

Attitude of Malabar Towards English Language

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Abstract

Malabar holds a peculiar place in the historical and cultural arena of Kerala state. The colonial period marked a specific place for Malabar as the people were firm and ferocious towards the colonial aggression. The people of Malabar were vibrant against the atrocities of the suffocating imperialist rule. They abolished everything English and they were against the spreading of 'English' in every aspects of life. So the Malabar people spread the idea that English language is the fume of hell. The agenda behind the aversion towards English language was the aversion towards the products of colonizers and they believed that the English products will ruin the indigenous culture and beliefs.

But even in the post-colonial times Malabar witnessed the aversion towards English language. The Malabar was traditional in thinking and the aversion towards the language remained in the minds of the people. The aversion towards English language made the Malabar people to be behind in the gush of science and technology. They were unable to enjoy the benefits of the language and the region became backward in the field of education and technology.

The migration to the gulf countries made the Malabar people to realize the role and value of English in the development of science and technology. This forced the parents and the old to compel the younger generation to enjoy and utilize the benefits of English language to attain success in life. While the schools followed the traditional ways of grammar based language teaching, many institutions sprouted proclaiming the capsule model language teaching and even ensured injecting English in to their blood.

Keywords: Malabar, gulf migration, English language, higher education, development.

Introduction

Malabar plays a peculiar role in the topography and history of Kerala society with its elegant flora and fauna and unparalleled fight against the British power at the time of independence struggle. Malabar people fought the British powers with their might and mind to wipe away the colonial aggression and atrocities from the soil of Malabar area. The revolution of

1921 was a fight against aggression of the British powers and intrusion of the imperialism to the life of Malabar Muslims. Malabar people established their own autonomous regions and printed their own passports as retaliation to rules and regulations of the imperialist powers. The fight was so ferocious that the British could not freely enter into the region of Malabar and they cannot implement the spurious methods of separation. Malabar people not only fought against the political aggression but also resisted the cultural invasion of the English. They kept aloof from the cultural remnants of the British power and abolished everything English. Their products, raw materials and their lifestyle were eradicated from the lives of Malabar people. This resulted in the animosity or hostility towards English language. In Malabar it was believed that English is the fume of hell. They "...considered the English language as *haraam* (sacrilege) during their multifaceted resistance against the British" (Arafth). This belief was superstitious but was to keep away uneducated masses from the British language and culture. The Malabar people accomplished in keeping away the British culture but after-effects of this animosity was there in the society. After the attainment of freedom and in the path of progress of the nation Malabar people were behind in progress and education compared to other regions of the country. This hostility resulted in the backward condition of the Malabar region and the lack of growth and prosperity in the region. While most of the states and regions of the country succeeded in acquiring laurels of success, the region was behind in progress and development. The slogan and belief that English language is the fume of hell were taken by the superstitious religious apostles to keep away the laity from modern education. Conventional and traditional attitude of this religious leaders and their preaching pulled the Malabar people from attaining success and development in life through modern education.

Need for Education

Attainment of freedom and the eradication of social evils from the society made the people to seek for the bread for living. The newborn nation could not supply to the needs of the region as it was behind in education and attainment of knowledge. The condition of Malabar people changed with the migration to gulf countries. The gush of oil in the dry deserts of Arabian sands nurtured the dreams and hopes of the Malabar region as they found a passage to relieve from the debilitating poverty and hardships. The progress of gulf countries needed labor from the Malabar region and young men flowed to the Arabian sands and they reached the Arabian shores with much trouble, shattering the challenges of the ocean. Gulf money from the Arabian sands brought development and prosperity in the Malabar region. But the development in Arabian countries wanted educated men to lead the country into prosperity and glory. Malabar could not supply educated men to the gulf countries as they were against the attainment of English education to the young men and women. Especially the Muslims in the region gave more importance to religious education than mundane to attain success in life.

The exposure to the real world and the importance of education in the contemporary technological society made the Malabar migrants to encourage English education and for “Providing good education for children... (60). This resulted in the sprouting of English medium schools in the nooks and corners of Malabar region. “Since the 1980s, and more markedly since the 1990s, there has been a gradual but important emergence of a new private English - medium sector of schools” (Sancho53).The poor performance of the public education system with insufficient facilities and infrastructure and poor performance of the teachers helped the English medium school to develop to its maximum performance. But this was at the cost of the failure of public education system. The government authorities and rulers looked the public education system as burden to the public exchequer. Individual organizations and parties started English medium schools in every area of Malabar region as it was a fast-growing money-making business. This resulted in the quality deterioration of education. Parents, teachers and the school authorities tried to Anglicize the student discarding the mental and physical manifestations of the students. The teachers and parents tried to keep away from the traditional values and morals of Kerala culture and encouraged the students to change their mind and attitude to an Englishman. This encouragement was aiming at the bright future of the students as they can gain a better job in the gulf countries with a proficiency in English language. The migrants thought of the benefits, reputation and recognition for English speaking employees in the gulf countries and they dreamt of their children getting reputation and recognition and a bright future by attaining English language proficiency.

English medium schools exploited growing need for English-speaking students in Malabar region. The school authorities discarded extracurricular abilities of the students and tried to enrich academic excellence and English-speaking capability with the help of methods and processes formulated by English-speaking community. The question of applicability of the methods and processes of English learning in the rural sides of Malabar area was never in the thought of the teachers in the race for making English-speaking men. The students suffered physical and mental torture as they were forced to learn a foreign language without realizing the benefits of learning. The parents were happy listening to their children spelling English words, rhymes and sentences and they believed that the students will shine in their future and will attain laurels of success with their English-speaking ability. The teachers were forcibly pouring language to the very mouths and ears of students in traditional way of teaching. Especially, grammar was taught in such a way that the students were not able to realize the value of grammar sections in the practical speaking. Students were forced to learn a foreign subject and language in the examination point of view alone. The value and merit of students were valued on the basis of English-speaking ability and high marks in the examinations. Parents looked at the English medium education as a symbol of reputation and compelled the teachers and authorities to make their children bright in the examinations. The pressure of these competitions was on the students and they were mentally and physically destabilized in the race for marks and grades. “Most the families oriented their children's education towards acquiring the sort of prestige and

wealth ...” (Gooptu 163). The race for high marks, reputation and recognition in the society affected the students as they moved away from the mother tongue Malayalam and the traditional culture and language were considered as secondary or inferior to the English culture. The parents and teachers wanted the students to be Englishman living in the rural areas of Malabar area. The hostility and animosity towards English language in the colonial times was erased from the society and was substituted with the affinity towards English language aiming at the bright future of Malabar youth.

Private institutions and English medium schools failed to attain the expected aims of the parents and well-wishers. English medium schools employed teachers with minimum qualification and experience for minimum wages to make maximum profit with minimum expenditure. Teachers in English medium schools with minimum qualifications and experience followed traditional methods of teaching English. They neglected modern methods of teaching English language and communication without giving importance to listening and speaking abilities. The inefficient teachers concentrated on reading and writing skills neglecting the abilities of listening and speaking. Thus, the students who can recite poems in English and read textbooks and story books were unable to speak English freely and comfortably only because of the lack of effective listening and effective speaking exercises. English listening confined to the classroom voices of the teachers who failed to communicate English in exact tone and pronunciation so as to attract the students. The pronunciations of the teachers were not so encouraging that the students were not inspired to speak English among the students and with the teachers. English medium students are forced to speak in English imposing fines and restrictions. This created a mechanical way of speaking English with the influence of mother tongue Malayalam. So the children in CBSE schools and English medium schools spoke English in the Malayalam way which created a negative impact on the student. They spoke English only because of compulsion from the teachers and school authorities. The illiterate or ignorant or less educated parents were happy with the student performance in the examinations and were delighted listening to the recitation of rhymes and poems in English or reading stories from textbooks.

Grammar was taught in the traditional and conventional way as the teachers with minimum qualification and efficiency could not construct modern ways of teaching based on the capabilities and qualities of the students and the social circumstances of teaching. Traditional methods of teaching grammar created an aversion towards English grammar and made a weird feeling that English language is full of laws and restrictions. This fear of restrictions and rules made students to keep away from the English language communication as the failures and mistakes were considered to be great sins from the part of student and the mainstream society discouraged English speaking with the faults and mistakes. While ancient Malabar created an aversion towards English as a part of the anti-colonial struggle and to keep away the laity from the productions of British Empire, the younger generation of the post-independence time created

and an aversion towards English language as a result of the faulty methods of teaching. English medium education not only failed to meet the expected aims and objectives of the parents but also resulted in the generation of a negative impact on the student community. Thus, even after the completion of secondary education the students in Malabar were unable to meet proficiency in English language.

The depth of failure was realized as the students with high marks and credentials in English subject failed to perform before the job interviews and group discussions because of lack of training for speaking fluent English in the education system. Those who learnt English language even from the elementary school realized that English language literacy is not enough to attain better job in the fast-growing gulf region. Those who attended effective English education failed to perform in the interviews and group discussions at the time of job selection and parents realized that English medium education failed to meet its expected goals and in ensuring the bright future of the students. This resulted in the realization of the deficiencies and failures of English medium education. The youth searched for new methods of attaining efficiency for the job selection and better performance in the interview process. The search for English proficiency and ability for a job resulted in the sprouting of spoken English institutes which made the capsule model learning of English language with the training in interviews and group discussions. The result was that English-speaking classes or spoken English institutes became a fast-growing business in the rural areas of Malabar region as the number of educated students came forward expecting a better job and future in the gulf countries.

Malabar was hostile towards higher education at the time of independence struggle as the people concentrated on the sole aim of freedom of Indian motherland from the British powers. After the attainment freedom the prime motive was not education but was to keep away from the crushing poverty and hardships brought about through the colonial rule. The way to find a solution for the hardships and poverty was migration to the Arab countries. So, the youth from Malabar region migrated to the gulf countries as the gulf had a demand for laborers to build their nation. This demand for laborers in the gulf countries was answered with the hands and toil from Malabar. Without elementary education or even after the completion of basic education the youth migrated to the gulf countries to earn a living for the family. The value of higher education was realized only after the exposure to possibilities and opportunities in the gulf countries for graduates and highly educated man. This was in the verge of 20th century. This realization of the value of higher education and English language made the young men and women in Malabar to think about a prestigious job in the gulf countries. But the failure of English medium education and public education system brought about a faulty higher education system in the region.

The growing demand for graduates and educated youth in the gulf countries created a need for establishment of higher education institutions in the Malabar area. The government

could not establish higher education institutions in the public sector because of heavy burden to public exchequer. This resulted in the sprouting of self-financing institutions in the Malabar region. The graduates from the higher education institutions could not shine in the selection process of multinational companies and corporate world because of the lack in English communication. The higher education institutions could not supply to the needs of the individual in nourishing their English language capability and they failed in attaining a prestigious job in the gulf countries. Even the bright graduates from Malabar region could not succeed in the job market because of the deficiency in English language. Higher education system was not well designed in a manner so that they are able to master English language. The emphasize was on the subject of learning and marks in the examinations. Ability for effective presentation of the thoughts or ideas in English language is not in nourished in higher education system. So the graduates from Malabar region failed to express their views and ideas in English language in the interviews and selection processes of multinational companies. The graduates were forced train in English language speaking from private spoken English institutes to reach their expected goals.

Conclusion

Thus, the hostility towards English language in the time of independence struggle gave way to affinity towards the language in the post independent Malabar region as the Malabar have to depend mainly on the gulf region to grab a job. Contemporary Malabar region could not turn away from English language as their main income is from the remittance from gulf countries.

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