

MOTHER TONGUE AS MEDIUM OF EDUCATION

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There are people who refuse to adapt themselves to the new order but demand the compulsory introduction of English from Standard 2 for the reason that it is the products of English Education that won our freedom.

This argument is refuted by no less a person than the first President of the Republic of India in his convocation address to Nagpur University on Tuesday last. **President Rajendra Prasad** referred to an incident that happened in 1921 and which made him a thorough believer in national education, that is to say, the principle of imparting education through the medium of the mother-tongue. He said: "In those days, the boycott movement of educational institutions established or aided by the Government was at its height. I was touring Orissa in company with Gandhiji. An aged gentleman put a question to Mahatmaji at a big mass meeting. He asked why Gandhiji wanted the educational institutions to be boycotted when, as a matter of fact, the whole freedom movement was but an outcome of that system. He asked whether it was not a fact that such talented people as Lokamanya Tilak and Gandhiji himself were the products of that system. Mahatmaji countered the question by asking whether it was not a fact that there had been only one talented person like Lokamanya Tilak even though the system of English education had been in existence for many years. He added that if the matter were carefully considered, it would appear that Lokamanya Tilak could stand no comparison in point of talents with the great people who had appeared in our history before. Even if the great Rishis about whom we did not know much were not taken into consideration, yet could it be said that anyone in India under the British Rule could be compared in point of his abilities to such giants as Gautama Buddha, Shankara, or even to Tulsidas and Kabirdas who were living only a little time before English rule began in this country? Moreover who could be sure that if Lokamanya Tilak had not had to suffer from the limitations and the burdens of a foreign medium of instruction he would not have proved a much greater man than he actually was? He, therefore, was of the opinion that whatever talents our people had exhibited after receiving English education had been acquired not on account of, but in spite of it. I wholly subscribe to this view and it is my unshakable conviction that it is absolutely necessary for our development and the realisation of the creative energy in us that our own language should be the medium of education."

Dr. Prasad added, "It was but plain that **the foundations of the present-day education system were laid to produce administrative officials for the British Government** and, therefore, in the syllabus and courses of study prescribed in the Universities not much attention had been paid to the integrated and all-round progress of the country. The first feature of the system was that an alien language had been made the medium of education. This enabled the production of such people who could assist the English

people, through their knowledge of the English language, in running the administration of the country so that there might be the least necessity for the latter to learn the language of this country and the literature enshrined in it during the period of their administrative service in this country and they might thus be freed from all the trouble and bother attendant upon the learning of a foreign language or the study of an alien literature. 'It is unnecessary for me to reiterate that it is now acknowledged by all educationists and scholars as also administrators that education imparted through the medium of the mother-tongue proves most beneficial to the child and to the development of its mind and character. Thus, while we have no doubt learned and benefited greatly from the study of English literature, yet there cannot be any doubt that we have lost our creative energy and have become mentally paralysed to a very great extent as a result of having had to learn everything through English'.