

LANGUAGE AS EMPOWERMENT

I propose to raise a set of interrelated questions and look for answers. Even if the answers I offer are not found acceptable, I hope they will at least serve to stimulate further thinking.'

LANGUAGE AS POWER ?

The first question is : Is there some kind of power in language?
Is language the manifestation of some power ?

Let me call in as a witness Desdemona. You will recall how Othello was charged with using the power of witchcraft in order to seduce her. This is what Othello has to say (*Othello* : Act 1 : Scene 3)

Her father lov'd me, oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life
From year to year...
I ran it through...
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field;
Of hairbreadth scapes...

This to hear

Would Desdemona seriously incline ;...
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse
...often did (I) beguile her of her tears...
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs

...she wish'd

That heaven had made her such a man. She
thank'd me.

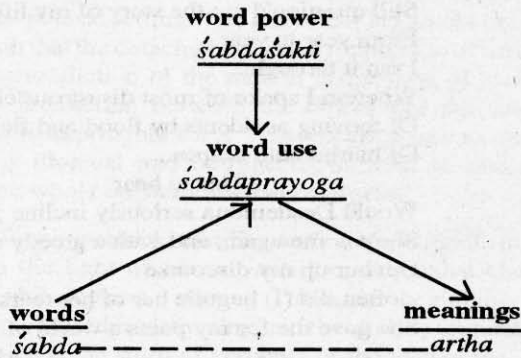
And bade me, if I had friend that lov'd her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake;
She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd;
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have us'd.
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.

On being asked Desdemona confirms that Othello had indeed won her through the power of words.

In our own Indian civilisation we greatly praise prowess with words. In the *bhāṇa* plays of Sanskrit the character of a *viṭa* is known for his advancing the plot by virtue of his linguistic adeptness. The character of *soṅgādyā* in marathi *tamāśā* theatre could easily be a latter-day descendent, as also the Bhojpuriya Kakkaji in the Hindi television serials.

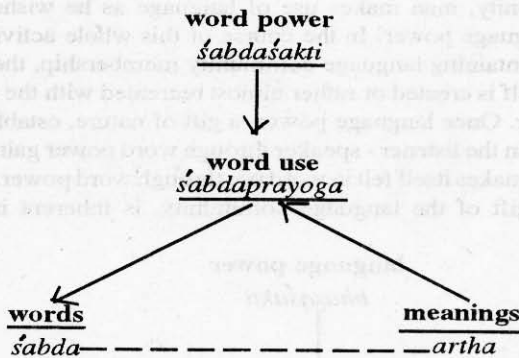
One looks for skill in language not only in a speaker or a writer but in a listener or a reader as well. Whether it is the speaker or the listener, the writer or the reader, properly activating the relationship between words and the meanings is a job shared between the communicator and the addressee.

As the listener listens, words (*śabda*) on the one hand and the power that activates words (*śabdaśakti*) on the other hand conjoin in actual word use (*śabdaprayoga*). It is from this actual use that meanings (*artha*) emerge.



It is **word power** that leads the addressee from **words** to **meanings** in the course of **word use**. Such is the case whether word power takes the form of bare word power (*abhidhā*) or enriched word power (*vyāñjanā*), whether word power takes form of direct word power (*vācyārthaśakti*) or displaced word power (*lakṣyārthaśakti*).

When the speaker speaks, just the reverse turns out to be the case. Word power conjoins here with meanings in the course of word use leading the speaker to select words. In this context, word power is called *ukti*, which renders meanings cognizable-by-other (*parasamvedya*) with the help of words.

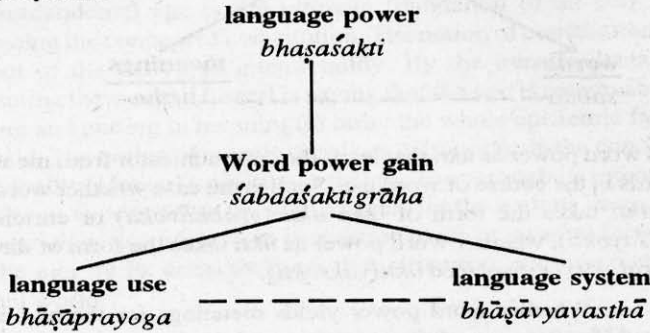


It is word power as *ukti* that leads the communicator from meanings to words in the course of word use. Such is the case whether word power as *ukti* takes the form of bare *ukti* (*svabhāvokti*) or enriched *ukti* (*atīśayokti*), whether word power as *ukti* takes the form of direct *ukti* (*saralokti*) or displaced *ukti* (*vakrokti*).

Whether word power yields meanings for the addressee or words for the communicator, it is certainly the power we have been looking for in language. Language use is the manifestation of this power to activate the bond between words and meanings (*śabdārthasambandha*). (Please note how I have consistently employed the plural "words" here, since I am not concerned with this or that word as a constituent entering a sentence - that is, word as a *pada*; *śabda* here simply refers to the accessible aspect of language whether speech or writing.)

The bond between words and meaning as well as the power that activates it (*śabdaśakti*) are both inherent in the *language system*. It is by adopting and assimilating this system that anyone can become a member of a language community. The member of a language community goes from words to meanings or from meanings to words with a certain ease by virtue of the **language system**. Now the question may be raised as to how anyone attains membership in the first place or maintains the membership once gained. Attaining membership concerns children especially. (Our ancients raised the question - how does the child accomplish **word power gain**, *śabdaśaktigrāha*?) Maintaining the membership once attained concerns adults especially. Child or adult, man certainly possesses **language power** (*faculté de langage*) - a gift of nature to man. (A parrot or a child readily repeats what it keeps hearing, but a parrot remains a parrot, a child gains membership of a language community.) Once a member of some

language community, man makes use of language as he wishes by virtue of this language power. In the course of this whole activity of attaining and maintaining language community membership, the language system itself is created or rather almost recreated with the entry of a new member. Once language power, a gift of nature, establishes language system in the listener - speaker through word power gain, this language system makes itself felt in word use through word power. This word power, a gift of the language community, is inherent in the language system.



The relationship between language system and *language use* is essentially a dialectic in Hegel's sense of the term. Language system regulates language use - if there were no regulation of this kind, man would have had to remain content with *soliloquy* and colloquy would have eluded his grasp. Language use constantly renovates language system - if there were no renovation of this kind man's colloquy would have remained more a monologue than a dialogue proper. It will be seen that we have just distinguished between three levels of language use :

1. *soliloquy* (or interior monologue) (*svasamvāda*)
2. *colloquy as monologue* (*anyasamvāda*)
3. *colloquy as dialogue* (*anyonyasamvāda*)

The bidirectionality of the relationship between language system and language use makes this three-level use possible.

The relationship between words and meanings is equally bidirectional, equally a dialectic. People commonly enough assume that meanings are ready-available, one need only to couple them with words. But this is not a correct picture. Why did Desdemona respond so appreciatively to Othello's skill with words? Words do not merely convey meanings, they embody or mould or construct meanings. Language is the *medium of understanding*. Othello presented to Desdemona, even as a poet would, a whole new world mediated by

words. Othello thus moves from soliloquy to monologue and then to a true dialogue with Desdemona. It is as if colloquy as monologue is the passway between soliloquy (or interior monologue) and colloquy as dialogue.

Sometimes this vital bidirectionality gives way. A time came when Sanskrit ceased to be the everyday language--children had no entry to that language community, neither had women or *sudras*. This by itself was no calamity--for a language to die a natural death is a normal historical event. In spite of this event Sanskrit remained in use; for centuries it was the medium of Indian intellectual life, the medium of learning and teaching. Any Indian thinker wishing to give words to his thoughts had to resort to Sanskrit prose (or verse), while the living languages did not develop any intellectual prose as such. The end result was that Sanskrit remained in suspended animation as it were : the umbilical cord with everyday life (*vyavahāra*) snapped. Some examples are in order. Consider the senses recorded against the word *hari*: yellow-green, red-brown, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Bramha, Yama, Sun, Moon, man, light ray, fire, wind, lion, horse, koel, frog, parrot, snake, peacock, sense organ. Consider, again, the words recorded against the sense 'water' : *jala, udaka, āpa, vāri, salila, payas, madhu, sāra, ghyta, paniya, tirtha* and dozens of others. Consider, finally, that you are informing somebody that Narayan drinks cold water you could say *nārāyaṇah sītam jalam pibati*, or *nārāyaṇo jalam pibati sītam*, or any other out of the total of $4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 24$ permutations. These are no signs of richness in language but signs of phenomenal bloating. No living language can tolerate polysemy or synonymy of this sort, because it will only obstruct everyday life.

No wonder that, in consequences of a language in suspended animation remaining the sole medium of Indian intellectual life, the relationship between words and meanings ceased to be bidirectional, and there was no recognizable coherence between intellectual life and life at large. In an almanac, *candradarśana* meant no more than just that with no connection with actually sighting the moon. Indian intellectual life slowly ground to a halt. (The condition of Persian and Arabic in India was not too different.) The coming of the British rule saw the *deśī* languages being put to use in learning and teaching and in expressing one's thoughts, which were now linked to the English language--certainly not to everyday English life. The net result was the emergence of a new version of the language in suspended animation--one could perhaps call it English in a Sanskrit grab. The intellectual life did not flourish, but constantly slipped into intellectual parroting. Making jokes about *sarkāri hindī* is a favorite pastime of intellectuals, but is intellectual Hindi so very different? Where would the intellectual

find a better means of concealing the absence of thought? Similar observations could be made about other *desi* languages (or about *desi* English, for that matter).

Well, let us not forget our questions. The first question about power in language can now be answered as follow :

1. Power is certainly present in language. At the level of language use, word use can be seen as a manifestation of word power. Word power is inherent in the language system. At the level of language system, language system can be seen as a manifestation of language power, which is so natural to man.
2. Language is a medium of understanding. Words and meanings shape each other. Language use and language system shape each other.
3. The bidirectionality is vital. In certain circumstances the bond between words and meanings gives way at the level of language use, and so the bond between language and life at large give way too, to the detriment of the community.

Now we can move to the second question.

Language in Power ?

The second question is : Is language in any way connected with power in society? Can language be the vehicle of any power or the instrument at the disposal of any desire for power?

It is obvious that we are no longer speaking of power in this second question in the same sense in which we spoke of power in the first question. It will be worthwhile to bring out the distinction between power-1 (*śakti*) and power-2 (*sattā, prabhutā*).

Power-1 is the natural capacity to do something, to bring about some change. When we notice that someone can do this or that but does not want to or that someone wants to do this or that but cannot, we have a case of power and *will* being out of tune with each other. In respect of the exercise of human will, human communities present either of two arrangements. Whether someone were indeed to do this or that in accordance with his power and will or not would either be a matter of his *right* to do so or be a matter of his *duty* to do so. Notice that, in moving from questions of power-1 and will to questions of right and duty, we move from the plane of mere *behavior to the plane of socially defined conduct* (*ācāradharma*). Morals (*sādhāraṇadharmā*), custom (*rūḍhi*),

law, the conventions or restraints enjoyed within some tradition are some examples on this plane. Now we move further on. **Power-2** is the capacity to bring about a shift in the definition and range of what counts as right or duty within a certain social framework. It is obvious that, if someone has power-2, there has to be someone over whom he has power-2, someone subject to this power. Power-2 and *subjection* go together. What plane is this? It is the plane on which socially defined conduct is moulded in accordance with someone's power-1 and will. Sovereignty, sectarian authority, the relationship between the leader and his followers are some examples on this plane of power-2 and subjection. (It is of some interest to note that our ancients used the term *nīti* to comprehend both the plane of right and duty and the plane of power-2 and subjection. The plane of power -1 and will was the plane of nature or *prakṛti*. The term *dharma* comprehends both the plane of nature and the plane of right and duty.)

Every society presents a certain interweaving of power-1 and will and of right and duty with power-2 and subjection. Let us call this the *power space* (*sattākāraṇa*) of that society. *Power moves* such as resistance, alliance, distancing, defiance, subdual, submission constitute the *power play* within the power space and make a difference to the pattern of power-2 and subjection.

When this power is harnessed (or purports to be harnessed) to the cause of human welfare it deserves to be called *polity* (*rājakāraṇa*). Polity is that *power play* which defines the ruler's conduct in terms of right's and duties (*rājanīti* then turns out to be *rājadharma*). Mob rule or dictatorship or revolt is only power play, but democracy or monarchy or revolution are correspondingly considered worthy of being called forms of polity rather than simple power play. (One could consider the 1857 rebels or the cultural, social, or political rebels of the Indian Awakening of 1820-1920 in the light of this distinction between power space and polity space.)

Let us see whether language power and language use have a part to play in this triple network--on the plane of power-1 and will, the plane of rights and duties, and the plane of power-2 and subjection.

Let me call in as a witness a member of Britain's House of Commons. The debate concerned the fixing of qualifications for a commissioned officer in the armed forces. (Qualifications are the measure of power-1 and will taken in the exercise of power-2 in conferring rights and duties.) The minister argued that the leadership qualities of the person will be assessed. Readily came the ironic comment of a Labour Party member--these leadership qualities will no doubt be judged from the person's pronunciation of vowels. He was

alluding to the prestige of Received Pronunciation or the BBC accent. He could as well have spoken of Nancy Mitford's Upper-Class usage. These used to be the insignia of the British caste system. Members of the Upper class sent their children to public schools and Oxbridge and used to enjoy positions of power in the armed forces, the civil service, industry, and trade. (Recall Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*.) In this case language use turns out to be vehicle of power-2 in that the rank and the file would indeed identify the commissioned officer's accent with qualities of leadership. (Indeed experiments have shown that listeners associate a recorded speaker's Received Pronunciation not only with education and upper class but also with being male, tall, handsome, young, honest and so on!)

Language use need not to be a vehicle of power, it could well be an instrument of power. The word *femme* in French or *aurat* in Urdu or *stṛī* in some Indian languages means not only a woman but also a wife. Correspondingly, the word *Mann* in German or *mard* in Urdu means not only a man but also a husband. It is not our purpose to go into the historical or conceptual niceties ; our purpose is rather to highlight how terms serve to insinuate to the language users what the principal role of a woman or a man is. Language thus often encapsulates the unspoken assumptions shared by those wielding power as well as those subject to power.

We have already seen that language is a medium of understanding life : it embodies the meanings that life confers on reality. We need also to see that language is no less a *means of communication*: it conveys these meanings from one person to another. Every word use calls for a communicator (speaker or writer as the case may be) and an addressee (listener or reader). In every word use inheres a *language act* on the part of the communicator and a *response act* on the part of the addressee. If a word use links up with a certain understanding or reality, it equally links up with a certain social situation. Who can speak what to whom and does is accordingly governed not merely by power-1 and will of the parts concerned but also by the play of rights and duties, power-2 and subjection. Thus, the man (or boy) in the Indian street can ask a stranger for the time of the day or the latest cricket score, provided the stranger too is likewise a man (or a boy).

But it is open for us to go deeper into the matter. The ground of power-2 is either *brute force* (*daṇḍa*) that is, use of threat or violence, or *pecuniary force* (*dāma*), that is, offering or withholding money or what money can buy. But the ground of subjection goes beyond these two to *reconciliatory force* (*sāma*), that is, getting the other to accept subjection through propagating faith or ideas and evincing or eliciting feelings. (The ancients recognized a fourth *upāya*, namely, *bheda* that

is, sowing of dissension and treachery. But this can easily be subsumed under the other three for methodological economy's sake.) Language has obviously a place in the deployment of reconciliatory force, which we shall therefore dwell upon.

One need not assume that the propagator of faith or ideas or the expresser of feelings is only the powerwielder or the power-seeker and the subjection-subdued or the subjection-seeker is only at the receiving end of this reconciliatory force. (Consider the function of sycophancy in winning over the power-wielder or a fellow power-subjected or even winning over the power-subjected or a fellow power-wielder.) Language use and language system provide a sturdy underpinning to the propagation of faith and ideas and the evincing and eliciting of feelings. After all myth, ritual, law enforcement, advertising, the dissemination of science and technology, exploiting of the various media -- all get constituted and maintained through the help of language. As long as a Dalit's expression of feelings is limited to '*Chomandudi*' it makes very little difference to the power space. But then when the Dalits of Maharashtra resort to language use (be it memoirs, poems, slogans, speeches, or the rest) or to change in language system (a firm rejection of the reconciliatory term *harijan* and of certain older derogatory idioms and usages), this does make some difference to the on-going power play. There is just no substitute for language. Along with language one need also to reckon the spread of literacy. It was not for nothing that Dr. Ambedkar and Paolo Freire identified the spread of literacy and education as a powerful, if unobtrusive, engine of social change.

We have already made a note of the movement of language power from soliloquy through monologue to dialogue in the modality of understanding. In power play the modality of communication of propagation is the one that counts, and the movement of language power in this modality is in the reverse direction, namely, from dialogue through monologue to soliloquy. Let us say, for instance, we overhear an on-going dialogue between husband and wife on some such lines-

"It's your fault all right !"

"Of course, it's your fault !"

Let's say then somewhat later one of them keeps his or her peace and the other goes on in a monologue --

"You see it's all your fault, because of such and such"

In the course of time the one that has been silent starts speaking to

himself or herself in a silent soliloquy or interior monologue--

"Looks like it's my fault after all."

At the end of such a movement one typically comes round to morally accepting one's power-seeking or one's subjection. What one says to others or what one hears others say to oneself often ends up as what one says to oneself, making the presence of the others redundant. Such a moral acceptance of one's power-wielding or power-seeking or subjection makes it possible for simple power play to graduate to polity proper; then alone power play gets to be socially defined conduct. The distribution of power and subjection acquires an aura of good standing or *prestige* (*supraṭiṣṭhā*). Brute force and pecuniary force acquire good standing from sustained language use as reconciliatory force, and this reconciliatory force is itself in need of acquiring good standing. (The opposite of prestige is of course poor standing or loss of face.) Acts of propagation and expression also need this support. The weakness of 'Chomana ; dudi' is precisely this lack of prestige. When an article of faith suffers loss of face it is deemed to be no more than a piece of popular superstition. Ceremonials and mournings are simply prestigious expressions of feelings. Even the powerful has an occasional need to say 'I am sorry' or 'We seek pardon' in the interests of maintaining prestige. Refusing to call or mention somebody by name or denying the use of prestigious given names are ways of robbing somebody of any vestige of respectability and rubbing in the lack of power. (These are practises still in vogue in Bihar.) Brute force often takes the form of verbal abuse or blame directed against the powerless or even the powerful and thus robbing them of good standing. Some British officers have noted that two quarrelling Indians come to blows much less readily than two quarreling white people; a whole session of abuse, threats, taunts, and curses, *verbal violence* (*vākparaṣya*) in short, has to intervene first.

So much for the play of word power and word use in the power space. Now we could move to language power and language use on the part of man. Knowing a language, that is, having the language at the disposal of one's language power, can well be an instrument of power. The withholding of the knowledge of Sanskrit from women and *śūdras* in ancient and medieval India amounted to keeping them away from the propagation of ideas at the prestigious level. In contemporary India two distinct powermotives may underlie the parental craze for sending one's children to English-medium schools. The power-wielders thereby would hold themselves apart from those bereft of power so that the latter could not attain positions of power or access to prestigious communication channels. On the other hand, the powerless thereby

would seek access to better channels of education, chain of command, mass media, positions of rights, livelihood, or commerce. Such a motive may or may not be linked with power - seeking : it may as well stem from an acceptance of their subjection. The position of Persian in medieval India was fairly analogous. What about the position of the knowledge of Hindi in contemporary India ? At a certain historical juncture Hindi was looked upon as a vehicle and instrument of India's unity essentially a political motive. At a later juncture Hindi came to be looked upon as a vehicle and instrument of Hindi imperialism - and there is a certain factual basis too for this perception. Harsh criticism has led to a certain weakening of this power-seeking motive, though it still persists in certain spheres. Moving to the international level, one can see the dissemination of the American way of life and thought and its imitation through the medium of language. One can also connect this phenomenon straightway to power-seeking and subjection-acceptance and thus to power play in power space.

So then the second question about language in power-2 can now be answered as follows:

1. Power-1 and will, rights and duties, power-2 and subjection (and the moral acceptance of these two) together constitute the fabric of the play of power-2 (and within it polity proper.)
2. Language is not merely a medium of understanding meanings but also a means of communicating those meanings. Naturally language has a bond with life in society--and within it life in the power space.
3. In the course of language use propagation through language can be an underpinning of the grounds of power-2
4. Access or lack of access to language can be a Vehicle or instrument of power-2

Now the two questions raised so far about language in relation to power-1 (language as power?) and to power-2 and powerplay (language in power?) are distinct, yet not wholly unconnected. The connection yields the third and last question in the present series.

Language as empowerment ?

The third question is : Is it possible that the proper manifestation of language power should assist the proper sort of moves in power play? Can language help us in promoting power play to the level of polity proper?

In a sense, we have already answered this question in the affirmative by implication.

The withholding of the learning and use of Sanskrit from the powerless and the limiting of the intellectual life of the power-wielders to the language Sanskrit (which remained in suspended animation) did considerable harm to the powerless and even much more to the power-wielders. The 17th century *bhakti* poet Tukaram says he was much better off born in a lower caste. Kabir expresses analogous sentiments. (At this point I am reminded of Virginia Woolf's comment in *A Room of One's Own*: having related how she was denied access, being a woman to a University library, She wryly points out that it is "unpleasant to be locked out...it is worse, perhaps, to be locked in.")

A similar harm is being done in contemporary India by the use of English in a Sanskrit garb. The rampant spread of English-medium schools is giving rise to a new generation that is linguistically disabled, being neither able to use their own language effectively nor able to draw intellectual sustenance from English. A golden opportunity indeed to the blatant power-seekers!

If the prestigious medium of intellectual life needs to be closely related to the speech of everyday life, it is true as well that the prestigious medium of emotional expression needs to be closely related to the indigenous *deśī* speech forms. This will ensure the health of our thought, our faith, and our feelings. It is no sign of health that Indian symposiasts or seminarians fail to relate to each other, to reality, or to life, That our thoughts, articles of faith, feelings are imprisoned in the tradition rather than nourished by it. That our regional feature films are becoming carbon copies of Hindi cinema. That the whole world is having the rich variety of cultures painted over with American colours. (If this impoverishes the rest of the world, it impoverishes America even by blocking inputs from outside.)

No, we are not by any means raising the slogan of swadeshi. The window on the West should certainly keep open, but the eyes looking out from the window should be our very own. Indeed, not just the Western window but all the windows should be opened. Is it not strange that, while many Indian texts were translated into Chinese, there were no Indian translations of Chinese texts? Our contact with the Arabs in Medieval times yielded analogous results. (Indian self complacency was phenomenal and duly noticed by an Arab traveller al-Biruni) New ideas, new emotional expressions, new turns of verbal expression - from whatever source - are always welcome as revelatory of new possibilities.

If we are raising a slogan, it is one of swaraj in ideas and authenticity in feelings. Just consider the manifold ways in which the present enquiry into power and language has gained through the interplay of Sanskrit, Marathi and English. Translation can nourish

language just as surely as it can debilitate language. (Recall our comments on English in a Sanskrit garb passing for intellectual prose in Hindi.)

Two things become evident if we go deeper into the matter.

The first thing has to do with the propagation of faith and ideas. (Let it not be forgotten, that 'faith' is not quite the same as *śraddhā*, nor is 'reason' quite the same as *viveka*.) As we have already seen both these processes serve to underpin reconciliatory force which in turn is a ground of power play. As such they assist the movement from bare power play to polity proper. The opposite of faith is certainly not reason--man badly needs reason so that faith may not turn to blind faith. The opposite of faith is doubt or scepticism. In order that doubt may not turn to blind, unthinking doubt, reason is just as badly needed. The opposite of reason is unreason.

Faith confronts doubt and reason confronts unreason. These are two distinct matters. The crucial point is whether faith resorts to reason or unreason for support. Likewise with doubt. The propagation of faith chiefly works towards mystification. When mystification turns unreasonable one has to resort to doubt. Doubt chiefly works towards demystification. When demystification turns unreasonable one has to fall back upon reason. (This even applies to investigative journalism!)

Mystification strengthens the prestige associated with power, while demystification weakens it. When it comes to the purification or refinement of power, mystification. Assists the propagation of faith and demystification assists the propagation of ideas. (It is certainly a piece of excruciating irony that in order to lend prestige to science it is often shrouded in mystery! This is no prestige conferred on science, rather it could be a clever move on the part of power-wielders.) When the propagation of faith has to cope with some unanticipated shift in reality, then mystification can endure only by resorting to 'interpretation, of the text (*ijtihad* in Islamic parlance). The object of faith may be Aristotle or Pāṇinī, Vedas or Qurān, Marx or Gandhi-- it makes no difference to the reconciliatory force being exercised in the interests of maintaining subjection to what the text represents. Ambiguity and complexity in meanings and indirection and complication in words favour the maintenance of mystification. The object of mystification may be the justification of socially defined conduct or the policy espoused by popular leadership or the doctrine of accepted thinkers - it makes little difference.

The other matter that needs to be gone into has to do with literary language. Literature in the broad sense (*vāṇimaya*) is the body of such word uses as are considered fit objects for going over repeatedly: then a single word use is put to use in several language uses

we see the emergence of a *text* (*pāthya*) in the course of repetition *āvṛtī, abhyāsa, pārayana*), and once such a text emerges. It is open to interpretation (*vyākhyā, ṭikā, bhāṣya*). Literature in this broad sense comprises the literature of ideas, religious texts, and of course literature proper. (*sāhitya, lalita-vāṇmaya*). (Journalism will count as literature in the broad sense only if it stands repetition and establishes itself as a text.) In the present context we consider together all kinds of literature in the broad sense.

Literary language use assists the propagation of faith and ideas and the evincing and eliciting of feelings. For example, the call of '*Chomana ; duḍi*' may not have been heard by others in real life, but is certainly being heard now thanks to the literary sensibility of Shivaram Karanth and his readers. Naturally, power-seekers, be they in or out of power, are always eyeing literature for its potential as reconciliatory force, conformative or subversive as the case may be. The connection between literature and power play is quite indirect indeed in this context. If we are interested in connecting literary language with power in a more direct fashion, we shall have to look for it elsewhere and at a deeper level.

When language power manifests itself in language use *language* power exhibits two distinct tendencies. There is the tendency towards diversification and decentralization in the language system in tandem with the various modalities and divisions of social life. Language use comes to vary according to occupation, ethnicity, region, generation. Diversity of languages is maintained like-wise. And there is the opposite tendency towards refinement, standardization, stabilization, uniformity - the impulse to link up various occupations, ethnic groups, regions, generations and to set up a strong centre is active here. The various facets of culture often earn their prestige in conjunction with this latter centripetal tendency. Gautama Buddha asked his followers to propagate the *dhamma* each in his own speech form and forbade the rendering of his word into Sanskrit, the language of the learned--and yet later Buddhism employed Sanskrit on a large scale. Arabic spread along with the spread of Islam--so much so that many local languages (Berber, Egyptian etc.) were either lost or reduced to being local dialects. In literature proper we see the manifestation of both the centrifugal and the centripetal tendencies. Consider, on the one hand, the use of *khicadi* dialects in the devotional and the heroic poetry of Medieval North India; or the diversity of idioms (*raznorecie*) noted by Mikhail Bakhtin in the European bourgeois novel. On the other hand, the use of Braj and Braj-coloured dialects (Braibuli, for instance) by non-Braj-speaking poets in Krishna-bhakti poetic traditions; or the refinement and stabilization of classical Urdu poetry and its spread among Dakkhini-speakers, or the deep influence

of Chinese language and literature on the greater part of East and South-East Asia. It will be worth examining to what extent such literary events connect with the power spaces concerned. Perhaps the power 1) and the inspiration of Shudrak's *Mṛcchakaṭīkam* can be traced in terms of the two tendencies and the power 2) ambience of that play.

The manifestation of language power as language use is mediated through language system, otherwise identified as word power. When word power manifests itself in actual language use, it is subject to either of two movements, as we have seen earlier. To recapitulate, either it is a question of the understanding of meanings from interior monologue through monologue to dialogue or it is a question of propagation through communication in the reverse direction, that is, from dialogue through monologue to interior monologue. In the one the addressee is led through monologue to interior monologue and mystification. Witness the works of Kālidāsa or Tulasīdās, poets who are essentially conformist and traditionalist. In the other the addressee is led through monologue to dialogue and demystification. Witness Bhavabhūti or Kabir, poets who are essentially subversive and iconoclastic. Of course a fuller study and analysis of these two tendencies is called for before we can understand the complex effect of Jñāneshvar or Shakespeare, Ibsen or Brecht.

The foregoing is merely an indication of the kinds of problems that could be raised and investigated, nothing more, should we probe the depths.

The third question about language as empowerment can now be answered as follows:

- 1) Let the language of ideas remain affiliated to everyday speech so that the swaraj of ideas be maintained.
- 2) Let the language of feelings not lose its touch with *deśī* speech forms so that the authenticity of feelings be maintained
- 3) Let the languages of ideas and of feelings be ever in search of new possibilities whether such possibilities are native or borrowed, traditional or innovative.
- 4) Word power is directly connected with mystification and demystification and indirectly connected with the propagation of faith and ideas.
- 5) Language use, especially in literature (whether in the broad or the narrow sense), can manifest language power in a centrifugal or centripetal manner--perhaps in a way linked in the power space.
- 6) Language use, especially in literature (whether in the broad

or the narrow sense,) can manifest word power in a way that leads the addressee either in the direction of interior monologue of propagation with understanding) or in the direction of dialogue of understanding (with propagation) in a way that gets linked in the power space.

So I have kept my promise of offering answers to the three interlinked questions of language as power, language in power, and language as empowerment. It is quite possible that you may not accept them all, but it is, by now, quite probable that you accept the questions as crucially relevant to the understanding of language and its bond with human life - and literature even in the narrow sense is after all included in language use.

7, Dhananjay
753/83 off Bhandarkar Insti. Road
PUNE- 411 004

ASHOK R. KELKAR

Colophon

This essay was presented at the workshop on Literary History, Region, and Nation in South Asia at the University of Hyderabad on 28-30 December 1993. It has also benefited from useful comments by Professor K. V. Tirumalesh of Hyderabad.

An intellectual inquiry of this kind naturally puts one in debt to many thinkers of the past. Even so it will be only proper to single out of some of these by name in a chronological order - the political theorist Kautilya, the grammarian - philosopher Bhartṛhari, the grammarian Nāgeshbhaṭṭa Kale, the historian Vishvanath Kashinath Rajwade, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the American jurist Wesley Newcombe Hohfeld, the English mathematician-philosopher Bertrand Russell, the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, or the literary theorist-philosopher Dinkar Keshav Bedekar.

The usual disclaimer that the responsibility for the thoughts presented is not theirs is especially appropriate in the present case, as I may have quite possibly distorted their ideas knowingly or unknowingly and added my own by way of interest on the loan.