

**TEXT OF THE SPEECHES DELIVERED IN THE  
SEMINAR ON THE CAUSES OF DECLINE OF  
PERSIAN IN PAKISTAN AND REMEDY THERE  
OF THE 6<sup>TH</sup> FESTIVAL OF ART AND CULTURE  
ORGANIZED BY IRAN CULTURAL CENTRE  
HYDERABAD SINDH PAKISTAN ON 17<sup>TH</sup>  
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**BY  
M.H. PANHWAR**

In an article which surprised many, Dr. Daudpotta had stated that, at the time of the Arab conquest of Sindh (711-12 AD), the official language in use in Sindh was Persian. This statement is still true and valid.

To verify the truth of statement we go back 2500 years. Around 505-545 AD, Cyrus conquered parts of Baluchistan bordering Sindh. In Empire by Darius-I. They introduced Aramic as official language. His officers and soldiers stationed in Pakistan spoke Avasti (Old Persian). His son Xerers recruited Sindhian troop to fight Greeks on European soil. This was another contact with Persian language. Persian continued as official language, even though Achaemenian power declined and local principalities of Sindh captured power latest by 400 BC. By the time of Alexander's conquest (329-325), the whole Indus valley was ruled by a number of small chiefs and Persian seems to have declined. Alexander's empire in India dissolved within 3 years of his death. Mauryans who gained power, ruled for 137 years (321 BC to 184 BC). Persian further declined during Mauryan rule. Pali and Sanskrit developed in its place as religious and official languages.

Collapse of the Mauryan power brought Bactrian Greeks in Sindh and the West Pakistan in about 184 BC. These Greek kings were from Bactria or Balikh, then a part of Persia. Their soldiers were Iranians. They struck coins bearing Greek alphabet, but their soldiers spoke Persian. The Bactrian Greek's rule (Demetrius, Menander and etc.), in Sindh was short lived and after some 100 years were replaced by Scythians (80 BC - 17 AD), who were from Scythia or Western Seistan or Sakastan, a part of Iran. Scythians governed Sindh and the Indus valley for about 150 years and were replaced by Parthians (17 AD - 65 AD), who in turn ruled Sindh for about 50 years. Parthians were from Khorasan a Province

of Persia. Continuous rule of these people from Persian, reinforced the influence of Avasti or Old Persian language in Sindh and the West Pakistan. After 65 AD, Parthians were replaced by Kushans (Yue-Chi people from China but settled in Central Asia for nearly two centuries) who seems to have continued Parthians governors to rule Sindh on their behalf for some time, but soon Scythians occupied Sindh, Kutch, Kathiawar and the northern Gujarat. The Persian language therefore stood on firm ground since the decline of Mauryan Empire in 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC.

Between 283-617 AD Sassanid Persians conquered and lost the Indus Valley a few times. Though their rule was short lived but use of Persian in all probability continued. The Rulers of Sindh may have used Persian as media for official communications and records. It is therefore not surprising that at the time Arab conquest of Sindh, they saw Persian as official language as stated by Dr. Daudpotta. The association of the Persian with Sindh and the Sindhi language at the time was 1250 years old. This left lasting influence of Sindhi language.

After the Arab conquest of Sindh in 711-714 AD, Persian was replaced by Arabic. It was the greatest blow to Persian as a language and it took over three centuries for it to recover. The Arabic had replaced Persian as official language even in its home of Iran. The Abbasid courts were dominated by Persian noble-men, viziers and scholars, but Arabic dominated as vehicle of communication. On the decline of the power of Abbasid Caliphs, Persian again gained its ground in 10<sup>th</sup> century. In Sindh and Multan the Persian travelers wrongly called geographers, of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, saw Arabic and Sindhi as predominant language of Arab tribes and Sindhis respectively, but at other places they found Persian being used instead of Arabic by about 951 AD continuous unrest in Sindh, for 150 years since its conquest by Arabs, resulted in total loss of Persian and Sindhi literature developed before and after the conquest.

It is therefore not correct to state that Persian was first introduced in the conquered lands by Mahmood Ghaznavi. He himself was an Iranian and does seem to have strengthened Persian by replacing Arabic. He was a Patron of the great classical Persian poet Firdous.

From 1024 AD, Persian remained as official language. The Ghaznavi hold on Multan and upper Sindh was lost in about 1040 AD, by Coup-de-etat, but Persian continued as official language. It appears that replacement of Arabic by Persian had started in a slow process since decline of central power of Abbasid Caliphate in mid tenth century and remote provinces had started gaining political power and simultaneously started discarding of Arabic in favor of Persian, though slowly.

Soomras who rose to power in early 11<sup>th</sup> century and whose Chief Khalif was defeated by Mahmood Gaznavi, continued to rule the lower Sindh uninterrupted for another three centuries and half. Only for three brief intervals of a few years, had they accepted vassal ship of Delhi. Upper Sindh seems to have been sacked by Delhi Sultans, in eighties of 12<sup>th</sup> century. Since then the locals were gaining independence, as soon as conquerors left, or their power weakened. Sammas who replaced Soomras, ruled Sindh from 1333 AD, to 1524. In the beginning they ruled lower Sindh only but slowly extended their rule or influence to most of Sindhi speaking lands to the north. From the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century to 1350 AD, the Delhi Government, under sheer political necessity to face Mongol invasions, had held Sehwan, Bakhar and Uch.

Mongols had occupied Quetta-Zhob and Loralai hill country and had occupied all areas west of the Indus in N.W.F.P and in the Punjab up to D.G. Khan. To stop their advance the above three strong holds had to remain under Delhi control and occupation. The same reason necessitated Muhammad Tughlaq and Feroz tughlaq to invade the lower Sindh and they persisted on solution by wars, failing which by the religious diplomacy of learned men and scholars collected by them at Thatta. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century even Mongol scholars, and learned men of central Asia were admitted in Sindh court to help develop Persian language. This further added to the knowledge of Persian in Sindh.

The Persian was yet to get a very strong blow in Sindh in 1524 AD. The raids, invasion and conquest of Sindh by Shah Beg and Shah Hassan Arghoons, and their total destruction of Sindh villages and towns, looting and massacre, destroyed both Persian and Sindhi literature developed since rise of Soomras in early eleventh century. Years 1525 to 1600 AD, saw the flight of very large number of scholars, poets, saints and men of means to leave their homeland of Sindh and take flight to Gujarat, Burhanpur and Mecca for shelter. There was no peace to population and more so to the intellectuals as the Sindhis would not easily accept the Mongol domination. Their resentment and uprisings were ruthlessly, suppressed by Shah Beg and Shah Hassan, by burning the villages and mass killing. The latter had not completed his task of destruction fully, when Humayun's flight to Sindh (1540-1543 AD), further made it necessary that Shah Hassan should make Sindh un-habitable and un-attractive to the former. Task was easily managed by burning country side and destroying crops and settlements excepting a few fortified towns to offer resistance to Humayun.

The Persian and Sindhi literature developed in more than 500 years of Samma and Soomra rule, was totally destroyed with exception of Persian history of Chach Nama and a few Sindhi poems of a dozen poets.

If any literature had survived it was a Thatta, the Capital of Sindh. On Shah Hassan's death feud between Tarkhans and former governor at Bakhar, resulted in invitation to Portugese, who burned city of Thatta completing one of the asks left by Arghoons, the total destruction of books in Sindh.

Years 1525-1600 AD, also saw import of Persian scholars from Central Asia. Shah Hassan like all other Mongols of the Central Asia was a tyrant but also like them fond of scholars. A large number of Persian scholars came to Sindh, to fill the gap. Unfortunately their poets sang of "GUL" and "BULBUL" both aliens to Sindh soil. They never talked of environments surrounding them and though their books have survived but they never worked as inspiration for development of Sindhi poetry.

Volunteer surrender of Bakhar to Emperor Akbar in 1587 AD, by Sultan Mahmud and conquest of the Lower Sindh from Tarkhans in 1592 AD, brought Mughal governors. Years 1600-1700 AD, were the period of struggle of Sindhis to gain the lost independence. Persian scholarship still retained its stageny and alien element of thought, barring a few exceptions like Masumi and others. Under the circumstances Sindhi poetry developed at the cost of Persian, perfectly fitting into Sindhi environments. The development of nationalism wrought by 200 years struggle against foreign rule ultimately resulted in strong nationalistic elements in Shah Latif's poetry. Persian scholarship kept developing at Thatta. In 1699 AD, Hamilton was to see 400 colleges in Thatta.

Between 1701-1843 AD, Persian developed under free atmosphere with no harassment to scholars and it continued as official language.

1740 AD, however was to bring further catastrophe to Persian language in Sindh. Nadir Shah himself an Iranian having had Sindh annexed to Persian Empire by a treaty with Muhammad Shah of Dehli, and finding Noor Muhammad Kalhora ignoring this treaty invaded Sindh. Besides taking all gold and jewelry from Sindh treasury, he also took away complete library of Sindh, which met destruction subsequently. This was another great blow, Persian was to receive, and unfortunately at the hands of a Persian conqueror.

The political peace and prosperity that Sindh saw during most of 18<sup>th</sup> century developed great Persian scholars in Sindh. Their writing are definitely different that their predecessors of previous two centuries.

The British conquest of Sindh and the Punjab in 1843 and 1849 AD, respectively completely replaced Persian as official language in whole of the South-Asia.

British who were great political analysts, and had known India for 250 years and also had experience of administrating various territories of India for a century, understood that in spite of 800 years of Muslim rule of India, and 2500 years association of Persian language with Sindh, it had not tricked down to masses. In 1863 AD British Parliament had decided to replace Persian by English as well as local languages as official languages, Sir Bartle Frere Commissioner in Sindh therefore standardized Sindhi alphabet in 1853 AD, opened for Sindhi examinations to be held twice a year and offered jobs and scholarships to candidates securing first three numbers from each centers.

The result was that Sindhi took only a few years to replace Persian at lower administrative level. At upper administrative level, English was to be the media. The scholarships awarded to candidates passing examinations from 45 centers, produced English knowing clerks and officials and the use of Persian became redundant.

The British however knew that the past history and culture of the people lies in Persian literature developed in the South-Asia. The Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta found by Warren Hastings in 1783 and the Royal Asiatic Society London established 1830, had stated publishing extracts from Persian texts, and even complete translation of some Persian texts were published. By mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century, need was felt to publish original Persian texts. This was done under Bibliotheca Indica series by both the Societies. By 1847 all important Historical Persian texts and many provincial texts had been published by these two Societies.

To keep interest in oriental studies alive the British had introduced Persian as second foreign language in the curriculum up to matriculation. In Sindh 95% of students, both Hindu and Muslim studied Persian up to the level of matriculation. Sindhis took great advantage from it in development of Sindhi language. Sindhi literature produced from 1853-1940 AD, both by Hindus as well as Muslims used simple Persian words freely and frequently. There were many Hindu professors and teachers teaching Persian in colleges and schools. Dr. Gurbuxani, who wrote three volume commentary of Shah-Jo-Risalo was Ph.D., in Persian. Dr. Sadarangani wrote "Library History of Persian Poets of Sindh". Persian was alive in Sindh. It had application and utility. It was helping in development of the Sindhi language, Sindh's history and past culture. It has large number of ancient works, which discussed history, geography, archaeology and social condition of Sindh for a thousand years. It had Sufi literature acceptable to both Sindhi Hindus and Muslims. Above all it had enormous medical as well as theological literature.

Independence and creation of Pakistan in 1947 brought Urdu as official language. It did not replace English in the field of administration. In the technical studies and their application, it was inadequate. English therefore continued. Urdu was an official and national language in name.

In the Educational field Urdu had to be given due importance. Educationists had to put limitations on total time load students would carry. Urdu and Islamiyat had to be introduced as new subjects. East subject to be discarded was Persian. Sindhi language had always used Persian, instead of Urdu for its development, but Persian studies had already decayed in Pakistan.

There is huge wealth of Persian manuscripts in Sindh and Pakistan. They all pertain to local history and culture. About twenty of these have been published by Sindhi Adabi Board since independence. Elsewhere in whole of Pakistan not even half of this number have been printed. This is only a fraction of work done by British in about a century. Only four Persian texts have been translated by Sindhi Adabi Board in last 33 years. There is lack of Persian scholars to undertake this work. In fact efficient good Persian scholars are not being produced by Universities.

For the understanding of our cultural heritage and our history we still need Persian. We cannot force it in the educational institutes. There is no wide spread use for it and therefore there is no justification to introduce it compulsorily.

We will have to create an institute for study of our cultural heritage and history. This institute will collect Persian manuscripts of all kinds, study, analyze, publish and translate them. Only this way, can we keep the Persian language, its utility and legacy alive for understanding our past.