
Old Gold

There has been mounting pressure on 'Shining India' to look at its under-world. We are not referring to the old netherworld populated by gangsters and smugglers, nor are we talking about the supporters of modern 'terrorism'.

We are referring to the underworld of people and communities like the traditional fisher folk communities, adivasis and tribals, farmers subsisting on rain fed agriculture, and artisanal workers. There is mounting pressure from farmer suicides, for instance, on 'Shining India'.

***Bhaskar Save**, a farmer, has decided to make a stand - and he has written to the neo-con, M S Swaminathan, who is a newly converted believer in inclusive and sustainable development. His open letter to M S is a rousing call to understand the true nature of production and processing of goods and the understanding of the larger environment; that the onslaught from rootless modernity is disruptive, and in the long run, counter productive and unsustainable.*

Must modernity and science necessarily subjugate and colonise?

*More than twenty five years ago - Old Gold is how we call such prescient writings - **Ivan Illich** laid it bare in his inimitable, incisive style. He traces the war against subsistence and the*

onslaught on the vernacular to a deliberate effort to subjugate and colonise peoples' minds, lands and cultures.

It still goes on. Is it now the turn of the native? Is it ripe for a revolt of the subaltern?

Mounting Suicides and National Policy for Farmers, Letter from Bhaskar Save,
[\[/eldoc1/0609/DD1_Bhaskar_Mounting_Suicides_NPF.html\]](#)

Vernacular **Values**, Ivan Illich, The Preservation Institute, April 12, 1980.

<http://www.preservenet.com/theory/illich/Vernacular.html>
[\[/eldoc1/q00_Vernacular_values_by_Ivan_illich.html\]](#)

Letter

To,

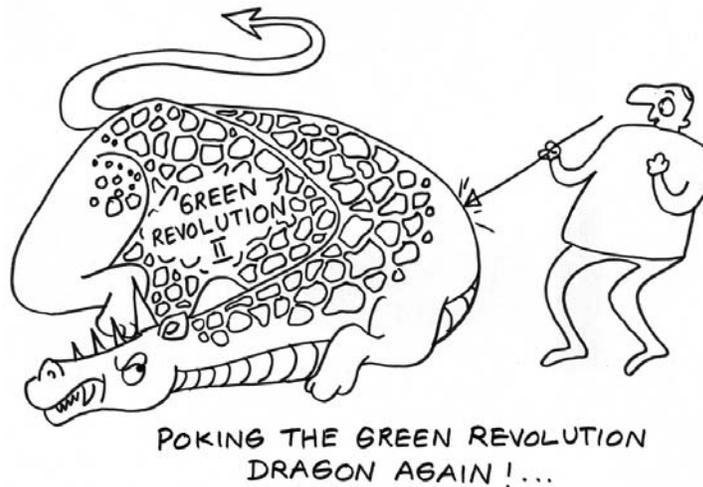
Shri M.S. Swaminathan,
The Chairperson, National Commission on Farmers,
Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India

July 29, 2006

Subject: Mounting Suicides and National Policy for Farmers

Dear Shri Swaminathan,

I am an 84-year old natural/organic farmer with more than six decades of personal experience in growing a wide range of food crops. I have, over the years, practised several systems of farming, including the chemical method in the fifties - until I soon saw its pitfalls. I say with conviction that it is only by organic farming in harmony with nature, that India can sustainably provide her people abundant, wholesome food. And meet every basic need of all - to live in health, dignity and peace.



You, M.S. Swaminathan, are considered the 'father' of India's so-called 'Green Revolution' that flung open the floodgates of toxic 'agro' chemicals - ravaging the lands and lives of many millions of Indian farmers over the past 50 years. More than any other individual in our long history, it is you I hold responsible for the tragic condition of our soils and our debt-burdened farmers, driven to suicide in increasing numbers every year.

As destiny would have it, you are presently the chairperson of the 'National Commission on Farmers' mandated to draft a new agricultural policy. I urge you to take this opportunity to make amends - for the sake of the children, and those yet to come.

I understand your Commission is inviting the views of farmers for drafting the new policy. As this is an open consultation, I am marking a copy of my letter to: the Prime Minister, the Union

Minister for Agriculture, the Chairperson of the National Advisory Council, and to the Media - for wider communication. I hope this provokes some soul-searching and open debate at all levels on the extremely vital issues involved so that we do not repeat the same kind of blunders that led us to our present, deep festering mess.

The great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, referred not so long ago to our "*sujhalam, sufalam*" land. Ours indeed was a remarkably fertile and prosperous country - with rich soils, abundant water and sunshine, thick forests, a wealth of bio-diversity, and cultured, peace-loving people with a vast store of farming knowledge and wisdom.

Farming runs in our blood. But I am sad that our (now greyed) generation of Indian farmers, allowed itself to be duped into adopting the shortsighted and ecologically devastating way of farming, imported into this country by those like you, with virtually zero farming experience!

For generations beyond count, this land sustained one of the highest densities of population on earth. Without any chemical 'fertilizers', pesticides, exotic dwarf strains of grain, or the new, fancy 'bio-tech' inputs that you now seem to champion. The many waves of invaders into this country, over the centuries, took away much. But the fertility of our land remained unaffected.

Though stationary, nature provides their needs right where they stand. But 'scientists' and technocrats like you - with a blinkered, meddling itch - seem blind to this. On what basis do you prescribe what a tree or plant requires, and how much, and when?

Agricultural Mis-education

This country has more than 150 agricultural universities, many with huge land-holdings of thousands of acres. They have no dearth of infrastructure, equipment, staff, money, ... And yet, not one of these heavily subsidized universities makes any profit, or grows any significant amount of food, if only to feed its own staff and students. But every year, each churns out several hundred 'educated' unemployables, trained only in misguiding farmers and spreading ecological degradation.

In all the six years a student spends for a M. Sc. in agriculture, the only goal is short-term - and narrowly perceived - 'productivity'. For this, the farmer is urged to *do* and *buy* a hundred things. But not a thought is spared to what a farmer must *never do* so that the land remains unharmed for future generations and other creatures. It is time our people and government wake up to the realisation that this industry-driven way of farming - promoted by our institutions - is inherently criminal and suicidal!

Gandhi declared: Where there is *soshan*, or exploitation, there can be no *poshan*, or nurture! Trying to increase Nature's 'productivity,' is the fundamental blunder that highlights the ignorance of 'agricultural scientists' like you. The mindset of servitude to 'commerce and industry,' ignoring all else, is the root of the problem. But industry merely transforms 'raw materials' sourced from nature into commodities. It cannot create anew. Only nature is truly creative and self-regenerating.



The Six Self-renewing *Paribals* of Nature

There is on earth a constant inter-play of the six *paribals* (key factors) of nature, interacting with sunlight. Three are: air, water and soil. Working in tandem with these, are the three orders of life: '*vanaspati srushti*' (the world of plants), '*jeev srushti*' (the realm of insects and micro-organisms), and '*prani srushti*' (the animal kingdom). These six *paribals* maintain a dynamic balance. Together, they harmonise the grand symphony of nature, weaving the new!

Man has no right to disrupt any of the *paribals* of Nature. But modern technology, wedded to commerce - rather than wisdom or compassion - has proved disastrous. Modern farmers spray deadly poisons on their fields. These massacre nature's *jeev srushti* - the unpretentious but tireless little workers that maintain the ventilated quality of the soil, and recycle all life-ebbed biomass into nourishment for plants. The noxious chemicals also inevitably poison the water, and nature's *prani srushti*, which includes humans.

The Root of Unsustainability

Sustainability is a modern concern, scarcely talked of at the time you championed the 'green revolution'. Can you deny that for more than forty centuries, our ancestors farmed the organic way - without any marked decline in soil fertility? Is it not a stark fact that the chemical-intensive and irrigation-intensive way of growing monoculture cash-crops, has been primarily responsible for spreading ecological devastation far and wide in this country? - Within the lifetime of a single generation!

Engineered Erosion of Crop Diversity, Scarcity of Organic Matter, and Soil Degradation

This country boasted an immense diversity of crops, adapted over millennia to local conditions and needs. But in the guise of increasing crop production, exotic dwarf varieties were introduced and promoted through your efforts. This led to more vigorous

growth of weeds, which were now able to compete successfully with the new stunted crops for sunlight. The farmer had to spend more labour and money in weeding, or spraying herbicides. Much less organic matter was locally available to recycle the fertility of the soil, leading to an artificial need for externally procured inputs. Inevitably, the farmers resorted to use more chemicals, and relentlessly, soil degradation and erosion set in.

Engineered Pestilence

The exotic varieties, grown with chemical 'fertiliser', were more susceptible to 'pests and diseases', leading to yet more poison (insecticides, etc.) being poured. But the attacked insect species developed resistance and reproduced prolifically. Their predators - spiders, frogs, etc. - that fed on these insects and 'biologically controlled' their population, were exterminated. So were many beneficial species like the earthworms and bees.

Agribusiness and technocrats recommended stronger doses, and newer, more toxic (and more expensive) chemicals. But the problems of 'pests' and 'diseases' only worsened. The spiral of ecological, financial and human costs mounted!

The 'Development' of Water Scarcity and Dead, Salty Soils

With the use of synthetic fertilizer and increased cash-cropping, irrigation needs rose enormously. In 1952, the



Bhakra dam was built in Punjab, a water-rich state fed by 5 Himalayan rivers. Several thousand more big and medium dams followed all over the country, culminating in the massive Sardar Sarovar. And now, our government is toying with a grandiose, Rs.560, 000 crore proposal to divert and 'inter-link' the flow of our rivers.

India, next to South America, receives the highest rainfall in the world. The living soil and its underlying aquifers serve as gigantic, ready-made reservoirs gifted free by nature. Particularly efficient in soaking rain are the lands under forests and trees. Half a century ago, most parts of India had enough fresh water all round the year, long after the rains had stopped and gone. But clear the forests, and the capacity of the earth to soak the rain, drops drastically. Streams and wells run dry.

While the recharge of groundwater has greatly reduced, its extraction has been mounting. India is presently mining over 20 times more groundwater each day than it did in 1950.

More than 80% of India's water consumption is for irrigation, with the largest share hogged by chemically cultivated cash crops. Maharashtra, for example, has the maximum number of big and medium dams in this country. But sugarcane alone, grown on barely 3-4% of its cultivable land, guzzles about 70% of its irrigation waters!

Soil salinisation is the greatest scourge of irrigation-intensive agriculture, as a progressively thicker crust of salts is formed on the land. Many million hectares of cropland have been ruined by it. The most serious problems are caused where water-guzzling crops like sugarcane or basmati rice are grown round the year, abandoning the traditional mixed-cropping and rotation systems of the past, which required minimal or no watering.

Since at least 60% of the water used for irrigation nowadays in India, is excessive, indeed harmful, the first step that needs to be taken is to control this.

Conservative Irrigation and Groundwater Recharge at Kalpavruksha

Efficient, organic farming requires very little irrigation - much less than what is commonly used in modern agriculture. My farm is a net supplier of water to the eco-system of the region, rather than a net consumer! Clearly, the way to ensure the water security and food security of this nation is by organically growing mixed, locally suitable crops, plants and trees, following the laws of nature.

Need for 30% Tree Cover

We should restore at least 30% ground cover of mixed, indigenous trees and forests within the next decade or two. This is the core task of ecological water harvesting - the key to

restoring the natural abundance of groundwater. We sadly fail to realise that the potential for natural water storage in the ground is many times greater than the combined capacity of all the major and medium irrigation projects in India - complete, incomplete, or still on paper!

By inter-planting short life-span, medium life-span, and long life-span crops and trees, it is possible to have planned continuity of food yield to sustain a farmer through the transition period till the long-life fruit trees mature and yield. The higher availability of biomass and complete ground cover round the year will also hasten the regeneration of soil fertility.

Production, Poverty & Population

After the British left, Indian agriculture was recovering steadily. There was no scarcity of diverse nourishment in the countryside, where 75% of India lived. The actual reason for pushing the 'Green Revolution' was the much narrower goal of increasing marketable surplus of a few relatively less perishable cereals to fuel the urban-industrial expansion favoured by the government.

The new, parasitical way of farming you vigorously promoted, benefited only the industrialists, traders and the powers-that-be. The farmers' costs rose massively and margins dipped. Combined with the eroding natural fertility of their land, they were left with little in their hands, if not mounting debts and dead soils. Many gave up farming. Many more want to do so,

squeezed by the ever-rising costs. This is nothing less than tragic, since nature has generously gifted us with all that is needed for organic farming - which also produces wholesome, rather than poisoned food!

Restoring the natural health of Indian agriculture is *the* path to solve the inter-related problems of poverty, unemployment and rising population.

In Conclusion:

I hope you have the integrity to support widespread change to mixed organic farming, tree-planting and forest regeneration (with local resources and rights) - that India greatly needs. I would be glad to answer any query or doubt posed to me, preferably in writing. I also welcome you to visit my farm with prior notice.

I may finally add that this letter has been transcribed in English by Bharat Mansata, based on discussions with me in Gujarati. (The annexures hereto are excerpted from his forthcoming book, 'The Vision of Natural Farming,' Earthcare Books, which draws largely on my experience.) Whether or not you agree with my views, I look forward to your reply.

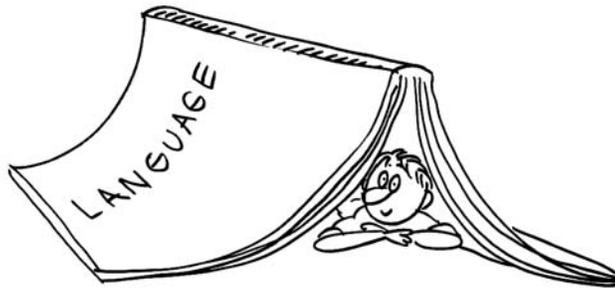
Yours sincerely,
Bhaskar H. Save

Vernacular Values

Ivan Illich

Cuernavaca, April 12, 1980

During the next several years I intend to work on an epilogue to the industrial age. I want to trace the changes in language, myth, ritual and law, which took place in the current epoch of packaging and of schooling. I want to describe the fading monopoly of the industrial mode of production and the vanishing of the industrially generated professions this mode of production serves.



I am back to the study of history, the study of popular cultures, mentalities, practices and tools all too often overshadowed by the history of ideas, institutions and dominant styles. The promised epilogue is taking shape in a dozen essays on the fate of *Vernacular Values* during the last five hundred years of warfare that has been waged by the modern State against all forms of *Subsistence*.

Ivan

Where the war against subsistence has led can best be seen in the mirror of so-called development. During the 1960's, "development" acquired a status that ranked with "freedom" and "equality". Development was described as a building program - people of all colors spoke of "nation-building" and did so without blushing. The immediate goal of this social engineering was the installation of a balanced set of equipment in a society not yet so instrumented: the building of more schools, more modern hospitals, more extensive highways, new factories, power grids, together with the creation of a population trained to staff and need them.

Today, the moral imperative of ten years ago appears naive; today, few critical thinkers would take such an instrumentalist view of the desirable society.

Two reasons have changed many minds. First, undesired externalities exceed benefits - the tax burden of schools and hospitals is more than any economy can support; the ghost towns produced by highways impoverish the urban and rural landscape. Externalities represent costs that are "outside" the price paid by the consumer for what he wants - costs that he, others or future generations will at some point be charged.

These rising externalities, however, are only one side of the bill which development has exacted. **Counter productivity is its reverse side.** It arises "within" the very use of the goods purchased.

Each major sector of the economy produces its own unique and paradoxical contradictions. Each necessarily effects the opposite of that for which it was structured. This institutionalized frustration, resulting from compulsory consumption, demands an increase in the production of scavenging and repair services to impoverish and even destroy individuals and communities, affecting them in a class-specific manner.

The under classes are now made up of those who **must** consume the counterproductive packages and ministrations of their self-appointed tutors; the privileged are those who are free to refuse them. A new attitude, then, has taken shape during these last years: the awareness that we cannot ecologically afford equitable development.

Ten years ago, attitudes toward development and politics were simpler than what is possible today. Work was identified with employment, and prestigious employment confined to males. The analysis of shadow work done off the job was tabu. A contrary view of work prevails when a community chooses a subsistence-oriented way of life. Now is the time to dig out the axioms hidden in the idea of development itself.

Vernacular is a Latin term that we use in English only for the language that we have acquired without paid teachers. In Rome, it was used from 500 B. C. to 600 A. D. to designate any value that was homebred, homemade, derived from the commons, and that a person could protect and defend though he neither bought nor sold it on the market. I suggest that we restore this simple term, vernacular, to oppose to commodities and their shadow. It allows me to distinguish between the expansion of the shadow economy and its inverse - the expansion of the vernacular domain.

The War Against Subsistence

Just as the environment is divided by each society differently into food, poison and what is never considered as digestible, so issues are divided by us into those which are legitimate, those one leaves to the fascists, and those which nobody raises. However, these latter are not actually illegitimate. The distinction between vernacular and industrial values is of this kind. With this essay, I want to draw this distinction into the realm of permissible discussion.

In terms of 20th century classical economics, both the shadow economy and the vernacular domain are outside the market, both are unpaid. Also, both are generally included in the so-called informal sector. And both are indistinctly viewed as contributions to "social reproduction." But what is most confusing in the analysis is the fact that the unpaid complement of wage-labor

which, in its structure, is characteristic of industrial societies only, is often completely misunderstood as the survival of subsistence activities, which are characteristic of the **vernacular** societies and which may continue to exist in an industrial society.

The choice between labor-intensive consumption and modern forms of subsistence is the most resistant blind spot of economics. I propose to throw light on this issue through an examination of everyday-speech. I shall proceed by contrasting the economic nature of this speech in industrial society with its counterpart in pre-industrial epochs. As I shall show, the distinction finds its origin in a little-known event, which occurred at the end of the 15th century in Spain.

While Columbus sailed for foreign lands to seek the familiar - gold, subjects, nightingales - in Spain, Elio Antonio de Nebrija proposed the fundamental engineering of a new social reality to queen Isabella. He advocates the reduction of the queen's subjects to an entirely new type of dependence. He offers Isabella a tool to colonize the language spoken by her own subjects; he wants her to replace the people's speech by the imposition of the queen's *lengua* - *her* language, *her* tongue.

Nebrija says "Language has always been the consort of empire, and forever shall remain its mate. Together they come into being, together they grow and flower, and together they decline." He created two rulebooks, both at the service of the queen's regime. First, he wrote a grammar. Then he also wrote a

dictionary that, to this day, remains the single best source on Old Spanish.

Continuing to develop his petition, he introduces **the** crucial element of his argument: the unbound and ungoverned speech in which people actually live and manage their lives, has become a challenge to the Crown. He proposes to regularize language to stop people from wasting time on frivolous reading.



Nebrija argues for standardizing a living language for the benefit of

its printed form. This argument is also made in our generation, but the end now is different. Our contemporaries believe that standardized language is a necessary condition to teach people to read, indispensable for the distribution of printed books. The argument in 1492 is the opposite: Nebrija is upset because people who speak in dozens of distinct vernacular tongues have become the victims of a reading epidemic.

Nebrija clearly showed the way to prevent the free and anarchic development of printing technology, and exactly how to transform it into the evolving national state's instrument of bureaucratic control. The switch from the vernacular to an officially taught mother tongue is perhaps the most significant - and, therefore, least researched - event in the coming of a commodity-intensive society.

From the very earliest days, the Church is called the "mother". Nebrija's argument implies that, institutionally, the state must now assume the universally maternal functions heretofore claimed only by the Church. *Educatio*, as a function first institutionalized at the bosom of Mother Church, becomes a function of the Crown in the process of the modern state's formation.

His important innovation was to lay the foundation for a linguistic ideal without precedent: the creation of a society in which the universal ruler's bureaucrats, soldiers, merchants, and peasants all pretend to speak one language, a language the poor are presumed to understand and to obey. Nebrija established the notion of a kind of ordinary language that itself is sufficient to place each man in his assigned place on the pyramid that education in a mother tongue necessarily constructs.

Both Columbus and Nebrija offer their services to a new kind of empire builder. But Columbus proposes only to use the recently created caravels to the limit of their range for the expansion of royal power in what would become New Spain. Nebrija is more

basic - he argues the use of his grammar for the expansion of the queen's power in a totally new sphere: state control over the shape of people's everyday subsistence.

The Imposition of Taught Mother Tongue

Historians have chosen Columbus' voyage from Palos as a date convenient for marking the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times, a point useful for changing editors of textbooks. But the world of Ptolemy did not become the world of Mercator in one year, nor did the world of the vernacular become the age of education overnight. Rather, traditional cosmography was gradually adjusted in the light of widening experience. Columbus was followed by Cortéz, Copernicus by Kepler, Nebrija by Comenius. Unlike personal insight, the change in worldview that generated our dependence on goods and services took 500 years.

By the time of Comenius (1592 - 1670), the ruling groups of both the Old and New Worlds were deeply convinced of the need for such a method. This gradual replacement and degradation of the vernacular by its costly counterfeit heralds the coming of the market-intensive society in which we now live.

Vernacular comes from an Indo-Germanic root that implies "rootedness" and "abode." *Vernaculum* as a Latin word was used for whatever was homebred, homespun, homegrown, homemade, as opposed to what was obtained in formal exchange.

By speaking about vernacular language and the possibility of its recuperation, I am trying to bring into awareness and discussion the existence of a vernacular mode of being, doing, and making that in a desirable future society might again expand in all aspects of life.

Mother tongue, since the term was first used, has never meant the vernacular, but rather its contrary. The term was first used by Catholic monks to designate a particular language they used, instead of Latin, when speaking from the pulpit. No Indo-Germanic culture before had used the term. The word was introduced into Sanskrit in the eighteenth century as a translation from the English.

Today, "mother tongue" means several things: the first language learned by the child, and the language, which the authorities of the state have decided, ought to be one's first language. Thus, mother tongue can mean the first language picked up at random, generally a very different speech than the one taught by paid educators and by parents who act as if they were such educators.

We see, then, that people are considered as creatures who need to be taught to speak properly in order "to communicate" in the modern world. Dependence on taught mother tongue can be taken as the paradigm of all other dependencies typical of humans in an age of commodity-defined needs.

As language teaching has become a job, it has begun to cost a lot of money. Words are now one of the two largest categories of marketed values that make up the gross national product (GNP). Money decides what shall be said, who shall say it, when and what kind of people shall be targeted for the messages. Administrators and entertainers, admen and newsmen; ethnic politicians and "radical" professionals, form powerful interest groups, each fighting for a larger slice of the language pie.

Ten years ago, energy accounting was almost unthinkable. Now it has become an established practice. It would be interesting to know what language accounting looks like.

Taught everyday language is without precedent in pre-industrial cultures. The current dependence on paid teachers and models of ordinary speech is just as much a unique characteristic of industrial economies as dependence on fossil fuels. The need for taught mother tongue was discovered four centuries earlier, but only in our generation have both language and energy been effectively treated as world wide needs to be satisfied for all people by planned, programmed production and distribution.

Traditional cultures subsisted on sunshine, which was captured mostly through agriculture. These cultures that lived mostly on the sun subsisted basically on vernacular values. In such societies, there was no need for the production of power in centralized

plants and its distant distribution to clients. Equally, in these essentially sun-powered cultures, there was no need for language production. Language was drawn by each one from the cultural environment, learned from the encounter with people whom the learner could smell and touch, love or hate.

The vernacular spread just as most things and services were shared, namely, by multiple forms of mutual reciprocity, rather than clientage to the appointed teacher or professional. In most cultures, we know that speech resulted from conversation embedded in everyday life, from listening to fights and lullabies, gossip, stories, and dreams. Even today, the majority of people in poor countries learn all their language skills without any paid tutorship, without any attempt whatsoever to teach them how to speak.

I feel sorrow for those students whom education has made tone deaf; they have lost the faculty for hearing the difference between the dessicated utterance of standard television English and the living speech of the unschooled.

Language exempt from rational tutorship is a different kind of social phenomenon from language that is purposefully taught. Even today, the poor in non-industrial countries all over the world are polyglot. Communities in which monolingual people prevail are rare except in three kinds of settings: tribal communities that have not really experienced the late Neolithic, communities that for a long time lived through exceptional forms of discrimination,

and among the citizens of nation-states that, for several generations, have enjoyed the benefits of compulsory schooling.

Throughout history, untutored language was prevalent, but hardly ever the only kind of language known. The ordinary language, until Nebrija, was prevalently vernacular. And this vernacular, be it the ordinary colloquial, a trade idiom, the language of prayer, the craft jargon, the language of basic accounts, the language of veneration or of age (for example, baby talk) was learned on the side, as part of meaningful everyday life. Of course, Latin or Sanskrit was formally taught to the priest, court languages such as Frankish or Persian or Turkish were taught to the future scribe.

But, in traditional societies, no matter how much or how little language was taught, the taught language rarely rubbed off on vernacular speech. Everyday language, until recently, was nowhere the product of design; it was nowhere paid for and delivered like a commodity.

Between taught mother tongue and the vernacular I draw the line of demarcation somewhere else than linguists. The terms elite language, trade language, second language, local idiom, are nothing new. But each of these can be formally taught and the taught counterfeit of the vernacular comes as a commodity and is something entirely new.

Not all standard language is either grammar-ridden or taught. In all of history, one mutually understandable dialect has tended toward predominance in a given region. This kind of principal dialect was often accepted as the standard form. Diffusion occurred through a much more complex and subtle process. The language of Mogul hordes (Urdu) came into being in northern India. Within two generations, it became the standard in Hindustan, the trade language in a vast area, and the medium for exquisite poetry written in the Arabic and Sanskrit alphabets. Not only was this language not taught for several generations, but poets who wanted to perfect their competence explicitly avoided the study of Hindu-Urdu; they explored the Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit sources that had originally contributed to its being.

It is true that the dominant position of elite or standard language was always bolstered by the technique of writing. Printing enormously enhanced the colonizing power of elite language. The historical monopoly of educational bureaucracies over the printing press is no argument that printing techniques cannot be used to give new vitality to written expression and new literary opportunity to thousands of vernacular forms.

The commercial status of taught mother tongue, call it national language, literary standard, or television language, rests largely on unexamined axioms, some of which I have already mentioned:

that printing implies standardized composition;
those books written in the standard language could not be easily
read by people who have not been schooled in that tongue;
that reading is by its very nature a silent activity that usually
should be conducted in private;
that enforcing a universal ability to read a few sentences and
then copy them in writing increases the access of a population
to the content of libraries:
these and other such illusions are used to enhance the standing
of teachers, the sale of rotary presses, the grading of people
according to their language code and, up to now, an increase in
the GNP.

Vernacular spreads by practical use; it is learned from people
who mean what they say and who say what they mean to the
person they address in the context of everyday life. This is not
so in taught language. The vernacular and taught mother tongue,
are like the two extremes on the spectrum of the colloquial.
Language would be totally inhuman if it were totally taught.

Speech is much more than communication, and only machines
can communicate without reference to vernacular roots. A
growing percentage of speech has become mere formula in
content and style. In this way, the colloquial moves on the
spectrum of language increasingly from vernacular to capital-
intensive "communication".

So far, every single attempt to substitute a universal commodity for a vernacular value has led, not to equality, but to a hierarchical modernization of poverty. The modernized poor are those whose vernacular domain, in speech and in action, is most restricted - those who get least satisfaction out of the few vernacular activities in which they can still engage.

Mother tongue is taught increasingly, not by paid agents, but by unpaid parents. These latter deprive their own children of the last opportunity to listen to adults who have something to say to each other. For the professional parent who engenders children as a professional lover, who volunteers his semi-professional counselling skills for neighborhood organizations, the distinction between his unpaid contribution to the managed society and what could be, in contrast, the recovery of vernacular domains remains meaningless. He is fit prey for a new type of growth-oriented ideology - the planning and organization of an expanding shadow economy, the last frontier of arrogance which *homo economicus* faces.

[Note: These essays from *CoEvolution Quarterly* were the basis of most of Illich's book *Shadow Work* (Marion Boyars, 1981).]
