

Editorial Preface

Language is difference, says Derrida. Words grow, language grows, much as peoples or civilisations: by splitting from existing matter; by *differentiating* from catch-all phrases and overburdened signifiers. Homer called the sky 'bronze-coloured' because the Greeks had not yet perceived subtle differences in the tints of dawn. The Anglo-Saxons used the word 'apple' for any and all fruits until the Norman French brought the word 'fruit' along with many new varieties, forcing the word 'apple' to simply signify one such variety. One thus need not subscribe to a Sapir or a Whorf to posit a connection between the growth and health of a language and the discernment and complexity of the people possessing it. Will a child, for instance, appreciate the subtle difference in emotional state communicated by the words sober and sombre or serious and solemn, before learning those words? But in the globalized world of today, the standardised (and simplified) global koine of American (or American 'English', if you insist), often takes the place of native languages and literatures. Children grow up sampling various languages but knowing none. Anglophone Indians, particularly, possess a melange of languages at a purely functional level, but are not acquainted with *literary* language at all, as they hardly ever engage with Indian literature. This survival of ancient languages at a ghostly and superficial level has set in train what we may call the *simplification* of the Indian mind.

To resist this phenomenon, the Department of Language and Literature at Alliance University is starting this humble publication to celebrate and popularise the intricate texture of Indian (and foreign) languages, starting with the most widely spoken variety, Hindi. Do not be discouraged if you find literary language difficult to fully grasp. Merely making the effort to follow this webzine, we believe, will help you recover those feelings, emotions, and states of mind lost to the gradually vanishing richness of language.

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