

## **RACIAL SEGREGATION - Extract from “Why Do We Need English”**

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**Date: Circa 1952**

It is untrue to say that the adoption of swabhasa medium will lead to the separation of races. English was never intended to be a bond to unify the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The most effective method of bringing about social unity is by giving every Sinhalese child a working knowledge of Tamil and every Tamil child a working knowledge of Sinhalese. It should be an integral part of our educational policy. By following this method you forge a bond that will create mutual respect and mutual understanding between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. A three-year course is quite ample to give a working knowledge of each other's language, that is from 6th standard to 8th standard. At Ananda College we give a working knowledge of Tamil to all Sinhalese students in 6th, 7th and 8th standards. And this has been welcomed by parents and pupils alike.

It is said that in certain big schools in Colombo where there are parallel classes for Sinhalese and Tamil pupils there is racial segregation. E.G.Malherbe, in his monumental study of bilingualism in South Africa (English and Afrikaans), has met this objection. He endorses the basic principle that education should be imparted through the mother-tongue of the pupils. He compares unilingual schools with parallel medium schools. Unilingual schools are either English unilingual-schools where English children learn through English or Afrikaans-unilingual-schools where Afrikaans children learn through Afrikaans. In parallel medium schools English and Afrikaans children learn separately in the same premises, English children through English medium and Afrikaans children through Afrikaans medium. Professor Malherbe holds that the parallel medium school claims for it “several social and educational advantages over the separate school. These advantages are held to arise from the fact that the school's environment is enriched by the cultural contributions of both sections. By working and playing together from their early youth, Afrikaans and English-speaking children learn to work together as they will have to do as adults. By hearing the other language spoken at any rate and by having certain common school exercises..... they have greater opportunities for the appreciation of each other's personalities and cultural and social outlook than have children in unilingual schools.”

Professor T.J.Haarhoff writes: “Much, however, depends on the principal and the tone of the school. Tests have shown that the mere fact of having the two sections in the same school eliminates, under the right principal, much of the bitterness found in many single-medium schools”.

In other words, according to Professor Malherbe, a school like Royal College, which may be regarded as a parallel medium school under the new policy, has several social and educational advantages over the single-medium school.