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## LANGUAGE POLITICS

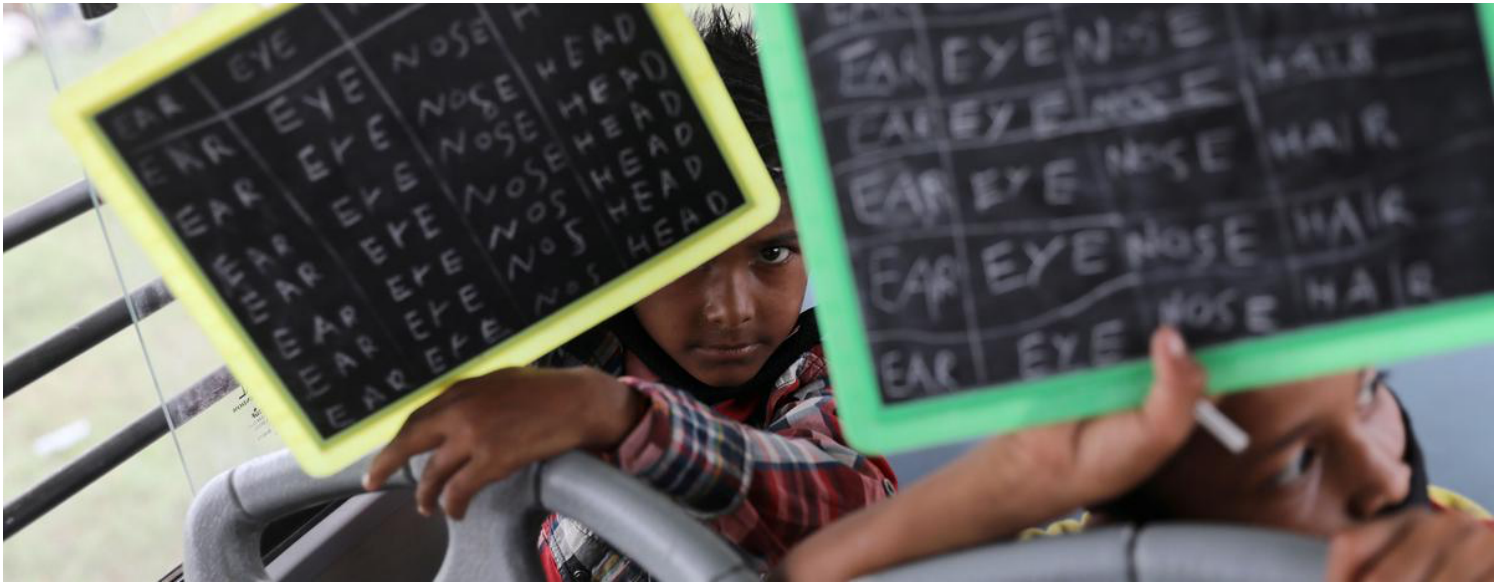
# For Shudras and Adivasis to have a shot at a better life, English language education is essential

This shared international language would allow them to live as equal and respectable citizens of the global community.

**Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd**

Apr 13, 2022 · 09:00 am





Classes inside a parked bus organised by an NGO for children living in slums along the Yamuna river in New Delhi in August 2021. | Reuters

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement on April 8 that [Hindi must be spoken](#) by people in all of India's states instead of English will undermine development and foster a regressive brand of nationalism.

Nationalism has no meaning if all children do not get equal language education from Class one to Class 12. Higher education must be available in any language for those who want to pursue it. For Shudras, this means having [access to education in English](#) if they want to catch up with the [English-educated Dwijas](#).

Shudras form the lifeblood of the nation. From the ancient post-Rigvedic period to the present, the majority of members of the group have worked only in physical labour domains. Dalits were separated from the Shudras when leather work began to be declared untouchable. Over a period of time, the Brahminic ritualistic notion of food taboos and untouchability created a barbaric segregation in Indian society.

As Adivasis, Shudras and Dalits struggled for survival, their creative solutions hold lessons for India and the world. To expand the planet's knowledge base, it is critical that their children be educated in English.

Though the world has shrunk considerably, for now only Dwijas have access to English to live a good life in the global village. Shudras, Dalits and Adivasis have no access to this common global language that would allow them to live as equal and respectable citizens of the global community.

## **Exploitation, English education**

If India's productive masses are not educated in English, they will continue to be exploited. Only English-educated Dwijas will continue to join the class that generates the surplus necessary to live a life of leisure. The only way out, therefore, is that English must become the medium for national education in India.

The realisation by Shudras that English education is vital for modern philosophical engagement will solve many of India's long-festering problems. Expanding the national educational pool is important for the development of the whole country.

**DK Shivakumar** 

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All Kannadigas are proud of our mother tongue but we do need a second language to be part of a globalised world.

That second language is English.

Without English, so many Kannadigas won't be working across the world, and Bengaluru wouldn't be India's IT capital.

1:19 PM · Apr 8, 2022 

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For millennia, Shudras, Dalits and Adivasis have had sophisticated experiences

working with nature, producing food, animal grazing, fishing and other activities. The Dwijas lacked that. They survived with several theories that are purely imaginary. Their revered texts have little connection to productive activities necessary for human survival. While war and violence that characterise some of these works are, no doubt, part of human experience, they are not positive paths for human advancement.

The Sanskritised life of the Dwijas has not promoted the idea of human equality. It promoted [varna and caste inequality](#) as divine ethics. History for them is a history of war, violence and power. Sanskrit as a language survived by recording such negative experiences, with a combination of metaphysical visions into texts.

But spiritual life does not deal only with the imagination, Shudra spirituality combines faith with reason. For them, physical labour and faith in God were complementary. But they never textualised their socio-spiritual lives. In the Shudra imagination, God is a benevolent food producer.

## **Sanskrit and Persian**

India has never spoken [a single language](#) from one end to another. Castes and

tribes could not communicate with each other because of caste culture and language barriers.

Shudras and other productive communities were not allowed to combine that experience with a collective imagination – or even an individual one. A thought process that combined experience and imagination would have been translated into textuality and expression if only they had a shared language across the country. That is why the language disconnectedness among Shudras, Dalits and Adivasis has to be done away with.

There were two national languages that could have connected the whole nation. The first national language was Sanskrit, which was confined to Dwija families across the country. Others had no right to learn that language.

Sanskrit came to India with the migrant Aryans around 1500 Before the Common Era and remains the language in which temple ritual are performed. Though everyone can learn Sanskrit now, it has no use except in temple and ritual practices. These domains are still Brahmin controlled.

When the Muslim rulers established their kingdoms in the subcontinent, Persian

became the administrative language. Within a short time it became a [lingua franca](#) almost across the country. If these rulers had established schools and taught Persian to children of all castes, a common intellectual pool would have emerged with Persian as the spoken and textual language.

This would have offered a means of linguistic communication that could be identified from one end of India to the other, and people from different castes would have exchanged ideas in that language.



Credit: Rohini, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Since Persian was also the main language of some Muslim countries – particularly Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan – Shudra/Dalit educated sections, in that language, would have had an international exchange of ideas.

It is said that before the British came, Persian erased the influence of Sanskrit in many parts of India as it was a court and administrative, music and cultural discourse language. The Brahmins and other Dwijas became loyal learners of

Persian for positions of power and social status. But Shudras and Dalits, while living within the village economic system, were not allowed to enter into those Muslim and Dwija elite clubs.

Indian Islam, which was was equally casteist and feudal, continued the same caste culture in all spheres. Many Dwijas converted to Islam. Thus, Persian became the Mughal Sanskrit.

Mullahs worked exactly on the lines of the Brahmin priests and pundits. They installed Arabic as the language of prayer and Persian as the official and elite club language. Lower-caste converts to Islam were left with Urdu, which had only market and kitchen value, exactly on the lines that Hindi and other regional languages had for Shudra/Dalit/Adivasis now.

Unless the Shudras and Dalits are drawn into one language, the nation will never be fully integrated. Now, English gives that scope to make India a nation of one language, serving serves this aim better than Hindi since it is an internationally-saleable language.

Shudras, Dalits and Adivasis must be more cautious of the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh and Shah's Hindi conspiracy in this globalised world, and push their children into English learning.

*Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd is a political theorist, social activist and author and the former Director of the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at the Maulana Azad National Urdu University in Hyderabad.*

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