



THE LURE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Jai Hind! Jai Bharath! India is a formidable country-multi cultural, multi dimensional and multilingual. If I remember my history right, the Indian rulers fought among themselves and the absence of unity brought its several foreign invaders and thus we were under the British rule for several years.

The British are out but their legacy has had a strong imprint on our soil and the English language is here to stay! It has been made the official language.

Politicians in India are trying to play the regional card and divide the country into regions by their local languages. Ironically English is the unifying force for the masses and more importantly it is Bread and Butter for millions. Hence it is the language encouraged in elite circles, schools, colleges and is definitely the mainstay for Higher Education.

Coming to the lighter side of things I would like to quote a few instances how English wrongly communicated can land you in very embarrassing situations.

As a little girl when I visited an ailing old lady, she said "I feel a lot better after the doctor asked me to take tablets for my romantic heart" (she meant rheumatic heart!)

While in college, I called on my friend and after a long wait she emerged from the room saying, "Sorry I made you wait, I had to milk my baby."(Of course she meant she was nursing her baby.)

One of my English students gave me the recipe to make tea, "The luggage needed to make tea is tea leaves, sugar, water and milk. Steer the tea before serving."

This anecdote really takes the cake: Queen Elizabeth was taking a walk around her garden with one of the Indian ministers. They halted in front of a pond with two swans. The minister decided to compliment the Queen, "I admire your bathakhs" (*Bathakh* is Hindi for swan).The Queen blushed.

Wrong Communication can land you in very embarrassing situations. If you do not want to get into similar situations...learn the language well.