

## MITHOO POOR MITHOO

Sitting in his study room, Mithoo was shouting “Ein”, “Ein”, “Ein”, “Ein”. He was now trying to memorize the Arabic names of various parts of the body. His mother, disturbed by the noise, came in to stop Mithoo. He said: “Mummy I am fed up. I have been repeating this word “Ein”, “Ein”, “Ein”, “Ein”, but I forget it every time. This new language, Arabic might help me in the C.S.P. competition, do you think Mummy it is too difficult to learn, it might turn me mad, I fear.”

“Do not worry dear Mithoo. One more language added to the list of the four that you already know will, if course be a great asset in life, but please, do not make a noise.”

I cannot help it. I have to follow the *Ratta* Method, I wonder how many more names I will have to learn. This Ein (pointing to his eye), he said “is ‘chashm’ in Persian, when I learn English it is ‘eye’ and in Urdu I was taught to call it ‘Aankh’. When I was two, you told me it was ‘Akh’. In sixteen years its name has changed from ‘Akh’ to ‘ankh’, ‘eye’, ‘chashm’, and now ‘ein,, but this beastly ‘ein’ is the same old ‘akh’. It has not changed a bit”.

“But, Mithoo, you are gaining knowledge. Don’t get impatient. You will learn Arabic as easily as you learnt Persian.

“Mummy, do I really gain knowledge by learning five ten or fifty names for one thing? What if I call ‘eye’ by a hundred more names, it will still remain the same old ‘akh’.

“Yes, Mithoo, the more names you know the more educated you become.”

My friend John knows only one name for it “eye”. Whereas I have learn five name for one thing while he learns five names for five new things. How can I compete with him. Don’t you see how brilliant he is and rich in knowledge? He knows only one language--- his mother-tongue.”

“That may be so” answered mother, “But Mithoo, you cannot become properly educated and cultured without learning a few language.”

Mother sat thinking of the difficulties expressed by her son. “Indeed my poor Mithoo is in great difficulty”. She was reminded of her own days when she had to go through similar suffering in her school and college. She remembered how so many books learnt by *Ratta* (rote method) were forgotten so soon. How so many chapters of history, geography and science became forgotten memories soon after the examination. How many years had been wasted in cramming up new names and words, new verbs and sentences, of a new language’ how simple things became so complex, as the language used was not her own; How a different language, ordinary ideas and simple meanings became so difficult to learn. How she used to learn by heart, phrases and sentences, passages

and chapters, containing very ordinary and simple words, only to be able to reproduce them in sophisticated English, in examination for the sake of high marks. She always believed that knowledge of several languages was a sign of learning. Mithoo's father was a great linguist and she had married him for that very reason, even though he remained poor and miserable all his life. While she was buried in these thoughts, Munni the eldest daughter, who was preparing for the Degree Examination, called out to her.

"Mummy, I have been trying to mug up this paragraph about Akbar the Great from this wonderful book. Its meaning is so simple to learn but it is the flowery English language which makes it so difficult and without it, I cannot get good marks. I have spent almost the whole morning cramming it yet I forget it."

"Yes, Munni, I appreciate your difficulty, for I had to go through it myself at your age."

"But, Mummy, the rote method is so useless. All I learnt in the last class is completely forgotten. The fact is I have to labour hard to learn beautiful words of English in order to express simple facts which are so easy to remember in my own language. Besides, Mummy whenever I think, I think in the language I learnt from you as a child, and in fact the substance of all that I am now cramming stays in my memory only in that language.

"I agree", answered Mummy. "It is indeed painful. Poor Mithoo also expressed this difficulty. "But I do not know what to do about it. (We have to learn in English). However Munni, trust in God and be patient, you will get through. Don't worry." Saying this she left Munni and went back to her room.

Munni had failed once in the Intermediate and twice in the Matric and Mithoo had also dropped once in the Matric. Both of them had failed in the compulsory English subject each time. She had one consolation, however, that her children were not the only sufferers. About 70,000 students in the Matric and Intermediate had failed that year, most of them because of compulsory English subject. It was so ordained by God Almighty, she thought to herself.

The difficulties expressed by Mithoo and Munni, however caused her serious concern. She noticed that they remained ignorant of many important facts of life and gained little by their education. On the contrary they were becoming unsure and timid.

## Chapter 2

Mother had invited a German friend to stay with her during her visit to Lahore. Mithoo was thrilled to learn that she had arrived on her motorcycle.

“She will stay with us four days”, said Mother and will tell us wonderful stories of her travels; her name is Dagma.”

“That’s splendid”, answered Mithoo with joy. “I would be delighted to see her but who will we communicate, I do not know German.”

“But Munki, you will see how I impress her with my first rate English pronunciation and Oxford accent and impress her with my knowledge of so many languages.

At the breakfast table Dagma, narrating her travel through Turkey, Iraq and Iran and wonderful places and people she had seen and met on the way.

Full of curiosity Mithoo asked: “How did you communicate? Do you know Arabic and Persian?”

“No”, answered Dagma.

“How then, did get along?” enquired Mithoo.

“A few of the people of those countries understand English.”

“Your English is quite good”, remarked Mithoo.

“Thank you for the compliment”, answered Dagma.

“How long did it take you to learn it?”

“Just a few months”, answered Dagma.

“Just few months! I am surprised”.

“Yes, only a few months. Why are you surprised” How long did it take you?

“Me! About sixteen years and I am still learning.”

“Sixteen year! I am shocked,” remarked Dagma.

“It took me only a few months. Before starting on my travel, I took up English and in two months I picked up a small vocabulary. Then I spent two months in Berlin with an English-speaking family and got a working knowledge of this language which I improved by practice on the way.”

“I am puzzled”, said Mithoo. ‘I cannot imagine that one could learn English in such a time. Either I am stupid or you are clever”.

“Don’t worry Mithoo you are not stupid. You are very clever”. Interrupted mother, “Dagma has learned it so quickly as her German language has

something in common with the English language and besides, she has learnt it by the direct method”.

“But Mummy I have spent full sixteen years”.

“Don’t worry Mithoo. Time does not matter”, answered mother. “a time spent on learning English and acquiring English culture is really worth it, Don’t you agree Dagma?”

“I don’t know”, answered Dagma politely. “I have been hearing the same thing from some of your University Professors and students. They are all full of praise for English culture and English language.”

“If you were so fond of the English language and culture why did you drive out the Englishman from your country”?

“Munni amused by this remark said: “Yes, Dagma we no doubt miss them especially when we see behind, what they left around us. Their culture, their language and their fashions.

Please tell me how many languages you know; I am sure you know many,” enquired Mithoo.

“Not many”, answered Dagma. “I know only German properly and, of course, a little smattering of English.”

“Is that all? proudly enquired Mithoo. I cannot believe it. Such a brilliant and able girl like you knows only one language? I hope you are not kidding me.”

Dagma, surprised at Mithoo’s question quietly answered. “I really know only one language my mother-tongue, and I am quite happy with that.”

“How could you be happy knowing only one name for things? Look at me I know five names for everything. It seems, Dagma, that German people are not fond of learning”, said Mithoo.

“Please do not say that Mithoo. You seem to be quite ignorant of the advances made by the Germans, in Science, Philosophy and research. We are on the top of the world, but we are not fools to waste time on learning languages of other peoples.”

“I do not mean that Dagma”, answered Mithoo apologetically. “But do you mean to say that nobody in your country learns any foreign language.

“We do not learn a language which is not used inside the country”, retorted Dagma. “But of course a few of us who want to become research scholars or interpreters in the United Nations organizations, learn different a few languages for the sake of making a career, and they are very very few.”

Mithoo turning to his mother said: “Mummy, but how was Dad such a good linguist. Was he an interpreter or a Research Scholar?”

"No, my dear Mithoo", answered mother with a sense of grief. Your Dad had a flare for languages and had learnt eight languages just for the sake of language learning, but it had nothing to do with his career.

"But, Mummy, Dad wrote some scholarly books in English.

"Yes dear, he wrote two books in first rate King's English and in the style of Macaulay, but the English ridiculed his works due to prejudice. Your Dad felt it very much." Heaving a sigh she continued: 'Your dad used to say towards the end of his life; that he had wasted his time money and energy.

Dagma, moved by the tragic story of Mithoo's father remarked sympathetically. "I am sorry for your poor father. He was indeed a victim of cruelty which the foreign rulers usually impose upon their subjects. By allurements of careers and honours they encourage them to ape and imitate. So successfully do they create a cobweb of magic and sweetness about their own language and culture that very often their silly and stupid words sound sweet and worth imitation? So many of the poor people perish in the pursuit of imitation."

Addressing Dagma, Mithoo enquired: "Could you tell me how many people in Europe know foreign languages" My teacher says that almost everyone there knows one or two foreign languages."

"There is no truth in what he says." Dagma replied "Hardly one in, 5,000 can speak a foreign language properly. A good many might learn a second language –French or English in schools for a few years as an optional subject."

"I am surprised", remarked Mithoo. My teacher told us the other day that almost everyone in Europe knew English.

"Is your teacher an Englishman? Asked Dagma.

"Yes, he is Mr. Fox."

"I think Mr. Fox is foxing you." Remarked Dagma jocularly. "You go and see for yourself." In the large hotels and night clubs which are frequented by American tourist, you might find the waiters and the staff speaking English to get tips from the rich Americans, but in the general work places English is not understood anywhere.

"Surprising indeed" remarked Mithoo. I was under the impression that English was spoken everywhere in the world, particularly in Europe.

"Mummy I hope you believe Dagma." Interrupted Munni.

Mother answered: "I have no reason to disbelieve her."

"I hope Mummy you will now not insist on our learning so many languages.

Casting an affectionate look at her, the mother answered: "My dear you do not know that Dagma's country has no serious problems. They have only one language while we have so many. We cannot learn all these

languages and therefore, we must learn one common language. Each one of us speaks his own language. How shall we understand one another? We must have a common language.” “English will be that language.”

“There are already four provincial languages, and if a new one was added, would it not make our task much more difficult?” enquired Munni.

“No”, retorted mother forcefully. “It will make it easier, for the new language would be the common language for all.

“Excuse me Mummy”, said Munni, “It sounds strange to me. I cannot understand it. How can a new language become common and how can a common language be new. If we have something in common between our various languages, that common factor alone could be the common language.”

Will you please tell me if any where in your countries they have been successful in making a common language.” Munni asked of Dagma.

“No, as far as I know, there are three languages in Switzerland of with a population is nearly 6 million, there are two languages in Belgium with a population of 9 million and there are two languages with a population of 4 million in Canada. No where in these countries have they tried to make a common language.”

“Then, how do they run their Government, and how do they understand each other,” enquired mother surprisingly.

In each country, “Dagma answered,” the Government is run in all the languages of the country. (The Swiss Government sends out its orders, laws and every other communication, in all the three languages of the country and similarly in Canada and Belgium).

“But, Dagma” said Mithoo, “How do they understand each other without a common language?

“Well answered Dagma, “I was in Switzerland a few months before I started on my world tour. There are three regions in this country, German, French and Italian. In each the students in secondary schools are taught the language of the other region for three years, beginning from 8<sup>th</sup> class. In this way they gain some knowledge of the language of the region other than their own. Very often those desiring to learn languages of the other region properly, go and stay in that region and learn it much better than in the school.”

“This appeals to me a lot” said Mithoo, “why should not we go to England to learn English, as indeed it is difficult to learn it in Pakistani schools.”

“And, that is why, added Munni, sympathetically, you and I have spend sixteen years on it while Dagma did it in four months by the direct method.”

“Yes”, answered Mithoo excitedly, because she stayed with an English family; we should all go to England, all the student of English language.”

“And on return forget it,” interrupted Dagma.”

“That does not matter,” retorted Mithoo. “They can go back to refresh it, it is so easy to travel to London now-a-days only 7 hours by air.”

Mother burst out laughing, addressing Mithoo she said, “you are so ignorant, poor Mithoo. We can’t do that. We have been learning English quite alright in our country and we can continue to do so.”

“Dagma,” called out Munni, “can you please tell us if we could all learn English here.”

“And how long have you been learning it already?” enquired Dagma.

“Ever since the British rule,” answered mother “and that is about 200 years now.” “200 years! exclaimed Dagma. I am sure you should all have learnt it by now.”

“Only very few of us have about one in hundred or even less.” said Munni

“If in 200 years only 1% of the population has been able to learn English, will take 20,000 years for the whole population. This is simple arithmetic. It is now for you to decide whether you are prepared to struggle for the next 20,000 years.”

“I do not think it will take us that long”, said the mother. “The British rulers did not try hard enough to spread English but we will.”

“How will you do that?”, enquired Dagma with surprise.

“We will speedup the process by teaching English as a compulsory subject from the early age in school and speak to our children at home in English. We can make it our mother tongue,” responded mother.

“Mummy, “said Munni, “you failed in our case and you also have forgotten quite a lot of what you learnt. The English that we have learnt is so ridiculous and bookish. English girls often laugh when they hear pompous and high-sounding bookish words being spoken by us. We have lost the power of original thinking. Mithoo is cramming all the time and so am I, now you want to extend this torture to all the other children of this country, I shudder at the idea.”

“If you are keen to make English your mother tongue,” interrupted Dagma, “you will have to import English mothers from England, and I am sure you won’t like English women taking over your homes and husbands.”

“We need not import. We can manufacture Cathedral and Convent schools are already doing it.” said mother.

“You are making fun”, retorted Dagma.

“No, I am not making fun of you. In our convents the girls are trained in English from the very beginning and they soon learn to talk and behave like English Jill. They will train their children in the same way when they become mothers.”

"But Mummy", remarked Munni, "you also spend eight years in the Convent but you still do not look like Jill".

"Yes", interrupted Mithoo. "Mother used to talk to us in English when we were very young just like Jill, but it seems that she forgot a good deal of it that is why she now speaks to us in her mother tongue."

"That happens to all of us", added mother. "However hard we might learn English in schools, we begin to forget it for lack of use in everyday life."

"Strange, indeed strange", remarked Dagma. "If several years of hard labour on English, beginning from childhood, ends in nothing how can you ever expect that all your people would be able to make it their mother tongue at any stage? You are perhaps not aware that a language which is not spoken in the country can never be retained however hard one might try."

"But, interrupted Munni," our University Professor told us the other day that we could change our language and make a new one."

"Make a new language?" remarked Dagma surprisingly.

"But language cannot be made. It is born with man", said Dagma. "You cannot change a language. First you have to change man, his mother, breed, the sound muscles of the larynx and his environments, then you might change his language."

"Not quite", interrupted Munni, "if language could be changed by governmental patronage we should all be speaking Persian, as it was sponsored for over seven hundred years by the Muslim rulers. If not that, at least English, which was encouraged by the British Rulers for about two hundred years. I agree with Dagma, you cannot change a language."

"But they have changed it in America where so many different nationalities have gone and settled down. They have all adopted English" answered Mummy.

"You do not seem to know fact", remarked Dagma. The English speaking people in America, being in majority, their language was adopted as the state language. When they had to decide about the State language they counted the numbers of different nationalities in Parliament of Lincoln Abraham. If there had been two more Germans, German would have become the language of the United States."

Mother was surprised at this fact.

"But don't you think Dagma, the knowledge of a foreign language is necessary for the sake of maintaining contact with the foreign world", enquired mother.

"I do not think, it is necessary for all to learn a foreign language. A few might; and it is always the few who remain in contact with different countries and not the entire population."

“But, Dagma,” enquired Mithoo, “please tell me how you would be able to talk to a foreigner coming to your country, if you did not know his language.”

“Mithoo, you are queer. Do you mean to say that a foreigner coming to my country would expect me to speak to him in his language? We expect a foreigner, who comes to our country, to speak to us in our language and when we go to a foreign country we learn that country’s language.”

“But the English people,” responded Mithoo, “come to our country and do not speak our language. They want us to speak to them in English.”

“I am surprised”, answered Dagma.

### CHAPTER III

“Mummy”, said Mithoo, “Look at Dagma. How efficient and full of confidence she is. She has come out on a world tour on her own. You had told me that knowledge comes through learning several languages but how is she so well informed. The other day when I was sitting with her at the table I tried to impress her by telling her five names of the table spoon (in Persian, Arabic, English, Urdu and Punjabi) and similarly five names of a plate, cup, glass, fork and knife, lying on the table, but she only laughed at me.”

“Why did she laugh at you? Asked Mummy.

“Because, When she asked me how the spoon was made, type of steel used how it was polished and where it was manufactured, I hardly knew anything. Similarly she asked me about many other things on the table and I was unable to give her any answer. She laughed again.”

“Did she know all these facts herself?” asked mother.

“yes, she told me so much on each point that I looked like a fool in front of her. Then she asked my name in English. I told her Mr. Mith-oo. She then asked what other names I had given myself in other languages; I thought she was joking me. When she asked me the meaning of my name I told her with a sense of shame that it meant ‘parrot’. At this Dagma smiled and said: ‘Yes, This seems to be the right name given to you by your parents for you are trying to become a parrot.’ Mummy, why did you give me this silly name, Mithoo?”

“It is very sweet name. Isn’t your English teacher Mr. Fox?” said mother.

“Yes”, said Mithoo, excitedly. “And also our Science Teacher is called Mr. Hog.”

At this Munni shouted: “the name of my English teacher is Miss Sparrow and that of Domestic Science, Miss Wolf.”

Rolling with laughter Mithoo said: “Oh, I thought I was unfortunate but at least I am better off than Fox, Hog, and Wolf.”

“So why do you worry about your name?” said mother. “You are all right. Let Dagma think that you are a parrot. You should tell her about Fox, Hog and Wolf and she will not pull your leg again.”

“But, Mummy, she does not laugh at the meaning of my name but she laughs because she finds to me learning new names and new expressions for the same thing like a parrot. This rote method of learning new sounds from books is what makes her think that I sound like a parrot. She had found me cramming “Ein” “Ein”, “Ein”, just last night, as I had forgotten this wretched name again. Besides, Mummy, she dislikes me when I talk to you and to Munni in English. In their country no German would talk to the other in a foreign language even if both knew it well.”

"Mithoo continued, the other day an Egyptian Professor, visiting our school, mentioned the same thing. He was shocked to hear us speak in English and more so when he heard our teacher lecture to us in English. To him it was unbelievable that a teacher would talk to the students in a foreign language even though he was one of them." Dagma and that Egyptian Professor are not fully aware of what we have through under British rules."

"Yes, Mithoo, it seems so. said mother. "

The arrival of Dagma made Mummy more conscious of the torture through which Mithoo and Munni had been through the difference between the personalities of Dagma and her children, made her think. She became depressed and often wondered why the most impressionable and informative years of her children's lives were being wasted on hearing new sounds for the same objects and new expressions for the same idea. Why should Mithoo have to say so often "Shut up" for 'chup kar', make haste, for 'juldi kar' and 'don't do' 'mat kar'. She was distressed to hear them talk to each other, sometimes in English, sometimes in Urdu and at times in Punjabi, repeating the same idea in new words, unconscious of the repetition. Both the children were going through a terrible time. Mithoo stammered when we tried to express a simple thought in English. The same was the case with Munni. Mother was deeply upset. She remembered how one day Poor Mithoo painfully said: "Mummy I speak to God in Arabic in the morning when I pray to him, I talk to my friends in Urdu, the national language, Government officers, I have to talk in English, the official language, in the evening when I come home grandpa recites to me poems from Hafiz and Roomi in Persian, the language of culture, and at night I talk in Punjabi which you taught me as a child and that is what's enjoy the most."

She realized that Mithoo was becoming confused in his understanding. One day she sent him to the market to fetch a few things for the house. Mithoo had never been to the market as he had been too busy with his "Jack and Jill" and "Little Tommy Tucker" stories. All these years he had been pouring over books and cramming beautiful phrases, idioms and expressions, but he knew nothing about ordinary things of life. In the market he found himself bewildered. Speaking in English to the 'Sabziwala'. I want that", said Mithoo. The shopkeeper looked at him with surprise and said: "*Sahb keeh git mit karta hai*".

Mithoo suddenly realized that this was not a market in London about which he had been reading so much in his English textbooks, but, the sabzimandi of Baghbanpura. He immediately changed over to Urdu and said: "*Humko woh do.*" Moving close to the vegetable he said: "Eh"

"No, that"

"Eh"

"No---o ---that"

"Eh"

"No---o---that pumpkin, lady's fingers, potatoes."

The shopkeeper gave the vegetables to which Mithoo had pointed hurriedly. Mithoo asked for the "bill". The shopkeeper said: "*Bill, Bull Koie*"

*naheen sahb. Ponay non annay da kaddu, dhai annay dee toree, darh annay da aloo—kull ponay teran annay.*”

What, “*Ponay, dahi, derh*. What does that mean?” “How much?” again asked Mithoo.

“*Ponay teran annay sahb, ponay teran annay, Juldi dey sahb.*” Confused he gave the shopkeeper one rupee and thought that would settle the *Ponay, dhai* business and hurriedly left the shop.

Coming back home he said to his Mother: “I was lost. First the fool did not understand the meaning of pumpkin. Then I spoke to him Urdu and that too be took time to understand. And, when he talked about prices he used words again like *Poney, Dahi*, which I had never heard in my school where I learnt maths in English. Mummy I will not go again to this market. Those idiots cannot understand me.”

“Mithoo I am surprised, you have brought *Alloos* when I had asked you to bring *Kachaloos*.

“I am sorry Mummy. I thought you wanted *Kutcha aloo.*”

“And what about the *Kadu* and *Tori*, you have brought the wrong variety.”

“No”, said Mithoo surprisingly. “I have brought you what you wanted.”

“No”, answered mother. “I asked you to bring ‘*Ghiya Kaddu*’ and ‘*Bhindi Toree*’, but you have brought “*Halwa Kaddu*, and “*Ghiyya Toree*’.

“I am sorry Mummy. I forgot the *Ghiyya* and *Halwah* part of the names. In fact I know only pumpkin and lady’s finger.

## CHAPTER IV

Mother was now understand what was responsible for all this confusion in her children.

George Mallow, a scholar from the Oriental School of Studies, London, and a professor of oriental languages in a College of Lahore, was a great friend of mother, dropped in for a chat. Finding her in a depressed mood, he said: "Mary (real name of mother was Maryam but she liked to be called by Mary) what is wrong with you?"

"Nothing, Mallow, I am worried. Mithoo and Munni's problems are causing me great anxiety. Mithoo is fast losing his confidence and is becoming a nervous wreck. When he tries to speak in English, he stammers and gets excited. He tries to twist his lips and forces his voice out to make impressive pronunciations. Sometimes he raises his pitch too high, sometimes too low and often he sounds odd. He avoids his teachers with whom he has to talk in English and Munni has the same problems."

"Why don't you give them practice in speaking English?" asked Mallow.

"How can I do so? English is not spoken generally in the town. They learn it from books but they get no practice outside the school."

"I know it is very difficult to learn a language from books", answered Mallow, "but what can you do about it. You will have to learn it as it is an international language."

"But Mallow", said Maryam, "Dagma, our German guest; told us last night that English was not understood any where in Europe except in big hotels or night clubs.

"Is she here" enquired Mallow.

"Yes, shall I call her?"

"No, I understand your difficulties", said Mallow, "but Mary, you will have to learn English, as your language is under developed and backward."

"How can you call my language backward and under developed and me advanced and cultured", remarked Maryam. "How can a cultured person be the product of a backward language and how can a backward man have a cultured language."

"I do not want to inflict my views on you Mary. You might stick to English for the sake of knowledge and science as for books are in English and there is nothing in your language" said Mallow.

"Of course nothing", answered Maryam, "and it is indeed a great pity but it is not the backwardness of the language that is responsible for this tragic situation, Mallow. You know that thousands of years before the English came we had a very superior civilization of Mohanjodaro and Harappa, and there was no signs of English or Englishmen."

Mallow said, "I know of your great civilization, but what will you do now? You have adopted English as your medium and you are reading and learning in it since a longtime."

"By no means adopted. It was thrust on us."

"But what prevented you from sticking to your own language Mary?"

"Force of economic necessity", answered mother.

"The opportunists, the self-seeker, the salaried servants, the Government stooges and the career hunters, in fact all employment seekers were forced to learn English for the sake of bread and butter, honours, higher salaries and several other advantages." They have to learn it even now, as English still remains the language of the office and the Court.

"You do not seem to appreciate", said Mallow, "How much science and knowledge we introduced in your country. Look at the modern railways, telephones, telegraphs, roads, etc."

"Oh, we do appreciate it very much but would you please tell me why we have remained so backward in all scientific knowledge, inventions and manufacture in spite of your great kindness?"

"It seems you are bent upon denying all the good that British have done to your country", answered Mallow, "Look at Mithoo and Munni, how smart and cultured they look and how nice they sound when they talk in English."

"Thank you Mallow for the compliments to my children," answered mother gratefully.

"Mummy", interrupted Munni, "Professor Mallow is just flattering you."

Shrugging his shoulders Mithoo interrupted: "No, no, it is true. Aren't we smart Munni?"

Munni answered smilingly: "Yes Mithoo to us it seems that we are very smart but the other day Dagma was commenting upon your style of dressing, talking and behavior. She remarked that we are neither fish nor fowl. We neither talk our own language properly nor English."

"So you see Mallow", said mother.

"Whatever you may say Mary, I still think that you will deprive your children of modern knowledge and science if you give up English."

"No, we shall not", answered Maryam. "We will certainly bring back, to our country, all knowledge and science we lost after you came."

"How will you do that without English?" said Mallow.

"Quite easily", answered Maryam. "We will follow the Japanese's example. Some scholars and educated men will pursue the knowledge of

English. Modern science and technology would be translated into our language. My Mithoo will be a part of this movement of change.”

“Certainly not, Mummy. It seems you are planning to give me a few more language to learn. I have had enough of it. I am not going to do any more-cramming.

“No Mithoo. You will not have to cram any more. You will now have to utilize your cramming for constructive work.

“Would you like to learn French Mithoo? I can teach you”, said Mallow.

Mithoo jumping out of his chair shouted: “One more language! I knew what you were planning to do with me. No more. No more. I have already been turned into a parrot.”

Dagma had just come back from her visit of Shalimar Gardens and greeting Mallow she joined for a chat and let us continue.” With our discussion and addressing Mallow mother said: “So you think we can not do without English.”

“Yes”, answered Mallow, “Whatever you might say, your Government will never discard it, for they cannot run the Government without English.”

Why not”, asked Dagma curiously?

“Well they have no translations of English official terms.”

“It sounds strange to me”, said Dagma. “I read recently that in Indonesia they discarded the official Dutch language which had been there for four and a half centuries as soon as they drove out the Dutch from the very day of liberation they stopped the use of Dutch and have done on very well since then in their own language.”

I do not know about Indonesia”, answered Mallow. Addressing Mary he said: “If you do not teach English to your children, they will be in serious difficulty when they go to England for business or higher studies.”

“Of course,” answered Maryum, “those who go there must learn English. But why should those who do not go there learn it. Hardly one out of thousands in our country goes to England or other foreign countries.

“Isn’t it shocking,” said mother, “we have been discussing this serious subject for so long. I am sure we are all tired. Lets change the subject to a lighter one.”

“I shall be pleased to provide music,” answered Dagma, “if Munni will play the Piano.”

Dagma with her violin and Munni on the Piano filled the room with music and Mithoo was now humming a song when Mallow remarked: “your children sing so beautifully just like English children.”

“Thank you Mr. Mallow”, and heaving a sigh she said: “They are very good in music and English songs often sing *“Mama loves Mambo”* and *“I want to marry the butcher boy,”* Unfortunately they know nothing about

their music and *folk songs* and cannot understand radio songs, film songs of Heer Ranjha, Khushal Khan; Ghalib or Shah Latif.

"I am reminded of the time I took Mithoo and Munni to the Musical Concert on Iqbal Day Just last month neither of them understood anything."

Munni kept asking me what was going on? I cannot understand a word, she sat thoroughly bored through out the show. Mithoo was sporting enough to clap and saying 'Wah', 'Wah' along with the audience ever though he understood nothing and looked quite blank. He got thoroughly bored after some time and fell asleep. As the concert ended I shook him out of his slumber. "What lovely music" it was, wasn't it?" remarked Mithoo as he opened his eyes. "Drink to me only with thine eyes and I will drink with mine." Shakespeare's beautiful verse" he remarked.

The family members were sitting with Mr. Marlow, discussing general language issues of the country when a Japanese Professor, Mr. Mikado, who was on a visit to Pakistan, came in, as he had been invited to tea by Maryam. Mother, introducing him to Mallow said; "Professor Mikado, we are discussing a very serious problem of our country. Would you like to join in the discussion?"

"May I ask what its about said Prof. Mikado.

"Certainly its about the language issue Mr. Mallow" said Mithoo. Mr. Mallow thinks that we cannot do without English since books of Science and knowledge are in English."

"I do not see any difficulty in that", answered Mikado. "In Japan we have to each and everything in science given Japanese names even to terms like Oxygen, hydrogen, Nitrogen etc, scientific research carried out and the results are published in Japanese language, have been acknowledged all over the world."

"Yes, I Know", answered mother. "I have been reading about your industrial, technological and scientific advancement. But please tell me Mr. Mikado, how much of the English language was used by you for this purpose?"

"English! I am afraid, non whatsoever! We use no foreign languages in our country. Our scholars and experts of course learnt some foreign languages, particularly (pointing to Dagma) German, and translated modern science and technology into Japanese, but that was in the initial stages. Now we have all knowledge and science in our own language."

"It is difficult to believe that you achieved all this without English" and addressing Mallow mother said: "Can you believe it Mallow?"

"I do not know. The Japanese have no big inventions to their credit, nor any high quality manufactured products," answered Mallow. "You know the qualities of the Japanese goods Mary? Don't you?"

"I beg your pardon", said Mikado. "We manufacture cheap goods for the poor people of your colonies, whom you are forcing to buy English

products at high prices. You have put heavy duties on our goods, but in spite of that we beat you in your own markets.”

“I do not agree”, answered Mallow. “The Japanese have not much to their credit in the sphere of science and inventions. They can only copy.”

“Don’t you know”, retorted Mikado “That we very nearly drove you of your Asian colonies (Burma, Malaya and Singapore) in the last World War? You were just saved by the American Atom Bomb. Even then you dare say that we have nothing on our credit! I am sorry, but these are facts.”

Mallow felt a bit insulted and rising up said: “Mary, it is getting late, I must go and walked out of the room.”

“I hope you come again”, shouted mother and turning to Mr. Mikado she said: “Will you be good enough to stay a little longer? I am very interested in knowing more facts about your country.”

“All right. I am not in a hurry”, answered Mikado. “I shall be pleased to tell you more.”

“I am indeed struck by the achievements made by Japan. Your story is most revealing”, said Maryam. “Are all books especially, in sciences now available in Japanese?”

“Certainly. We have plenty of books they are the country’s heritage and now we can produce original books in science and arts subjects.”

“Prof. Mikado Japanese language must be a rich language enabling you to translate modern science and knowledge.” Said Maryum

“No language is rich or poor”, answered Mikado forcefully. “Language is merely a vehicle of our thought. It is only a carriage. If you are rich in thought it is rich and if you are poor in thought it is poor. Therefore (pointing his finger at her, he said,) “it is you--- you---- you and not the language, which is rich or poor.”

“It is not as simple as that” answered mother. “We have no words in our languages to express many thoughts of modern knowledge. What do you say to that?”

“You are serious, are you?” asked Mikado angrily.

“No, I am not. It is really so Mr. Mikado”, answered mother.

Thumping his hand on the table Mikado retorted: “How is it possible? Do you want me to believe that your mind is capable of grasping modern thought and is incapable of expressing it? It is funny.” Putting his hand on the head of mother he continued: “This wonderful mind which has given you thousand of words and expressions in your language to enable you to live a life superior to all other creatures in this world, has suddenly become incapable of designing a few more words for your new thoughts?” I cannot believe it. Has it gone so dull or have you made it useless by lack of use? It is your mind, your mind, your mind and not your language that you should worry about.”

Deeply impressed by Mikado's remark mother said: "thank you Professor you have, so nicely, explained the fundamental truth, about man and language of which I had such a vague idea. I thought that the development of language was an abstract and mechanical process separate from the development of man. This is also the view of many of our experts."

"You know Maryam", answered Mikado, "Man separated from the animal when his mind developed to such a stage that he could express his thought through words. The evolution of man is in fact the evolution of his mind and expression. These two are separately from one another."

"If language is so deep rooted," said mother, "why do our experts insist that we give up our mother language and express ourselves in another language."

"Are they experts and intellectuals?" asked Mikado. "And if they are, then they are men of ignorance. Do they wish to reverse the process of evolution and to put the clock back by thousands of years?"

"How?" questioned mother curiously?

Mikado continued; "Once man learnt to think and express himself he separated from other species and evolved as man, now by asking man to learn to think and express himself in a different language from what he learnt during in thousands of years of evolution. Aren't they asking him to be reborn as man again?"

Startled by this remark Mithoo interjected "Mummy, why are you teaching me to think and express in another language? I do not wish to be reborn. I am born. Born already." This evoked laughter and Dagma quietly whispered into the ears of Mithoo, "No you are not being reborn for you have not given up your mother tongue but you are being reborn into a parrot."

Dagma admiringly remarked, "I had been longing to meet Japanese, as I had heard so much about their greatness and history and culture." Moving closer to the Professor, and sitting by his side she said: "What you have said in a few words, is more than what one can get from many books. I have seen the light and the wisdom of the East. I wish, I would travel".

Dagma before you take Professor Mikado away with you," interrupted Munni, "Please let me ask him a few more questions."

"Most certainly", Dagma and Professor Mikado responded simultaneously.

On this side we have never heard of any great Japanese works," said Munni "Can you give me the names of some famous Japanese authors?"

"Come to Japan and see our libraries. The Imperial Library has over ten lac books. Scores of small libraries throughout in the different districts have over three lac books each."

"Are all these in Japanese?"

“Yes”.

“But why do we not know anything about Japan and its language?” asked Munni.

“The British rulers never allowed you to look to the East and they kept your head always turned to the West. They wanted you to remain ignorant of the greatness of the East.”

“That is true,” we were not taught anything in our schools about the Eastern countries. I read nothing about Japan or China. In my English Geography books, Indonesia was mentioned as a chain of islands producing spices. I thought the East ended in East Pakistan and beyond that was West.” Replied Prof. Mikado

“It is only in the last World War when Indonesians drove out the Dutch that we came to know that seven crores Muslims lived in Indonesia. Before that I also thought there was nothing but spices in those Islands.” Munni asked.

“Had they allowed you to look towards us?” answered Prof. Mikado “you would not have felt inferior about being Asiatic nor would you have thought yourself incapable of thinking for yourself. Neither would you have so helplessly depended on the British rulers. On the contrary you would have made discoveries, explorations and adventures in the field of Science and knowledge. You would have discovered the road to progress in no time.

“But what should we do now Mikado? We have no books on science and technology”.

“You should get hold of people who shout that English should stay. Get them to translate some of the important works in your language, send some of your scholars to England and very soon you would be up on your own feet. Once you get started you will create your scientific literature yourself.”

“It is not so easy as that” answered mother. “Translation work is very difficult.

“Difficult for you who have been learning English language like your mother tongue for over two hundred years?” retorted Mikado surprisingly.

“This is the opinion of some scientists of our country. They think that scientific terms cannot be translated”. Asked mother.

“But Mummy,” said Munni apologetically, “excuse me for the interruption. There are no scientific terms incapable of translation, nor in geography, history, arithmetic, geometry and other subjects. Why should they teach us these subjects in English? Why not in our language which is so easy.”

“Yes, The Government is do this.” answered mother “in the lower classes all the subjects are now being taught in our own languages.”

"But in higher classes, English is still the medium of instruction. Our children are being indirectly forced to learn English or else fail. The shocking results of our university in F.A, B.A and Law, only 7 out of 10 students who sat in the examinations failed I also failed, and I know what it means to fail.

"That is terrible", said Prof. Mikado, "I thought your difficulty was only in science subject, but it appears that you are cornered all round.

"Yes indeed", answered Munni. "I am not telling you a lie."

"Shocking indeed!" said Mikado sympathetically.

"No wonder so many poor students fail in your poor country, where poverty makes education so difficult, and such failures must be devastating for the parents."

But why on earth do they teach law and other subjects in English" enquired Mikado angrily.

"Professor, "Perhaps you know that the Government offices and courts are run in English and in the competitive examination for all higher appointments efficiency in English is the decisive factor for success. If our children lag behind in English, they would lose chances of employment. That is why as everyone is so keen to be educated in English, at least they learn English as a language well if nothing else, for ultimately it is English alone which would bring them bread and butter. However, our Government is planning to replace English by the National language in the next 20 years. Maryam added."

Struck with surprise and astonishment, Mikado thumped the table with his fist and his face flushed with anger and said, "well I can't comment on that. It is beyond me. Your Government must know your problems better than I do. I am a foreigner. Let us not talk about it anymore. Tell me about Mithoo and Munni."

"We shall soon get over these difficulties", said mother, "but our main difficulty still is in the field of translation. Our scientists find it very difficult to translate books of higher science.

"If your Scientists understand the meaning of English books" answered Mikado, "they can surely transmit that meaning into their own language, but if they do not understand, how can they translate."

"They do understand, I am sure", said mother, "but their real difficulty is the scientific terms for which there are no equivalent words in their own language."

"If that is their difficulty", answered Mikado sarcastically, "then they do not appear to be scientists, for they do not understand the A.B.C. of their subjects."

"How", questioned mother curiously?

"Scientific terms", answered Mikado. "Are after all names of things and actions. Your mind is quite capable of inventing as many new sounds as you may need. Haven't you already got thousands of names for things

and actions in your language and can't you add a few more. I have already told you how, in Japan, we have coined words for every new scientific action, reaction and term."

"Excuse me" interrupted Dagma addressing her mother, "It seems that your scientists learn science in the same way Mithoo is learning his languages."

"Yes, you are right Dagma" answered Mithoo. "I have a friend studying science and he joins me almost every second day in cramming our homework. I shout 'Ein', 'Ein', 'Ein' and he shouts, oxygen plus hydrogen is equal to aqua (water)."

"The problem of your scientists appears to be an interesting one, itself fit for scientific research", said Mikado smiling. Would it be possible for me to see any scientific literature that you scientists have produced? I should be very grateful, Maryam, if you would find me such books.

"I don't, know", answered mother, hanging her head down, "When I was a student of science, in the college, I saw no books or literature written by any of our scientists. However, let us ask Munni, who is now studying the subject. She might know of the latest situation." Munni "Will you please, show some scientific books to the Professor."

Drawing close, Munni quietly whispered, "Mother what shall I show? I have no such books. All our books are by English authors."

Mother said loudly, "Show Prof. Mikado Urdu text books in science for lower classes, and borrow them from the neighbour's children who are studying in the Vernacular School."

"I don't want to see small text books", interrupted Mikado, "what I want is books on advanced science and research."

"I am afraid, I have none", said Munni bashfully, "nor do I know of any such books."

At this Mithoo said loudly, "I can show you very famous books by Professor Deen".

"Which one is that?", asked Munni mother surprised.

Mithoo said, "It is that famous book called the "Science of Kite flying and the Science of Producing Bubbles".

Remarked Mikado in astonishment; "Really you have no books by your own authors in English on scientific research."

"No. Nothing worth the name?"

"Have your writers produced any books in literature, fiction, novel drama, geography and history? May I see these", asked Mikado.

"Yes, there are few such text books", said Munni.

"But I don't want to see text books. These are generally meant for students, answered Mikado "the authors write these to make money from the students and not for the sake of knowledge. Please show me some advanced books in History, Geography and Fiction."

Munni again whispered something into the ear of her mother who answered on her behalf and said; "Professor! I am afraid, Munni has no such books, nor can these be found in the market. Our great English Professors have not even been able to write a good novel, drama or even short stories in English language, not to mention books in geography or history."

"Then what have they been doing all these years?"

"Nothing, I am afraid. Just brow-beating their countrymen in foreign expressions, preventing the spread of knowledge instead, spreading ignorance and earning fat salaries for themselves", answered mother.

"They are not to blame", said Mikado. "That would have happened to any one if they had also gone through the same process of suppression and torture. You do not know how the imposition of a foreign medium cripples the personality of a nation. It is worse than maiming their limbs. One can walk with artificial legs but one cannot think and talk in an artificial medium. It simply cripples the nation and makes them useless mimics, with narrow minds and narrow visions."

"I agree", said mother, "and that is why I think our crippled veterans of education dread the abandonment of English Medium in our educational institutions and put obstacles."

Mikado answered: "In Japan we have a saying, "blind man fears a ditch at every step."

Deeply impressed by the wisdom of Mikado, mother was now eager to consult him on the emotional instability and erratic behavior in Mithoo. She continued; my poor Mithoo and little Munni often look disturbed. I am trying to give them first-rate education to create stability in them, but I am facing disappointment everyday. In fact, what they learn in school and college is not related with life in the real world outside the school. While they live and enjoy picnics to the Ravi River, they read about excursions to the Thames. While they visit the Murree Hills in summer, they read about the peaks of the Alps in Europe. While they scorch here in the hot sun in May, they read about the beautiful pig farms. While here they smell the sweet fragrance of "*Gulab*" and "*Chameli*" they read poems on Daffodils and Tulips. While they see crows, kites and the parrots all around them, they read about Robbins, Cuckoos and Skylarks. While their playmates are Nathu and Nanni, they sing songs of Jack and Jill. They are becoming dreamy and romantic. Not only that, they have no original interest in life and express disgust for their home and their country. They always feel out of sorts, frustrated and miserable I am very much worried about them, I do not know what to do."

"Well", answered Mikado, "Obviously there is a striking contrast between the life that they see and the life that they read about. This is confusing them."

“But, why are they losing interest and becoming frustrated.” enquired mother.

Answered Mikado. “You are well aware that the surroundings and environment shape the life of man. The soil, the land, the water, the climate, the vegetation and the animals and all that exists around him make him what he is. His food, dress and his way of life is conditioned to suit his surroundings. Therefore, they say that Man is the creature of your circumstances. Similarly, you and your poor Mithoo and little Munki are the creatures of their surroundings. But, if you disturb their relation with their surroundings by making them constantly read about some thing which do not exist around them, they are bound to get mentally uprooted from their surroundings. Thus, they pass through a painful condition in which they are mentally in England, but physically they in Pakistan. It is conflict of mind and body that makes them frustrated, dreamy and romantic. You are lucky that they have not gone mad.”

Mithoo shouted: “Mummy, you know I thought I was going mad when that idiot of vegetable seller did not understand the ordinary English word ‘Pumpkin’. If I had not given him a rupee and hurried back home, his ‘Pauna’ and ‘Dhai’ would certainly have driven me mad.”

“It is not a torture”, said Mikado, “that poor Mithoo speaks a language different from what he reads and he reads a language different from what he speaks. He thinks in his mother tongue and writes in a foreign tongue. This irrational process is bound to create serious conflicts in his mind and personality.”

“But do you know, Mikado” said Mithoo, “I have learnt five languages and I can give you five names of the cap, the rat, the cat and the bat.” said Mithoo “and most of my friends know only three names Punjabi, Urdu and English.”

“Poor Mithoo”, exclaimed Mikado, “You are going through a terrible torture. How can you maintain your original self when you have to project yourself through artificial and foreign expressions so many times everyday?”

The observations of Mikado on the behavior problems of her children made Maryam think. She took up the study of the problems of expression and personality. Her previous knowledge of psychology during her time at university helped her a great deal. After several experiments and intensive analysis of different types of educational systems of the middle class, the aristocracy of different levels of intellectuals, scholars, she became aware of how ludicrous it all seemed. How an artificial personality was formed by the use of foreign expression in their daily life. How the skill to copy and ape developed and how they competed with each other in the art of presenting simple, straight ideas in extravagant foreign expressions. How all this unnatural process gutted their thinking power. How the intellectuals had become barren and the zest for decorative expressions and refined pronunciations had taken the place of original thinking, research and investigation, and how the absence of any relation between what they saw and what they read about, made them unbalanced, disgusted with their surroundings, sick of themselves. She was convinced that no damage could be greater than the suppressions of the natural expression of a nation. She was

convinced that no weapon could be as effectively used by a foreign ruler as that of the imposition of a foreign language on their subjects.

She was now determined to wage a war to liberate the millions of suffering children. Her only hope in this struggle was Mithoo, but he was unfortunately growing up on wrong lines. This pained her soul.

She decided first to redeem her Mithoo to make him her right hand in this crusade. She thought of witnessing the proceedings of the West Pakistan Assembly where this problem was asserting itself. While she was getting ready to go, she thought of taking Mithoo along with her, as she entered his room she found shouting. Ein, Ein, Ein, Ein, Ein.

“Mummy” said he pathetically. “I had again forgotten the word. This is the same damn Ein, Ein ein for my little akh.”

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