

suggestions like- getting hold of every small bit of information in the foreign language because it works really well for language learning.

Very interestingly, the authors take every small bit available in hearsays, discuss them with reference to language learning, but don't present 'the answers' to those questions; rather put their propositions on it and leave the rest for the reader(s) to decide what works and what doesn't for them.

Summarily, the authors draw on insights from psychology and cognitive science to show that adults can master a foreign language if they bring the skills and knowledge they have mastered during their lifetime. Adults should not try to learn as children do, rather they should learn like adults.

The authors present data which suggest that adults can learn new languages even more easily than young adults. Children appear to have only two advantages over adults in learning a language: they acquire a native accent more easily. Adults, on the other hand, have the greater advantages that they understand their own mental processes and know how to use language to do things. Adults better understand the pragmatics of new language, and the authors demonstrate how the adults can use this advantage for themselves.

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Anuradha Ghosh, Saroj Kumar Mahananda and Trisha Lalchandani (eds.), *Premchand on National Language (Rashtrabhasha)* (Translated from Hindi into English). Delhi: Aakar Books, 2019 (Hardback), ISBN 978-93-5002-606-9, Rs. 495.00

Premchand on National Language (Rashtrabhasha) is a collection of translations of Premchand's writings in Hindi between 1931-36 on the question of making Hindi the national language (Rashtrabhasha) of India (Bharatvarsha, then). This collection is a rich mine of Premchand's views (vichar) not only on the question of Hindi as the national language and all its ramifications but also on many other issues of national importance.

Premchand appears in these writings as a campaigner for Hindustani as the national language of India; a propagator for one language, one script, one literature and one culture as one important factor, among others necessary for nation-building. Premchand believes that Bharatvarsha has been made one nation, which it was not in the past, by the British. However, the English language has enslaved the minds of the Indian elite, mostly upper castes, and distanced them from the common people and their vernaculars and the Indian culture. In order to keep India as one nation after the departure of the British, English must be replaced by an Indian language, and that language can only be Hindi (Hindustani in Devanagari script) it being the most widely spoken and understood language in India. That Hindi would subsume Urdu under it, would be enriched by the vocabulary and literary wealth from all the regional languages and dialects, and even from the West. This new language would be spoken and understood by the common mass of people all over the country and totally free from Sanskritic and Persian vocabulary forced by Hindu and Muslim diehards into Hindi and Urdu. All this, he believes, would lead to one national literature written in Devanagari script and embedded in Hindi transformed into Hindustani. To make Hindustani acceptable to the South, Premchand wants the north Indians to work to propagate Hindustani in the South and appeals to the South Indians to accept it for the good of the nation. He assures all the regional languages that this need not affect the growth of regional literatures.

These writings encompass the whole complexity of the language question that still continues to haunt us: the spoken language vs the written language, the Hindi-Urdu controversy, use of script including developing a script common for all the Indian languages, dominance of English yet hopelessly poor standards of English language teaching and learning, use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction, lack of uniformity within regional languages in the use of terms related to science, philosophy, religion, the role of films and theatre in the propagation of a language, the opposition to Hindi from non-Hindi-speaking regions and the need for a national academy of literature. Apart from all these, Premchand reflects on several issues of national importance. He envisions an economic system free from greed and excessive love of wealth, is alive to Hindu-Muslim relations and women's issues. He is also aware that India is a country of a sub continental size with so much religious, linguistic and cultural diversity. And we also

come to know that Premchand was a smoker!

As we know, today this project of one language, one national literature in Hindustani written in Devanagari script failed to take off due to the insistence of the diehard Hindiwallahs to Sanskritize Hindi to the level of utmost unintelligibility and unrelenting opposition from Southern states who felt that this was an attempt by the North to dominate the South. The result today is that we have not one 'national' language but 22, Hindi being one of them. Hindi has retained its status as the official language along with English. Above all, English, in spite of Premchand's strong opposition, has become far more entrenched in India, so much so that a large emerging aspirational class among the common people of India has taken to English as the language of opportunity, and Hindi has lost that status because Hindi cannot provide the kind of educational and job opportunities English can. However, Hindustani has not lost the battle altogether because now more than ever it is understood and spoken in most parts of the country though with varying degrees of competence. This has not been due to the efforts of the diehard Hindiwallahs but because of Bollywood, urbanization and migrations of people in large numbers from one state to another, the print and electronic media and assimilation of a vast vocabulary from English, Urdu and other regional languages. It is well on its way to become the language of spoken discourse in the country, though it is far from competing and replacing English in science and technology, modern medicine, business in the corporate world and communication at the international level. One may also add that Premchand's idea of one national literature in one language, of spreading Hindi in South India through organizations like the Hindi Pracharni Sabha seems unrealistic for the simple reason that proficiency in a language cannot be attained by passing examinations but it evolves and is attained the way a child attains it, through motivational use and interaction. Language can't be forced upon anyone unwilling to learn it. Premchand's views on one national literature in Hindustani also seem problematic. The role of uniting different regional literatures through translations appears to be performed at present by English rather than Hindi.

The editors by making available to English readers Premchand's views on the national language have served one good purpose. These writings lay bare before us the utmost, almost chaotic, complexity of the language question in our country which is unique in having such a linguistic