

## Language, Writing and Great Books

Deepika went to Nellore Railway Station for going to her village. She was surprised to hear the railway information announced in so many languages. She also saw the name Nellore written in three different ways. She started wondering why there are so many languages and ways of writing.



Fig: 19.1 Display Board - Nellore Railway station

- Try to imitate different animals and birds or the sound of rain or cars or trucks. See the kind of sounds we can make.

Language has become so much a part of our lives that we seldom stop to think about it. We think and understand with the help of language, we communicate with each other with the help of language, we learn from others with the help of language, we use language to play... We do so many things with the help of language!

First of all we use language to help us to organise and plan our own work. Don't you always speak about your work as you do them?

Secondly, we use language to attract the attention of others and also to ask them to do something or the other: 'Oh just look at the bird!', 'Oh Mother! Please buy me that toy!', 'Stop. Don't move!'

### What is language?

You may have heard dogs bark or birds tweet, but we humans are the only living things on the earth which speak 'language'. Human beings can make a variety of sounds from their mouth that no animal or bird can. This enables us to speak and develop language.

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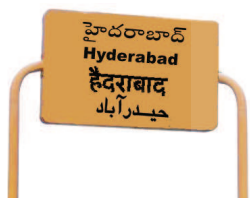


Fig: 19.2 Display Board - Hyderabad Railway station

As people travelled and mixed with each other their languages too mixed with each other and people adopted several words from each other's languages. Thus Telugu today uses many words taken from Sanskrit, Marathi, Arabic, Persian and English.

### Writing and Script

We write and read languages with the help of scripts. As you know we use many kinds of scripts - we use Roman script (ABCDEF), Devnagari script (A A e E E u), Arabic script, ... Telugu script and Tamil Script... Actually we can write any language in any script! For example we can write the word Hyderabad in all these scripts -

नेरा नाम रघु है।	Hindi
నా పేరు రఘు	Telugu
מירא נאם רעגה	Yiddish
میر نام رگھو	Urdu
jina langu ni raghu	Swahili
Mi Nombre es Raghu	Spanish

Fig: 19.3 Different types of scripts



Fig: 19.4 Indus script

In fact, we can even make new scripts. Would you like to develop your own secret script? Try doing it, you will have some fun!

While it may seem easy and funny to you now, actually it took human beings thousands of years to develop scripts like the ones we use today.

Most of the scripts we use in India today (Devnagari, Telugu and Tamil, for example) actually developed from Brahmi Script used by Ashoka. One of the earliest inscriptions found in Andhra Pradesh region is from Bhattiprolu stupa in Krishna District. This was inscribed around 200 B.C.

Thirdly, we use language to create new things and just to have fun. Like we make funny sentences, funny words, funny poems and laugh and make others laugh.

Fourthly, we try to understand the world around us with the help of language and also try to imagine things which do not exist around us with the help of language. Can we think if we did not use any language? Or can we imagine stories about far off times and places if we did not have any language? We investigate and use our reason to find out about some thing - but we can't do this without language.

Fifthly, we use language to tell others about what we feel and experience. Suppose an early hunter-gatherer saw a tree full of ripe fruits in a far off place, how could she, if she couldn't use any language, tell her friends what she found and where? Suppose you are hurt and it pains, how can you tell your parents about it if you did not use any language?

Surely you too can think of many more examples of how we use language and what language does for us. It appears that human beings have been speaking and using language right from the earliest times when they gathered food in the forests. Language has helped people to pass to their children information about what they saw, what they learnt and what they felt. So each generation of people can build on what the earlier generation knew and add to it. We can learn from people all over the world and we can tell them about what we think and know. Language thus brings together people who are far away from each other,

even people who are now long dead and those who are living. Isn't it wonderful!

### Why are there so many languages?

Language is developed by a group of people living together. They decide to call the drink that quenches their thirst as water. Another group of people who may be living far away from the first group may decide to call the same drink as *NEELLU*. Another group may call it as *THANNI*. They mean the same but they use different sounds or symbols for it. That is why people developed different languages such as English, Sanskrit, Persian, Chinese, Swahili, Hindi, Telugu, etc.

Often it also so happened that one group of people who spoke a language got separated into different sub groups and each group in turn developed different languages based on the old language. We say that all these languages belong to one family. Thus, originally a group of people spoke a language which today we call Early Dravidian. When the people who spoke this language began to live in distant places and mixed with other people, they developed new languages. Among them are Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Gondi etc. These are today mainly spoken in South India. There is another language family in India called the Indo-Aryan family. The famous languages of this family are Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, etc. There are some other language families in India about which you will learn in higher classes.

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### What did people write on?

In the beginning people probably wrote on cloth, leaves, barks etc, which decayed and got destroyed with time. Some people even wrote on pots by scratching on them. Some of these pots have survived. However, the earliest writing of a long text that has survived to our own time is Ashoka's inscriptions which were engraved on rocks or stone pillars.

In many parts of South India people wrote on palm leaves which were cut to a definite size. They used a pin like pen to scratch on the dried leaf and coloured it with black ink. In North India they used the barks of Bhoja trees which grew in the Himalayas. These barks peeled off just like paper and one could easily write on them using ink. In those days paper was not in use.

### Poems, Songs and Stories

You may have listened to many poems, songs, sayings and stories from your parents or grand parents. Many of these were not written down but told by one generation to another just like your parents told you. These are called oral literature - that is literature which has been passed from mouth to mouth. This was the earliest form of literature. The earliest people composed poems, songs and stories and told them to their children who in turn told them to their children. They also passed on their understanding of the world through sayings and proverbs which too were similarly taught.

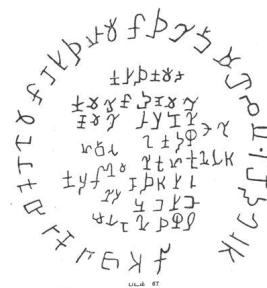


Fig: 19.5 Bhattiprolu inscription

- Write your name in as many scripts as possible on a card sheet and display it in the class.

- Take three Telugu words and write them in at least three other languages - you may use Telugu script to write all of them like this:

Telugu - Amma    Tamil - Tai  
English - Mother    Sanskrit - Matru  
Persian - Madar    Marathi - Aai  
Hindi - Maa

- Think how the following persons would have used writing. Who would have needed it more?

Kings and Emperors, Traders  
Peasants, Peasant women  
Brahmin Priests, Buddhist Monks  
Poets, Artisan-women  
Labourers, Soldiers

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- Collect at least three stories, three songs and ten sayings from your elders and write them down on a poster and display them in the class.
- Try to illustrate the stories and prepare a hand written book.

## Vedas

The Vedas were also initially composed and taught orally. They were preserved for over three thousand years in this manner. These were later written down.

Here read a very interesting verse from the Rig-Veda on how the universe started:

*Who knows it for certain – out of what it was born and wherefrom this creation came? The Gods appeared only later – after the creation of the world. Who knows, then, out of what it has evolved?*

*Wherefrom this creation has come, whether he has made it or whether he has not – he who is the superintendent of this world in the highest heaven – he alone knows, or, perhaps even he does not know.*

*(Nasadiya Sukta, from the Rig-Veda)*

Have you also wondered how the world started? This verse tries to imagine how it would have been before the world started and how the world would have started. Can you write about what you think about this problem?

## The great Epics - Ramayana and Mahabharata

Epics are deeds of heroic and legendary figures. They describe conflicts between good and evil, 'dharma' and 'adharma'. Every country has its own epic and in India we have two important epics - Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ramayana is the story of Rama and Sita and the fight between Rama and Ravana. Ramayana tries to portray ideal type of a human being - an ideal son, ideal wife, ideal brother, ideal ruler, etc. This epic is considered the first *Kavya* in Sanskrit literature and composed by Valmiki. Initially it was recited orally by wandering preachers and later on edited and written down.

Mahabharata is the story of the conflict between two sets of cousins, Kauravas and Pandavas. It finally ended in a great war which was won by Pandavas with the help of Krishna. It seeks to portray a very wide range of human beings and the moral dilemmas they face and how they try to resolve those dilemmas. It is one of the largest poems in the world and contains hundreds of small stories. This was composed by Vyasa and again recited orally by wandering story tellers and eventually written down.

Historians believe that even though these epics were composed much earlier they were given their final form about 1600 years ago.

### Jataka Stories

You had read about Gautama Buddha in an earlier lesson. His followers believed that he had taken several births earlier to

preach dharma to fellow human beings and animals. They wrote many stories about these births of the Buddha and compiled them in the form of Jataka stories. These are delightful stories which you may like to read. These too were collected and written down around 1600-1800 years ago.

### The story of Kisagotami

Here is a famous story about the Buddha:

*Once there was a woman named Kisagotami, whose son had died. She was so sad that she roamed through the streets of the city carrying the child with her, asking for help to bring him back to life. A kind man took her to the Buddha.*

*The Buddha said: "Bring me a handful of mustard seeds, and I will bring your child back to life."*

*Kisagotami was overjoyed and started off at once. But the Buddha gently stopped her and added: "The seeds must come from the house of a family where nobody has died."*

*Kisagotami went from door to door, but wherever she went, she found out that someone or the other - father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, child, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother - had died.*

*What was the Buddha trying to teach the sorrowing mother?*

### Sangam Literature in Tamil

Tamil was the language that was spoken in a large part of South India in the early days. Sangam literature is a collection of

poems composed by a large number of poets and poetesses. They wrote about heroes who bravely fought wars in defence of their tribes, about the love of brave heroes and beautiful girls, about the beauty of the landscapes and seasons and their effect on human beings.

Read this poem from the Sangam collection addressed to a small king:

*Your land lies within a dense forest with elephants everywhere*

*As if they were cows, and scattered blacks that look like buffaloes..*

*I have something to tell you! You must be as careful in watching over your land as you would be in raising children.*

### Books on Medicine and Surgery

In earlier times there were many people who studied why people fell ill, and how they can be cured, how people hurt in wars could be healed. They collected herbs and other things and prepared medicines and also wrote about these medicines and how to lead healthy lives. Some of these books have come down to us. One famous such book is called *Charaka Samhita*. Another book which focusses on surgery is called *Sushruta Samhita*. These books laid the foundation of Ayurveda the traditional Indian system of medicine and health. They taught people not only on the medicines they should take during illness but also on how to lead a balanced and healthy life.

- Identify the medicinal plants within the premises of your house/ surroundings and prepare a list of the uses of those plants.
- Find out from your parents any sayings about health and medicine and note them down to prepare a small booklet for the entire class.

## Books on Astronomy and Mathematics

Our ancestors were fascinated by the heavenly bodies like the sun and moon, the stars and the planets. They observed them day after day and noted that things in the sky kept changing over time. Some changes took place every minute, some took place more slowly over several days or months or even years. They noted all these carefully and found out that the skies had two or three distinct kind of bodies – the sun which rose and set every day and gave us warmth, the moon which grew big and vanished over the month, the planets which moved slowly against the background of the stars and the stars which shone brightly

but did not change their position with reference to each other. Slowly many people felt that these stars, planets and sun and moon contained secrets about the entire universe and that we should understand them better by observing them more carefully and calculating their movements. One such person was Aryabhata who wrote his book called *Aryabhatiyam* in which he said that the earth rotates causing day and night and that actually the sun did not go around the earth. People did not agree with him in those days.

Aryabhata and other mathematicians of ancient India also adopted the decimal system of numbers and place value system writing numbers the way we do today. Earlier Romans wrote one hundred and two as CII or one hundred twenty seven as CXXVII ( $C = 100$ ;  $X = 10$ ;  $V = 5$  and  $I = 1$ ). They did not use any zero. This created lot of problem in adding etc.

With the decimal system and place value system we can write this simply as 102 or 127. Today this system of writing numbers is adopted throughout the world.

### Improve your learning

- 1) Brief the importance of languages.
- 2) How can you say that Aryabhata was the father of astronomy?
- 3) Differentiate between Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita.
- 4) Mention a few inventions in Mathematics.
- 5) Look at a currency note and write down difference scripts on them. Identify the language in which they are written. Is the same script used for different languages? Which are they?
- 6) Refer to any general knowledge book and list out five great books in Telugu language and other languages.

### Project :

Prepare a Flow Chart on the establishment of languages.

### Key words

Epic  
Inscription  
Sangam Literature  
Decimal system  
Ayurveda