

Urdu:A Popular Modern and Urban Tongue An Evolution and Geographical Expansion

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ABSTRACT: Etymologically the word Urdu itself is Turkish and means ‘army’ or ‘camp’. English word ‘horde’ is said to be connected with it. The Muslim army stationed in Delhi from 1193 onwards was known as the Urdu or Urdu ‘e’ Mualla, the Exalted Army or Royal Army. Their language was known as Urdu Jaban which emanated from intermingling of Arabic and Persian words first with Punjabi and Hariyanvi and later on with ‘Khari Boli’ of Delhi.

By the first half of the 14th century, the literature in Urdu reached its zenith and Arabs and Turks became the permanent inhabitants of India. ⁽¹⁾ Nehru also remarks that they are now completely Indians and consider India as their Motherland. ⁽²⁾ The eminent scholar Dr. Tara Chand has also pointed out that not only Hindu religion, art, literature and science adopted the Islamic trends, but it metamorphosed also the soul and mind of the Hindu Civilization completely. ⁽³⁾ Islam brought a revolutionary change in an age old Indian Civilization. This revolutionary change resulted in the declination and then the revival of the Hindu civilization, giving birth to a new Indo-Islamic culture and civilization. ⁽⁴⁾

KEYWORDS: Urdu, Muslims, Islam, local dialects, Khari Boli, Brajhabhasha, Awadhi, Deccan Style of Urdu.

INTRODUCTON: The arrival of the Muslims in the Indian Sub-Continent created a new era in the Medieval history and literature of India. Influence of Islamic culture is noticeable in every sphere of Indians’ life i.e. social, economical, political, religious and cultural. Especially the creation of a new language Urdu which originated from the interaction of the penetrators with the locals was of utmost importance. To Muhammad Hasan Askari Urdu language is greater gift than the Tajmahal to us and a thing to be proud of. ⁽⁵⁾ This view cannot be endorsed at all as the Muslims did not bring this language with them, neither they tried to enforce it on the Indian people immediately. This new language evolved from the interaction between the invaders and the invaded. Therefore, soon after the evolution of Urdu language, it became the source of interaction between the Muslims and the local inhabitants in the areas where the Muslims were settled. The evolution of Urdu began with political, administrative, commercial and social interactions between the rulers and the ruled. In this stage of its evolution Urdu appeared as heterogeneous language comprising of the salient features of the dialects of different areas.

The Muslims came to this sub-Continent as traders or businessmen, as commanders and soldiers or conquerors and as preachers and sufis. The Arabs had been visiting India as traders or businessmen since long even before the birth of the Holy Prophet. The Arab traders used to come to Malabar, Karamandal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Even after embracing Islam they continued their practice of trading and visiting India. Most of them settled and developed their colonies on the coastal areas. ⁽⁶⁾ Definitely they must have adopted the local dialects and infused their own words of daily use in them. The influx of the Muslims on such a large scale for about one thousand years i.e. from 712 A.D. to 1857 A.D. enriched the Islamic culture and civilization detached from the changes swept over the world. In the opinion of Dr. Jamil Jalbi, “the culture of the Muslims was the culture of a conquering nation. It had a full capacity and potential to assimilate great vastness of life. When this new culture gave new dimension to the Indian culture, one of the dialects here that had much capability of acceptance and assimilation and that had already assimilated different temperaments of various dialects, come forward and imbibed this new culture. Consequently, a new heterogeneous dialect began to evolve rapidly. Within a very short period this dialect adopted the vocabulary of this culture. Thus, it turned to be a common mode of communication among the Muslims and the ancient inhabitants of the sub-Continent due to modern cultural, social, and linguistic compulsions.” ⁽⁷⁾ However, nor did the Muslims bring this language with them, nor did they give it to India or enforce it. It becomes very clear from the opinions of the researchers of linguistic science that Urdu or Hindvi has its origin in the Indo-Aryan languages. When the Muslim conquerors first settled in India in the areas of North-West frontier, the Islamic influence began to spread here rapidly. Then Urdu had passed through various stages of its evolution and taken its present shape. The role of the traders, commanders, soldiers or conquerors in the evolution of Urdu was of not great significance. They only tried to mould the local dialects just for their daily use and added a few Arabic, Persian and Turkish words to them and thus convert it into a heterogeneous dialect.

They were the mystics and Sufis contributed a lot to the development and of a dialect into a literary language that could express all feelings and expressions of its users. They reached India solely to preach Islam, therefore they learned the local dialect for their own objectives and made them the mode of interaction and a channel of communication. Mingling of Persian words with the local dialects started extensively in 11th century A.D., during the reign of Sultan Muhammad of Ghor. Their preachings consisted of Khut’bat (sermons), Aquvals (sayings), pamphlets, books, couplets and songs through which they spread it from north to south and from west to east.

OBJECTIVES: The objective of this paper to discuss the evolution of Urdu as the tongue of masses after mingling with the tongue of the Muslim penetrators. The paper also try to find out how this language influenced the people of Indian origin and how the people contributed to its development through the ages. This paper maps out the expansion of Urdu Language in different historical period throughout India.

CONCEPT: We find that the Urdu emerged as the mixture of different tongues i.e. Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Haryanvi, Multani, Awadhi etc. since the advent of Muhammad Ghouri. It expanded its net from Sindh to Deccan and from Gujrat to Bihar. The efforts behind this network of Urdu were of the Mystics and Sufis who were to win the faith of the common people.

EVOLUTION OF URDU AS A TOUNGUE: The Influence of Islam on Indian culture was limited to urban areas only. The Muslims settled mainly in cities and towns far away from villages the abode of Indian culture. So we can say that hardly 10% people of India might be influenced and affected by Islam, which is renowned for its liberal and democratic social structure.⁽⁸⁾ At the advent of Babur, the first Mughal, in India the Hindus and Muslims were not two different identities, they became too much identical that Babur called them 'Hindustani' irrespective of their religious, social and cultural differences.⁽⁹⁾ Reciprocally Islam in India got influenced by the Indian Philosophy and culture in the course of time and got painted in the colours of India. The good example of conglomeration of Islamic culture with Indian culture was the emergence of Urdu, the greatest gift of the Indo-Islamic transitional period. Urdu has been enriching the Indian literature and music for centuries. The scholars do not nourish an unanimous opinion about the origin of Urdu. Dr. Mahmud Sherani⁽¹⁰⁾ does not accept the views that Urdu has been originated from the mixture of different languages. Though in the eyes of Dr. Masud Husain⁽¹¹⁾ Urdu is the product of Persian and Haryanvi languages. To him after the penetration of the Arabs to Sindh and Multan, the language of the two came in close contact and gave birth to a new language 'Urdu'. Dr. Yusuf Hossain also endorsed the view of Dr. Masud Husain saying that the genesis of the Urdu is the mixture of Persian and Haryanvi languages.⁽¹²⁾ We find Arabic and Persian words in the 'Prithvi Raj Raso' of Chand Bardai, who wrote an epic in the praise of gallantry of Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi in 'Khari Boli' the local dialect of Delhi.

During the early phase (636 A.D.-986 A.D.) of the evolution of Urdu, the Muslim regime was confined to Sindh and Punjab i.e. the North-West of India. From there it shifted to the other parts of North and Central India in its second phase (986 A.D.-1192 A.D.), when the Muslim rulers brought this part of India under their direct control, the Arabians, the Turkish, the Iranians and the Afghans started settling in the different parts of India, especially in the towns or on the outskirts of the Indian villages and influenced the life and cultures of the inhabitants of the local areas.⁽¹³⁾ The third and last phase of its evolution can be counted since 1192 A.D., the year when Muhammad Ghori defeated Prithviraj Chauhan, the Rajput king of Delhi and became the sovereign of Delhi. Delhi became the capital city where the intellectuals and scholars influxed from remote areas. This new settlement of the foreigners influenced the local dialect, 'Khari Boli' of Delhi and its surroundings.⁽¹⁴⁾

It is clear from the above discussion that Urdu does not belong to any single dialect or language. Amir Khusro the poet of Delhi Sultanate christened Urdu as 'Hindvi' or 'Delhvi'. Rapidly Urdu became the language of the sufis (Muinuddin Chisti, Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki, Hazrat Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar, Hazrat Aulia) who used Urdu to spread their preachings among their followers.⁽¹⁵⁾ Amir Khusro used Urdu terms extensively in his Persian Poetry. He used Persian words extensively while composing Ghazals in Urdu which he called 'Hindvi', and created an example before future generations. He was very proud of 'Hindvi' as depicted in his work 'Gurrat-ul-Kalam'.⁽¹⁶⁾ Hindi not remained confined to Delhi only but exercised its influence all over North India and South India as well as West India.⁽¹⁷⁾ The eminent scholar Mir Mohammed Turka Mir wrote in his 'Nikatush Shoasa' that the writings of Amir Khusro were famous in Delhi.⁽¹⁸⁾

EXPANSION OF URDU IN VARIOUS PARTS OF INDIA: Delhi became the centre for Sufi Saints, they came across the fact that they could not reach to the hearts of people of India through Persian language which they used as the medium of their preachings. The Persian language was prevalent in urban centres only. Very few number of urban people used Persian as an official language. The common people were not accustomed to using Persian, but local dialects as the medium of communication. This motivated the Sufi saints to use 'Hindvi' while preaching the people and spreading their teachings.⁽¹⁹⁾

Urdu reached Gujrat and South India with the expansion of Allauddin Khalji, the Sultan of Delhi, who invaded Gujrat in 14th century and the South in 14th century and took hold over these states.⁽²⁰⁾ Sheikh Burhanuddin Gharib and Hazrat Banda Nawaz Gesudaraj Khwaza Syed Muhammad Gesudaraj contributed a lot in the expansion of Urdu in far Deccan (1432 A.D.) Gesudaraj's 'Mishjal Aashiquini' is known as the first 'Hindvi' writing of South India.⁽²¹⁾ After the death of Gesudaraj his spiritual disciples left no stone unturned for the expansion of 'Hindvi'. Other sufis who contributed to the evolution of Urdu were Sk. Hamiduddin Nagori, Sarfuddin Buali Alander, Sk Sirajk Usman, Sk. Sarfuddin Yaha Maniyari, Shah Burhanuddin Gharib, Sk. Abdul Kuddus Gangohi, Shah Muhammad Chaus Gwaliori and Shah Aminuddin Ata.⁽²²⁾

Not only the Sufi Saints but the saints of Bhakti Movement acknowledged that Persian was not popular among the Indian people, so they too preached them in Hindi enriched with Persian words.⁽²³⁾ In North India, Kabir, the Bhakti Saint applied Arabic, Persian and Hindvi terms in his Couplets. He wrote some Ghazals which are purely in Urdu.⁽²⁴⁾ In Punjab Nanak Saheb, the Bhakti Saint used 'Hindvi' to send his preachings to maximum number of people.⁽²⁵⁾ Some Hindi poets such as Surdas and Tulsidas also used Urdu terms in their poetry in Brajhasha and Awadhi respectively.⁽²⁶⁾

After the declination of the Bahamani kingdom- Golkunda and Bijapur of the Deccan, the two eminent centres patronized Urdu as their court language. Muhammed Kutub Shah and Abdullah Kutub Shah, the Kutubshahi kings of Golkunda not only patronized the Urdu scholars, but they themselves also composed verses in Urdu and while doing so they used Urdu language extensively enriching the Deccan style of Urdu.⁽²⁷⁾ They patronized and honoured a number of poets and intellectuals like Vazhi, the composer of 'Kutub-o-Mustari' and 'Sab Ras' and 'Ibn-e-Nishati' the writer of 'Tutinama'.⁽²⁸⁾

The Adilshahi Sultans of Bijapur kingdom were the patrons of art and education. They patronized Hasan Shauqui, the author of 'Fatahnama'. Mukim, the composer of the poem 'Chandrabhan' and Rustami, the creator of 'Khabarnama'. Ibrahim Adilshah was entitled as 'Jagatguru' for his efficiency and expertise in Indian classical music. He composed 'Nauras', a book on music and

placed Urdu as the state language at the place of Persian. Ali Adilshah patronized Mulla Nusarat, the author of 'Alinama' and 'Gulshan -i- Issac' in his court.⁽²⁹⁾

Again in Gujrat the Sufi saints contributed to the evolution of Urdu. After the invasion of Timur Lane in 1398 Sheikh Kutub Alam and Sheikh Ahmad Khattu took shelter in Gujrat and preached their disciples in Urdu mingled in local Gujrati dialects. An elaborate and vivid description of their teachings can be traced out in 'Mirat-i- Sikandari'.⁽³⁰⁾ With the passage of time, they developed Gujrati style of Urdu writing. Shah Ali Muhammad Jeeb composed 'Jawahar- ul- Asrar' in this new style. Khud Muhammad Chisti in his 'Khub Tarang' and Amin in his 'Yusuf Julekha' used this new style of Gujrati Urdu.⁽³¹⁾

Though Babar composed his memoirs 'Tujuk-i-Babari' in Turkish, he Utilized a number of Urdu terms in it.⁽³²⁾ It was the high time for ghajal composition extensively in the mixed language of Persia, Urdu and the local dialects. Akbar promoted Urdu in North India and Rajputana by creating good relations with the Rajputs. It was his reign when Urdu was popularly known as 'Rekhta' and was popular among the common people.⁽³³⁾ Akbar ordered to maintain all his accounts in Hindi in order to pay honour to the Rajput kings, but Todarmal advised him to maintain all the royal accounts in Persian. As Hindi had never been a language of commerce and account keeping, while compared with Persian, this practice of using Persian, language for account keeping contributed to the development of Urdu, for people were bound to learn Persian as official language⁽³⁴⁾ which at the time of the intercourse with local dialects took a new style. During the reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb Urdu achieved its height and reached the zenith. Princess Zebunissa, the daughter of Aurangzeb herself was an eminent and efficient scholar of writing couplets in Urdu. The new style and tradition of composing using Urdu couplets or Shayari started from that time.⁽³⁵⁾ Chandr Bhan Brahman, Muizzuddin, Musavi Khan Jafar jalali, Mirza Abdul Ghani Kashmiri and Mirza Bedil were the renowned poets who composed Shayri in Urdu in the times of Mughals, Shamsuddin Wali (1668-1774) who was known as the father of 'Rekhta' and had completed his education in Gujrat and after being settled in Aurangabad, he started composing poems. He visited Sadulla Gulshan, a Sufi-saint in Delhi and became his disciple. According to the instructions of Gulshan he included the Persian subjects and styles in Rekhta while composing poems. He started writing 'Deewan'.⁽³⁶⁾ In 1722, Muhammad Shah, the Mughal Emperor invited him to Delhi where he was honoured for his writings. He experimented by including Persian art of Ghazals, Kasidas, Masnavi, Marshia and Rubai etc. in Urdu language to give it a new flavour.⁽³⁷⁾ After his death, his disciples Mir Taqui, Mir Dard, Mir Khwaza, Mir Sauda, Mir soaj Musfi and Insha carried on his tradition for years and took Urdu to its highest peak. Mir Soaj and Mir Sauda enlightened the court of Lucknow at the regime of Nawab Sadat Ali Khan who invited them to settle in Lucknow. Ateesh and Nashikh were the eminent composer of Shayri in Lucknow.⁽³⁸⁾ Mir Anees and Mirza Dabeer composed Marshia on the death of Imam Hossain and contributed highly to raise the standard of Urdu. Jauque, Ghalib and Momin contributed a lot through their writing to take Urdu at its zenith. Ghalib and Momin used bombarding and complicated Persian words while composing poems in Urdu⁽³⁹⁾. Ghalib included logic and philosophy in his verses. But his disciples did not follow his style of poetry and composed in simple and popular Urdu. Bhadur Shah Jafar, the last Mughal emperor composed poems in Urdu, when he was in jail at Rangoon.

Though Urdu emerged as purely secular, popular and modern Indian language, acceptable to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. It was the language of intellectuals and the purest form of Urdu was popular in Delhi for centuries but at the time of renaissance Sir Syed Ahmad Khan tried his best for Musalmanisation of Urdu and popularized that Aligarh was the centre of Urdu Education and it was the only language through which instructions should be given to the Muslims. It contributed to the extension of Urdu, but closed the door for new experiments with Urdu by intermixing new styles and new dialects. Slowly the extremist reformers of renaissance separated the Hindus and the Muslims on various social, religious and lingual issues and the Muslims adopted Urdu as the language of communication and the Hindus adopted 'Khari Boli' and other local dialects as their language. And closed all doors to new horizon for the evolution of Urdu. In eastern India-Bengal, Assam, and North-eastern regions Urdu never found place in the hearts of people. The medium of conversation was the provincial language irrespective of their caste and creed. When Bangladesh got separated from India, Urdu as the state language was imposed on these Bengali speaking people by the West Pakistan, but they discarded the imposition and resisted against it. They sacrificed their lives for the sake of their mother tongue Bengali and restricted its expansion to the rest of India and Pakistan. But in the Post-global era all the classical and native languages are losing their originality. It happened to Urdu too. Urdu with other indigenous languages is becoming a dead language.

CONCLUSION: It may be concluded that the emergence of Urdu in the 11th century was occurred when the efforts were made not only by the rulers but by the subjects also, not only by the Sufi saints but by the Bhakti Saints also and not only by the Muslims but by the Hindus also. It was patronized by the then governments and flourished to its heights. Now it is used in cinematic songs only with some foreign words inter-mingled with it. Even National and State Governments today are not patronizing in the school curriculum like English and Sanskrit. Now Urdu has become a language of the Mullahs and religious interpreters of Koran in North India and is confined to Madrashes and Maktabs only. Once this was the language of intellectuals which ruled over the hearts of people from Sindh-Multan to Bihar and from Gujrat to Bijapur and became popular among the common people for its Nazakat (delicacy) and Nafasat (sweetness & clearness). About the abysmal condition of Urdu we can quote poet Iqbal Ashar here,

"Dekha Tha Kabhi Maine Bhi Khushiyon Ka Zamana,
Apne Hi Watan Mein hun Magar Aaj Akeli."

(I too have seen an era of happiness but today I am an orphan in my own country.) We can hope that Urdu will be revived again, flourish again as the medium of instruction, conversation and literature.

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