

LANGUAGE PROBLEM OF SINDH

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Portions added by him have been deleted)

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This is not a political thesis or an answer to my colleagues and friends or to other letters published in the great English journal of Sindh and Pakistan, "Sindh Quarterly". This is an attempt and a study in sociology, culture language and nationalism. I want to go beyond the opinions expressed in various letters and articles in this connection and discuss the problems of nationality in the South Asia and the pathetic condition of some who have confused themselves and are groping for direction and cheating their children and descendants and giving them ideas, which will not stand the test of time. I can even discuss minority and nationality problems of a large number of countries of the World which have paid so heavily for their confusion.

At the initial stages an immigrant population in variably calls itself after the nationality of the country of their birth of origin. It is usual for the immigrant in the United States of America, which has the largest conglomeration of nationalities in their first generation to call themselves Italian, German, Czech, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican, Arab, Iranian, Indian etc., but in the second generation they all become Americans. There has never been an attempt by any of these minorities to assert their languages and ethnic traditions. The second generation may not even know the language of their forebears. In the South Asia immigrants from one province to the other since times immemorial had been calling themselves Medrasis, Bengalis, Deccanis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans, Biharis, Gujaratis, Rajwaris or Marwaris or Mevaris (from Rajasthan) and so on. Of course some call themselves after the language they spoke like the Tamil as there was no province like Tamil-land in India. This was an exception. People from the United provinces of India or near about were generally called Hindustanis and this word symbolised the language they spoke. The British had adopted and not coined the word Hindustani for the language spoken by the common man of the United Provinces in India. The United provinces were a geographical hybrid or a hedge podge and sociological absurdity in international creation by the British interest as assignment of Diwani in 1765 by Shah Alam-II. All officers since 1837 in the United Provinces had to pass an examination test in Hindustani written in Persian script. The British parliamentary resolution of 1837 made it compulsory to introduce major vernacular languages of India and the Indian administrators executed the resolution meticulously. Even political Governors of the provinces had to learn the provincial languages. Sir Lancelot Graham the first Governor of Sindh had to learn Sindhi at the age of over 70 years and he did so in three months.

The descendants of immigrants normally adopt local language from second generation. Mass scale migration mostly singles of the Central Asians and Iranians freebooter under Akber,

Jehangir and Shah Jehan, had resulted in local marriages and their second generation spoke Hindi, with limited borrow words from Turk-Persian languages, due of official influence of Persian as the court language, and for convenience sake they had called it Urdu-yi-Mulla (camp language), in the second half of seventh century. The Mughal military camps had more local domestic servants and local Rajput soldiers (even under Aurangzeb) than the immigrant foreign soldiers and the ruling class had to learn the local language, exactly in the same way as the British did, but the latter being modern and scientific, made it compulsory for their officers, to pass tests in vernacular languages, within two years of their arrival, to be in touch with the public and understand not only their needs but their history, culture and beliefs. It was these officers who discovered India's past history, culture, archaeology, languages religions, customs, good, bad or what-ever it was, developed respect for the land, people and some times introduced rules, which were against the interests of their mother land the England.

The development of Urdu its challenge to Persian and the ouster of the latter from India is an interesting story connected with Emperor Muhammad Shah's admittance of a Hindu singing girl in the Mughal court and allowing her to sing in Hindi instead of Persian and thus breaking a more than five hundred years old tradition since the formation of Delhi Sultanate. Since then Hindi or Hindustani writing in Persian script started replacing Persian. Hindi and Urdu is really the same language or the same dialect of one language; they have an identical grammar and differ only in vocabulary, the latter using as many foreign words, specially Persian and Arabic and the former as few as possible. This is confirmed and reconfirmed by census reports of 1881 N.W.P and O, I, pp.88 to 99; and the census report of 1901 N.W.P and O.1, pp.174 to 194; Grierson volume 1 part 1 pp. 158 to 168; volume Vol. And also volume IX part 1).

Much before Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-1748), under identical circumstances, the Gokanda ruler, Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah (1580-1611 AD), who in a gesture to his love for a Hindu courtesan, Bhagmati founded a city of Bhagnagar, later on called Hyderabad Deccan, also had musical ear and being sensitive to the rhythm and beauty of Telugu and Dravidian languages spoken by his Hindu Raiyat, borrowed extensive vocabulary from those languages for his Hindi verses and it was sung in the court. Abul Kalam Azad said "In love and taste, crossing the national boundaries is normal". Thank to Muhammad Shah and Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, they were not statues of marble but humans, who found nothing wrong with at local languages and broke all court ethics.

The Muslims realists like Amir Khusru, called the Language, Hindwai or Hindi, Abul Fazal called it Dihlawi and in Deccan it was called both Dakhni and Hindi. When Muhammad Bin Tughlaq made Daulatabad capital of his empire, it was called Hindi and occasionally Gujarati (not Gujarati which is a different language). Hindi was taken to Deccan first by Allauddin's armies, before Muhammad Bin Tughhlaq.

Introduction of local language Hindi in the Mughal camps was resented by Turko-Persian elite, even in the late seventeenth century. As late as early nineteenth century, poetry written in Urdu was called rikhta or spoiled, a fact now superseded by historians of Urdu language.

A couple of Sindhi language theorists to please their masters, have advocated Sindh, as the birth place of Urdu, but they have only made them-selves a laughing stock. None has accepted this view, and so is the case of some other theorist from Haryana. By the end of Tughlaq dynasty or around 1400 AD, Braj Bhasha a dialect of Hindi had pushed its way into the court of Delhi, Agra, Jaunpur and other important towns and was a common means of communication. It developed standard literary pattern at Bijapur and Golconda in the sixteenth century and here in, from the local Hindu population, it absorbed Telugu, Marathi and Kanarese words. When Aurangzeb started conquests of Deccan in 1681 AD, the Deccan and Delhi-Agra Hindi versions merged at the secondary Mughal capital Awaranabad.

Much more contribution to the form of Hindi now called Urdu has been that of Unitarian Sufis, Shaykhas and Bhagats. They were unorthodox closer to the masses, than either the rulers or the orthodox, i.e., the Hindu and the Muslim priests-hood. Khanqahs and road side Bhagti camps were open to all people. From the later part of tenth century AD, and onwards, Ismaili preachers had been interpreting religious doctrines in local dialects and composing it in poetry. Muslim Soofis had started the same from end of twelfth or the earliest thirteenth centuries. Common Muslims knew no Persian. They got message in local language. The Hindi (Pre-Urdu as some fashionable people now call it), thus contributed tremendously towards propagation of Islam in India. Again it was Indian music composed in Hindi dialects, which was a great aid to spiritual ecstasy of Muslim Soofis and their followers. We cannot forget Tanasin musician, who became immortal for creating ecstasy in Akbar's court.

Despite lot of disapproval among Muslim theologians and lawyers, Indian music flourished from tenth century to fourteenth under the auspices of Ismaili priests and from thirteenth onwards, under Chisti mystic order. It is continuing to this day. All Mughal Emperors, except Aurangzeb, were patrons of music. King Adil Shah of Bijapur (1535-57) allowed Muslim singers to sing songs from Hindu methodology, while Hindu singers sang Muslim religious songs. It was the sphere of music, in local languages specially Hindi that brought Hindu-Muslim cultural tradition to the development of Hindi or Hindustani, as lingua franca, a common medium for day to communication in the whole South Asia.

With Aurangzeb's conquest of Bijapur and Golkanda, literary Hindustani from the Deccan was introduced in the northern cities of Mughal Empire. It was not welcome in the northern India. Poets like Khwaja Mir Dard (1720-84), Mirza Rafi Sauda (1713-81) and Mir Taqi Mir (1733-81), expressed their anguish and dismay at the spectacle of an empire, and decay of a cultured society for discarding Persian in favour of Hindustani (Urdu or western Hindi).

Persian was not the first foreign language introduced in the South Asia officially. It had many predecessors like Sanskrit (800 - 300 BC), Aramaic (519 - 400 BC), Pali (300 - 184 BC), Greek (184 BC - 200 AD), Sanskrit then a dead language, second time (200 to 1200 AD) became official language and Persian (1200 - 1837 AD). Because they were imposed on people, by the rulers or their priest hood, they evaporated and disappeared leaving only traces

behind. Common man did not know them. None of these languages was a medium of trade and commerce, and also scientific development (except Sanskrit before Achaemenians and under Guptas). As religious languages, some of them, have definitely left vocabulary, but it is religious-technical vocabulary and virtually untranslatable, so has to remain as part of local languages.

The English became an exception, due to its internationally, scientific and economic development, and modern literature, it became the world language. Had the British not taught English, the Western ideas, and technology in the South Asia, we would never have aspired for independence.

The British calling the language so spoken; 'Hindustani' had given Urdu a facelift, when it replaced Persian as the official language written in Persian script. To start with U.P Muslims did not like this change from Persian but soon found it advantageous for entering government services, for political manoeuvrability and for profiteering and enriching themselves and thus they had a predominance in government services, administration and politics.

Under the Mughal rule the urban Muslim of U.P enjoyed almost complete monopoly to the government jobs. With the introduction of Hindustani in Persian script, Muslims who already knew Persian and found it easy to read and write the newly created official language, secured numerous offices of Government such as Peshkarship, Sarishtadarship, Muharri ship and etc. As education spread the Hindus agitated not against the language but against the script and the Muslims retaliated by declaring this language as a part of their religion, faith and culture, whereas neither Hindi nor Urdu had any thing to do with religious of the two communities. For both it was a question of loafs and fishes and bread and butter. The fact is that in history stomach has always had priority over faith inspite of what the faithful had preached and had publicly vociferated. It was question of exploitation, competition and gain.

In the Hindu-Urdu riots of 1882 AD, Muslims lost a number of lives. The British governor in order to pacify the Muslims met a Muslim deputation and after hearing them, in recording his minutes, he wrote that it surprised him that all that the Muslims were asking for was nothing but higher quotas in government jobs, more recruitment opportunities, more educational institutions and they never talked about compensation even to the families of the dead, who were Muslim butchers, tonga drivers and manual labourers. Thus the language issues and controversies were neither cultural nor religious. They were economic, developed historically over a long period of time this economic issue led to the cow and the boar and so to blood-shed.

The controversy over Hindustani language developed with the spread of education among the masses, and when Hindus started adding more and more Sanskrit words and the Muslims simultaneously added Persian and Arabic words and called this simple language as Urdu or Hindi as it suited them. Then started pitched battles day after day from Delhi to Patna and Hyderabad Deccan a constant phenomenon in the years to come mostly in U.P or in its border

areas - a sad inheritance or legacy of those days in Pakistan today. After the infamous Urdu-Hindi riots of 1882 exactly 90 years later, similar phase started on the status of Sindhi in 1972.

That Muslim were opposed to Hindustani written in the Persian script in late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is quite evident, but introduction of Hindustani as official language by British in U.P, C.P and Bihar after 1837 AD, and in absence of adequate schools, Muslims taking benefit of Persian script, took advantage of monopolising lower government jobs. As against this in 1861 AD, a movement in favour of Hindi, written in Devnagri script, with a vocabulary drawn more from Sanskrit started from Benares, with sole intention of getting government jobs. In fact the Persian script of Hindustani had caused discriminated against the rural people, who in majority were Hindus, in the favour of Urban areas where Muslim were in majority, but there too were many Urban Hindus, who had adopted to Persianised script and reaped full benefits. The Muslim minority was not willing to yield their economic advantages, and initial break up came when Babu Shiv Prasad a Hindu member of Sir Saiyid Ahmed Khan's Scientific Society demanded, that the proceedings of Society may also be published in Hindi (Hindustani in Devnagri script). In 1871 AD the British had yielded and adopted Hindi (Hindustani in Devnagri script) in Bihar and Central Provinces but not in U.P, so as to cause disaffection. However in 1899 Sir Anthony Mac Donnel, the Lientenant Governor of U.P, after receiving a Hindu delegation and without consulting Muslim opinion, issued orders permitting optional used for devnagri script in the court document and requiring a knowledge of both Persian and Devnagri scripts by the court officials.

This order maintained Hindustani as official language and did not force Hindi in place of Urdu, but merely permitted the script. As an anticipated move, Urdu Defence Association was formed by English and Muslim barristers in 1898 AD. The English barristers had probably found it difficult to master Devnagri script for the court practice. The Muslim fear was justified, Hindus were able to compete for lower jobs. The proportion of Muslims in uncoveted jobs reduced from 45% in 1887 to 25% in 1913, but that was a democratic process under which minority of Muslims could not have majority of jobs in a province in which they were in minority and under the British ruled government, controlled by Parliament and directed since 1833 AD to work on secular principles of recruitment of Indians, irrespective of race, caste, creed, colour and religion. Urdu-Hindi controversy was a beginning. The British had been announcing some reforms like the 1868 local-self Municipal Governments, on elective principle and representation, which had to be on population basis, where Muslim elite, invariably at the helm of affairs for some centuries, since Muslim occupation of U.P, were in total danger, under the secular policy of a foreign and world's leading power. They seem to have no alternative. In the name of Urdu, major objective concerning the Muslim bureaucracy was not getting a few jobs, but controlling a great mass of civil service and patronage, still held by Urdu speaking elite.

The U.P Urdu speaking Muslims resorted to agitation, protests, getting support from Muslims of other of provinces, forming all India agitation grounds on political and religious basis. Urdu became faith and the language of faithful. The consequences are well known. Essentially Urdu was back ground of agitation and separatism movement in East Pakistan.

However the 1899 order for the Government provoked Muslim agitation lead by Muhsin-ul-Mulk (1837-1907) and Wiqar-ul-Mulk (1841-1907) who also as founders of Urdu Defence Association pushed matters further. In 1902 Anjuman Tarqi-i-Urdu was founded.

While the early Muslim had expressed and considered Urdu as spoiled language, an out come of decadent society, Urdu had got a chance from the Blue. Comparative peace and though not prosperity came to Delhi in 1765, after assignment of Diwani to East India Company by power-less Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, and becoming pensioner and protégé of the former, safe from depredations of Marathas, Jats and Rohilas, with this change, Delhi school of Hindustani poetry, rehabilitated itself in a new found security, and this is the back ground of acceptance of Urdu in a decedent society, while at the time, highly advanced literature was being produced in other languages, the Punjabi and Sindhi included.

Historically Urdu lost its opportunity in severing itself and keeping itself aloof from its soil from the very beginning. It could only gain status and solidity, if it could have maintained and strengthened its Hindi base. Today it is circumscribed and encumbered by Persian and Arabic, both being languages foreign to Pakistan. When Arabic and Persian inspite of centuries of use, did not and could not survive in Sindh except as languages of some religious thought and instruction, how Urdu an inadequate and defective language could make roots in the Sindhi masses.

Sindhi was the official language of Sindh from 1853. Just like Hindi-Urdu riots of 1882 linguistic riots in Sindh in 1972 were not a cultural issue as became evident in the negotiations of the Urdu committee with Prime Minister Bhutto, in which again only economic issues were discussed. All Urdu slogans were only a subterfuge and a camouflage. Urdu was again the issue of bread and butter in Sindh as it was in the Punjab. With Sindhi language were connected the posts of Tapedars, Abdars, primary teachers, and other teachers in schools, colleges and universities. There were publishing houses, printing presses, language development boards and government communication media like television and radio, which disbursed millions of ruppees daily. There was no question of ideology or integrity of State of or a community at stake. The media has been fully exploited by the Urdu speaking population even when it was against the interest of State and the Nation. Bengali opposition to Urdu was on the same ground. Bengali versus Urdu was straight way an economic issue pure and simple and we saw what happened to our shame and humiliation. This was no lesson to the remnant of old Pakistan. The British were maintaining official record in U.P in Hindustani written in Persian script. Courts used the same language. Hindus wanted official record to be maintained in Nagri and called it Hindi. They also wanted Hindi to be the court language although Hindustani was both Urdu and Hindi, written in Persian script. Thus started the Hindi Urdu movement and controversy. In Sindh we had no controversy of this nature. Any visitor from U.P speaking the language of that province was called a Hindustani and so were called the pioneers of Khilafat movement Moulana Shukat Ali and Mohammad Ali Hindustani meant one from Urban areas of U.P, irrespective of religion. The simple rural people of U.P, who spoke various dialects of Hindustani were called Bhayas in

Sindh in the cities. They called themselves Hindustani. In the Urban areas of Sindh we came across a little of Urdu but there were no Urdu papers, journals or publishing houses in Sindh. In Sindh we made no difference between Hindi or Urdu. Of course when it came to Abdul Kalam Azad's Urdu, we scratched our heads, but his Urdu was too classical and flamboyant even for the leading Urdu writers. For us it was not Urdu. It was Abdul Kalam Azad with his edition, eloquence and fluency. This was the opinion of Hindustani in Sindh in the urban areas, which in a certain way made us a part of the South Asia and it was a language very useful for inter-provincial contacts and communication.

On the formation of Pakistan when Urdu was declared as an official language, before it became a national language. In Sindh, we had no objection to it as it had already developed to that position in the undivided India. To us Hindi in India and Urdu in Pakistan were the same languages having two different scripts although in the process they began to drift apart a little for the literary man but not for the common man. Many of the Indian movies now readily available in Pakistan are today witnessed more than ever in history, which have a simple language and which is nothing but Hindustani. Fanatics on both side of Indo-Pakistan border may call it by any name.

Coming to the issue of nationality the people of U.P were called Hindustani and those of Hyderabad Deccan as Daccanis. We saw no objection to this terminology nor found any thing wrong with it. On the contrary the word Hindustani denotes distinct culture of an area of the South Asia. At one time in Sindh any one from U.P was called a Hindustani. It was in the contact of Hind that Sindh had its distinction. This was a historical, geographical and linguistic phenomenon.

There is now the word Muhajir noisily reverberating and being hammered and dinned in our ears day and night. To some it means immigrant as a consequence of the partition of Indian. In actual fact the largest number of Muhajirs were immigrants from East Punjab to West Punjab. History has never witnessed such cruel exodus before. There was the Biblical exodus of the Jews from Philistine, Berbers (Moors) from Spain in 1487 AD and followed by Jews of Spain, who were supporters of Moors in 1492, but none like the one in the Punjab. There were massacres, loot, arson, rape, destruction of property and animal and inhuman acts of all kinds, which were too mean and cruel even for Changiz and his progenies.

Nearly five million people were forced into migration in West Punjab. They were the real Muhajirs who had come for shelter and not for grab and adventure. It was fortunate and sensible for these immigrants of Punjab who have never called themselves Muhajirs. They called themselves Punjabis.

For this act alone we consider them a great people. We have in Sindh immigrant from all over India majority of them call themselves Cutchis, Kathiawaris, Gujaratis, Malabarais, Beharis and Bengalis, Marwaris and Rajwaris. In their homes they still speak their respective languages.

What is a Muhajir then, when the above category of I migrants do not call themselves Muhajirs. The Muhajir then is the residue or what is left over, that is, Urdu speaking Muslims of U.P, C.P and Hyderabad Deccan. One good word we have to say about Punjabi agricultural settlers in Sindh since 1881. They speak Sindhi outside their homes, go to Sindhi schools and never think of any difference between themselves and the Sindhis. Government never opened any special schools for them. They were Sindhis in spirit, body and soul but after 1955 some of them thought them-selves as rulers during “One Unit” and they along with many innocent are paying for it now.

We have never distinguished between any immigrant in Sindh and the original Sindhi. All that we see is nothing but a question of selfish economic interests advanced by Urdu charlatans and mountebanks that galore in Pakistan today. Any body permanently settled in Sindh, has his interest linked with those of Sindh, is a Sindhi. Any body born in Sindh or whose parents are genuinely settled in Sindh and has no eyes fixed on any thing abroad, is a Sindhi with equal status and rights. It would be dishonest and treacherous to Sindh to deny these immigrants and their descendants the status of Sindhis, inspite of the unfortunate and pathetic refusal of these people to call themselves Sindhis, which notion also we see being debunked by History.

The word Muhajir is also linked with the Urdu language. There were no more than a dozen Sindhis in Sindh who could very well express in Urdu prose of some acceptable standard on the 14th of August 1947. To some of us the knowledge of Urdu has helped a great deal in collecting information and in doing research on subjects of Indo-Pakistan interest. Now as time passed the deficiency of Urdu began to appear so openly. Even Dr. Iqbal felt the same, when he turned from Urdu to Persian for his poetic expression, during the last decade of his life. Some of us turned to English because we were convinced that any standard research in Pakistan in any field needed better medium than that of Urdu, about which our Urduphiles were getting so dogmatic. In the language controversy Urdu and Sindhi are fanatically valued by both the groups. We had conveniently rejected Agha Khan’s proposal to adopt Arabic as a national language of Pakistan although Arabic too is under developed as compared to English and other European languages Chinese and Japanese. Arab speaking people oare backward in science and technology and have turned Arabic backwards.

In India an official commission was set up soon after independence to coin scientific terms in Hindi. After some fifteen years work, they found out that Hindi had one lac words only and has no capability of absorbing four lac scientific words coined upto 1964, when at that time another 4 lac scientific words were still to be coined and absorbed. Today scientific terms have reached more than one million words. The project was tactfully put in the cold storage in the days of Jawaharlal Nehru. Osmania University of Hyderabad Deccan had started publishing of engineering texts in Urdu. We had examined a number of books and found all technical words of English language were maintained in their entire totality, with the exception that words were written both in Urdu and English scripts and the latter also used in brackets. It had increased the column of a book by 25 percent without adding a singly sentence to the original English text,

with which we had compared them. Pakistan is an agricultural country and any literature in any language has to be agricultural and country base.

The issue of nationality thus boils down to the issues of language, and so that of Urdu and Sindhi. The word Muhajir only signifies the vacuum the incumbent occupies sociologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually. A Muhajir is in the doldrums. He is in a psychological process of flux, as is evident from the processes of life during the last twenty years. Can he free himself from his self imposed bondage and slavery. The young generation of Muhajir's born in Sindh has seen the writing on the wall and is showing readiness, willingness and determination to get away from the teachings and prejudices and phantoms and hallucinations of his forbears. We seen a slow but sure process of admission, confession and assimilation. Time, earth and events are forcing issues of absorption. Muhajir is passing through a painful phase of realities and inherited or injected phantasmagoria. He was blind in his fanaticism. He sees Sindh now and Sindh is holding him in his grips. He has got to loosen the chains which bind him to Urdu. Time has taken its toll and it will not accept unnatural artificial and imaginary absurdities. This is suicidal. Today it is Muhajir Quami Muhaz, tomorrow they may not find it more paying and so it must be Sindhi Quami Muhaz. Let the word Muhajir go for ever.