

Mother tongue: As the Medium of Instruction and its Utility

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Abstract

Odia is an age-old and well-developed language. “*The Mahabharata*” in Odia, written by Sri Sarala Das in the fifteenth century is a testimony for this. Of course, it took almost five centuries for Odia to be developed as a modern language. As the proof of this ancient language we have King Kharavela’s inscriptions which are written in Magadhi abrasions; and ‘*Bandhagaana*’ and ‘*dohas*’ written in between eighth to eleventh century AD. This highly cultivated language is the symbol of an Odia’s self-respect. Hence, without any doubt this is unexceptionally the medium of understanding for an Odia child. For a child one’s own mother tongue is the best medium. Mother tongue means what a child learns from one’s own mother. Through this the child can communicate and share his/her own feelings, emotions and thoughts with his/her parents, relatives, friends and neighbours. Mother tongue plays a very important role in the everybody’s life. Holistic growth of a child depends on its ability to understand his/her mother tongue. So, to accept the importance of mother tongue in one’s life the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi has compared it with one’s mother’s milk. He has remarked, “**The mother tongue is as natural for the development of man’s mind as mother’s milk for the development of an infant’s body**”

Introduction:

**“Motherland and mother tongue are like our mothers,
I do worship them both days and nights.”**

- *Madhusudan Rao.*

For a child both his mother land and mother tongue are mothers. The poet here asks to serve them both which shows the importance of one’s mother tongue. The role of one’s mother tongue for the development of the child’s psychology is noteworthy. Generally, the child learns his /her mother tongue in very natural surroundings. But to learn a foreign language he/she has to take the help of some artificial and controlled environment. Language expresses one’s ideas through some sound symbols. With the appropriate pronunciation of these sounds we can understand the inherent meaning of those sound symbols. This reflection is the basis of our knowledge. The child acquires this linguistic excellence in a natural atmosphere from his father, mother, relatives and others members of the society. Hence, nothing can match one’s mother tongue for intellectual development of the child. There is no alternative for one’s mother tongue to gain intellectual knowledge and institutional education and to cope with the journey of one’s life. So, George Sampson has remarked, “**It’s a condition of existence rather than a subject for instruction. It is an inescapable circumstance of life.**”

Man is a social animal. To continue social relationship, we have to share our thoughts and feelings and emotions. And one's mother tongue is the medium of expression in all places such as family, village or the market places. Because this is the only language as everybody can understand. Our mother tongue plays an important role in expressing our ideas before others and vice versa. If the mother tongue of a child is different from his surroundings then he or she faces problem to express his or her ideas before others. In such cases he/ she has to learn more than one language. According to the psychologists it becomes a hindrance in the personality development of the child.

It is said. "the story of the language is the story of the civilization". The culture, philosophy, history, rituals, traditions and the development of a civilization is preserved in one's mother tongue. In fact, language is the preserver of a culture. History, philosophy, cultural heritage, religious ideas and ideals, legends of Odia people are better preserved in Odia language than in any other tongues. So, it is the best way possible to know and understand these aspects in one's mother tongue. Language also helps in preservation, transferring and development of one's culture. The child is introduced to its culture through its mother tongue. On the other hand, those who are unknown and special or great persons who differ with the conventional way of life they express their own ideas in their mother tongue and clarify their ideas to the common masses.

For the wholesome development of one's personality one's head and heart should get equal importance. And development of one's heart depends on the positive emotions. For this the impact of literary works, especially poems and dramas etc are very necessary. Poems, dramas, puranas etc. composed in one's mother tongue put a great impact on the child's heart. It helps the child to raise itself from its instincts to higher level of character building and personality development.

The creative works in one's mother tongue touches the child's heart naturally. It helps for the development of moral values in the child. As you know a drama like "*Harishchandra*" had changed the course of Karam Chand Gandhi's life. Books written in one's mother tongue plays a definite role for the development of the basic qualities like simplicity, truthfulness, perseverance, compassion, forgiveness, renunciation and patriotism etc. The poet writes,

"O, Mother Earth, you are my mother who has hold me on your lap. And at your feet lies the sea with great pleasure."

Poems like the above one enhances love for one's motherland.

Deep emotions and feelings of a person are spontaneously expressed only in one's mother tongue. So, it is very natural medium to open up one's mind. This is the best medium to express and explain deep feelings and realisations.

India is a democratic country. It needs to produce good citizens for democracy. Right thought and right expression are the qualities of a good citizen. One's mother tongue is the only possible medium through which a citizen can express and communicate his thoughts properly in a democratic atmosphere. Again, it is important to those who lead in the field of social and administrative services to accept and respect public opinion and express their opinion in the mother tongue as well. So, mother tongue helps the democratic system to go on properly. Mother tongue helps to one to develop one's hidden creativity. It develops the child's thoughts, ideas and

opinions. Hence it inspires the child's power of creativity to produce literary works. In this way the scope of literature and culture is expanded and the national literature and culture is strengthened.

Presently not only in school level, but also in the university level the medium of instruction is in the mother tongue. It is indispensable for educational democracy. But if expertise in mother tongue is not there then this goal can not be achieved. One should have highly acquaintance with one's mother tongue to get or impart knowledge on history, Geography, Mathematics or Philosophy in one's mother tongue. To have sufficient knowledge in the language which is the medium of instruction, helps to develop that language also. Similarly, learning of science, technology and computer etc in Odia medium is helping Odia language to develop more and more.

From the above discussion it is clear that the role of mother tongue is very essential in the life of a child. We can remember bhaktakabi (poet saint) Madhusudan Rao's words in this context. The mental and spiritual growth of a child is achieved by reading literature preserved in his/ her mother tongue. The power to accept and express one's ideas is easily attained through one's mother tongue. From this point of view more emphasis should be given to one's mother tongue for a successful life and education. So, it is said.

“Learn as many languages as you can,

But you should respect first your mother tongue.”

We should observe February 21st, as the International Day for mother tongue and March 11th as the National Odia Language Day in pomp and pride and respect our mother tongue. Then only our mother tongue can be developed.

Review of Literature

Importance of one's mother tongue is well acclaimed. But presently it has been the most neglected subject. Though more emphasis is given on the teaching and learning of Mathematics, Science, English etc but there is a lack of importance to one's mother tongue to a large extent. One's mother tongue is his/ her own language. Even Before entering to school, the child has got functional knowledge of his mother tongue. So, the children don't show more interest to his/ her mother tongues but to other subjects. It is a common idea that one can pass in the subject even though whatever he/ she writes in the examination paper. So why should one think about their mother language. Having this idea in their minds the children neglect their mother tongues.

There are numerous reasons for the neglect of one's mother tongue. One of the main reasons for this is the two hundred years of British rule. During the British period the foundation of modern Education was laid in our country. During those days emphasis was given on English language keeping in mind the necessity of the time. Even English was the medium of instruction in the primary level. So, children had to labour hard to expertise in English and neglect one's Mother tongue. Though there is a little change in educational system after Independence still the then module is still working. So, mother tongue is neglected being affected by such kind of mentality.

The teachers' role is very important and crucial to rouse interest in the students' minds for a particular subject. Sometimes a competent teacher though very

much helpful to make the students understand about a particular subject still may not be able to rouse interest of the students for that subject. There is a real scarcity of teachers for mother tongue. Since it is the language of that particular society and family so people think that teaching of mother tongue in very simple & easy. Even it is found in some places the **PETs** (Physical Education Teacher's) are also asked to teach a different subject than his/ her expertise in that particular subject in the Graduation level. For example, if somebody is appointed as a Mathematics teacher then it is sure that teacher must have studied Mathematics as an optimal subject on his graduation. Otherwise he will not be eligible to teach mathematics. But in case of one's mother tongue this rule doesn't work. So, because of the lack of expertise in the subject and lack of influence, one's own mother tongue is neglected.

In, Odisha Odia has been recognized as the medium of instruction up to graduation level. In some other states of India mother tongue has been recognized as the medium of instruction even up to post- Graduation and research level. So, in comparison with other states Odia language through has been recognized as the medium of instruction up to post- graduation level still English has been used as the Medium of instruction in University level. No scope is there to appear in the examination or for teaching in Odia Medium in the departments of science and commerce. In Arts section the students who appear in the examination in English medium generally secure more marks. Hence, talented students don't opt for mother tongue as the medium of instruction. It has been considered to be something aristocratic to be educated in English Medium schools. And there is a scarcity of text books in one's mother tongue for all subjects also. So, the students are eager to study in English medium and neglect their mother tongue. In Odisha Odia has been accepted as the language of Governance. But truly speaking in the Govt. offices also English has been used as the medium of communication. So, everyone considers that the place of English is very high and tries to be an expert in English language. This is the reason for which Odia Language has been neglected.

In today's globalised world industrialization and commerce has been affected by the global atmosphere. In such a condition English has become the medium of communication. So, the important role of the multi-national companies in the field of industry, commerce etc and job opportunities of the students in these companies have attracted them to be educated in English. Thus, this is also another reason for which one's mother tongue is reflected.

English is an important language both in national & International levels. So acquiring knowledge in this language can be a hindrance to learn one's mother tongue. Rather if there are more than one language then they may supplement each other. In fact, our negative mentality is responsible for our neglect to our mother tongue. Comparatively we consider English to be of higher status and our mother tongue to be if lower. Because of this under- estimation Odia Language is neglected. Our mother tongue should be respected as our mothers. This language works as the instrument for our overall development. Even it has been proved by most researchers that ability of Odia language in more extent helps to English better.

To popularise science & technology now a number of books have been published in Odia. Keeping in new the necessity of modern times, Odia language is revolutionised. This flow of evolution definitely will develop our mother tongue and will help for the development of individuals and the nation as well.

From the beginning to the end of the life drama of a child, his/ her each and every role is acted on depending his/ her mother tongue. Because of the contribution of one's mother tongue growth of a child and its evolution takes place and with this develops his/ her intellect also. Gradually he/ she becomes aware of the qualities & values like love, affection, sympathy, brotherhood, patriotism and universal brotherhood and tries to inculcate them and establish himself as a true human being.

Some queries rise in our minds in the context of the syllabus. First, in which level the subject should be introduced? Second, whether that subject should be compulsory or optional for that level? Third, in our curriculum there is the provision of more than one language. So how much importance should be given to which language, what should be the aim & objective of that teaching?

Our mother tongue is Odia. So, it is important and valid to include Odia Language in our curriculum. In democracy Schooling is a fundamental right. The importance of one's mother tongue in the field of education is well realised. Mother tongue plays a major role for the success of education for all. So, the educationalists have suggested to include one's mother tongue as a compulsory subject in the primary and secondly levels. And it has been unanimously accepted that in school level mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. Earlier this place was acquired by English. Jervactav Raiburn a renowned educationalist in his book '*The teaching of Mother Tongue*' writes, "**The day is now in sight, however when English will be the only second language, necessary for those who are taking up certain occupations and professions, but no longer in a position to rein the world curriculum. The mother tongue will soon take its rightful place, both as a medium of instruction and as means of culture**".

Through there are a number of languages in India still only twenty-two languages have got constitutional right. Those are Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Assam, Odia, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Sindhi, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Manipuri, Nepalese, Bodo, Duguri, Maithili, Konkani and Santali etc. After independence special measures have been taken for the development of stately languages. Now it (Odia) is not the only language that has been included in our curriculum but it has been recognized as the medium of instruction upto the University level. Even it is used as the medium of instruction in the competitive examinations for administrative services of the state also. A special cell for the print and publication of text books for college level named as *The Odisha State Bureau of Text Book Preparation and Production* has published a number of text books in Odia language. In spite of all this Odia language has not become so popular in our state as other languages have become so in their respective states. The main reason for this is that much importance is not given for the learning and teaching of Odia in the school level. It is not enough to give it the place of the first language in our curriculum, at the same time measures should be taken for preparation and awareness of teaching Odia I the school and college levels.

It is just a challenge for the teachers of our mother tongue. They should not underestimate themselves. They should improve the standard of their teaching method by the application of modern technology and having proper knowledge of the subject and modern teaching method. So that a developed method of teaching mother tongue will be evolved and the teacher's mentality of underestimating himself will be vanished.

The researchers of Odia language don't give much importance for the training of teaching Odia language. Reason for this is it comes under the department of Teachers' Training Programme. However, research is still wanted for the analysis and application of Odia language in primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education. My article is based on these points that how mother tongue can be used as the medium of instruction and what will be its utility.

Objective/ Hypothesis:

1. To understand and know different chapters in one's syllabus
2. To have knowledge about one's own culture, tradition and social values
3. To introduce oneself with grammar, sound, structure of sentences and word stock of the language
4. To know about different genres of literature such as: essay, story, novel, poetry, drama etc.
5. To know the usage of language, lyric and ornamental languages etc.
6. To know about other cultures and nations through translation and travelogues
7. To develop moral and intellectual prowess of the students
8. To develop interest for their mother tongue and literature
9. To encourage them to read creative works other than their syllabus
10. To develop positive qualities like patriotism, love for nature and love for life itself
11. To encourage them for seeking and following an ideal in their lives.
12. To make them capable of realising and expressing their emotions and feelings.
13. To encourage them to express their fundamental rights and creativity before others.
14. To enable them to pronounce correct Odia language.
15. To enable them to write correct Odia language.
16. To enhance them to participate in public meeting, debate and discussion.
17. To make them enabled for communication of ideas and ideals through listening, speaking, reading and writing of Odia language and literature.
18. Language is a social need. So, one has to know Odia language to live with Odia people so conveniently. So, another objective of this is to enable a person to cope with the environment of Odisha and her people.
19. To enable the students to read and understand their duties, advertisements published in Odia.
20. Last but not the least, the main objective of this is to make one a healthy, responsible and successful person, in short, a perfect human being.

SCOPE:

Language is an expanded topic. Especially this essay has been designed to discuss various dimensions of study and utility of such an old and highly developed language like Odia in different levels of education.

METHODOLOGY:

Educational methodology is a relative term. It depends on the nature and utility of a particular subject. Steps will be discussed in this essay to show the capability of Odia language to implement the subjects like History, Geography, literature, Science & Technology etc. issue like methodology of teaching of traditional and modern Odia language; activity method; method of evaluation; writing method; method for teaching of pronunciation; of grammar; method for teaching

prose, poetry, additional literature; method of correction etc have been discussed in this chapter.

EXPECTED OUTCOME/ SOCIAL RELAVANCE/ SIGNIFICANCE:

1. Students will draw ample opportunity and inspiration from the teachers.
2. Students will be attracted towards their mother tongue and aware to preserve their age-old tradition, culture, philosophy, religion and heredity.
3. They will be attracted towards their own mother land, her natural atmosphere, water, air, soil and show great respect towards the various types of dresses, food, festivals, dances etc. of their own brothers and sisters.
4. Students will learn the moral qualities like love, affection, cooperation, sympathy, ideals and proper ways of life, rules and regulations etc. to lead a healthy social life and apply them in their daily life.
5. The students will be able to learn, accept and imbibe morality, human values, positive thoughts through their mother tongue for which a healthy society, a healthy world can be possible.
6. They will be proud to be Odia and realise the importance of one's mother tongue for the formation of a true human being.
7. Students will show interest for study in Odia-medium in their school, college and University levels when they realise the importance of their mother tongue and literature.
8. A society or race or a nation lives with her own language and literature. The guardians of a society, teachers, intellectuals and administrators will understand this and hence, will promote the students to study in Odia medium.
9. Teachers can learn some methods for teaching of prose, poetry and additional Odia literature from this methodology.
10. And finally, everyone can realise the importance of relationship between an Odia person and his mother tongue.

Conclusion:

From the beginning to the end of the life drama of a child, his/ her each and every role is acted on depending his/ her mother tongue. Because of the contribution of one's mother tongue growth of a child and its evolution takes place and with this develops his/ her intellect also. Gradually he/ she becomes aware of the qualities & values like love, affection, sympathy, brotherhood, patriotism and universal brotherhood and tries to inculcate them and establish himself as a true human being.

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Everyone should respect and learn his mother tongue. Now-a-days it is found that the Odia children neglect studying Odia literature. But we feel if the study of great Odia masterpieces is encouraged and love for Odia language and literature is aroused among the students of Odisha then they can have a first-hand knowledge of the glorious culture of their past and present. By which a healthy society can be formed. So, for the growth and development of our mother tongue proper efforts should be taken by the guardians, teachers, educationists, and the linguists.

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