

# HAYEREN KHOSINK... YEV KRENK

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 Team Keghart **Editorial**, 22 December 2009

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Early in the 19th century dedicated Armenologists, writers, and teachers launched their sacred task to "clean" our language. Whenever possible, non-Armenian words were replaced by Armenian words, and in the absence of an Armenian equivalent, new words were coined. We owe modern Armenian—the Eastern and Western versions—to the devotion and expertise of these 19th century patriots.

No language is "pure". Our own language has multiple links to other Indo-European languages.  We know that a great many Armenian words derive from Iranian because the Medes, the Pahlavis, and the Persians occupied our homeland. Foreign borrowings can enrich a language, as can be seen in English—the only global language. However, there has to be a demarcation line when a language starts to lose its identity, its characteristics, and its richness because of overwhelming borrowings or forced adoptions of odar words. Foreign words can drown the native language.

These ruminations were triggered by a recent letter from an Armenian intellectual to a Diaspora Armenian writer. The short letter had at least 13 foreign words—words which are a sad legacy of the Soviet era in Armenia. Such words as "insdidude", "pizness", "dourisd", "chounklayin", "olikakhner", "monopolisdner", "penzeene", "gongressagan", "paleschchig" and "tekhnikagan" littered the letter. What made the usage even more deplorable was that we do have perfectly good Armenian words for the above abominations.

One could argue that the Republic of Armenia has more urgent matters on its plate than to mop up these non-Armenian words from our language. That kind of lazy and complacent attitude would assure the disappearance of the Armenian word and its permanent replacement by the foreign. Like

our mountainous homeland, our language is one of our most distinctive possessions. Our religion is an import. Our alphabet is largely the reworking of the alphabets of neighbouring countries, adapted by Mashdots for the unique needs of our language.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, many Diaspora Armenians (perhaps those in Armenia, too) hoped that Soviet terminology would vanish together with the unwieldy, unrealistic political ideology. After years of hearing, in utter bafflement, on "Yerevann eh Khosoum", such unArmenian and incompressible words as "Gomgous" "golkhoz" and "bardya", we were hoping to hear Armenian from our motherland. We are still waiting.

