they lived in India and participated in the life of the community around them. The language of this international order was Persian and Arabic, while those of the local communities around them were the Indian languages of the common people. This is paralleled by the Franciscan friars who also lived ‘in-between’ lives, sandwiched as they were between ‘the Latin world of their order and the multilingual world of regional issues’. But this kind of existence ‘was the precondition for the friars’ active participation in local and trans-local discourses’ (Kehnel 2006: 105). Such conditions probably prevailed in medieval India too and produced both local discourses in the local languages and trans-local ones in Persian and sometimes in Arabic.

**RELIGIOUS WRITING DURING COLONIAL RULE**

Two factors increased religious writing in Urdu during the colonial era. First, printing made it possible to produce and disseminate many more copies of religious works than the copiers of handwritten manuscripts could ever imagine. As this effect of printing will be given detailed attention in Chapter 12, it will only be mentioned in passing here. Both in the present day Uttar Pradesh area as well as the Punjab, religious literature remained neck to neck with poetry and fiction as far as the themes of the printed works is concerned (see Annexure-A of Chapter 12).

Even the literary compositions were often on religious subjects, so one could argue that the dissemination of religious themes was the most significant consequence of printing in India. This was an activity in which both the Hindu and the Muslim communities indulged. However, the reports speak more often of Muslim activity because, as one report puts it, ‘works on history and biography are generally semi-religious’ in their case (Adm. NWP and O 1901: 189).

The second factor was the military defeat and the political, economic, intellectual, and psychological domination of the
British over Indians this entailed. The Muslims reacted to this in three ways: militarily, by emphasizing their religious identity and purifying their religious practices, and by cooperating with the colonial masters and accepting various degrees of assimilation and Anglicization. The ones who coped with the colonial onslaught by reinventing religious identity were the strict monotheists like Shah Waliullah (1703–1762) and the Ahl-i-Hadith who believed that Indian Islam could only be reformed by removing all traces of polytheism (shirk) and innovations (bidā). For this purpose, knowledge of the fundamental sources of religion—the Quran and the Hadis—had to be translated into Urdu in order to make them accessible to the common people.

THE QURAN AND ITS EXEGeses IN URDU

The reformers felt that the message of the Quran should be propagated widely among the common public. Hence there was an emphasis on making it available to the common people in Urdu. Shah Waliullah is a pioneer of this trend. His movement of Islamic reform of Indian Muslim society is closely linked to Urdu (Aqil 2008: 120–128). Although he himself wrote in Arabic and Persian, he encouraged his son Shah Abdul Aziz to learn idiomatic Urdu (Rizvi 1982: 77). This was probably because Urdu was so commonly used among the urban Muslims of North India by this time that it was a better vehicle for reforming Indian Muslims than either Persian or Arabic. His other sons, Shah Abdul Qadir (1753–1827) and Shah Rafiuddin (1749–1817), translated the Quran into Urdu (Rizvi 1982: 104–105).² An earlier venture initiated by J.B. Gilchrist was forbidden by the government in 1807 because the ulema had been highly incensed even with Shah Waliullah’s Persian translation and were not likely to countenance an Urdu one (Siddiqi 1979: 155–157). Indeed, the fundamentalist preachers, called Muhammads by Harlan Pearson in his study of the Tariqa-i Muhammadyah—also called Wahhabis—recognized the value of Urdu in popularizing
their reformist message (Pearson 2008: 60–81: also see Farooqi, K.A., n.d.). Some Englishmen did get the Quran translated into Urdu for their benefit. One such case is that of William Wright who was posted to Farrukhabad at Camp Fatehgarh. Here he met Syed Waliullah who translated the Quran for him in Persian in 1243/1837, in what he calls Hindi. There are four columns in the manuscript: the first in Arabic, the second in Persian, the third in Hindi (Tarjumā Hindī), and fourth, which is blank, is for English. In the copy in Heidelberg University Library there is a note by William Wright as follows:

This copy of the Koran in the Arabic, Persian and Hindoostanee langues [sic], was compiled for my use by Syyud, Mooftee, Wallee Ollah Expounder of Mosulman Law and a native judge of the Furkhabad Zillah Court. A profound Arabic Scholar, upright judge, virtuous and amiable man, and a zealous, but not intolerant Mosulman (Waliullah 1837).

But, of course, most translations were meant for the Muslims themselves.

Exegeses came to be written as early as the end of the sixteenth century and some of the early ones are anonymous. Gujarat and Deccan fare prominently as centres of Islamic writing in this early period (Naqvi 1992: 23). A notable attempt is that of Murad Ullah Ansari Sanbhli, who gives reasons for having written his exegesis Tafsīr-ē-Murādī (which ended in 1771). Sanbhli argues that, since millions of people spoke Hindi and were keen to learn from his explanations of the holy book, he was requested by many of his companions to write his explanations for them. He therefore undertook the writing of this exegesis (Naqvi 1992: 25–26). He ends his work by thanking God for having made it possible for him to write an exegesis of a portion of the Quran in the Hindi language (‘um sipārē kī tafsīr Hindī zubān mē tamām karvā dī’) (Sambhli 1875: 387). This, however, was the period (middle of the eighteenth century)
when there was a great increase in religious writings in Urdu. While the popular poems such as *Nūr Nāmās* and *Jang Nāmās* continued to be written, serious prose literature—translations of the Quran and the Hadis, exegeses, collections of legal judgments (*fatāwā*)—now started supplementing Persian works in these genres. Such literature is described in some detail by Gaborieau (1995), Ayub Qadri (1988), Naqvi (1992), and Khan (1987), but a study with reference to its production and consumption still needs to be undertaken.

Sometimes the exegeses of the Quran, said to be in ‘Hindi’, are actually in a language which is Urdu mixed with Punjabi, such as Maulvi Deen Mohammad’s *Tafsīr Qur’ān Majīd Bazuban-ē-Hindi* (Mohammad n.d.). Mostly, however, Hindi means Urdu, as in Maulvi Ikram Uddin’s *Tōhfatul Islām: Tafsīr Sūra’ Fatehā* (1308/1890–91). Some manuscripts have two works in them—one in the centre of the page and the other on the margins. For instance the *Tafsīr Sūra’ Taēhrīm* has the ‘Silk Nūr Masnavi’ on the margin and the exegesis of a verse of the Quran in the centre (Ismail n.d.).

But, while such learned works were read by the clergy and only a few other people, the pamphlets described below spread far more widely.

**THE SHARIAH GUIDEBOOKS**

This genre is further divisible into the philosophical guidebook and the practical ones. The first refutes what the authors call false beliefs and emphasizes upon the right ones. The latter sub-genre is less concerned with intellectual arguments about doctrines. These simply instruct the believer into rituals, practices, worship, and the required behaviour of a practicing Muslim.

The paradigmatic work of the philosophical kind is Shah Ismail’s (1779–1831) Persian work whose Urdu translation is entitled *Taqwiat ul Īmān* [The Strengthening of Belief] (1876). The
book was originally written in Persian and then translated into Urdu by Mohammad Sultan Khan. It was he who gave it this title. According to its translator the language used in this book is the commonly understood ‘Urdu’ (Ismail 1876: 226). Another book attributed to the same author is Sirāt-ē-Mustaqīm [The Straight Path]. It too was translated from Persian into Urdu by Abdul Jabbar. It describes the philosophy of divine love along with stringent condemnation of the social ceremonies of Indian Muslims (Ismail 1319/1901–2).

Another important text of this genre is Khurram Ali’s (d. 1855) Nasīhat ul Muslimīn (1822). He begins the book by saying that he wanted to refute polytheistic beliefs and practices by quoting from the Quran, but in the ‘Hindi’ language, so that those who did not know Arabic could escape shirk (Ali 1822: 2). Qurban Ali’s Tōhfat ul Mōminīn is yet another book in the same general category. However, along with being a Shariah guidebook, it also attributes miraculous powers and body processes to the Prophet of Islam like folk literature of the Barelvi kind (Ali n.d.).

The simple Shariah guidebooks confine themselves to correcting religious practices. For instance the Shariat kā Lath was one such guidebook (Khaliq 1290/1873). It is especially meant to admonish those who do not say their prayers and the words ‘risālā bē namāzgān’ and ‘nasīhat nāmā’ are part of the title. Another such book, this time by an anonymous author, explains rituals of religion in Urdu verse. For instance this book says about performing ablution prior to worship.

Farz ghusal mē tīn sanbhāl
Paēhlē mū mē pānī dāl
(In bathing there are three mandatory practices first put water in the mouth).

The manuscript of this book consists of only three pages pasted in another work (Anonymous c. 18th century). Other such examples are Rāh-ē-jannat, Masāil-ē-Hindi (Anonymous 1233/1818).
A related genre was the description of the ‘day of judgment’. Shah Rafiuddin’s Persian pamphlet Qiāmat Nāmā [Account of the Day of Judgment], a work of this kind, was translated by Syed Abdullah Ibn Bahadur Ali into ‘rekhta Hindi’ (i.e. Urdu) as Dāb ul Ākhirat (Abdullah 1239/1863).4

These works were printed several times and some remain in print even now. Indeed, they were found so useful for the shaping of the pious personality that they were recommended even to women.5 However, as such printed material spread it sharpened and articulated sectarian and sub-sectarian identities. In this context it is useful to turn to the development of these identities during this period.

THE AHL-I-HADITH

The Ahl-i-Hadith, in common with many eighteenth century Muslim thinkers inspired by Shah Waliullah, wanted to reform Indian Islam. This was their response to the political weakness of the Muslims in India. The Ahl-i-Hadith, moreover, were also inspired by Abdul Wahab (1703–1792) of Saudi Arabia, who was completely antagonistic to the veneration of the tombs of saints and Sufism as it flourished in his day. The Ahl-i-Hadith, or Wahhabis as they were called in India, wrote learned treatises in Persian but they also understood the value of spreading their message in Urdu and other languages, especially Bengali, to the laity. These tracts have been described in many works and Churchill gives a succinct summary of the important ones (Churchill 1975: 276–281). This section introduces some of the more prominent writers and their works. Wilayat Ali (b. 1790), one of their leaders in Patna, taught the rudiments of the faith in simple Urdu. He got the translation of the Quran by Shah Abdul Qadir, as well as some writings of Shah Ismail in Urdu printed locally and ‘distributed among the members of the gatherings, which included some women also’ (Ahmad 1966: 84). Another Ahl-i-Hadith thinker, Haji Badruddin, wrote his fatwā in
Bengali verse which, of course, must have appealed to ordinary people (Ahmad 1966: 237).

As the Wahhabis fought the British as well as the Sikhs in the present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa they emphasized jihad [religious war or *Bellum Justum*]. Some of their tracts praised the concept of the ‘just war’. These tracts were in Urdu and were easily accessible to the public. The British were well aware of the ‘Rebel camp on the Punjab Frontier’ as W.W. Hunter calls it. It was established in 1831 and finally defeated in 1868 (Hunter 1871: 3). The main leader of the fighters, Sayyid Ahmad, preached from 1820 to 1822 and Hunter reports that a number of Urdu poems foretelling the downfall of the British were in circulation (Hunter 1871: 51–54). The itinerant Wahhabi preacher whom Hunter describes must also have preached in the same language (Ibid., 59). The Ahl-i-Hadith created prose literature in Urdu which has been described as follows:

Addressed mainly to the common people the manner of presentation is geared to their mental level. The narrative is simple and conversational. It is in sharp contrast to the ornamental rhymed prose then generally in use. Arguments are backed with quotations from the Qur’ān and Hadīth, translated in Urdu. Didactic stories and similes are used to illustrate the points (Ahmad 1966: 282).

Thus, at least by 1820, as the *Awadh Akhbār* of 15 January 1870 noted, ‘religious works of fifty years are now all being compiled in Urdu’. However, as Marc Gaborieau has pointed out in his well-researched study on this subject, most Wahhabi writings (as well as those of other sects, one might add) were in Persian. It was only after 1857 that ‘the ratio of Persian to Urdu is reversed’ (1995: 172). However, the fact that there were Urdu writings at all from the early nineteenth century onwards suggests that Urdu was considered by the Wahhabi preachers as having the potential to advance their cause. It might be added that the period of lofty Urdu poetry, at least in North India, is
generally dated to Vali Dakani (d. 1707) whose poetry stands at the beginning of the classical age of the Urdu ghazal. The implication is that this high literary pedestal owed its existence to the widespread use of Urdu in other domains such as the dissemination of religious ideas.

**The Deobandis**

The Deobandi interpretation of Islam, which is strict and puritanical, goes against the saint-ridden, folk Islam of ordinary Indian Muslims. Its literature in Urdu is described in brief outline by Churchill (1975: 283–286). Because of numerous pamphlets and monographs against the saint-ridden folk Islam, popular among common people as well as the Sharia’h guide books, the Deobandi version of Islam spread among urban, educated Muslims. It also gained momentum as the graduates of Deoband occupied mosques and the Bahishti Zēvar [The Jewellery of Paradise] of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (d. 1943), a detailed and comprehensive Sharia’h guidebook primarily meant for women, became a household name in North India and the areas now in Pakistan.

In Pakistan the Deobandi madrassas increased from 1,779 in 1988 to nearly 7,000 in 2002 (GOP 1988; Rahman 2004: 190–191) and are now reported to be more than 12,000 (GOP 2006: 23). They are also ones that are associated with militant and extremist Islam since the Taliban, who imposed a very stringent version of the Sharia’h on Afghanistan (Rashid 2000), were students of these madrassas. They are concentrated in KP and Balochistan which are also associated with Islamic radicalism. The language of the Deobandis, even in KP where the mother-tongue of most students is Pashto, remains Urdu. It is also the language of examination of these madrassas as well as the language of the preachers in mosques, of pamphlets meant to refute other sects and for carrying out administrative functions of the Deobandi seminaries,
In short, Urdu is the main language for the dissemination of the Deobandi ideology in South Asia.

**THE BARELVIS**

The Barelvis—or Ahl-i-Sunnat as they call themselves—are inspired by the work of Ahmed Raza Khan (1856–1921). Ahmed Raza, belonging to an *ashrāf* family of Pathan origin from Bareilly, belonged to the Urdu culture of UP. He founded a madrassa called Manzar al-Islam. By this time Urdu was the established language of Islam in India, therefore, the Barelvis used it in their sermons, popular poetry and the theological debates with their rivals, the Deobandis and the Ahl-i-Hadith. They also had two major presses in Bareilly, the Hasani Press and the Matba’ Ahl-i-Sunnat wal Jama’at. They published almost all the *fatāwās* of Ahmed Raza Khan (Sanyal 1996: 83). Besides, there is a large number of *Nūr Nāmās*, and not only in Urdu but in all major languages of South Asian Muslims, on this theme. Barelvi Islam, affirming the intercession of saints, is the folk Islam of South Asia and fulfils the spiritual needs of the people. Its tenets and interpretation of Islamic law have been spread widely by an Urdu work, Amjad ‘Ali Azami’s *Bahār-ē-Shari’at*, [The Spring of the Islamic Canonical Law] (n.d.) which is the equivalent of the Deobandi work *Bahishti Zēvar*.

**OTHER SCHOOLS OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT**

In Lucknow the Farangi Maehli family of religious scholars had been teaching Islamic studies since the eighteenth century. Mulla Nizamaddin, the inventor of the curriculum called the *Dars-i-Nizāmī*, was a speaker of Urdu (Robinson 2002: 46–52). In 1905 Maulana Abdul Bari created the ‘*Madrassa-i Āliyā Nizāmiyyā* which continued its work until the 1960s (Robinson 2002: 71). ‘A course of books was taught in Urdu’ in this Cambridge of India to those who did not undertake the study of the full *Dars-i-Nizāmī* (Ibid.,
The Farangi Maehli family of alims had ‘produced some of the earliest Urdu newspapers which still exist, *Tilism-i-Lakhnaw*, which appeared in the year before the Mutiny uprising, and *Kārnāmā*, which appeared in the three decades after it’ (Ibid., 133).

**URDU AS THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Maulana Qasim Nanautvi (1833–1877), the pioneer of the Islamic seminary at Deoband, mentions with approval that the Delhi College was using Urdu as the medium of instruction instead of Persian (Gilani Vol. 1, 1954: 100). The famous madrassa he and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829–1905) established at Deoband in 1867, which pioneered the Deobandi movement, used Urdu as a medium of instruction (for description of the beginnings see Azhar 1985; Metcalf 1982). Thus, as Barbara Metcalf has pointed out, it ‘was instrumental in establishing Urdu as a language of communication among the Muslims of India’ (Metcalf 1982: 102–103). At Deoband, translations from Arabic to Urdu and vice versa, were part of the curriculum (Azhar 1985: 90). There were also classes of Urdu (Ibid., 92). Urdu was also taught in the basic *maktabs* where the Quran was taught in Arabic without understanding. Besides the usual primers, the letters of Ghalib, being paradigmatic samples of simple and powerful Urdu writing, were also taught. Besides, Urdu educational literature, especially created through British agency for ordinary schools, was also used in the madrassas. These included ‘the poems of Zauq and Ghalib, and for women Nazir Ahmad’s *Mīrāt-ul-Urūs* and *Taubat-un-Nusūh*’ (Churchill 1975: 273). Books on ethical instruction, equally valid for all religious communities, such as the ubiquitous *Dharam Singh kā Qissā*, a didactic tale of learning to avoid common follies and ignorance and pass a fruitful life, were also taught. The major effect of this transition from Persian to Urdu was that more people could internalize the arguments and information which was otherwise only memorized. Also, formal education creates a veritable
industry of guides for students, exegeses, translations and summaries. These became widely available in due course thus bringing far more people in contact with religious ideas of some kind than it was possible to do so in the age when Urdu was not the medium of instruction in the Islamic seminaries.

**URDU AS THE LANGUAGE OF DEBATE IN INDIAN ISLAM**

So common was the use of Urdu as a religious language that sects considered heretical—such as the Ahmedis (or Qadianis)—also used it for writing and missionary work. Although Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (1835?–1908) wrote in Arabic and Persian for authenticity, he also wrote extensively in Urdu to disseminate his message among the masses (Friedman 1989: 135). He published ‘at least 60 works in Urdu most of which appeared before 1900. Indeed, Urdu appears to have been the major language of the Ahmadis’ (Churchill 1975: 292). He even claimed that ‘he received his revelations in Urdu more than Arabic’ (Ibid., 293). His spiritual successors also continued to write in Urdu.

Another sect, considered heretical by mainstream ulema, the Ahl-i-Quran, argued that the hadis is not reliable, therefore, guidance can only be obtained from the Quran. Ghulam Ahmed Parvez (b. 1903), the most well-known proponent of the sect in the twentieth century, wrote extensively in Urdu. He began with writing in the *Tarjumānu’l-Quran*, the mouthpiece of the Jamā’at-i Islāmī but developed heterodox ideas which Khurshid Ahmad describes as socialistic (Ahmad 1972: 320–328). He even argued that prayers can be said in Urdu instead of Arabic (Mustafa 1990: 241).

Urdu is also the language of Islamic revivalism. Sayyid Abu’l A’la Maududi (1903–1979), the pioneer of revivalist Islam, through the efforts of his Jamā’at-i Islāmī, wrote his entire work in idiomatic and accessible Urdu (Ahmad 1972: 328–348). He was himself from Delhi and spoke idiomatic Urdu at home (Nasr
1994: 3). He is a pioneer in using easily comprehensible Urdu rather than the Arabic-laden jargon of maulvis which was used by writers on religious subjects earlier. He is also an Urdu journalist whose journal *Tarjumānu’l-Quran* appealed to the middle class of the urban areas of North India and Pakistan. Maududi’s books were read by middle class professionals in Pakistan who have a tremendous influence in the Jamā’at-i. These people supported Urdu in Pakistan against all other languages.

All the debates of the Pakistani and the Indian ulema in the last century and at present are in Urdu. Their writings, refuting each other’s beliefs, are in the same language. The first important movement of a religious kind in Urdu was for the refutation of Christianity. This is described by Powell (1993) and Moinuddin Aqil both before 1857 and after it (Aqil 2008: 143–148 and 216–221). The first book of this type (i.e. refutation of non-Islamic beliefs) in Urdu is said to be a response by Ikram Uddin Shahjahanpuri to a priest’s answers to questions about religious beliefs. This was written in 1245/1829–30. However, the first printed book for the refutation of Christianity in Urdu is Abbas Ali’s book, entitled in Arabic, *Khilāsa Saulat ul Zaigham ‘Ali A’ da’ Ibn-ē-Maryam* (1248/1832–33) (Aqil 2008: 146). The missionaries initially wrote in Persian but then shifted to Urdu so that the tract *Dīn-e Haq kī Taēhqīq* (1842) by William Smith (d. 1859) and Charles Leupolt (d. 1884) were in Urdu. Carl Gottlieb Pfander (d. 1868) who argued with the ulema between 1844 and 1847 at Agra used Urdu. Among the most famous of the ulema who refuted Christianity is Rahmat Ullah Kairanvi (1818–1891), whose debate (*munāzarā*) at Agra with Pfander is well-known as a great success among Islamic circles in South Asia. His refutation of Christianity in six volumes appeared in Arabic in 1864. It was soon translated into Urdu and is now available in English translation as *Izhār al-Haq: The Truth Revealed* (2003) (Izhar 2010). Even newspapers, such as the *Manshūr-ē-Muhammadī* from
Bangalore took upon themselves the duty of refuting Christianity (Aqil 2008: 501).

And it was not only Christianity which was refuted in Urdu. Indeed, almost all of the literature refuting heretical or alien beliefs as well as the beliefs of other sects and sub-sects is in Urdu (Rahman 2008b: 204–220). For instance, the criticism of Maududi and its reply is in Urdu (Yusuf 1968); all religious arguments are in the same language (Ludhianwi 1995) and so are all the writings of the ulema whether against Western philosophies (Usmani 1997) or other matters. These texts, called munāzarā texts by the present author, are widely distributed in Pakistan and India. They are not necessarily prescribed in the madrassas, at least not in the printed syllabi any more though they used to be earlier, but they are constantly reprinted which suggests that they are read. These texts are polemical in tone and use the disputation skills honed to effect in the madrassas where the art of refuting the doctrinal position of other sects, sub-sects and heretical or alien ideologies is taught. As the texts are in Urdu their arguments are internalized whereas the traditional textbooks of the Dars-i-Nizami are in Arabic and are learned by heart but not internalized as these Urdu texts are (Rahman 2008 b).

In addition to the texts, there are also the ‘Jihadi’ or militant texts. These are pamphlets, magazines and tracts which argue that the leadership in Muslim countries, including Pakistan, has sold itself to the West; that there is an international Zionist-Christian-Hindu conspiracy against Muslims; and that the appropriate response to this is armed struggle (jihad). Some of these discourses also justify suicide bombing as part of asymmetrical warfare. These texts circulate in Pakistan in mosques, madrassas, bus stops etc and are mostly in Urdu though some are in Pashto also (PIPS 2010).
URDU IN RELIGIOUS POETRY
AND REFORMIST FICTION

Besides the use of Urdu in the domains mentioned above, one may not forget the considerable influence of religious poetry in Urdu. There was, for instance, an upsurge of the nā‘at (poetry in praise of the Prophet of Islam) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the Barelvi sub-sector popularized the celebration of the Eid Milad un Nabi (birthday of the Prophet). The nā‘at poetry was read out in these functions and it was always a prefatory part of all stories in verse. A large number of poets who have such verse to their credit have been mentioned by Khan (1985: 114–137). Ahmad Raza Khan, the ideologue of the Barelvi sub-sector who has been mentioned earlier, himself wrote poetry of this genre which are in the lofty tradition of Urdu poetry of his times (see example in Sanyal 1996: 146–148). The main text of the Barelvi maslak is devotion to the Prophet of Islam and many of the verses are about this subject (Ibid., 155–158). He also celebrated the Milād with much enthusiasm described by his biographer Usha Sanyal (1996: 159–160).

Elegies (marsiyās) about the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in the Battle of Karbala were also popular among South Asian Muslims, especially the Shias. Indeed, they became an important part of the oral and written culture of both the Shia kingdoms of the Deccan and the kingdom of Oudh. And not only the Shias but also the Sunnis read and narrated marsiyās all over North India and present-day Pakistan. Such elegies were written in Urdu by poets such as Hashmi Bijapuri (1656–1672), Mulla Vajhi, etc., in the Deccan (Shareef 2004: 767; Siddiqui 1967: 716–717). Later, in Lucknow, Mir Anees (d. 1874) and Mirza Dabeer (d. 1875) became famous marsiyā poets whose Urdu verses were part of the mourning for the martyrs of Karbala in Muharram (Siddiqui 1967: 721–792). In Lucknow, for instance, Minister Agha Mir patronized the writing of religious poetry especially marsiyās (Ansarullah 1988: 78). The marsiyā became such a cultural trend
that even Hindus wrote them. Akbar Haider Kashmiri has compiled the work of some such poets in a book entitled *Hindū Marsiyā Gō Shu ‘arā* (Kashmiri 2004).

Reformist literature in Urdu—such as the work of Nazir Ahmad—which will be mentioned in more detail in the chapter on education (11) also helped spread the idea that adherence to Islam—the ‘high church’ rather than the ‘low church’ version (Gellner 1983: 74)—would counteract social evils. A good example of this is Rasheed un Nisa’s novel *Islāh un Nisā*, which contrasts two kinds of marriages: the *shara‘ī* and the ‘*urfi‘. The former is simple, dignified, inexpensive, and as the name implies, in consonance with Islamic law. The latter is full of irrational traditions, highly extravagant, and against Islamic injunctions as dancing and consulting astrologers (Muslim and Hindu ones) are involved. The message is that reform involves Islamization of lifestyle and abandonment of the syncretic practices of folk Islam. Songs with names of Hindu historical and religious personalities (Ram, Lachman) are especially objected to (Nisa 1894: 86) and a hardened, religiously inspired Muslim identity is constructed. The contemporary equivalent of such a movement is the Al-Huda movement pioneered by Farhat Hashmi in Pakistan which teaches the Quran and the practice of Islam in one’s personal life to women in Urdu and, to a lesser extent, in English rather than Arabic (Ahmad 2009: 42). Thus, the movements for societal reform also function as movements for Islamization of the self through the medium of Urdu.

**URDU IN MODERN SUFI WRITING**

From the first half of the nineteenth century Urdu came to replace Persian in the Sufi tradition also. Writing on the Sufis of the Deccan Nile Green tells us:

> It was mainly the development of this tradition of Urdu *tadhkirāt* that provided the means by which the memory of the saints was passed
on to modern times after the collapse of literary participation in Persian. Sufi biographical writings formed part of this growth of Urdu prose writing and Aurangabad also saw the composition of Sufi texts in Urdu by residents of the city attached to the new Sufi tradition of Banē Miyān, as well as the featuring of its older Mughal saints in new Urdu Sufi biographical texts written elsewhere in the Deccan (Green 2006: 124).

A Tazkarā in Urdu which has gained wide circulation and is still being reprinted is the Tazkarā-ē-Ghausiā, which is the hagiography of Syed Ghaus Ali Shah (1219/1804—1297/1880), written by Gul Hasan Shah in 1301/1884 (see Shah 1884). The nineteenth century was the time for a renaissance of Indian Islam and, thanks to the printing press, the large number of publications coming out in the form of books, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers disseminated Islamic thought in Urdu. In this context the role of the Darul Musannifin, a major publisher and disseminator of Islamic literature, is important (for Shibli and Sulaiman Nadvi’s contribution to it see Nadvi 1986: 95–140). Khurshid Ahmad, while writing on Islamic literature in Urdu, mentions the pioneering role of Shibli, Sulaiman Nadvi, Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Mohammad Iqbal, Inayatuyl lah Khan Mashriqi (1888–1960), Ghulam Ahmed Parvez, and Maulana Maududi, who have been mentioned already in the dissemination of Islamic writings (Ahmad 1972: 261–338). All of these famous intellectuals wrote in the shadow of the empire and their major concern was to reconcile Islam with the seemingly overwhelming dominance of the West and to give faith to Muslims that Islam had a meaningful philosophy to offer to them in order not to be inundated by Western and specifically Christian thought. They wrote on all Islamic issues but in a modern perspective and also on political, educational and social matters.

Thus Urdu came to possess the highest number of Islamic writings among all the languages in South Asia. It had translations
and exegeses of the Quran (Khan 1987: 18; Naqvi 1992); Islamic textbooks associated with teaching in the madrassas; the highest number of elegies commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain; the writings of revivalists and Islamic pressure groups in Pakistan and India and several other sub-genres of religious writings. Thus, texts supporting and nourishing all kinds of Islamic traditions in South Asia—the orthodox, the Sufi, the modernist, the revivalist and even those considered heretical—were increasingly available in Urdu rather than only in Persian and Arabic during British rule in India. In short, Urdu became the oral and written language of Islam in South Asia during the modern age (for a list of books on religious themes in Urdu see Khan 1985: 76–173). Let us now come to the implications of these facts for Pakistan.

**URDU, MUSLIM IDENTITY AND PAKISTAN**

Islam and Urdu both contributed to the creation of Pakistan, a state for the Muslims of British India, in 1947. Islam was the principal identity symbol of the Indian Muslims who got mobilized to give a united opposition to the Hindu majority to obtain maximum political and economic advantages and then, under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948), partitioned India to create Pakistan and Bharat (India). In this context the works of Shibli Nomani, Altaf Husain Hali, and Iqbal played a great role. Shibli’s books on the biographies of Imam Abu Hanifa, *Sīrat un No’mān*, and that of Omar Farooq, *Al-Fārūq*, have been called extensions of the Hanafi-and Ahl-e-Hadith debate and the Shia-Sunni debate respectively. Nevertheless, they played a great role in making Urdu the language of Islamic themes which were read by a large number of the Urdu-reading public (Ikram 1971: 455). Hali’s long poems such as ‘Mad-ō-jazr-ē-Islām’ (1879) appealed to Indian Muslims and were recited all over India. Similarly Iqbal’s ‘Shikwā’ and ‘Jawāb-ē-Shikwā’ also reinforced the Indian Muslims’ sense of nostalgia for past glory
and prescribed a return to Islam as a solution for all problems. Urdu, which had become a symbol of Muslim identity during the nineteenth century, also became the subsidiary symbol of the Indian Muslim identity which helped establish the new state.

Both Urdu and Islam came to play different, and even opposing, roles in the power dynamics of post-partition Muslim communities in Pakistan and North India. In Pakistan, the ruling elite, which was mostly Punjabi-speaking, continued to consolidate its dominance over the different ethnicities comprising Pakistan, in the name of Islam and Urdu. Even literary figures were divided along ideological lines which led to the creation of a movement for Islamic literature in Urdu as described by Anwar Sadeed, among others (Sadeed 1985: 600–610). Thus Ghulam Mustafa Khan, writing during Ziaul Haq’s rule, praises the military ruler’s encouragement of Islamic themes in Urdu literature while running down the literature of the Progressive Movement for its alleged promotion of nudity, atheism and socialism (Khan 1985: 254–266). The Islamic movement opposed both the left-leaning Progressive Movement as well as the politically centrist modernist movement because both were perceived to support Western sexually permissive mores. The movement was inspired by Maududi and his view of creating Islamic minds in order to create an Islamic state. The movement was opposed not only to Western ideologies (socialism and liberalism) but also to ethnic, identity-based politics in Pakistan.

In East Pakistan the Bengali ethnicity, mobilized initially by the identity symbol of the Bengali language, created Bangladesh in 1971 (Umar 2004: 190–229). In West Pakistan, the Sindhis, Baloch, Pashtuns, and Siraikis have all used their respective languages as ethnic identity symbols to procure power and a more equitable distribution of power and resources in the state (Rahman 1996). Thus in Pakistan, Urdu came to be associated with the ruling elite as far as its domination over the weaker
URDU AS AN ISLAMIC LANGUAGE

ethnic groups was concerned. The strongest religious influence on the educated, urban lower-middle and middle-classes is that of the Jamāʿat-i Islāmī, who were strong supporters of Urdu. According to Seyyed Vali Nasr:

The party [Jamāʿat]... much like the Muslim League had viewed Urdu as the linchpin of the two-nation theory and a cornerstone of Pakistani nationalism. Allegiance to Urdu was therefore an article of faith in the Jamaʿat. The rural and urban poor are as deeply rooted in vernaculars such as Baluchi, Pakhtun, Punjabi, Siraiki, and Sindhi. Outside of the Muhajir communities of Sind, Urdu is not used below the lower-middle class (Nasr 1994: 85).

To add to Nasr’s argument, the Jamāʿat considered Urdu as part of its cultural agenda of resisting both Westernization through English and the weakening of the nation-state through ethnic nationalism based on language identity.

Because of the religious right’s support of Urdu, both the ethno-nationalists, using the identity symbols of the indigenous languages of the people, as well as the Westernized, English-speaking elite, oppose Urdu. The latter feel that this language would empower the religious lobby which, in their view, would suppress women and probably inhibit creativity, arts and research. Hence Khalid Ahmed, a well-known liberal intellectual from Lahore, argues that Urdu is intrinsically not a progressive language while English is (Ahmed 1998). Other Westernized people oppose Urdu both in the domains of education and in the media because it threatens to undermine their own elitist status.

While in Pakistan, Urdu is often associated with pro-establishment and right-wing forces; in India it is anti-establishment and generally stands for the autonomy, identity and rights of the Muslim community. Though spoken only in parts of North India, and that too in the urban areas, it is a symbol of the Muslim identity for most Indian Muslims. However,
the third generation of Muslims in ghettoized areas like Old Delhi, as mentioned earlier, are moving away from Urdu, which indexes a lower-class, uneducated Muslim identity for them (Ahmad 2007: 148–150). At the upper political level, however, Muslims feel that the fight to preserve Urdu is part of keeping India a pluralistic democracy (Farouqui 2006). Apart from writings by scholars and Muslim politicians in India, the clergy regards Urdu as a language of Muslims even though some exceptional non-Muslims, like J.S. Gandhi, who heard a Mullah pontificating to that effect in 1996, felt that Urdu is not the property of Muslims (Gandhi 2002: 139). In India, in fact, the madrassas are seen as repositories of skills pertaining to the Urdu script which is not generally taught in the secular stream of education (Winkelmann 2006: 259). Even in Vellore, South India, where the mother-tongue is Tamil, the madrassas offer Urdu as well as Tamil as a medium of instruction for the first four years in the madrassa (Tschacher 2006: 206). The Urdu script has penetrated the Tamil-speaking world so much that the children, while reading Arwi texts—which are in Tamil written in the Arabic script—use ‘the Persian-based Urdu alphabet’ and get confused especially while producing the ‘p’ as this ‘is written in an entirely different way in the two scripts’ (Tschacher 2001: 64). Indeed, a new identity is being indexed with Urdu in India: that of the Islamic clergyman. Urdu is often called the ‘Maulana ki Zubān’ (the language of the Muslim clergyman) in India. They are the preservers of the distinctive phonemes of Urdu as well as the Perso-Arabic diction which distinguishes its high variety from Hindi (Ahmad 2007: 208). In pre-partition Bengal, according to S.K. Chatterji, Urdu was called “‘Nabī-jī-kā-Bhā sā” or “the Holy Prophet’s speech”’ (Chatterji 1942: 162) and this association with Islam continues even now. In Bangladesh, though created on the basis of Bengali-based ethno-nationalism, Urdu is still used in the madrassas.
There are two kinds of madrassas in Bangladesh, the Qaōmī (spelled Quomi in the original source) and the ‘Āliyā (Anzar 2003). The former are entirely private while the latter, though mostly private, are financially supported to a large extent by the government. In one of them, the Jami’a Islamia Yunusia, was formed by an Urdu-speaking cleric from UP and the curriculum is still printed in Urdu (Kabir, H. 2009: 426). In another such madrassa, this time for girls ‘the teaching is in Urdu and Arabic’ (Mannan and Mannan 2010). If it is true that the number of madrassas has grown by 27.9 per cent vis a vis other educational institutions which have grown 16 per cent, and there are around 10,000 quomi madrassas and 20 per cent students get educated in both types of madrassas (Ibid., 2010), then Urdu certainly has a niche in the religious education sector of Bangladesh. The point is not whether Urdu is well-taught or whether the average student in a madrassa is proficient in the language. The point is that Urdu is associated with Islam in Bangladesh as it is in India and Pakistan.

Because of this link, a number of Muslim clerics learnt Urdu and read Islamic literature in that language. It remains associated with Islam in the minds of those who see themselves as members of a South Asian Islamic community. Thus Farhad Mazhar, a writer of Urdu in Bangladesh, told Pakistani writer Asif Farrukhi in 1988 that ‘Urdu should be reclaimed as an integral part of the subcontinent’s Islamic culture’ (Farrukhi 1989: 86). In short, the madrassa network in South Asia is the biggest supporter of Urdu. And, while doing so it necessarily associates the language with Islam.

THE POLITICAL USES OF LANGUAGE PLANNING OF URDU IN PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, the ruling elite, which is predominantly Punjabi, has used Urdu next only to Islam itself as a means of creating national unity which should transcend ethnic division. The major
fear driving this policy of using Urdu as the symbol of Islam is to confront the Indian ‘other’ from which Pakistan separated and which is still feared as it would absorb Pakistan unless Pakistan kept emphasizing the difference between Hindus and Muslims, the major one being religion itself.

Since the state used Urdu as a symbol of Islamic identity, its language planning activities revolved around it. One instance of legitimizing West Pakistani domination of East Pakistan was the Islamization of Bengali. The central government established adult education centres to teach Bengali through the Arabic Script (PO, 4 Oct 1950). The Language Committee set up in 1950 recommended non-Sanskritized Bengali and the teaching of Urdu (LAD-B, 31 Oct 1951: 25). At this period, because Bengali ethnic identity was expressed through the Bengali language, Urdu was seen as an imposition by the West Pakistani elite.

Another area in which the Islamic identity was associated with Urdu and its script was neologism—the coining of new terms to express modern concepts in the languages of Pakistan. The Urdu script was considered the desiderated script for languages without an old established script such as Punjabi, Siraiki, Balochi, Brahvi and, of course, the unwritten languages of the country. In Balochistan, the convention on the Balochi script, held in September 1972, became a battle ground between the left-leaning ethno-nationalists and the right-leaning Pakistani nationalists. The former rejected the Urdu script even preferring the Roman one to it while the latter insisted upon it (Rahman 1996: 166).

In short, Urdu and Islam are used to subordinate the ethnic elites in favour of the Punjabi elite in Pakistan but, ironically enough, both are in fact subordinated to the interests of the Westernized, English-using, urban elite. The political uses of Urdu as a part of the Islamic and Pakistani nationalist identity are, therefore, complex and contradictory.
It may be said, therefore, that Urdu, which is strongly linked with the Pakistani Islamic identity, is also used to construct and reinforce the Islamic identity in the rest of South Asia.

NOTES

1. While some words are given in the glossary the meaning of this line is not clear to this author.

2. The copy consulted had the following title in English besides the words Qur’an Majīd 1285/1868–69 in Urdu. Kurân with Persian Interlinear and Two Hindustani Versions (OIOC).

3. The book was written in Persian and translated by the author in Urdu. However, since he died the second chapter was translated by Mohammad Sultan Khan who called it the Taqwiat ul Īmān and published it in 1876.

4. The author’s name is missing on the manuscript in the OIOC but there is a note saying that it has been translated from the Persian work of Shah Rafiuddin.

5. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi includes a number of the books mentioned here as being ‘useful’ for women in his Bahishti Zēvar such as: the translation of Shah Rafi Uddin’s Qiāmat Nāmā in Urdu; Shari‘at kā lāṭh; Tambīh ul Ghāfīlin; Nāsihat Nāmā etc (Thanvi n.d. part–10: 60–61)
Urdu as the Language of Love

While the association of Urdu with Islam is still strong it is often forgotten that, paradoxically enough, the language was also associated with love—the amorous and erotic aspects of life. This second association was suppressed by reformers and the one with Islam has won out, but it was a constant refrain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and should be given the attention it deserves in this study. This chapter, therefore, traces out how Urdu developed the reputation of being the language of love—something which its critics call it sometimes even now—during the heyday of classical Urdu poetry. Let us then begin with such a critic.

Haris Chandra Bharatendu (1849–1882), the father of modern Hindi literature (Dalmia 1997), said in his statement before the Hunter Commission (1882):

There is a secret motive which induces the worshippers of Urdu to devote themselves to its cause. It is the language of dancing-girls and prostitutes. The depraved sons of wealthy Hindus and youths of substance and loose character, when in society of harlots, concubines, and pimps, speak Urdu, as it is the language of their mistresses and beloved ones. The correct pronunciation of Urdu, with its shin, ghain, and guttural kaf, is indispensable, and one unable to twist his tongue into unnatural and unpleasant distortions is not a welcome or an agreeable companion (Edn. Com. NWP 1884: 201).

Another respondent, Siva Prashad, said that ‘some of the women take up also amorous and vicious books, such as Mir Hasan ki
Masnavi, Indarsabha, etc. etc’ (Ibid., 323). Even books in Urdu translation, such as the *Alif Lailā* and *Qissā Tōtā Mainā*, were blamed for creating mistrust for women and obsession with sex. Thus in Upendranath Ashk’s (1910–1996) short story ‘*Chētan kī Mā*’, Pandit Shadi Ram locks his wife in the house when he goes out because of his reading of these works. Both the respondents were supporters of Hindi against Urdu while the Hindi-Urdu controversy was going on during this period. Could it be that the association of Urdu with love and eroticism, which they had brought up, was merely an allegation? A stratagem to defeat the pro-Urdu lobby? An anti-Urdu (and possibly anti-Muslim?) prejudice? Or, could it be that Urdu really did have such associations in the minds of many members of the intelligentsia? And, if so, why is there so much silence about them among Pakistani and Indian Muslims nowadays? Does this silence itself indicate certain ideological and political imperatives which can be understood once the erotic and amorous themes are documented?

These are some of the questions which this chapter will attempt to answer. It is not claimed that this is an original discovery. The claims made here are much more modest. First, to bring together the vast and scattered references to the amorous and the erotic known only to scholars of Urdu, and more importantly, to bring out into the open what has deliberately been blotted out of the collective memory of users of Urdu in South Asia which, I believe, is necessary in a social and political history of Urdu.

This association with the amorous and the erotic was primarily with Urdu poetry, but since the language was taught through literature, it was extended to the language itself. The reformers of Muslim society, aware of this nexus, tried to break it and to strengthen the association with Islam which was also formed roughly during the same period as we have seen in the previous chapter. As the educated gentry (*āshrāf*) studied Persian texts till
the middle of the nineteenth century, the British officials and the Muslim reformers made deliberate attempts to purge the curricula of them (Rahman 2002: 499–509; Stark 2008: 93–100). The erotic and the amorous was associated with moral degeneration and decadence, and was blamed for the backwardness and the political defeat of the Muslim ruling elite. For the ulema it was not only associated with all these things, but was also a great sin. Thus, in order to regenerate a powerful Muslim ‘nation’ (qaūm), a new literature, chaste and moral, had to be created. The moral and political imperative and the steps taken to bring the amorous and erotic themes in Urdu literature in disrepute, and create a culture shame and silence about them, persist to this day. Thus, the textbook committees in Pakistan exclude love poetry, even from the masters of the ghazal, out of the Urdu curricula. In India, too, there is the same shamefacedness and reluctance to teach about love and the night of the union (Shab-ē-visāl) in the classroom (Qidvai 1987: 21). And that is why Pakistani Television is squeamish about a married couple holding hands on the screen.

The erotic is excluded to such an extent from the officially constructed identities of Muslims that the classics of Persian and Arabic, which are proudly owned as being Muslim heritage languages, are not read in unexpurgated editions, at least in Pakistani universities and perhaps in Indian ones too. Hardly any scholar touches the erotic as a subject of serious research, although writings on the subject become popular among that group of the intelligentsia of Urdu letters which can only be described as the equivalent of ‘the Other Victorians’. For instance, Zamir Uddin Ahmad’s study of the sexuality of the beloved (Ahmad 1990) created a sensation and has had several reprints. Works of scholarship on such themes have been published by South Asians living, or at least publishing, in the West (notably Vanita and Kidwai 2000) but those published in Pakistan and India—a study of sexuality in the Urdu short story
URDU AS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

(Khan 2002) and boy-love in Urdu poetry (Azhar 1995) for example—are superficial and lack analysis. This is hardly surprising considering that in Pakistan the construction of the Muslim identity suppresses the erotic, associating it with the decadent ‘West’ or the sensational nudity of Bollywood. And in India it is a theme which does not bear placing in a serious context, either in Muslim politics or in the Hindutva one for both of which it is a stigma to be shunned. In short, the reformist discourse excludes the erotic and amorous for ideological and political reasons.

Such exclusion began in the nineteenth century and some of the reformist themes of the literature produced in Urdu during this period bear closer re-examination because they tell us what kind of associations existed in the minds of the educated public about Urdu poetry.

REFORMIST URDU LITERATURE ON THE EROTIC THEME

The Victorian British, in their puritanical zeal, professed to be scandalized by the expression of sexuality in both Muslim and Hindu classics. As the Muslim classics were part of the curricula, which they also studied when they learned Persian, they began to condemn it unequivocally (Rahman 2002: 503–508; Stark 2008: 90–95) For instance, although the vāsōkhīt never has obscene words, Matthew Kempson, appointed Director of Public Instruction of the North Western Provinces in 1861, condemned it as ‘trash’. Indeed, he went ahead to condemn the fact that Urdu ‘which we take pains in utilizing as an organ of education in the masses, should thus become a vehicle of immorality.’ (Stark 2008: 93). In this crusade against erotic literature, which has been touched upon synoptically as far as the British are concerned because it has been dealt with in detail earlier by other researchers, the Indian reformers also joined in. Let us now refer to the work of some prominent Muslim literary figures who
brought about the consciousness of the need for reform in Urdu.

Mohammad Hussain Azad expresses this consciousness about Urdu’s association with the erotic in his Āb-ē-Hayāt, when he complains that people agree to stigmatise Urdu as a language which can only express amorous subjects and not others. For him this is a great blot on the reputation of ‘our national language’ (hamārī qaōmī zubān) (Azad c. 19th century: 73). Nazir Ahmed’s novel Fasānā-ē-Muttilā (1887) begins with the following reflections regarding Urdu poetry:

What is there in our poetry except love affairs (ishq bāzī) and lack of manners (bē taēhzībī). Boys of respectable (sharīf) families learn habits leading to corruption from this very school....(Ahmed 2004: 621).

The protagonist, Muttila, was taught Persian because it was assumed that one could not learn Urdu without knowing it, but he was harmed by it, since he became conscious of his beauty (Ahmed 2004: 630). Boys ogled the good-looking Muttila, making him narcissistic (Ibid., 633). Women—albeit after his family had rejected the match for their daughter—called him ‘hijrā, zankhā’ (effeminate, eunuch, hermaphrodite) (Ahmed 2004: 639). He was always staring at the mirror and was not interested in his ordinary-looking wife (Ibid., 641). The author describes Muttila’s getting facial hair in a full page. He tells us how the youth’s admirers forsook him and how he became lonely and sad (Ibid., 642). But now Muttila turns to women and, of course, his taste for Urdu poetry becomes stronger. Among others, he praises Rind Lakhnavi’s Sarāpā called ‘Muraqqā-ē-khūbī’ which describes and praises all parts of the woman’s body as, indeed, all poems of this genre do (Mohsin 1861).

In Nazir Ahmed’s Taubat un Nusūh (1874), Nusuh, the protagonist, who turns reformer after nearly dying of cholera, tells his wife that poetry is considered bad because the poets
express the unclean (nāpāk) ideas of love and sensual gratification (ishq ō ayyāshi) (Ahmed 2004: 410). He finds his eldest son Kaleem’s books obscene (fahesh), removed from modesty (hayā sē dūr), immoral and so on. So he burns them. The books which are burnt include the classics of Urdu poetry and were read by almost all educated people of the day though they are confined to specialists today.¹

The Persian ones were Bahār-ē-Dānish and even Insha Ullah Khan’s Daryā-ē-Latāfat. A ‘good’ boy—Bi Sahib’s grandson—tells Saleem, Nusuh’s younger son, that the Vāsōkht is a dirty (gandi) book (Ahmed 2004: 408). Later, Kaleem meets the Sadr-e-Azam, a maulvi in Daulatabad state, who tells him in Arabicized Urdu that poetry is a corrupting influence and he considers it worthless (Ahmed 2004: 444).

To take another example from literature, Abid Hussain, the protagonist of the novel Sharīf Zādā by Mirza Hadi Rusva (1857–1931), was not like other youths of Lucknow who were notorious for debauchery. While most young men acquired the habit of falling in love and took to versification, which enabled them to express lust in beautiful words, Abid Hussain worked hard (Rusva n.d.: 534). Such works, products of modernist, reforming Muslims as they were, reinforced the association of the erotic with Urdu poetry in the public imagination.

Both the exemplars of modern Urdu literature, Mohammad Hussain Azad (1830–1910) and Altaf Hussain Hali (1837–1914), discredited the medieval world-view, which included the description of female and boyish beauty as a perennial theme. Hali argues against the description of boyish beauty because, in his view, it is unnatural. As for female beauty, it is condemnable because if she is a beloved, one is revealing one’s vices, and if a wife, it is shamelessness (Hali 1893: 112–113). Frances Pritchett has written in detail how modernity, spearheaded by Azad and Hali, discredited the themes, values and ideas of classical Urdu literature (Pritchett 1994), and one major area under attack,
as it were, was the treatment of beauty, love and sex. Even educational institutions held debates questioning the value of Urdu poetry. The Aligarh College, for instance, held a debate sometime between 1884 and 1901 on the motion that; ‘Asiatic poetry has had a bad effect on morality’. The motion was supported by sixteen and opposed by eight people (Ikram 1971: 103). This was only to be expected given Hali’s strictures against Urdu poetry in the ‘Mad-ō-Jazr-ē-Islām’ (Hali 1879: 124–125).

Besides these great names, other reformers too associated Urdu literature with eroticism. Mumtaz Ali (1860–1935), a pioneer of Urdu journalism for women, wondered whether Meer Amman’s Bāgh-ō-Bahār, that classic of Urdu prose for a century, was ‘appropriate for either boys or girls’ (Minault 1998: 83). Syed Husain Bilgrami, an influential man in Hyderabad, in his Presidential Address at the fourteenth meeting of the Mohammedan Education Conference held in Rampur in December 1900, considered Urdu literature as ‘coarse, pernicious, and unclean’ being a product of decadent, aristocratic (nawābī) culture (Quoted from Minault 1998: 207). Even more extremist was the puritanism of the ulema. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi writes in his influential Bahishti Zēvar (n.d.) that all novels and poetry should not be read by women on the grounds that they mention love. Moreover, he even places Tafsīr Sūrāh Yusuf (the exegesis of the Quranic verse of the Prophet Joseph) on the grounds that ‘some of its traditions are inauthentic, and secondly, it contains stories of loving and being loved which are harmful for women’ (Thanvi n.d., Part 10: 61). In short, there was an association of Urdu with the erotic and it was a source of anxiety for the reformers of Indian Muslim society. The reformers dealt with it in various ways: modernizing literary norms in Urdu with reference to English literature (Azad and Hali); creating new reformist texts (Nazir Ahmed); purging the canon of classical Urdu literature to create a sanitized, highly puritanical, pedagogical model for the mass consumption of the
Urdu-reading public, especially students (designers of curricula); and abandoning Urdu for English literature or language-teaching without the literary component (educational decision-makers; school teachers, college lecturers and even academics in universities).

But why did this association, disquieting as it was to people who wanted to break the British stereotype of Muslim sensuality and aristocratic (nawabī) decadence, come into existence? Did it have any basis in reality? These are questions to which answers will be sought in the following paragraphs.

THE PLACE OF THE EROTIC IN MUSLIM LITERATURE

Medieval literature in Muslim cultural languages—Arabic, Persian and Turkish—had an erotic content. This was a natural part of life among many others, and was not the exclusive focus of the narrative. It was formulaic in the sense that beauty, both female and boyish, was described in certain fixed, conventional terms. Sexual desire was also described as the normal response to beauty. The sexual organs, and intercourse itself, were described in metaphorical, stylized language, though at places, body parts were also referred to in words normally tabooed in society. This, however, was not in an erotic context as it is in pornography. The point is that, unlike the pornographer, the authors of classical literature in Muslim cultural languages were representing life—the whole of life that is—through certain conventional narrative devices.

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, writing on the role of sexuality in Islamic cultures, suggests that eroticism ‘is integrated in the Islamic view of the world and is situated at the heart, not at the periphery, of ethics’ (Bouhdiba 1975: 127). Elaborating upon this theme he introduces the concept of mujūn which he explains as follows:
Observe the ambiguous and equivocal richness of the root *ma ja na*, which signifies, according to the *lisān al ‘Arab*, the density, the depth, the lack of shame, the frivolity, the gratuity, the art of mixing the serious and the lighthearted, pretended austerity, true banter. *Mujūn* is the art of referring to the most indecent things, speaking about them in such a lighthearted way that one approaches them with a sort of loose humour. In principle *mujūn* ought not to go beyond words. It is oneirism, collective experience and liberation through speech (Bouhdiba 1975: 127).

The *One Thousand Nights and One Night* (*Alf Lailā wal Lail*) is considered an example of a narrative with erotic passages of the *mujūn* genre. But the famous *Alf Lailā*, paradigmatic though it is, is not the only example of literature with a healthy, accepting, attitude towards the erotic. Almost all the classics of Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature have the same attitude.

The *Masnavī* of Maulana Jalal-ad-Din Muhammad Rumi (1207–1273), considered one of the most influential works in the Muslim world, and one which educated South Asian Muslims were acquainted with and held in high esteem, is said to embody the esoteric meaning of the Quran (*hast Qur’ ān dar zūbān-ē-Fārsī* = the Quran in the Persian language). It is a six-volume work about the concept of the oneness of God (*tawhīd*), redemption of the soul through mystical processes, the desire to seek union with the deity and other moral and spiritual themes. These themes are expressed through anecdotes, fables and aphorisms. And yet, in common with medieval norms of writing in the Muslim world, there are fables which would now be considered erotic and even obscene. Rumi also uses both the accepted, respectable words for the human anatomy, and also ones which have earthy connotations and are tabooed in respectable writings today (collected in an appendix and defended against the charge of indecency by Iqbal 1956: 284–314). Modern Pakistanis would find them shockingly indelicate.
and teaching them to students of any age would be out of the question.

BOY LOVE IN URDU—USING LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

The literature known to Indian Urdu-using educated people was mostly Persian and Urdu during the British era, when English literature, too, became part of the world-view of the educated classes. Some classics of Arabic literature, too, were known through translations but the originals in Arabic were known only to the ulema. The most embarrassing theme for the British and the Muslim reformers was what the British called the ‘unspeakable vice of the Greeks’ (and Orientals) and the reformers ‘amrad parasti’ (literally: worship of the beautiful youth). This, however, requires some understanding of the construction of gender in Urdu, Persian and Turkish literatures. The sexual categorization in this literature, mostly that which is rooted in the Iranian cultural tradition, is very different from the one which has gained ascendancy with the universalizaton of Western discursive ideologies. For instance, man (mard) was seen as the lover (in amorous terms) and the penetrator (in erotic ones) while the beloveds or objects of desire were beautiful women (zan) as well as boys (amrad=adolescent youths). As such, this literature was not shamefaced about men’s aesthetic and erotic appreciation of beautiful, adolescent boys in addition to women as love objects. Even great mystic saints are said to be partial to boyish beauty though the sources also insist on the virtuous nature of their appreciation of ephebic beauty. Sheikh Gesu Daraz narrates the story of Sheikh Ohad Kirmani on 11 Ramazan 802/1400, who liked beautiful youths (amrad). Incensed by this, a Turkish youth decided to murder him but the Sheikh declaimed amorous Persian poetry to him and when the youth did attack him with a knife, the Sheikh cast an angry glance at him which killed him on the spot (Hussaini 1401: 294–95). Similarly, the Sheikh also narrated on 30 Shaban
802/1400, how Khwaja Nizamuddin’s musician, Hasan Maimandi, fell in love with a boy. This boy set his heart on a beautiful dress worn by a rich man and Hasan had to request Maulana Mahmood Avadhi to somehow obtain the dress. The Maulana perforce had to present a rare book to the owner to get the dress for his friend Hasan’s beloved (Hussaini 1401: 233–234). All this is narrated under the theme of good treatment for one’s pīr’s servants so there is acceptance of such relationships as matters of daily occurrence.

No theory of abnormality or effeminacy was invoked to explain this categorization. The appropriate gender role for the man was to respond sexually to the beauty of both women and boys. However, one could show a preference for one or the other kind of sex object at different periods of life. The particular construction of the category called ‘homosexual’ to include boy-lovers, and associating them with ‘difference’ and even abnormality and effeminacy, was a European phenomenon of a much later date (McIntosh 1968; Plummer 1981; Foucault 1976–1984; Foucault 1980: 220–221; Rahman 1988).

To equate such attitudes with ‘liberalism’, as used in contemporary parlance, would be to miss the point. While modern liberal, emancipatory, egalitarian, and humanitarian values would give freedom of sexual choice to all without stigmatizing certain preferences, the medieval values mentioned previously do not pretend to do that at all. Boys, and above all, adult men who still prefer to be anally penetrated, are despised. Even Rumi reserves the most contemptuous terms for such people (Rumi c. 13th century, Vol. 5: 255). Foucault explains this attitude with reference to the Greeks as follows:

The Greek ethics of pleasure is linked to a virile society, to dissymmetry, exclusion of the other, an obsession with penetration, and a kind of threat of being dispossessed of your own energy, and so on (Foucault 1984: 346).
Turkish and Persianate societies (societies with the cultural influence of medieval Iran) have similar sexual attitudes so there was freedom from stigma (except for the clergy who were against all kinds of sex outside the polygamous marriage and concubinage institution) for men who took the conventional role of lovers, wooers and penetrators of the bodies of women and boys, but not for the latter themselves. However, some of the Sufis narrated incidents of eunuchs and hermaphrodites (mukhannas) being close to God as the one by Khwaja Gesu Daraz who narrates how a hermaphrodite’s prayers brought rain (Hussaini 1401: 410).

The pervasiveness of boy-love in Persian and Turkish cultures is brought out, respectively, by Najmabadi (2005) and Andrews and Kalpakli (2005). Najmabadi makes the astute observation mentioned previously that the pre-modern beloved was a boy (amrad) who, like women (zan), belonged to the category of those who could be penetrated. Modernity changed this and Iranians became ashamed of this fact of their cultural past. The public space became hetero-socialized and male homosociality was heterosexualized during this era. Women’s education, too, was seen in the light of this new female identity as it was in India (Najmabadi 2005: 196). The amrad disappeared from cultural imagination. Even the feminist reading of sexuality and gender identity has ‘contributed to this historical amnesia by doing gender analysis without regard for the historical transformations of sexuality’ (Ibid., 235). Such an analysis is required for the Urdu-using culture of North India where gender was perceived in the same way as in Iran. The role of the amrad in this culture, as expressed in the Urdu language, has not been fully analyzed.

The lines along which the culture of eighteenth century Indian Urdu-using elite can be analyzed is provided, in addition to Persian cultural traditions, to those of Turkey described in a book entitled The Age of Beloveds (Andrews and Kalpakli 2005). The authors contend that, in the long sixteenth century, ‘a
period running from the late fifteenth century through the early seventeenth (Andrews and Kalpakli 2005: 10)—the ideal beloved was an adolescent youth (an *amrad*) who also symbolized the absolute ruler as well as the immanent deity in mystic love. The argument is that:

... during this period power relations of all kinds, from the most personal (adult-child, husband-wife, lover-beloved) to the most public (courtier-monarch, patron-client, even empire-empire), were eroticized on a consistent pattern. That is, they were imagined in the forms, the language, and the metaphors of love (Ibid., 28).

The authors contend that the *sehrengiz* was written as a catalogue celebrating the beauty of boys, generally artisan lads (Ibid., 40). This is common to Urdu poetry (*shahr āshōb*) also. Like Persian, the gender of Ottoman literature is also masculine and ‘reflects and scripts the (adult) masculinity of public space’ (Ibid., 54). This, again, is also true of Urdu culture. The authors describe how, during this age, it was fashionable to be enamoured of boys, use the ghazal (in Turkish *gazel*) as a medium of communicating about the beloved and the use of certain literary practices and conventions for the above (Ibid., 90). This, again, is true for the Urdu culture. However, it needs to be investigated in more detail (for initial steps in this direction see Naim 1979: 120–142; Rahman 1990: 1–20).

**LOSS OF POLITICAL POWER AND SEXUAL INDULGENCE**

A reading of texts from the medieval Indian period clearly shows that power was manifested in the possession of coercive ability which gave a person the ability to gratify himself (women were generally excluded from power) by possessing tangible and intangible goods (such as prestige). Among the tangible goods were sex objects—women and beautiful boys. Thus the Mughal rulers had large harems (Lal 1988) and a very active sex life. It
was when political power was lost that people, especially reformers and apologists of this ruthless power, started propagating the theory that sexual excesses or promiscuity brought about the ruin of the Mughal (or some other) empire.

Although Muslim political power was challenged by the eighteenth century in India, their cultural dominance was very much in place. Indeed, the British rulers themselves adopted the dress, etiquette, cuisine, and values—and even the religion sometimes—of the aristocratic Persianate Muslims becoming what William Dalrymple calls the ‘white Mughals’ (Dalrymple 2003). Thus, it was not a new breakdown of sexual norms, but a continuation of older established patterns—established during the age of political power—which oft-quoted works like the Muraqqā-ē-Dillī represent. The Muraqqā’s author, Dargah Quli Khan (1710–1766) was a nobleman from Aurangabad who lived in Delhi from 1738 to 1741. He describes the capital of the declining Mughal empire as a place devoted to pleasures of all kinds. The public places were full of beautiful women and boys and the powerful indulged themselves with both (Khan c. 18th century). The descriptions of boy dancers and women who painted their bare legs as if they were wearing tight trousers, may give one the feeling that Delhi was the most decadent of cities in the eighteenth century (Ibid., 67–82). But Paris and London, at the height of their colonial power, had all the pleasures which Delhi possessed (Bloch 1958: 217–252). Similarly, the Lucknow of the Nawabs, which Abdul Halim Sharar describes, was not more profligate than, say, London, though, of course, the practice of having many women in the harem was reminiscent of medieval Muslim and Rajput capitals at the height of their power. The social and literary norms for describing the sexual practices of European cities were, of course, different. But they were not any more virtuous even in Victorian England than Indian cities. Thus, the real reason why the erotic element in Urdu literature is condemned so unequivocally since the
nineteenth century is not because such pleasures were found in certain urban centres or the rich indulged in them but because it is the product of a militarily defeated culture. And, when one is defeated, everything one does or possesses can be, and generally is, condemned. The defeat is not easy to explain and the tendency of everyone, most of all the reformers of the defeated party, is to blame pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, for the defeat.

**THE EROTIC THEME IN EARLY URDU WRITINGS**

The earliest specimens of the erotic in Urdu poetry go back to the time of Muslim power, not to its decline. A certain poet called Qureshi wrote a *masnavi* called ‘*Bhōg Bhal*’ in 1022/1613 in Dakhni Urdu³ (Hashmi 1923: 285). It has twelve chapters describing sexual matters. The book is a translation of Pandit Kal Kok’s book called *Rati Rahas*, and its manuscript in the Salar Jang Museum in Hyderabad has 2,860 couplets whereas the original (*Rati Rahas*) has only 800 (Jafer in Jafer and Jain Vol 2, 1998: 424–433).

However, since Urdu came into its own at the time of the decline of Muslim political power, probably the most obscene of the Urdu poets is also one of the earliest, at least in North India. This is Meer Mohammad Jafar Zatalli (d. 1713). He was a satirist in both Persian and Urdu and the obscene words he uses are not a part of the Urdu erotic tradition. Nor are they meant for evoking sexual pleasure. Instead, they are obviously meant to shock, outrage, express contempt, and belittle others. Zatalli lived at a time of political instability after Aurangzeb’s death. He responded to it by making fun of it. He was murdered, probably at the instigation of King Farrukh Siyar in 1713 (see his works edited by Khan 2003). Zatalli created no tradition. His effect upon Urdu literature is minimal. So it is not because of his use of obscenities that Urdu literature came to be associated with love and sex.
Another eighteenth century work is Sayyid Sirajuddin Aurang-abadi’s (1715–1763) Bōstān-ē-khayāl. This is actually a sufi narrative about finding the source of permanent bliss. The narrator loves a boy who is indifferent to him. Although another boy, the son of a chief (Sardār), gives him attention, the narrator remains disconsolate. The beloved alternates between warmth and cold disdain until the narrator turns to God in whom he finds real love (Sarwari 1998: 149–246).

Najmuddin Shah Mubarak Abrū (1683–1733), one of the pioneers of the Urdu ghazal in North India, wrote a poem called ‘Advice for the Adornment of a Beloved’. In this poem, the narrator meets a beautiful boy who is, however, unsophisticated in the art of charming men. The narrator starts advising him how to behave like a ‘beloved’ (mā’shūq). Above all, the boy must know when to stop behaving like a ‘beloved’ and become a lover (‘āshiq) in his turn. So, when the hair on his face coarsen, he must ‘then give up the desire to be adored/don’t overdress or act coy any more’. That is when he must transit to the role of the lover and ‘enjoy the company of beauteous ones’ (Abrū c. 18th century, English translation in Vanita and Kidwai 2000: 161–168).

But Abrū’s focus is not pornography; nor even erotica. He is discussing the norms of role-playing in a conventional society. Moreover, he is upholding decency because, like the behavioural norms enjoined upon the Greek boy (eromenos or ephebe) (Dover 1978: 16), there were certain forms of good behaviour expected from the amrad also. Abdul Haleem Sharar also tells us that adolescent boys combed their hair in such a way on their foreheads that ‘attraction like women was created in them also’ (Sharar 1927: 261).

**THE PORNOGRAPHIC MINORITY**

There were, to be sure, pornographers (fahash gō) also. They wrote poetry called the hazal or, more loosely, kalām-ē-fahash (obscene verse). One of them, Saiyid Iman Ali Khan of Bilgram,
writing under the pseudonym of Sahib-ē-Qirān, has left behind a collection of verse written in black in the nastālīq script (Sahib-ē-Qiran c. 1811). He flourished during the rule of Asif ud Daulah as he has been mentioned in several couplets. At one place, the Nawab has been praised as a promoter of concupiscence (shahvat). Most of the verses are obscene and some mention the poet’s exploits in the brothel. In some cases the names of prostitutes are also mentioned but mostly, like all pornographers, the poet is concerned with types of fornication. According to Sharar, Mian Mashir, another hazal gō, perfected Sahib-e-Qiran’s style of using language idiomatically in this sub-genre (Sharar 1927: 122).

The Rampur Raza Library has a large collection of Hazliāt. These seven handwritten manuscripts, though all entitled Majmu‘ā Hazliāt, are written by different people. One (No. 1411) carries the names of two authors: Miss Flora and Sharir or Mir Hasan Ali. Others are by Mir Ashiq Hussain Bazm (Bazm 1908 and 1909); Agha Wasi Ali Khan Lakhnavi Mazhar (d. 1912) (Mazhar n.d.); Hayat Baksh Mustafa Abidi Rasa (d. 1913) (Rasa n.d.); Syed Jawad Husain Amrohi Shamim (d. 1915); and Syed Ali Husain (Husain n.d.). Another notable pornographic poet is Kallan Khan who wrote under the poetic name of Bechaen (1908). He was a student of Jan Sahib of Lucknow who is well-known for his rekhtī poetry. Bechaen was in the court of the Nawab of Rampur as well as Maharaja Ranbhir Singh. His verses were collected together by Qudrat Ali Qudrat in 1907–08. Out of all the hazal gō poets of the period, Bechaen’s work is among the most pornographic. He writes mostly in Urdu but there are poems in Persian too. The Urdu ones refer to all sorts of sexual activities—the combinations and permutations of the human body which is the distinctive feature of all pornography everywhere.

An oddity among these kinds of poets is Chirkeen, whose Dīvān falls in the sub-genre of the hazal, but is distinctive in that he refers more to excretion than to sex. He is also one of the few, even among the hazal gōs, to write on menstruation. Excretion is
an obsession with him and even when he is mentioning sexual acts he brings in some allusion to excretion.

The other collections of the *hazal* use sex in order to continue the war of words between poets—or a hapless victim of a poet’s satirical wit—through invective. Sex is used as a weapon; a device for insulting people; a means of embarrassing them. And this usage is based on the assumptions and values of a feudal society in which the crude use of power is a reality of life. In this society, sexual acts outside the institution of marriage—in which case they were not discussed—were seen as conquests. For the male, they brought honour; for the female, dishonour. And if a male (boy, eunuch or man) took the female role (of being penetrated) there was even more dishonour for him than for his female counterpart. It is in the context of these power relations and perceptions of reality that the world-view of these anthologies of the *hazal* must be understood.

It is necessary to state, then, that the *hazal*—taking these collections as a whole—is neither part of erotica nor even of pornography. It is really part of satire (*hajv*) but it uses sexual invectives, tabooed words and acts in order to insult a person and continues to attack and humiliate its victims through sexual allusions and imagery. It yields no sexual pleasure, not even of the kind which pornography can, and of course, it is not erotic in any artistic sense of the word.

To give a few examples, Bazm narrates the story of a woman who has five lovers from the working classes—the lowest of the low in society, association with whom brings dishonour, even if it is not of a sexual nature. Her husband, who cannot satisfy her, sees his insatiable wife’s goings-on with all of them. The purpose of the poem is to insult the man and his wife and not to excite lust. The poet sometimes names the butt of his insults—a certain Mazhar who is probably his poetic rival—whose wife and daughter are sexually exploited by the poet (Bazm 1908).
Rasa insults a man called Sameem, boasting about taking his mother, wife and daughter. He even mentions bestiality but, again, to insult Sameem, whose sister is sexually abused by a bull dog. It is worth mentioning that the poetic collection does not begin with the usual ‘bismillah’; it begins with ‘Yā Shaitān ul Rajīm’ (O! Satan who was cursed!). Rasa also mentions a European woman (Mēm) called Flora by name (Rasa 1909).

But perhaps the only pornographer with any influence was Sa’adat Yar Khan Rangin, who wrote his Dīvān-ē-Āmēkhtā as well as Dīvān-ē-Anģēkhtā on erotic themes. Like the work of Sahib-e-Qiran, Rangin’s work is also full of obscenities and boastful exploits of copulation with prostitutes. It begins with praise for the Satan which is not the usual pattern of Urdu pornographers.

Lānat mē kōi sharīk nahī tērā dūsrā jitnē haẽ randī bāz tū ūnkā haẽ raēhnumā (No one shares with you in the distinction of being the accursed one. Thou art the guide of all the world’s womanizers).

Here too some prostitutes are mentioned by name but most remain anonymous. The dīvān ends with the praise of Satan as the provider of carnal pleasures.

The Dīvān-ē-Anģēkhtā is about women’s language which, according to the author, he heard during his womanizing days. Apart from the prostitutes themselves, he claims to have had access to married women (khāngī) from respectable families who formed occasional liaisons with men for fun or, possibly, some personal income. This language is called ‘Rēkhtī’ and Rangin is said to be the author of this genre of poetry which will be mentioned in more detail later (see Rangin n.d., Insha 1802: 52–53). However, the language of respectable ladies—bēgmātī zubān—is given in Hādi-un-Nisā, which contains letters from and to women, songs, idiomatic phrases, witty couplets, in which a teasing maiden recites poetic lines with double entendres and sexual innuendoes, (kaēh mukarniā) and so on (Dehlavi 1875). The
rēkhtī is restricted to sexual innuendo, humour, repartee, the quarrelling tone, the scabrous tone, and the obscene.

Elements of the hazal—couplets and even complete poems—are found interspersed in the works of some of the classical poets. Only a few, however, are mentioned as ‘hazal gō’: Mir Zahik, father of Mir Hasan, for instance, was one of them (Qureshi 1966: 9). These days they are either not printed or printed with blank spaces in their poetic collections.

While the works of Rangin and maybe some other pornographers may have reinforced Urdu’s association with the erotic, it was not the major factor in creating this association. Obscenity, after all, is a part of all languages and remains on the margins of all literatures. Much more was contributed to the creation of this association by the erotic sub-genres in Urdu which were not, however, pornographic.

THE EROTIC GENRES OF POETRY

There are sub-genres of Urdu poetry which are not pornographic but may be called erotic. In one of these, the Sarāpā Sukhan, the language remains literary and beautiful. In the other, the Rēkhtī, it degenerates into the ridiculous, the frivolous and the misogynist. The Sarāpā, as mentioned above, is a collection of couplets on every part of the beloved’s body, starting from her hair to her heels. The breasts, buttocks, legs, and vagina are all described through metaphors and highly poetic similes. Her beauty is always described in formulaic terms without any attempt at individuation. Obscene words are never used but the poet does use the more sophisticated Persian words for body parts. Examples are as follows:

Feet:

\[
\text{Aōr jō hāthō mē uṭhā lǔ tō ajab lutf uṭhāũ} \\
\text{Phir jō vō lutf uṭhānā tujhē biṭhā kē dikhlāũ} \text{(Jurrat).} \\
\text{(And if I lift the feet I would find a strange pleasure}
\]
And then to make you sit and watch that pleasure-taking

Breasts:  
=Gōl ubhrē huē kyā us kē haē pistā dōnō  
Mast karnē kō haē mā’ jūn kī dibyā dōnō (Himmat)  
(How rounded and raised are both the breasts.  
To intoxicate, these are containers of intoxicants both)

Buttocks:  
Kōh-ē-suraēn dēkhō tō sar phōṛ ō tum  
and thighs  
Ranē makhmal sī haē khuāb-ō-khurash chōṛō tum (Mahar)  
(And if you see the mountains of the derriere you would knock out  
your head/and the thighs are like satin—enough to make you leave all dreaming and thinking)

Vagina:  
haē kamar bāl sī dēkhō jo b’aēn-ē-insāf  
Dāman kē nēha haē dil-ē-āshiq ka shigāf  
(The waist is like a hair; if you observe with justice  
Below the front of the shirt concealed lies the cleavage of the heart of the lover)

The sarāpā is interspersed in the versified tales of the masnavī and the vāsōkh, especially the latter. The vāsōkh is a formulaic story of the narrator wooing a beautiful beloved who is described in detail. The beloved alternates between indifference and passion. The narrator takes revenge of her indifference by pretending to love somebody else who, in turn, is described much in the same conventional terms as the first beloved. The drama succeeds in bringing the lovers together again. Sometimes, however, the ending is tragic (see the work of Fida Ali whose poetic name is Aesh. Ali 1829). Among the books read by the Muslim gentlemen of India was the notorious Persian work, Bahār-ē-Dānish, which was condemned by many Victorian British officers in various reports. These tales not only have erotic scenes but also feature a kind of defiant and wayward female sexuality which expresses itself by cheating the husband in a daredevil way. For instance, some of the women fornicate with a youth in the presence of their husband. This book was
URDU AS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

eventually thrown out of the curricula but it was translated into Urdu, notably by Mirza Jan Tapish. He translated the Persian work during his stay in Fort William College, Calcutta in 1802 (the couplet giving the date is in Bagh-o-Bahar and it adds up to 1217/1802). Modern translations purge out some couplets which are considered obscene but, in 1802, the work was acceptable to the authorities of Fort William College who are praised in it.

Another widely circulated tale (dāstān) was the Talism-ē-Hōsh Rubā or Dāstān-ē-Amīr Hamzā. This was translated from Persian to Urdu by Munshi Syed Mohammad Husain Jah (1908–1915). The stories of the great primal battle between good and evil—good personified by Amir Hamza and evil by the magician Afrasyab—have all the elements of public entertainment: magic, war, deceit, trickery, sex, and merry-making. These tales were read out by professional storytellers (dāstāngōs) who acted out the dramatic scenes and mimicked the actors’ voices to create a riveting rendition which reached audiences who could not themselves read the seven thousand plus pages (in the present Sang-e-Meel edition). The tales describe scenes of drinking and female beauty every now and then. As in other works, the descriptions of women (sarāpā) are in the same formulaic terms as in Persian and Arabic literature: long black tresses, large doll-like eyes, full sensual lips, full breasts, narrow waist, curvaceous hips, rounded buttocks, and sensual thighs. Sexual organs are described in metaphors, as is common in the sarāpās, and if body parts are named, sophisticated Persian words are used for them. In the ambience the tales create, the erotic, as in other Islamicate literature, is very much a part of life and it is life which the tales reflect. The Talism, with its wide popular appeal, took the erotic expressed in the Urdu language to the literate public.

The Rēkhti is written in a ‘feminine’ voice but this voice is satirical and mocking. It makes fun of the feminine, trivializing and vulgarizing it. It has already been mentioned that Rangin is credited with having pioneered it though, in fact, there are
occasional poems in a pseudo-feminine voice from earlier poets. However, Insha’s claim that Rangin invented it to induce women to lewdness so he could seduce them (Insha 1802: 52–53), is an exaggeration. In any case, this claim has been made by a comic character in Daryā-ē-Latāfat, called Mir Ghafar Ghaeni, and it is not possible to determine what truth value the author wishes to ascribe to it.

Rēkhti is course, facetious and licentious though hardly seductive. It provokes either disgust or risibility, though hardly lust as erotica should (for a study of Rēkhti in Urdu with many examples see Mushir 1974; Kazmi 1930; and for translations into English see Petievich 2007: 279–353). The rēkhti presents a lustful, aggressive, rather high-spirited woman. She is not idealized like the beloved of the ghazal. Instead, she is constantly being held to ridicule and has to hold her own against seducing men and scheming women. Very often she has a not-so-secret liaison with another woman: either a girl friend (dōgānā, ilaichi) or the nurse (the ubiquitous annā); and sometimes an older woman (bājī). However, because of the earthiness of these goings-on, the voice of the rēkhti is a full-blooded one; a real life one. In real life, however, there is much more than sex; the rēkhti, however, is obsessed with sex to the exclusion of other things in life. It is one-dimensional. Its purpose is not to represent women but to ridicule them.

While the Urdu sources—Kazmi (1930) and Mushir (1974)—merely give samples of Rēkhti couplets along with literary appreciation modified by the presently mandatory condemnation of indecency—recent criticism in English engages with more complex dimensions of this unusual sub-genre of Urdu literature. Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai (2000: 193) defend it on the grounds that it ‘represents women clearly stating that they prefer women to men when they have access to both’ (Ibid., 193). Petievich argues that the new criticism, that of the Hindu right in India and the Islamists in Pakistan, have created a culture
shame for the rekhti because it was women’s language and expresses lesbianism (Petievich 2001: 248; 2007: 274). Moreover, according to Ruth Vanita, the rekhti was purged from the Urdu canon because it draws upon ‘literary conventions drawn from non-Islamic sources’ (Vanita 2004: 15). In short, being in ordinary Urdu (Hindustani), it was linguistically subversive during a period of hardening Muslim/Hindu identities. Carla Petievich argues that the suppression of this poetic genre is because of ‘its frank assumption of lesbian eroticism in rekhti’ (Petievich 2007: 275). C.M. Naim, however, defends the more orthodox view that it is trivial, misogynist and meant only for male titillation (Naim 2001).

While interpretations of the Rekhtī in terms of identity, realism and the expression of lesbian feelings is new and interesting, it does not seem to be convincing, at least for this writer. A full reading of the original sources reinforces the earlier view that the rekhti was written by men and was used to entertain men (Naim 2001: 23). Indeed, it is recited even now in all-male gatherings in Pakistan and India to make men laugh. It made so much fun of women that it made travesties or caricatures of them and misrepresented them. It was a joke and, like all jokes, it created stereotypes and figures of fun. It was obviously a bawdy relief from the high-minded, idealized, romantic love of the ghazal. But it was not even subversive of the universe of the ghazal. It merely confirmed its existence by pointing out that real people, in moods of banter, could exist on much lower planes where women were not the androgynous ethereal beings of the ghazal.

The rekhti poets—Insha (1756–1817); Mir Yar Ali Jan Sahib (1810–1881); Nisar Husain Khan Shaida (b. 1868); Saiyed Sajid Sajni (1922–1993)—have not been ranked high among Urdu poets for their rekhti works at least. In Mirza Hadi Rusva’s novel Umrao jân Adā (1899), the rekhti poets are ranked as non-serious (Rusva 1899:84). Some of the poets themselves have written of their
work in terms of macho self-confidence expressed in terms of ridicule for the feminine. As Jan Sahib has it:

\[\text{Qadr kyā nāmard jānē, marduē jō mard haē} \]
\[\text{Jān Sahib shād hōtē haē vōhī sun kar mujhē} \]
(The unmanly would never appreciate me; only men would who are real men/And they, Jan Sahib, are entertained when they hear me).

The ‘real men’ heard about women talking about their under garments, especially the brassiere (angiā or mahram) to the confidante: the nurse (anna) or a friend. The angiā is a subject of great fascination. There are complaints about its being too light, too heavy, too gaudy, and that the male lover (marduā) has torn it to pieces or thrown it away. Sometimes she demands it as a present while at others she hides it from the prying eyes of intrusive men. Sometimes the female friends—the words used by Rangin are dōgānā, ilaichi and zannākhī—are also sexual partners. In such cases they ridicule the men and indulge in tabooed pleasures. However, it is only rarely that this is expressed without ridicule and when it is, as in the chaptināmās of Jurrat, it is to provide sexual pleasure to men. Qalandar Baksh Jurrat (1748–1810), noted for salaciousness even in his ghazal, has written about two women, Sakkho and Mukkho, who complain against their husbands and invite all women who ‘are given to clinging’ (Vanita and Kidwai 2000: 222). They make love passionately as described below:

When you join your lips to my lips,
It feels as if new life pours into my being,
When breast meets breast, the pleasure is such.
That from sheer joy the words rise to my lips.
The way you rub me, oh?...
In such samples the passion dominates the ridicule. In most others, however, the dominating tone is satirical, marginalizing, ridiculing. One couplet is as follows:

*Rangīn qasam haē tērī hi hū maēlē sar sē maē
Mat khōl kar kē minnat ō zārī izārband (Rangīn)*

(Rangin I swear to you I am having my periods
Do not keep pestering me to open the band of my trousers)

It seems to me that it was not only because of the non-standard Urdu that the *rēkhti* was purged as Petievich contends (2007: 272). After all, the *dōhā* remains respectable, though of minor interest, despite its use of ‘Hindi’ words and Nazeer Akbarabadi’s poems on the poor remain popular even today and are included in the curricula. The *Rēkhti*, on the other hand, was simply too unrestrained, non-serious, sexist, and rambunctious. In an age of increasing puritanism when even the Persian classics were purged, it could not be countenanced by reformers keen to assert the respectability of their literary legacy. However, it would not really be accurate to say that it was purged. In fact it was never actually included in the canon of Urdu literature. It was a joke to begin with and remained one throughout its career. However, because it was quoted for fun in male gatherings as a joke, it may have contributed to the impression that Urdu was the natural language of erotica.

The *masnavī*, which is a love story in the medieval fairy tale tradition, has more erotic descriptions of feminine beauty and scenes of love-making than any other genre of canonical Urdu literature, except the *vāsōkh* which, in a sense, is a formulaic *masnavī* in miniature.

There are, however, two traditions in the *masnavī*, like the ghazal but unlike the *vāsōkht*, that of ‘earthly’ and ‘celestial’ love (Suvorova 2000: 1–41). The earliest *masnavīs* were written in the southern centres of the Urdu language, the Deccan and Gujarat. The earliest one, *Kadam Rao, Padam Rao*, has been described
earlier and need not detain us here. Suffice it to note that it was in the ‘celestial’ tradition and that the Deccan as well as Gujarat, had many elements from the indigenous culture and very often one of the lovers was Hindu (Suvorova 2000: 24–28).

When the centre of Urdu literature shifted to the north, the masters of the ghazal, like Mir Taqi Mir (1724–1810), continued to write masnavīs too. Mir, for instance, wrote eight masnavīs of a romantic nature. Like his ghazals, they are more concerned with deep, romantic love than ephemeral lust. The erotic masnavī, still masquerading as a love story, came into its own in Awadh. Mir Hasan (b. 1727), born in Delhi but settled in Faizabad, is famous for his masnavīs such as the Saehrul Bayān.

The story is about Prince Benazir and Princess Badr-i-Munir. They fall in love and Najmunnisa, the Vizier’s daughter, advises her to yield to passion. Badr-i-Munir allows Benazir to make love to her. The scene of copulation is described in a formulaic manner (an early example being from Manjhan for the translation of which in English see Behl and Weightman 2000: 190).

This is true of most masnavīs of Urdu—especially those written in Lucknow or under the influence of Lucknow’s eroticism. According to Suvorova, ‘we come across similar more or less uninhibited descriptions of amorous intimacy in most of the Urdu dastans and ‘dastan-like’ masnavīs (Suvorova 2000: 146).

The masnavīs of Diya Shankar Nasim (Gulzār-ē-Nasīm) and of Tasadduq Husain Khan (Nawab Mirza Shauq) (1773–1871) are famous for their stylistic beauty. However, Shauq is an innovator in that he introduces realism in the masnavī. While the previous masnavīs mostly described fairy-tale characters, this one describes the passions of the boys and girls of contemporary Lucknow.

In his masnavīs, Shauq describes rendezvous with beautiful, veiled young ladies who are initially tricked by the lover into meeting them. The girl usually has a cunning maid servant who is bribed into making her palanquin-bearers leave her in a vacant
house or garden. There the lover approaches her with seductive words and professions of ardour. She rejects him initially but eventually yields. In *Farēb-ē-Ishq* (written before 1849) the man seduces the girl who eventually dies. In *Bahār-ē-Ishq* (1849) the families are scandalized but they get the lovers married. However, in *Zahr-ē-Ishq* (1862) they both try to commit suicide though only the girl dies (Shauq c. 19th century).

Abdul Halim Sharar blames Wajid Ali Shah's debauchery, or rather his advertisement of it, on his reading of Shauq's *masnavīs* (Sharar 1927: 96). As Suvorova points out, this is unproven and unprovable (2000: 218), but Shauq, as well as the Nawab, contributed to the association of eroticism with Urdu poetry, and indirectly with the language itself, at least with reference to Lucknow and its Urdu poetry.

Nazeer Akbarabadi (1735–1830), often called a people’s poet or a ‘realist’, has erotic appeal in many of his poems. Whether on a festive occasion—Eid, Shab-e-Bārāt, Hōlī, Dīvālī or a fair (mēlā)—he mentions beautiful women and boys. Incidents like a storm are occasions for kissing or fondling a beauty and dreams, of course, are an excuse for describing them. In Nazeer, because of the quality of realism, we get a sense of how forbidden pleasures made people yearn for them and act, even if in imagination, as thieves and robbers of delights (see *Kulliyāt-ē-Nazīr*). Nazeer uses words in common use, including obscene ones, which have been expunged in modern editions so that there are blanks in many poems, especially those describing festive occasions. For instance, he uses the excuse of showing exotic pet animals to boys in order to take sexual advantage of them (‘Biyā’, ‘Gilaehrī kā bachchā’ etc.) (Akbarabadi 1820).

**THE SEDUCTIVE CHARMS OF THE URDU GHAZAL**

The ghazal, not necessarily the explicitly erotic version associated with Lucknow, but the whole genre in general, contributed most to the image of Urdu as an amorous and erotic
language. The beloved of the Ghazal—whether the elusive deity, courtesan, veiled lady or adolescent boy—is beautiful but indifferent. The poet-lover’s passion is, therefore, unrequited. Thus, the poet accuses the beloved of being cruel and faithless (bē wafā).

Charā garī bimārī-ē-dil kī rasm-ē-shaher-ē husn nahī  
Varnā dilbar nādā bhī is dard kā chārā jānē haē (Mir)  
(It is not the custom of the dwellers of the city of beauty to give solace to anybody Otherwise even an innocent beauty knows how to provide a cure for the disease of love).

The beloved appears to favour the rival (dushman, ghaēr, raqib). And Ghalib invests the situation with inimitable humour.

Maẽ nē kahā bazm-ē-nāz mē chahiye ghaēr sē tahī  
Sun kē sitam zarīf nē mujh kō uthā diyā kē yū  
(I asked the beloved that this gathering of charm should exclude the rival/upon hearing this she made me get up saying ‘like this’).

The lover is condemned to separation (hijr) from the object of his love. He cries, sighs and grows pale and ill with the pain of separation.

Chupkē chupkē rāt din āsū bahānā yād haē  
Ham kō ab tak āshiqi kā vō zamānā yād haē (Hasrat Mohani)  
(Shedding tears night and day quietly I remember/the days of that love affair I remember).

These themes—romantic love, separation, fidelity on the part of the lover, indifference, and fickleness on the part of the beloved—were reiterated throughout the three-hundred year tradition, dating at least from Vali Dakkani (1667–1707) (even if the earlier one is not part of the common people’s consciousness) of the Urdu ghazal.
The ghazal had a special place in the lives of educated people—both Hindus and Muslims—in North India. Even in other parts of India—Hyderabad, Murshidabad, Mysore, Lahore, etc.—the elite enjoyed the ghazal as a distinctive cultural artefact. It was customary for educated, urbane men to learn several hundred couplets of the masters of the Urdu ghazal. These would be recited to make the conversation interesting. By the 1920s, when Modern Hindi had overtaken Urdu as the language of printing in North India, Urdu poetry would appear in journals of Hindi. Moreover, ‘collections of popular ghazals were printed more often in Devanagari than in the Perso-Arabic script, thus transmitting the taste for Urdu poetry to the wider public of new Hindi literates’ (Orsini 2002: 49–50). Urdu couplets featured in popular theatre and evoked a well-known and experienced response of tenderness, romance and the appreciation of the aesthetic in literature and life (Orsini 2002: 50). Mushairās, called kavi sammelans in Hindi, were common and are held even now in the South Asia diaspora settled in the United States and Europe, where Urdu poets are welcomed and people come to listen to them and enjoy the ghazal as well as the more recent genres of poetry. People played baēt bāzī in which one person recited a couplet and the other player had to recite a couplet in response, beginning with the last sound (denoted by the letter of the Urdu alphabet) of the last line. This went on till one of the parties ran out of couplets. This has changed into antāksharī in Hindi where film songs, instead of the classical works of the Urdu poets, are used. However, although even if the official language of the songs in India is said to be Hindi, it is closer to the Urdu end of the linguistic spectrum than Sanskritized Hindi. In any case the Hindi movie is strongly influenced by the amorous orientation of Nawabi Lucknow and, therefore, reminiscent of the link between Urdu and the life of love (Kesavan 1994: 255–256)—a point which will be taken up in more detail later.
Very often, couplet after couplet, by the great masters, was recited only for the pleasure of it. Such an evening and the special romantic atmosphere it created is described by E.M. Forster in his novel *A Passage to India* (1924) as follows:

They listened delighted, for they took the public view of poetry, not the private which obtains in England. It never bored them to hear words, words; they breathed them with the cool night air never stopping to analyze; the name of the poet, Hafiz, Hali, Iqbal, was sufficient guarantee (Forster 1924: 38).

This kind of enthusiasm for poetry was common. Every student of Aligarh Muslim University who has written memoirs has attested to it. And books of madrassa students, and even sermons, are studded with the couplets of the ghazal which are obviously amorous and sometimes erotic (Nadvi 2007). The highest number of publications of printed books, pamphlets, monographs, etc., during British India used to be either on literary or religious themes (Annexure A of Chapter 12). Sometimes the one theme, and sometimes the other, predominated. In short, printing flooded the market with the Urdu ghazal and reinforced the impression that Urdu was the language of love. Since the ghazal mentioned love and beauty repeatedly, Urdu itself came to be associated with romance and eroticism in the public mind. This image proved to be harmful for Urdu during the Urdu-Hindi controversy when some critics (such as Bharatendu referred to earlier) said that they did not want their children to learn Urdu as, being taught through its literature, it would spoil them. This criticism is still repeated by the partisans of the indigenous languages of Pakistan who claim that Urdu, being nurtured in the decadent and effete culture of the nawabs of India, is a decadent language. However, whatever critics might say, Urdu couplets and inscriptions, written on the pattern of the ghazal by unknown and often unaccomplished poets, are used widely to decorate trucks in Pakistan. They are chosen by the driver, the
painter and sometimes by the owner of the truck, generally out of scrapbooks kept for this purpose by painters. Out of all types of inscriptions on different themes—religion, fatalism, love for the mother, life of the driver, the truck itself, blessings and good wishes—romantic inscriptions are found on 56 per cent trucks from the Punjab; 50 per cent from the KP; 37 per cent from Sindh; 59 per cent from Balochistan and 51 per cent from Gilgit-Baltistan and the AJK area. At 95 per cent confidence level, there is no significant difference between these different regions of Pakistan in the occurrence of romantic inscriptions on the backs of trucks (Rahman 2010: 290).

THE DEFEAT OF EROS

The reformers crusaded against the eroticism of Urdu in ways which have been described earlier (Rahman 2002: 498–509). They won and slowly Urdu started becoming associated with Islam and Pakistani nationalism in Pakistan. In India it remains associated with the Muslim identity. But this identity can be politically-oriented or a nostalgic throwback to the Mughal past, like Nur, the failed poet in Anita Desai’s novel In Custody (1984). In the latter case there are some fading associations with romance and beauty but hardly the erotic. However, as the madrassas teach Urdu more often than secular schools in India, even the association with romance is fading away though the ghazal is still responded to among middle-aged, educated, urban people with much nostalgic enthusiasm. Mostly, however, in India, Urdu is a matter of demands, protests and Muslim political mobilization (see Farouqui 2006). In Pakistan, it is a contested terrain—opposed by the supporters of ethnic identities as well as those of English (Rahman 1996: 228–247)—and more often viewed as part of the Islamic-Pakistani identity than the language of love and longing.

In short, the nineteenth century witnessed battles, so to speak, for the soul of Urdu. It was a period of transition and the
formation of new identities for groups of human beings (Muslims, Hindus, etc.). The Indian reformers’ desire to purge the language of its erotic associations was motivated by their political agenda for the construction of a ‘nation’ which was respectable, serious and modern. They felt compelled to defend their culture and literature, and by extension, the whole Indian Muslim community, against the British and Hindu charge of concupiscence, decadence and lethargy of which the literature of Urdu, as known up to the reformist movement, seemed to be an obvious and painful reminder. Incidentally, a comparable movement was going on in the construction of the Modern (Sanskritized) Hindi tradition also. Here too the traditional use of Braj Bhasha, famous for songs and erotic poetry (the Shringrara rasā) was being replaced by Khari Boli which was excelling in nationalistic and realistic poetry. In 1925, when a Braj poem was read out in a poetry meeting (kavi sammēlan) ‘the small group of women heroically present in the audience walked off offended by its “vulgarity”’ (Orsini 2002: 86). Here too tradition was invented and the inventors were Victorian gentlemen morbidly conscious of appearing prim, proper and respectable.

But back to the Muslims of North India. Their defence of their culture and literature went hand in hand with the ideological imperative of emphasizing the Muslim identity, which tended to push Urdu towards an Islamic orientation. As Muslim separatism needed it as a symbol of the Muslim political identity mobilized against a Hindu version of a similar but opposing identity, it took on new features of a strident nationalism which is perennial in Urdu textbooks in Pakistan. However, the new language—the older one being Persian—continued to express the medieval themes of redemption and spirituality of which the erotic was always a part.

During this period Urdu produced all of its canonical literature in poetry which is predominantly associated with love and sometimes with the erotic. Thus the different, and often
paradoxical, associations of Urdu kept in conflict with each other with the public mind responding alternately to different ones according to the demands of the situation and whether the occasion was public (when Iqbal’s nationalistic and Islamic poetry was quoted) or private (when Ghalib’s love odes were more appropriate). However, the public mode gained ascendancy and the amorous and erotic associations were suppressed in the wake of the political urgency and identity politics of the Pakistan movement, and then the perpetual struggle the Pakistani ruling elite waged against the ethnic elites of Pakistan on the one hand and the Western and Indian ‘Other’ on the other. We now live in a highly politicized age when the amorous and the erotic are tolerated far less than ever before though, ironically, it is also the age of mass production of and easy access to commercial pornography through the internet. So, although the beautiful aspects of the ghazal are moribund and still draw the ire of hardline Islamists as well as the Westernized professionals for their purported eroticism or romantic frivolities, a new generation of young people are being exposed to the commodification of the body in ways never imagined by even the most erotic poets of Urdu.

NOTES

1. The following books were found by Nusuh in his son Kaleem’s room and burnt. They are mostly books of Urdu poetry, either the ghazal or erotic stories in verse. However, books other than poetry are also included.

- Kulliyāt-ē-Ātish (ghazal)
- Dīwān-ē-Sharar (ghazal)
- Vāsākhīt-ē-Amānat (amorous story in verse with erotic description of female beauty)
- Fasānā-ē-Ajāēb (Prose story in highly Persianized Urdu)
- Qīssā Gul Bukāōi (amorous story in verse)
- Arāēsh-ē-Maēhfil (1801) by Sayyid Haider Baksh Haider. A tale (dāstān) originally said to be in Persian and rendered into ornate Urdu prose in Fort William College. Like other tales it belongs to the fantasy world of magic, adventure, romance and necromancy.
- Masnavī Mīr Hasan (amorous story)
Waqā‘e-ē-Nēmat Khan Ali. The author’s full name is Nuruddin Muhammad Shirazi (d. 1710–1711). The book is in Persian and it describes the victory of Bahadur Shah, son of Aurangzeb, over Golconda (Hyderabad) in 1687.

- Ghazliāt-ē-Chirkīn (scabrous poetry)
- Hazliāt-ē-Jā’far Zatallī (satirical and indecent verse)
- Qasāēd-ē-Hajviā Mirzā Rafi Saudā (satirical and highly polemical verse)
- Dīvān-ē-Jān-Sahib (Rēkhtī poetry)
- Indar Sabhā (amorous drama with descriptions of female beauty)
- Divān Nazīr Akbarābādī (with couplets of Mian Hud Hud) (some poems are erotic)
- Vāsōkht (the author is not specified but all poems of this genre are amorous and erotic)


Hameed Naseem, describing the informal reading material during his childhood much later in the twentieth century, mentions the following books: in Persian Naērang-ē-Ishq of Ghanimat Kunjahi and Yusuf Zuleikhā of Jami. And in Urdu the poetic works of Zauq, Daqī, Hali, Atish, Nasikh and Shah Naseer. He describes the Persian work Bahār-ē-Dānish as a unique classic of erotic writing (Naseem 1990: 31).

2. European translators of the Masnavī were so embarrassed by the erotic content of some of the fables that Nicholson who translated it in English between 1925 to 1940 rendered them (133 out of 25, 700 couplets) in Latin so that only a few scholars could have access to them. He considered them ‘too outspoken for our taste’ but now that they are no longer unsuitable for Europe they are not acceptable in Pakistan. Even in 1956, when the Pakistani scholar Afzal Iqbal started writing his book on Rumi he was anxious to defend Rumi on the possible charge of sensuality (see Iqbal 1956: 284–314).

While Indians spoke and wrote in Urdu-Hindi before the arrival of the British, they did not use the language in the formal domains of power on any big scale. Thus the first rulers to use Hindustani (Urdu-Hindi), Urdu as well as Hindi, in several formal domains of power, were the British. In doing so they disseminated knowledge of the languages almost all over India, printed texts in them, created discourses in them for public consumption in the media, and helped standardize them. Indeed, the political and social history of Urdu (as well as Hindi) is connected with British rule in ways which must be understood in order to gain insights into why this common language became an all-India presence and how it came to be split into two rival standardized languages (Urdu and Hindi) and how identity and communal politics in British India, and even after British rule came to an end, is so intimately linked with these two languages.

This chapter, therefore, seeks to explore how the British learned Hindustani, commissioned writings in it and wrote about it. Even more interestingly, how the language became a symbol of identity of the old India hands or British officers who had returned home after having served in India. Thus the literature of Anglo-India (used here in the earlier sense for the British in India and not for those born of marriages between Europeans and Indians as it came to be understood later) is full of words from Hindustani (also called Urdu by some British authors). Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) can hardly be enjoyed unless one is provided with a glossary of these words and even then the
authenticity of the experience of the raj is lost in the translation and the interpretation.

That Hindustani was an identity marker for the British in India is borne out by a number of sources. According to Ivor Lewis, author of a dictionary of Anglo-Indian words:

They [the Hindustani words] could not have been much used except (with fading relevance) among a declining number of retired Anglo-Indians in the evening of their lives spent in their salubrious English compounds and cantonments. They brought with them into retirement their old imperial India colonized in their old imperial hearts, with a small but, to them, vivid vocabulary of Anglo-Indian words, such as I have quoted above, which set them apart from their stay-at-home neighbours (Lewis 1991: 11).

There are many examples of the use of Hindustani words in English speech from British writers—even those like Sir Walter Scott (The Surgeon’s Daughter, 1827), who had never been to India. Others who were acclaimed writers on India made it a distinctive feature of their portrayal of the British who had lived in India. Some of the more well-known works in this genre, apart from Kipling, are by: William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63); E.M. Forster (1879–1970); William Knighton (1885); Edward Thomson (1886–1946) and Edmund Candler (1874–1926); Flora Annie Steel (1847–1927); Maud Diver (1867–1945); Alice Perrin (1867–1934) and Christine Weston (1904–1989) among others. The present day hunger for nostalgic raj stories is fulfilled by P.M. Scott’s (1920–1978) The Raj Quartet (1966–1975) to name only the best sellers. All of these writers portray characters whose speech becomes colourful, authentic, or outlandish by the use of Hindustani words in it. It is as if one cannot create the distinctively exotic atmosphere of India if one does not use these Hindustani words.

However, Hindustani was not learned primarily to serve as an identity marker of past greatness or evidence of having lived an
exotic, adventurous and even a heroic life. It was learned as a
tool of imperialism; quite literally as a language of command.
The classic work on this is Bernard Cohn’s influential article
which argues that the British learned the vernacular languages,
mostly Hindustani, to understand Indians better so as to rule
them more efficiently. It was, more than any other language, ‘the
language of command’ (Cohn 1985). It was the mark of the pukkā
sahib (the authentic master).

An Englishman, like Kipling’s Legal Member in the short story
‘Tod’s Amendment’, whose ‘knowledge of natives was limited to
English-speaking Durbaris, and his own red chaprassis’, knew no
Hindustani and needed the boy Tod’s advice to make a popular
law for the Indians (Kipling 1896: 185). It was also needed by the
British women if only to order their servants, and by the children
in order to play with Indian children and get the attention of
their servants. Moreover, it was all around them even in areas
where it was not the local language because the British used it
in the army and with their servants. Thus, even without formal
instruction, it was picked up by the British. But it was also taught
formally and this is what is described below. But first, let us place
this language-learning in a theoretical perspective.

The grammar and dialogue books, written by the British to
learn Hindustani, have received excellent scholarly analysis by
Richard Steadman-Jones. His arguments are that, apart from the
well-known motive of learning the language in order to facilitate
colonial control (Cohn 1985), the act of using the language
involved an element of risk. Thus, at the psychological level, ‘a
sense of danger and disquiet really were central to colonial
language learning’ (Steadman-Jones 2007: 45). In short, language-
learning was an act of representation—that of the colonial power
in the abstract and that of the individual learner in the concrete.
However, there appear to be two traditions of writing the
pedagogical materials which are described below. There is the
work of George Hadley, an army officer, who chooses to call the
language ‘Moors’, while Gilchrist calls it ‘Hindustani’. For Hadley, this ‘pejorative labelling’ reduces it to ‘trade jargons’ (Steadman-Jones 2007: 52), while Gilchrist raises its status ‘by showing that it was not indeed a ‘jargon’ but a proper ‘language’, with standards of correctness that needed to be taken seriously’ (Ibid., 56–57). According to Steadman-Jones, Gilchrist raised the worth of Hindustani to ‘render the language available for appropriation’, so the British could understand ‘the risks inherent in speaking a language badly’ (Ibid., 260). The opposing trend, as exemplified in the works of Hadley, was to ‘insist that the problem lay in the language and not in the colonial agent’s own grasp of it [which] can be understood as a strategy of self-preservation through which feelings of anxiety and vulnerability were projected onto the colonized other and not attributed to the colonizing self’ (Steadman-Jones 2007: 261). To this, the present writer would like to add that sometimes speaking badly showed a triumphant ignorance of the language of the colonized because it showed not lack of something, but was a boast that one did not have to speak the tongue of the ruled perfectly. All these attitudes are in evidence in the history of the teaching and learning of Hindustani by the British in India.

First, it was taught to young British officers who came to India. This necessitated the writing of grammars and textbooks—especially textbooks in prose. That is how modern Urdu prose was created. There are many accounts of the man who presided over the birth of modern Urdu prose, John B. Gilchrist (Kidwai 1972; Siddiqi 1963; 1979; Lelyveld 1993). The most sophisticated of these is Steadman-Jones’s study of the work of Gilchrist, since it places them in the context of the situation in India, as well as the grammatical traditions of Europe (Steadman-Jones 2007). Gilchrist arrived in India is 1782 and started learning Hindustani. In 1785 he took leave for a year to collect material for a grammar book and dictionary of Hindustani. In 1786 the first, and in 1796 the second, parts of his dictionary were published. In the same
year he published a grammar of Hindustani also. In 1799 he established a seminary to teach Hindustani and Persian to junior civil servants in Calcutta, and in 1800 he was appointed professor of Hindustani at Fort William College. At Fort William he commissioned Meer Amman Dehlvi (d. 1806?) (Akhtar 1992: 423–427) to write the prose tale Bāgh-ō-Bahār (1801), which was then used for teaching the language to several generations of British officers and Indians. There are also several accounts of the Fort William College, often called the birthplace of both, modern Urdu prose as well as Modern (Sanskritized) Hindi (Fort William 1801; Public 1811; Roebuck 1819). A very readable account, Sisir Kumar Das’s Sahibs and Munshis (Das 1978), remains the most accessible for the general reader. Less well-known are accounts of the Haileybury College and the language-teaching either proposed or actually carried out there. T.R. Malthus proposed the establishment of a college for ‘some instruction in the rudiments of the oriental languages’ (Malthus 1817: 43) though the teaching was rudimentary at best. The names of some of the teachers of Urdu in this college and the military seminary at Addiscombe have, however, been given by Fisher (2004) in the context of tracing out the lives and occupations of Indians who settled in Britain before the twentieth century.

There are many accounts of the British experience of learning Hindustani in biographies and letters. A notable account, written by Rafiuddin Ahmed (1865–1954), a friend of Queen Victoria’s Hindustani teacher Munshi Abdul Karim and aspirant to the British parliament, is an indicator of the symbolic significance of the language in the mind of the Queen (Ahmad 1891). In my book sub-titled ‘language-learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India’, there is a brief account (four pages) of the learning of Urdu by the British (Rahman 2002: 212–215). None of these accounts look at the British perceptions of the language, nor do they describe the way the British officers learned the language, nor their levels of proficiency or the
relationship between their use of it and power. Some accounts do, however, describe some of the texts, such as Meer Amman’s Bāgh-ō-Bahār, which was taught to the British officers at Fort William (Duncan Forbes’s ‘Preface to the Edition of 1846’ in Akhtar 1992: 267–270). But this is a fairly advanced literary text. The basics of the language itself were taught through grammars, manuals and phrase books which have not been described in any scholarly work in the detail they deserve. This chapter is an attempt to fill that gap. It also relates the learning of this language by the British to their perceptions of identity—both theirs and of the Indians—and power: the fact of British rule over India. These perceptions constructed a linguistic category and fed into certain identity constructions going on during colonial rule. These constructions and their relationship with power and identity are traced out below.

**INSTRUCTION AND EVALUATION**

In British educational institutions, the teaching of Hindustani was through the grammar-translation method. Evaluation was through formal examinations as well as oral performances. The latter, called public disputations, were held at Fort William College in which subjects related to the language, or its wider significance, were discussed. The one held in 1814 was: ‘The Hindoostanee language, from its various origin and composition, is calculated to be more copious than any other language current in India’. This was opposed and there was a moderator too (Disputation 1814:17).

The questions required knowledge of both the Urdu and the Devanagari scripts, and grammar as well as translation were emphasized. For instance, the Hindustani examination held on 23 June 1801 at Fort William College, the first such examination to be held, has the following questions among others:

1. Decline the second personal pronoun [of Hindustani].
2. Translate the following passage in Nagri and Persian scripts.

In another examination, held on the 24 June, Mirza Ali Lutf's 'ghazal' in Rekhta, in the Urdu script, are set up for examination (Exercises 1802). On the whole the questions tend to direct the students to study works by Muslims which are now included among the classics of Urdu. Meer Amman, of course, was a great favourite of examiners. But the list of publications of 1819 reveals far more works in Urdu in the Perso-Arabic script than in Hindi in the Devanagari script. For instance there is Mir Taqi Mir’s work 'composed chiefly in the Oordoo, or Hindoostanee language' (Roebuck 1819: 286). Then there is ‘Gul Bakaoli’ written by ‘Meer Buhadoor Ulee’ (Mir Bahadur Ali) in 1803 under the direction of Gilchrist; Suyeyd Huedur Buhksh Hueduree’s (Sayid Haider Baksh Haideri) Tōtā Kahānī (1804); Meer Husun’s Masnavi Sahr-ul-Bayān; Ikhwān-us-Safā translated from the Arabic by Muolvee Ikram Ulee (Maulvi Ikram Ali) in 1811 (Roebuck 1819). This is in conformity with the British perception of Hindustani as easy Urdu. Sanskritized Hindi, also patronized by the British at Fort William through the works of Lalluji Lal and Sadal Misra, was probably a reaction of the majority community (the Hindus) to this British partiality for Urdu and its script.

The institutions for teaching the British were the colleges—such as Fort William in Calcutta and Haileybury in England—but before they were established, young officers learned Hindustani from teachers (Munshis). This was hardly a pleasant encounter since the young British officers were arrogant and often rode roughshod over the sensibilities of their instructors as Bayly has brought out (Bayly 1996: 74–75). In 1799, some junior civil servants were ordered to attend a course in Hindustani by Gilchrist. Indeed, the Court of Directors was not in favour of establishing Fort William College but it did want Gilchrist’s experimental seminary to be revived. Lord Wellesley’s reasons
for establishing the college were that the East India Company ruled vast territories and its officers could ‘no longer be considered as the agents of a COMMERCIAL CONCERN; they are in fact the ministers and officers of a POWERFUL SOVEREIGN’ (Wellesley’s Minute in Council at Fort William, 18 Aug 1800 in Public 1811: 14). He goes on to argue that no establishment in England could give a correct knowledge of ‘the languages, laws, and customs of India’... as even Sir William Jones was not intelligible to the natives of India when he first arrived at Calcutta. However, the Directors replied that their permission had not been obtained and that they were financially constrained so the college could not be allowed to function. They did, however, ask Wellesley to re-establish a seminary to teach Hindustani as proposed by Gilchrist in 1798 (Public 1811: 60).

Wellesley replied (5 Aug 1802) that there was no scarcity of money (the estimate of 1802–3 being 4 lacs) and if so many languages are taught in all the presidencies separately, the expenses will be more than if they are taught in one place. Hindustani, he agreed, was common to all the presidencies, but the local languages were different. As for Gilchrist, he said that he taught the grammar of Hindustani (Public 1811: 67–81) and so he was to be employed (Ibid., 82). However, as Calcutta also had ‘learned natives’ already employed for teaching the language, it would be seen as ‘manifest injustice’ if they were dismissed (Ibid., 107). At last the Directors relented and professorships in languages, including ‘Hindustanee’, were established. In time, however, political imperatives made Hindustani a more rational choice than Persian. One reason could be that the formal, ornate Persian prose used for writing letters and documents made the British so dependent upon their Munshis that it was more profitable to ‘expand the use of English and Hindustani in official business after 1837’ (Bayly 1996: 144). So, for many reasons including political ones, the shift towards Hindustani began before Persian was finally removed.
Languages were also taught at the Haileybury College in England since this college was meant to cater for the requirements of aspiring young civil servants in India.

Within the age of 18 or 19, with some instruction in the rudiments of the Oriental languages; and the Indian establishment to be confined exclusively to these languages, and particularly to act as a final test, as far as languages go, of qualification for office (Malthus 1817: 43–44).

In Haileybury, Hindustani was not taught initially (1806) but on 18 December 1813, the Librarian addressed the Committee of the College concerning students who had borrowed Shakespeare’s Hindoostanee Grammar. Then a certain J. Michael requested the College (Petition of 14 Dec 1829) to buy his reprinted and amended edition of Bāgh ō Bahār and Īkhwān us Sūflā. On 28 December 1828 C. Wilkins authorized another book of Hindustani and the same person gave reports to the College about the proficiency of students which was not very great considering that the award of ‘Great Proficiency’ was very rare indeed (Hertford: no page).

Up to 1814 there was no examination in the Oriental languages so hardly anybody took them seriously (Fisher 2004: 124). However, some of the Indian teachers had successful careers teaching Urdu. One such person, Syed Abdoollah (Abdullah) (b. 1825), reached Britain and applied for an appointment as ‘Moonshee or Teacher of the Persian, Oordoo, and Hindee languages’ at Haileybury or Addiscombe (Ibid., 424). He later taught for two years at Hanwell College and also at Grove, Blackheath. He is described as a ‘Teacher of Hindustanee’ (Ibid., 425). Later, he became Professor of Hindustani at University College, London, and remained there from 1859 to 1866. Another gentleman, D.K. Shahabuddin, is also described as a Professor of Hindustani, Gujarati and Marathi. However, the salaries of Indians were lower than those of Englishmen and they often took
private tuitions (Ibid., 427). Some were only private tutors. For instance, Mirza Muhammad Fitrat of Lucknow, advertised himself in 1801 as a teacher of Persian, Arabic ‘and also the Arabic and Hindostanee Languages as Pronounced in the Country’ (Fisher 2004: 105). As Indian sailors also lived in some parts of London, those who frequently came into contact with them learnt a few words of Hindustani. Sometimes, when the sailors were taken to the police, the people who had learnt English from them turned up as interpreters (Salter 1873: 26–27 quoted from Fisher 2004: 390). Exactly what kind of Hindustani was learned by the English in England is not documented. However, the kind of English they learned in India, or to use in India, is documented and exemplifies the linguistic aspects of the exercise of power.

HINDUSTANI IN THE IMPERATIVE MODE

The ‘oldest grammar’ of the language called Hindustani was written by the Dutch Director of the Dutch East India Company, Jean Josua Ketelaar, in 1698 (Bhatia and Kzuhiko 2008). Ketelaar’s real name was Kettler and he was born in Elbing (Germany) in 1659. He served the East India Company at Surat in 1683 and by 1708 he was ‘senior merchant’ because of his ‘expertise in the “Moorish” language’ (Bhatia and Kzuhiko 2008: 26). He wrote this grammar book in Agra, when given the charge of the Dutch factory there in 1700 (Ibid., 27). The Hindustani words are given in the Roman script while the explanation is in Dutch. The first grammar in which the words are in the Perso-Arabic script is by Benjamin Shultz (1689–1760). This was completed on 30 June 1741 and published in Leipzig as Die Schultzzi Grammatica Hindostanica in 1748 (MS. or quort 161 in Staatsbibliothek, Berlin described by Zaidi 1973: xi). Here the explanation is in Latin.

The British learned Hindustani to command their subordinates in the office, servants at home and subjects all over the subcontinent. As such, language was one of the sites for the exercise of power. There are two models of language-teaching
available during the British period. The first may be called the Hadlean (from George Hadley) and the second the Gilchrist (from J.B. Gilchrist) model.

To take Hadley’s model first, we notice that the sentences are in the imperative form and very rude. Whether this is so because, as Bayly says, ‘Hindustani was a language with which to marshal the lowly servant and sepoy’ (Bayly 1996: 288) or because Hadley, being a soldier, and writing for his colleagues did not care about niceties, or because he was an arrogant man is not clear. The fact remains that his tone and examples are extremely ill-mannered. First, the royal ‘we’ is used for one’s own self (ham) but the other person is always addressed with the less polite ‘tum’ instead of the polite ‘āp’.

Toom hum ko sunta? You (to) me hear
Chourah mooh sa bole Loud (with a broad mouth) speak.
Kone hy chorow Who’s there, boy?
Hum ghoorau pur churinga We will mount the horse (Hadley 1809: 6–15).

Not only are these orders rude but they are also grammatically incorrect. There are mistakes in use of the verb (suntē hō would be correct); adjective (ūchā not ‘Chourah mooh’, and nouns (larkā or chōkrā not choorau; ghōṛ ā not ghoorau).

Hadley arrived in Calcutta as a subaltern in 1763 and may have been more abrupt and imperative than others. He is not averse to using swear words (harrām zāddāh = bastard) (Hadley 1772: 132–133). It seems that his understanding of the language, or at least that which he wrote, was restricted to passing orders to servants.

Arnot and Forbes, writing in the same paradigm, concede that this Moors is essentially the jargon of servants and masters and not useful for communicating with ‘the higher classes of natives’ (Arnot and Forbes 1828: ii–iv). This book gives a short section on salutations in which the recommended reply to all salutations
for inferiors is merely ‘salām’. Even here, so little is the author’s understanding of Indian etiquette, that he tells English people to tell Indian visitors to cut short their visit if they stay too long. He believes that they should not offend their visitors by saying: ‘Toom Ja’o = you go!’ Instead, they should use the politer formula, ‘ub rookhsut leeye = be pleased to take your leave’ (Ibid., 476). He does not understand how offensive this must be for the visitors. He also points out that the ‘natives’ do not have a synonym for ‘thank you’; but fails to add that there are phrases which convey the same meaning (Ibid., 479). Another writer of this period, John Shakespear, whose books are mentioned in the reading lists for students, gives exercises in the Roman, Perso-Arabic as well as the Devanagari scripts, giving samples of conversation between an Englishman (Sahib) and his teacher (Munshi). Here, contrary to the Indian norms of addressing one’s teacher, the Sahib always uses ‘tum’ for the Munshi while the latter uses ‘āp’ (Shakespear 1840: 29).

By the early twentieth century, when the Indians were awakening politically, there was some attempt at linguistic politeness. Thus, I.A. Shah, after giving sentences for inferiors with ‘tum’ and people of high social standing with ‘āp’, mentions that ‘it is always advisable to use “āp”’ (Shah 1918: 78). This advice, however, was not usually followed as samples of conversation from this era suggest.

Another characteristic of the ordinary instructional books is to make Hindustani as easy as possible. This is understandable since conversation with servants and subordinates did not require the extensive vocabulary which is required for urbane or learned discourse. Thus, perhaps in order to find the lowest common denominator in vocabulary, some British writers would dismiss all learned words. Phillott, the author of the Hindustani Manual (1913), claims to have tested all words and phrases with an illiterate Punjabi bearer from the Murree Hills and rejected all which he did not understand (Phillott 1913: v).
Similarly, in the *Urdu Rōznāmā* (1911) he claims:

The vocabulary of all these parts is the everyday vocabulary of the uneducated; it is believed that very few words will be found in the text that are not in some form or other used by the uneducated Muslims of Delhi, Lucknow, Behar etc. etc (Phillott 1911: 1).

At the other end, however, are practitioners of the Gilchrist model which considered Hindustani a proper language and not merely a servant-master pidgin language. John Gilchrist's own *A Grammar of the Hindoostanee Language* (1796) quotes Urdu poets like Sauda, Wali and Meer Hasan.

But whatever the extent of the knowledge of people like Gilchrist, the ordinary Englishman in India was a 'kōī Haē' (a term used for shouting for servants meaning: 'is anybody there?'). The caricature of an English gentleman, sometimes called 'Colonel Poona' as by the radio broadcaster and director, Z.A. Bukhari, was probably the norm (Bukhari 1966: 289). Bukhari, like many others, remarks that the Hindustani spoken by English people was a testament to the listener's will and ability to understand rather than the speaker's proficiency in the spoken language (Bukhari 1966: 77). A contemporary of Bukhari, Lionel Fielden, the Director General of the All India Radio, says with great candour and humility, ‘with infernal cheek and of my own free will, I went to India to place myself at the head of a cultural organization in a country whose history I scarcely knew, not one of whose two hundred languages I had mastered’ (Fielden 1960: 154). But Fielden had tried to learn Hindustani as he says:

In England I had plodded through a whole Hindustani grammar, and knew by heart every exercise in it: how much is it, I should like a bath now, bring me some tea, how is your grandfather? More, indeed much more, I had learned to read and write the printed Urdu script (Fielden 1960: 165).
However, many Englishmen were so weak in Hindustani that during Bahadur Shah Zafar’s trial, although the proceedings were to be held in Hindustani ‘none of the five judges—all army officers of relatively junior rank—proved to be fluent in that language’ (Dalrymple 2006: 436). The president, however, was the only one familiar with it (Ibid., 436). Even Ralph Russell, now famous as a scholar of Urdu, says that during his stay of three and a half years in India, his proficiency in the language left much to be desired (Russell 1996: 7–8).

Besides not conjugating the verbs correctly, Englishmen used the imperative form either because they were taught that most often—we have seen how exercises in books used to teach Englishmen the imperative form—or because they were careless about polite usage, even when they were aware of it. Dennis Kincaid, in his history of British social life in India, describes how in the evening ‘the gentlemen soon exhausted their stock of Hindustani abuse, which was small, so small indeed that from constantly hearing the words repeated the ladies picked up certain indecorous phrases—particularly “Jow Jehannum”… which was a favourite expletive with the gentlemen’ (Kincaid 1938: 163).

An insightful observation in this context is from E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924). In the novel, Mrs Turton, the Collector’s wife invites ‘native’ women to a party.

Advancing, she shook hands with the group and said a few words of welcome in Urdu. She had learned the lingo, but only to speak to her servants, so she knew none of the politer forms, and of the verbs only the imperative mode (Forster 1924: 61–62).

Mrs Turton obviously belonged to that version of the Hadleyan tradition of language-learning which was too arrogant to imagine that the British needed to speak Hindustani properly.

So, despite Steadman-Jones’s theory about linguistic anxiety among the British, I would contend that this must have been
confined to the highest British officials or persons appointed to posts where such knowledge was a source of pride and distinction (like Gilchrist’s own post), but ordinary English people in India—secure in their knowledge of imperial power and racial superiority—deliberately made linguistic mistakes to show their contempt for the native language.

CODE-SWITCHING AMONG OLD INDIA HANDS

Another feature of British linguistic usage in India was code switching—the use of Hindustani words in English conversation and vice versa. This is a feature of South Asians speaking English even now but the British used the typically imperative forms even on such occasions. A number of such conversations are recorded in Anglo-Indian fiction. Letters and diaries also have some Hindustani words but only those ones which, presumably, have no exact English equivalent. To begin with there are the Portuguese words (ayāh=nurse; cobra= a kind of snake; palanquin= covered litter; chābī= key; peon= errand boy). These were absorbed in Anglo-Indian English and made it different from British English. The best source for this mixed language, very similar to the mixing of Persian with Hindi to produce what has been called Rekhta, are the records of the English factories in India. These are available from 1616 onwards. Interestingly the word used for Hindi-Urdu in these records is Indostan. The term ‘Mosselmana’ is used in a document of 10 February 1623, but the note explaining this usage says this may be either Persian or Hindustani (Foster 1908: 196). However, samples from what is called ‘Indostan’ are scattered all over the records and the language is named as in the case which follows. A certain John Willoughby, writing to the Surat Factory on 5 August 1623, reports how a factory officer found some natives digging ‘And he having no Indeston to speake to them, hee returned presenly [sic] to me...’ (Foster 1908: 253). Yet another term which is used is ‘Banian’ and the person who is said to speak it is ‘Santidas, the
great Banian’ who is ‘very powerfull at court’ (Foster 1911: 259). But it is not clear what language this was in 1636.

The records of the factories are full of words now clearly recognizable as Urdu-Hindi and they are so liberally used as to create a new hybrid language which may be called Hinglish. The writers use not only individual words but also proverbs. For instance, Willougby, whom we have met earlier, writes of the Gujaratis on 30 July 1623: ‘Thereof they say to the Guzz[er]ats pilla latte and pecher botte’, i.e. first kick them and then speak to them (Foster 1908: 251). Another sample is Robert Hughes at Patna’s letter to the Factors at Agra on 31 March 1621 describing a great fire:

A tirable fier kindled, which havinge consumed al those partes, by the source of a stronge ondye, brake into the citte and within the space of two greese came into the verye harte thereof, where our aboade is; whoe being environed with neigboringe choperes (Foster 1906: 247).

In this sample all the words have English equivalents: ondye [ādhī]=hurricane; grees [ghaṛīs]=unit of time; choperes [chappar]=thatched huts. But these words are being used because they are part of the natural vocabulary of the users.

Thus, apart from using words for which there was no exact equivalent, some Anglo-Indians used Hindustani words as an identity symbol which has been referred to in the beginning of this chapter. Apart from the actual usage of the factory records mentioned above, there are examples of this from literature which, albeit caricatures, do give some idea of how much Hindustani had permeated British speech in India.

Decko, you want this admi abhi, but you ain’t goin’ to get ‘im. Tumhara nahin. He’s mine, mehra admi, sumja? If you want to lurro, come on (Steel, Voices in the Night, 1900 in Lewis 1991: 12).
(Decko is dēkhō = see; ādmī = man; abhī = just now; tumhārā = yours; nahi = not; mehra mērā = mine; sumja is sumjhē = do you understand [sumjhā is the impolite form which does not go with tumhārā]; lurṛō = to fight).

While this is a caricature, old India hands did use many Hindustani words which they had become accustomed to. Some did have English equivalents, though perhaps not with the same shade of meaning, while others were irreplaceable. The British contact with India left a permanent mark on the vocabulary of English, including Portuguese words used by the British in India, as the dictionaries affirm (Yule and Burnell 1903; Lewis 1991). It is because of this contact, stretching over two centuries, between India and Britain, that many English words have entered Indian languages while words in Indian languages, especially Hindustani, are found in English. This may be the most enduring legacy of this contact.

THE LEARNING OF HINDUSTANI BY BRITISH MEN

There are several caricatures of British officers who learned 'Hindustani' but only to pass examinations. In a novel about this period, there is a hypothetical Secretary who ‘though he could never speak an intelligible sentence in the language, he had such a practical and useful knowledge of it, in half-a-dozen of its dialects, that he could pass examinations in it with the highest credit, netting immense rewards’ (Quoted from Kincaid 1938: 247). However, the fact is that knowledge of the language varied enormously among the British, though most probably never went beyond the imperative phase mentioned earlier. The early British arrivals in India learned Hindustani privately with the help of Munshis. Later, although the Munshis were not entirely dispensed with, educational institutions arranged for tutors. Some came in contact with the language even before leaving the British shore. This is because Hindustani was taught, as was Persian, at Haileybury. John Beames, an eminent civil servant
who studied there, said ‘Haileybury was a happy place, though rather a farce as far as learning was concerned’ (Beames 1961: 63). He adds that no attempt was made ‘to practice talking with them or to acquire any practical familiarity with them’ (Ibid., 64). In his case, when he came to Calcutta, he had to hire a Munshi (Hari Prasad Dutt) to learn Hindustani and Persian to pass an examination. The examination was held every month and he passed in the fourth month (Beames 1961: 81). However, he did not approve of teaching young officers languages in Calcutta. According to him:

As to languages, which were the pretext for keeping us in Calcutta, I can honestly say that I knew very little more about them at the end of the eleven months than I did at the beginning (Beames 1961: 91).

He learned Punjabi by talking to a Sikh priest who simply translated books into Hindustani. This language was necessary for talking to the ‘peasantry and lower classes in town only’ as ‘the upper classes and educated people spoke Hindustani’ (Ibid., 101). Lionel Fielden writes in his journal (27 August 1935) that ‘Cornelia Sorabji examines me in Urdu, which (if I knew it) is rather like a Greek examining an American in French’ (Fielden 1960: 152). However, he kept slogging through ‘lessons in Urdu’ throughout his stay in India (Ibid., 188).

The military cadets were also taught some Hindustani in England, though perhaps only for a short time. In 1809, the Military Seminary at Adiscombe near Croydon was established. In 1804 a school was set up at Baraset near Calcutta to teach the Indian languages but it was closed down in 1811. The cadets were, however, studying Hindustani—the only Indian language they studied—in 1813. In 1861 this facility was sold and cadets started attending Woolwich and Sandhurst. Among the professors of Hindustani the following are mentioned: John Shakespear (1809–1829); Richard Haughton (1821–1851); Charles Bowles (1829–1859); Maj. Michael John Rowlandson (1851–1861) and
Cotton Mather (1859–1861). An Indian teacher, the equivalent of a Munshi, Hasan Ali, was also employed between 1810 and 1816. The cadets were even less willing pupils than the civil servants. Thus they must have turned up in India with almost no knowledge of Hindustani.

The military officers were, however, examined in Hindustani so they had to learn it somehow. Lieutenant Bruce Hay writes to his father from Landi Kotal:

The Quartermaster’s clerk of the 9th Gurkhas is teaching me Urdu now. I’ve had him about a week so far and hope to go up for the lower standard the next exam in Peshawar—the beginning of October (Hay 19 July 1898).

He gives details of the course and how the officers approached their language learning exercise.

I’ve had an awful blow! In the Bagh-o-Bahar, which is the book (part) we have to do for the Urdu Lower Standard, I found out about four days ago I had been doing entirely the wrong show—having trusted the Munshi—and now, if I want to get the other beastly part finished I shall have to neglect ‘Urzis’ and conversation, so that you probably won’t see my name amongst the successful ones! (Hay 6 September 1898).

This particular officer says he did four to five hours daily of Urdu and that in the examination, conducted by his former captain, he got ‘good’ for conversation, ‘good’ for ‘Urzi’, ‘tolerable’ for Bāgh-ō-Bahār which was ‘very hard’ (4 October 1898). Even so, he failed ‘in that beastly Urdu Exam, and was a bit sick’ when he heard that. But he tells his father by way of mitigation that only ‘seven fellows in whole of the Punjab passed, six of whom are on the staff!’ (22 November 1898). This suggests that the standards were stringent but, in fact, as mentioned earlier, most of British officers never passed beyond the imperative mode and understanding the simplest of conversations. There were, however,
exceptions who learned Hindustani very well indeed. For instance, a certain blue-eyed European, disguised as a Faqir, ‘had acquired a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit and Urdu, that no one could detect him in his speech’ (Dalrymple 2006: 205). It seems, however, that the Indians were not particularly encouraging towards the British when they endeavoured to learn Hindustani. Lionel Fielden, at least, writes that his ‘attempts to speak Urdu and eat Indian food’ were regarded as ‘a sly form of hypocrisy’ (Fielden 1960: 179).

LEARNING OF HINDUSTANI BY BRITISH WOMEN

English Women also had to learn Hindustani. The most eminent example is that of Queen Victoria herself who, in keeping with her status of being the Empress of India, learned basic Hindustani from her Indian teacher, Munshi Abdul Karim (1863–1909) who was sent to her as a ‘gift’ and rose from the position of a waiter to that of teacher (Munshi), and who was also her favourite, and eventually, acquired the title of her Indian Secretary (Anand 1996). Among the first descriptions of the Queen’s diaries, which are exercise books having simple sentences of Hindustani, written in the Perso-Arabic script, are essays by Rafiuddin Ahmad, a contemporary who knew Munshi Abdul Karim (Ahmad 1892). Fanny Parkes, who lived in India between 1822 and 1846, was the wife of a minor civil servant. She enjoyed travelling all over India and was sympathetic to Indians. While coming to India she writes on 11 October 1822.

Monsieur mon mari, who was studying Persian, began to teach me Hindustani, which afforded me much pleasure (Parkes 1850: 7).

While the husband (Monsieur Mon Mari) does not seem to have made any remarkable progress in any language, Fanny learnt Urdu very well. To begin with, she had to learn the language purely for instrumental reasons which she describes as follows:
It appeared curious to be surrounded by servants who, with the exception of the tailor, could not speak one word of English; and I was forced to learn to speak Hindustani (Parkes 1850: 16).

Later, as she mingled more and more with Indians, she found the language an asset to participate in the aesthetic experiences India had to offer. Thus she mentions a gathering of Europeans—possibly the last remnants of the ‘White Mughals’ (Dalrymple 2003)—who were watching a dance (nāch) and listening to music in Hindustani. Despite considerable fluency, her grammar is as wrong as that of other English people. For instance, she sends a seal with the following motto on it:

*Toom ghee ka dhye jalāo* (i.e. be happy and celebrate) (Ibid., 47).

Actually it should be:

*Tum ghī kē diyē jalāō*

Hindustani was so widespread that Fanny Parkes reports its being used by the Marathas. They listened, and played, Hindustani ‘airs on the *sitar*’ (Parkes 1850: 262). Parkes herself was proficient enough in idiomatic Hindustani to use a proverb to reconcile the Rani of Gwalior to expulsion from her former state:

I hesitated; the Bāī looked at me for an answer. Dropping the eyes of perplexity on the folded hands of despondency, I replied to the Brija, who had asked the question, ‘*jiska lāthī ooska bhains*’, i.e. ‘He who has the stick, his is the buffalo’!. The effect was electric. The Bāiza Bāī and the Gaja Rājā laughed, and I believe the odd and absurd application of the proverb half reconciled the Mahārāj to her fate (Parkes 1850: 265).

She was the interpreter of the Miss Edens with the former Maratha rulers (Ibid., 203). And, indeed, the Rani of Gwalior, Her
Highness the Baiza Bai, wrote a letter (Kharītā) to Fanny Parkes on 29 June 1838. Which she describes as follows:

The letter was written in Urdū (the court language), in the Persian character, by one of Her Highness’s moonshees, and signed by the Bāī herself: the paper is adorned with gold devices (Ibid., 328).

It is significant that Fanny calls it Urdu, not Hindustani, and that this language is used by a Maratha princely house.

A contemporary, Isabella Fane, daughter of General Sir Henry Fane, C-in-C of the Indian Army between 1835 and 1838, learned Hindustani but was ‘too imperfect in the language to go beyond asking for what we want, and as for understanding what they say, it is quite out of the question’ (Pemble 1985: 71). Like the men, she also shouts for attendants with ‘qui hi!’ (Kōī Hāē) (Pemble 1985: 102). Her Hindustani, like many other women’s, never went beyond the imperative mode of E.M. Forster’s character, Mrs Turton.

THE LEARNING OF HINDUSTANI
BY BRITISH CHILDREN

The children of the officers also acquired Hindustani as their memoirs testify. The children learned the language through the servants and sometimes became as fluent in it as to use it as a mother-tongue or their first language.

Gillian Owen, whose father arrived in India in 1918, says:

My parents were vague, unimportant, rarely seen and vaguely threatening, figures who could not speak my language—for I remember consciously translating into English when I was with them (Fleming Vol. 2, 2004: 39).

This must have been exceptional. However, most children were fluent and flexible, i.e. they could switch between languages with ease, though, as was common in British India, they spoke
incorrect Hindustani in the imperative mode. Blake Pinnell, whose father arrived in India in 1920, reports:

Martin and I talked in Hindustani to the Indian servants and probably spoke as much in that language as we did in English. No one gave us lessons in Hindustani: I suppose we learned it by listening. Whether what we said was strictly grammatical, I shall never know, but at least we communicated effectively. Later on, we learned that there was a brand of Hindustani known as ‘kitchen Hindi’ which the memsahib or the lady of the house used when speaking to her servants, and maybe we had picked up a bit of that (Ibid., Vol. 1: 247).

Indeed, almost all British India picked up a bit of the ‘Kitchen Hindi’, if the phrase lists, dialogues, exercises, and sentences quoted in the documents the British have left behind are any indicator.

However, some people did know the other varieties and styles. Michael Bruce (b. 1927) in North Bihar, says his father, a police officer, knew Hindi and Urdu at three levels: the cultured, the everyday and the bazaar. He could use facetious stories in the bazaar style to dispense a potentially violent crowd (Fleming Vol. 1, 2004: 240).

Out of all the accounts of the British children, there is only one in which the child did not learn Hindustani very well. Ann Marindin, reports:

Our servants (Ayah-Emmy and Latif, bearer) wrote and spoke English, as well as many other Indian languages, so unlike many of my contemporaries I failed to speak Hindi fluently (Fleming Vol. 2: 178).

Some of these children are alive today and the nostalgia of the raj, expressed through words of Hindustani to those who understand the language, is very much part of their being as it was of their ancestors, the Anglo-Indians who remembered India,
and their own youth and importance, with the Hindustani words of their time in India.

HINDUSTANI IN THE ROMAN SCRIPT

Hindustani in the Roman script was primarily for the use of the Christian missionaries and the army. As the use of this script has been mentioned in relation to the army in Chapter 10, the other uses will be dealt with here. Among the various reasons given for preferring this script to the others, some given in a transliterated edition of the Alf Laila in Urdu, one is that the cost of printing is less, as the ‘Arabic script of Urdu takes more space’ (Pincott 1882: iv), and the other one is that it helps ‘to acquire an accurate knowledge of the vocalization of the Urdu’ language (Ibid., iii). But, of course, the main reason was that it was a script known to the British and saved them the effort of learning and writing in another one. There are several versions of the Bible in this script. The language is easy but is closer to Urdu than Modern Hindi (Bible 1860). In addition to the scriptures, there were religious hymns to be accompanied with music in the Roman script. The following is an example of such a tune set to the piano. The words are:

_Yá Rabb terí janabmen hargiz kamí na-hín_
_Tu-jha- sá jahán ke_
_bích to ko-í ga-ní nahn._
(O Lord! In thy Kingdom there is no dearth
There is none in the world
As generous as Thou art!)

(Parsons 1875)

Although British officers were divided over patronizing missionaries, some being of the view that the state must not appear to interfere with the natives’ religions, some Evangelical Christians did entertain the hope that the dissemination of the
Bible in Hindustani would spread Christianity in the Orient. The Reverend Claudius, writing in 1805, expresses happiness that Fort William College would help in the translation of the Bible (Pearce Vol. 2, 1846: 294). A certain Mr Bachanan, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the same year, exults that in ‘the centre of the Pagan world, and at the chief seat of superstition and idolatory’ this work of translation is going on and ‘the unconverted natives assist in the translations’ (Ibid., 296). And Wilberforce, writing in 1813, considered ‘the translation and diffusion of the scriptures’ the ‘most powerful agents in the great work of Christianizing the natives of India’ (Ibid., 299). During the 1840s–1850s, a number of Evangelicals had come to India and used the Indian languages, above all Hindustani, to convert the natives. Robert Tucker, the district judge of Fatehpur, had set up large stone columns with the Ten Commandments inscribed in Persian, Urdu, Hindi, and English, and used to read ‘the Bible in Hindoostanee to large numbers of natives who were assembled in the compound to hear him’ (Hibbert 1978: 52. Quoted from Dalrymple 2006: 61–62).

However, administrators often prevented the more zealous proselytizers from teaching the scriptures in schools. A certain Reverend Jabez Carey, for instance, had introduced them as school books in Rajputana. However, a letter from Fort William to the Resident, Major General Sir David Ochterlony, stopped the experiment and suggested Carey should be given ‘suitable Books in Persian and Hindoostany languages from Serampore and from the Calcutta Book Society’ instead (Fort William 1822 in Sinha and Dasgupta 1964: 257).

In any case, because the scriptures were available in the Roman script, they were read by many Christians—especially in Kashmir, Punjab and the Hindi belt—whose mother-tongue was not Urdu and who could not even read its script. But, of course, stories such as the Alf Laila in Urdu, were also available in this script, which means it was also available for pleasure reading.
It was one of the factors which helped spread the kind of Hindustani which is close to Urdu and Hindi as used on the streets of Pakistani and North Indian cities.

Urdu in the Roman script must have been useful in disseminating the knowledge of the language, or at least the easy version of it to people who could not read the Urdu or the Devanagari scripts. It is now used on the internet to write e-mail messages and chatting on Facebook or other chatrooms among both Indians and Pakistanis. Moreover, a number of personal writings on the internet (blogs) are in this script. A number of erotic, and frankly pornographic, stories purporting to be real-life events are also available on the internet. They are classified as Hindi or Urdu, more on the basis of the setting, names of characters and point of origin rather than any significant lexical difference. Recently, Gallup Pakistan published a report on 7 December 2009, which gave the following information about the use of Urdu on mobile telephones:

A nationally representative sample of men and women from across the country were asked ‘Usually which language do you use for sending SMS from your mobile phone?’ thirty seven per cent (37%) said they send SMS in Urdu typed in English alphabet, 15% use Urdu typed in Urdu alphabet to send text messages whereas 17% said they type SMS in English. Twenty nine per cent (29%) do not send any SMS whereas 2% gave no response (Gallup 2009).

To conclude, the British imagined Hindustani as an India-wide language; a lingua franca, which it probably was not, before their arrival. They spread it all over the country by using it in the army, to talk to servants and subordinates. They also spread it far and wide by using it in the courts of law, the lower levels of administration and teaching it formally in schools all over North India. Moreover, they wrote primers, phrase books, dictionaries, and grammar books in it, thus making it the most commonly known Indian language in their Indian empire. In short, the
imagination, or perception, that it was the language of their
Indian empire came first and the reality followed because of the
fact that the language was used as if it already was the language
of the widest possible communication in the country. The fact
that it was the language of wider communication in North India
during the eighteenth century is probably correct but it did not
have as much spread nor was it used in so many formal and
informal domains all over India as it was because of the British
understanding of it as the lingua franca of India.

The second aspect of the British understanding of Hindustani
is that they equated it with Urdu and favoured the Perso-Arabic
script for writing it. They did not favour the highly Persianized
variety of it but, on the whole, their Hindustani was closer to
easy, or commonly spoken Urdu than it was to either the
vernaculars of the Hindi belt or Sanskritized Hindi. This
particular understanding was felt to favour Muslims, as Urdu was
associated with Muslims, by Hindu nationalists.

Though the British were the first rulers who made such efforts
to learn Hindustani and produced so much instructional material
in it, they used it from a position of power and, hence, neglected
its polite usages and also did not master its grammar fully. This
creative an imperative style of Hindustani which goes with the
tone of command the British employed in most of their dealings
with ordinary Indians. Hindustani influenced English and its
words have entered the lexicon of English. This is the enduring
fruit of the two-century long contact of the British with India.
But another fruit—though less enduring in some cases—is the
effect of British use of Hindustani on the princely states of India.
To this we turn in the next chapter.

NOTES
1. Hindustan was identified, as William Dalrymple has written, with the
Indian States of Haryana, Delhi, UP, and some parts of Madhya Pradesh and
Bihar ‘where Hindustani is spoken, and the area often referred to in
modern Indian papers as the “Cow Belt”.’ There was a strong consciousness of this as a unit with Delhi as its centre (Dalrymple 2006: 21 and 489).

2. Queen Victoria’s diaries are preserved in the Royal Archives of Windsor. I am indebted to Professor Naeem Qureshi, former professor of History at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, for showing me a photograph of a page of the Queen’s writing. Sushila Anand also has the facsimile of one page of the diary in her book (Anand 1996).
The native states of India were fairly autonomous in their internal affairs. Thus the choice of the official language was up to the ruler. In reality, this choice was constrained both by the internal and the external language policy and practices of the states, their neighbouring areas and the inclinations of the ruling elite.

In this chapter we will take two case studies of India’s largest and most powerful native states: Hyderabad, ruled by a Muslim; and Kashmir, ruled by a Hindu ruler. Both shifted from Persian to Urdu as official languages and this chapter looks at the history of this change and relates it to the politics of the states and the overall political situation of India. In addition, a synoptic view of the language policies and practices of certain Hindu and Muslim princely states will be touched upon in passing in order to relate these variables to identity politics in India. First, then, let us take the case of Hyderabad.

HYDERABAD

While it is not clear how much Urdu in any of its forms was used in independent kingdoms during the Mughal period, there is evidence to suggest that in the Deccan rulers patronized the language much before North India. For instance, the author of Basātīn ul salātīn says concerning the Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur—Mohammad Adil Shah, Ali Adil Shah Sani and Sikandar Adil Shah who ruled in the seventeenth century—that ‘since the
inclination of the king was towards his own idiom which was the language of the Deccan...so many Hindi poets came to Bijapur’ (ammā chū taba’ā Humāyū Pādshāh aksar mēl bajānib lughāt-ē-khās khāvēsh ya’nī zubān-ē-Dakan ast...shu’ara-ē- Hindī gō basiār az khāk-ē-Bējāpur barkhwāstā and’ (Quoted from Syeda Jafer in Jafer and Jain Vol. 2, 1998: 377). But this did not mean that Dakhni was used as an official language.

The state of Hyderabad was carved out in 1724 by the Asif Jahis, the governors of the Mughal emperors in the Deccan, when they became powerful enough to set themselves up as rulers in their own right. The Nizams—from Mir Qamruddin Khan (1724–48) to the sixth ruler of the house, Mir Mahboob Ali Khan (1869–1911)—used Persian as their court language, in common with the prevailing fashion of their times, though they spoke Urdu at home. Persian was, however, replaced by Urdu in some domains of power, such as law courts, administration and education, toward the end of the nineteenth century. This phenomenon, which may be called the ‘Urduization’ of the state, had important consequences. Besides the historical construction of events, an attempt will be made to understand these consequences: the link of ‘Urduization’ with power, the construction of Muslim identity, and the socio-economic class. Moreover, the effect of ‘Urduization’ on the local languages of Hyderabad will also be touched upon.

LINGUISTIC POLICY OF THE NIZAMS

The question of the language policy of the Muslim rulers of the Deccan is discussed by Mustafa Kamal in his book on the development of Urdu in Hyderabad (1990: 17–45). Kamal refers to the claims of Jamil Jalibi (1987: 185), Naseer Uddin Hashmi (1923 and 1963), Abdul Qadir Sarwari (1934), Mohiuddin Quadri Zor (1969), and others, that Urdu—though called Hindi or Hindvi—was used in some offices of the state in the south. However, as Kamal points out, these authors refer to the
historian Farishta. But Farishta never claims that Hindi was used in the offices of the state. He narrates the tale of a certain Hasan, the servant of a certain Bahman Kangoo who enjoyed the favour of Muhammad Tughlaq. Kangoo foretold his rise to kingship and made him promise to make him his minister of finance (Farishta Vo. 1: 273–300). He fulfilled this promise when he became the ruler of a part of the Deccan. It was from this time onwards, according to the story, that Hindus started serving Muslim rulers in the revenue department. This story, if true, merely claims that Hindus started serving in the revenue department of the state, but it makes no claim regarding the language they used in their work. To assume that this was some form of Hindi, or the ancestor of Urdu, is not warranted by the evidence at hand.

As for the later rulers of the Deccan, once again Farishta’s words are instructive. He writes that during the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah I (1538–57):

va daftar-ē-farsi bārtaraf sākhtā Hindvi Kard (Farishta Vol. 2: 27).
(He dismissed the Persian office and made it Hindvi).

While it is clear that an Indian language was preferred over Persian, it is still not known exactly which language the generic term ‘Hindvi’ refers to. And, of course, if Brahmins used an Indian language at a later date, it does not follow that they did the same earlier. The existing evidence which Kamal (1990) refers to is that there are several documents in the Deccan with Marathi and even Telugu translations from Persian, but none with Hindvi (or old Urdu-Hindi) translations. It stands to reason, then, that the local languages, rather than some variety of Urdu-Hindi, were used at the lower levels of the administration. These local languages may have been referred to as ‘Hindvi’ or ‘Hindi’, i.e. the language of Hind, but this does not necessarily mean that one of them was the ancestor of Urdu.

The Nizams, then, ruled over a multi-religious, multilingual state where there was a tradition of using languages other than
Persian in some public domains. The rulers themselves were mostly Urdu-speaking Muslims, but the majority of the common people were Hindus who spoke Marathi, Telugu, Canarese, and other languages. The information pertaining to this diversity is summarized below:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Composition of Hyderabad State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The linguistic composition was even more pluralistic.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language/Speakers in Hyderabad State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telugu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanarese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 1871 (in Ibid., 432).

At this time, the census reports, ‘Persian is the official language of the Government, but it differs slightly from that now spoken in Persia’ (Ibid., 455). The Andhra Archives contain letters,
treaties and other documents in Persian up to the time of Mahbub Ali Khan, when Urdu documents start taking their place. Among these are letters of five governors-general: Warren Hastings (10 July 1784), John Macpherson (23 May 1786), Cornwallis (26 January 1792), John Shore (10 February 1797), and Lord Dufferin (17 March 1888), all in Persian. Even the letter of Maharaja Sri Samar Singh Bahadur, ruler of Marwar, though written long after Persian was the court language of the state (23 March 1911), is, nevertheless, in Persian. The treaties of 1792 and 1822, between the East India Company and the Nizam were, of course, in Persian, though a memorandum of 13 August 1872 between the British Government and the state of Hyderabad, is in English (all reproduced in Pachauri 1993, 2–20). However, interestingly, Hyderabad city was predominantly Urdu-speaking, and Canarese is not represented at all, though Arabic is (see Table 3). There were also 6,643 speakers of English in the city.

The linguistic composition is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages Spoken in Hyderabad City (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telugu                                  22.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathi                                4.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canarese                               Not given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu                                   67.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic                                 3.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Ibid., 456).

The Nizams had, of course, imposed Persian on the natives, who differed from them both in religion and language. This, however, was the common practice of that period for which the Mughals provided a model. What the Nizams did, however, was to use the indigenous languages of the people at certain levels of the
administration, which the Mughals had done earlier, but had stopped after Akbar (r. 1556–1605).

In Hyderabad state, however, the local languages were used as media of instruction in schools. There were, for instance, 162 educational institutions in 1880–81, out of which 105 were Persian, 35 Marathi, 19 Telugu, and 3 English-medium schools (Ali, C. Vol. 1: 128). Also, there were both Persian and Marathi clerks in the districts of the state (Ibid., Vol. 2: 197).

Moreover, different departments gave orders in Persian as well as a local language. In order to write them so that they could be read by the public, writers (muharrir) of the two languages were hired at a salary of twenty-five rupees per month (Jarīdā 1885, Vol. 3: 304). One such order states:

Shahpur Ji raised the point that the rules for the toll taxes on the road, which are a copy of those already used for the road to Gulbarga, should, in addition to being added to the gazette, also be written in Persian and Marathi and be pasted on every check post and every place for the information of everybody (Jarīda Vol. 3: 304).

At another place, an order by Prime Minister (Madār ul Mahām) Mir Turab Ali Khan Salar Jang I, who held office between 1853 and 1883, states:

The questions will be in the Urdu language but those who answer them can translate them and write their answers in Talangi or Marathi or English. However, anyone who answers them in any language except Urdu will have to appear for an examination in the Urdu language on the fifth day (Ibid., Vol. 4: 308).

When district land surveys began in 1886, a school was established in order to teach the principles of surveying in Marathi in addition to others languages (Ali, C. 1885–86, Vol. 2: 197). Indeed, the diary of Salar Jang I of 8 January 1880, records
that he told the students during his tour of the Aurangabad Districts:

From the Putwari’s office to that of the Talookdar and all official communications are made in that language. Not to learn Maratti [sic] therefore is to place yourselves outside the pale of official employment (Quoted in Ali, S. M. 1883–86, Vol. 3: 195).

The Prime Minister talked to the assistant settlement officers, both Muslims and Hindus, and recorded in his diary:

I desired them to hold a conversation in Maratti [sic], in order that I might judge of their attainments in that language. I found that they spoke it fluently. I was astonished to find them so proficient both as regards speaking and writing (Ibid., 200).

Schools were not only in Marathi or Telugu. There were, for instance, nine Canarese schools in 1884–85 (Adm Hyd 1886: 176). The ‘Inspectors of schools were ordered to pass in the vernaculars of their district’ (Ibid., 179).

In short, the linguistic policy of the Hyderabad state was to use the indigenous languages—Marathi, Telugu and Canarese—in some public domains. In time, however, Urdu replaced not only Persian in the domains of power, but also these indigenous languages in certain other domains (mainly education). Thus, the transition from Persian to Urdu represents not just a simple substitution of one language for another, but also a change in the self-representation of the Urdu-speaking ruling elite; a corresponding change in the mobilization of religious-cum-linguistic identities: Hindus being defined by the indigenous languages and the Muslims by Urdu. In short, the change led to the politicization of language in the Hyderabad state in a way that reflects the overall mobilization of Hindu and Muslim identities in India.
SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSIAN FOR THE OLD GUARD

In common with the rest of Muslim India, the elite of Hyderabad considered Persian an essential part of their cultural heritage and a marker of their elitist identity and political domination. The Paigah nobility of Hyderabad state, which held vast landed estates and political power, studied Persian as part of their socialization.

The children of the elite were taught Persian at home but schools were also opened for them by the late nineteenth century. For instance, the first Salar Jang’s sons were initially taught in the palace. In 1877, the class was removed to Rumbolt’s Kothi where it came to be known as the Madrassa-i-Aliya. In this institution, Englishmen were appointed headmasters. The school had an English and an oriental side, and Persian, along with ‘Arabic, Hindustani and vernacular languages’ were taught there (Adm Hyd 1886: 192). The Madrassa-i-Aizza was another elitist institution where boys were taught Persian along with other subjects (Ibid., 194). Hyderabad College was also an offshoot of the Dar-ul-Umar Oriental College, ‘which was founded by the late Minister in 1855 for the teaching of English, Arabic, Persian, Telugu, and Marathi’ (Ali, S.M. 1883–86, Vol. 8, Part 2: 435).

However, the upper classes of the urban areas, especially Hyderabad city, paid more attention to Persian in the beginning and then moved to English and Urdu, as those languages gained currency in the domains of power. Even the ladies of the upper classes were so conversant in Persian that local gossip in the English press was translated ‘in Persian having, it is whispered, found their way into the innermost recesses of the zananas’ (Ibid., Vol. 8, Part 2: 663). At the uppermost level, as in the durbar, the Viceroy’s speech was translated into Persian and read out to the Nizam on 22 February 1884 (in Ibid., Vol. 8, Part 2: 798).
Even up to 1885, when Urdu was gaining strength, the upper-class boys of Madrassa-i-Aliya were praised for having improved in Persian. It was further emphasized that ‘Hyderabad youths cannot dispense with their own classics, if they wish to make themselves useful in after-life’ (Ali, S.M. 1886: 372). Persian was a symbol of Muslim cultural and political domination until it was replaced by Urdu. The replacement itself was not without opposition. According to Sarwar Jang, tutor of Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam (1866–1911), when he expressed (in the presence of Salar Jang I) his agreement with Maulvi Mushtaq Hussain’s proposal that Urdu should replace Persian in all offices of the state, the Minister’s reaction was as follows:

As soon as he heard this he sat up straight. Earlier he had been reclining on a bolster but now he sat bolt upright and said: ‘God forbid!’ He prolonged the ‘a’ of Khudā so much that I was very disturbed and understood that I had made a mistake. Later he said that you Hindustanis are not competent in Persian writing and speech. Persian is the symbol of Muslim victories and we are from the victorious nation and have conquered this country by force of arms. In your own country [North India] you have done away with this symbol and now you want to do the same here also. As long as I am alive, Persian too will remain alive (Jang 1933: 244).

However, in practice the Minister used Urdu wherever it suited him—such as in meetings with the Resident, so as to prevent him from dominating the conversation if it was held in English. But at this time, while Salar Jang I’s own orders were in Persian, other departments had started issuing orders in Urdu (Jarida 1885). However, so much was the fashion of using Persian on formal occasions that the marsiyā, on the death of Salar Jang in 1883, was written, among others, by Hali also in Persian (Hali 1879: 395–97). The actual teaching of Persian was also declining by the time Mahbub Ali Khan was studying. His tutor, Sarwar Jang, reports that the young Nizam’s time was being wasted in
the learning of Persian because his teachers were unsuitable for this purpose. Moreover, the time for Persian was also reduced (Jang 1933: 211). The Nizam’s learning of Urdu will be touched upon later. What is notable is that, according to his tutor, the Nizam was not competent in Persian. Thus, when the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, who was learning Persian, paid a visit to the state, he began to converse in that language with the Nizam. Knowing that his pupil was not competent in Persian, Sarwar Jang suggested that, because Persian was understood by many who should not be privy to the conversation, it was more expedient that the conversation should be in English (Ibid., 272).

Thus, before the actual change of the official language, it had started losing out to both Urdu and English in importance. The change, however, involved bureaucratic procedures and orders which are described below.

TRANSITION FROM PERSIAN TO URDU

To understand this transition it must be placed in the context of state politics: specifically the tension between the locals of Hyderabad (Mulkās) and the outsiders, mostly the Urdu-speaking Muslims of North India (Ghaēr Mulkās). The tension increased so much that Mahbub Ali Khan asked for a report on employment and his prime minister submitted a report which has been summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Civil Officers</th>
<th>Total Number (%)</th>
<th>Aggregate Salary (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natives</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>42.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rest:</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>58.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustanis</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>20.38</td>
<td>24.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasis</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13.87</td>
<td>11.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombayites</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>8.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>13.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sajanlal 1974: 130 column 1.
The Nizam pointed out that the outsiders drew a higher aggregate salary. The Prime Minister explained that the outsiders (non-\textit{Mulkīs}) were more qualified and had, therefore, been appointed to more lucrative and powerful positions (Ibid., 132). They were so powerful that the Executive Council, carrying out the administration, had twelve members at one time, ‘all Hindustanees or foreigners’ (Ali, S.M. 1886: 68).

Newspapers were full of complaints against Salar Jang I. The \textit{Deccan Times} (18 February 1880) reported:

It is notorious that the employment of ‘Hindustanees’ in places of position and trust has engendered a bitter feeling against the Minister, who is not unnaturally accused of taking the bread out of the children’s mouths and giving it to strangers (In Ali, S. M. Vol. 3: 441).

The Hindustanis had come from British India where they had been using Urdu rather than Persian in their youth—the language of schooling and the courts being Urdu since the 1840s—they were in favour of using Urdu in the affairs of the state. Among the most prominent of them were: Imad ul Mulk, who came to Hyderabad in 1773; Mahdi Ali Khan (1874); Waqar ul Mulk (1875); Chiragh Ali Yar Jang (1877); and Deputy Nazir Ahmed (1877). V.K. Bawa, a biographer of Osman Ali Khan, mentions other important literary figures of Urdu who came from North India and whose stay in Hyderabad, whether brief or lengthy, must have increased the salience of Urdu in the state (Bawa 1992: 56–58). It is credible, then, that these powerful Hindustani officials created a lobby which promoted Urdu in the state.

Syed Husain Bilgrami (Nawab Imad ul Mulk) was the Indian tutor of Osman Ali Khan and the chief executive of education for thirty-two years (Haq 1959: 391). He was a great supporter of Urdu as a medium of instruction (Ibid., 409). As adviser to the Prime Minister, Nawab Mir Yusuf Ali Khan Salar Jang III (1888–1949), he issued a notice that English words should not be used
in Urdu documents (Ibid., 415). In short, the pro-Urdu lobby remained active even after the replacement of Persian by Urdu—now to counter the influx of English.

The pro-Urdu campaign was primarily against Persian, but it also sought to remove, or at least restrict, the usage of local languages in the affairs of the state. Mushtaq Hussain, better known as Waqar ul Mulk, held a judicial position (Mō’tamid-ē-Adālat) from 1878 onwards. He was also a Member of Revenue. He opposed the use of the local languages on the grounds that higher officials did not understand them, and signed orders on the behest of their subordinates without understanding their implications (Kamal 1990: 141).

PERSIAN GIVES PLACE TO URDU

The sequence of events relating to the transition from Persian to Urdu in Hyderabad state has been described admirably by Syed Mustafa Kamal (Ibid., 96–133). I follow his narration of events but have checked and consulted the Persian sources in the Andhra State Archives in Hyderabad which were used by Kamal. In the few cases where they were missed for lack of time, the reference is to the original source as quoted by Kamal. Previous and subsequent sections use sources not used by Kamal and, of course, the analysis and conclusions are my own and are different from existing works in this area.

Kamal points out that, notwithstanding the influence of the Hindustanis in favour of Urdu, the transition to the language was pioneered by a blue-blooded Hyderabad aristocrat, Bashir ud Daulah Sir Asman Jah (b. 1839). He was appointed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Sadr-ul-Mahām Adālat) in 1869. In 1871 he proposed that Urdu be used in place of Persian in the courts of law. Prime Minister Sir Salar Jang I conceded only that ‘the recording of statements in Urdu, that is, the language in common use, is enough (sīr qalam bandī izhārāt bazubān-ī-Urdū yenī zubān-ī-murawwajā ī jā kāfī ast)’. However, ‘all other writing
would have to be in Persian (dīgar hamā tā taehrīrāt ba Fārsi zurūr ast)’ (Jarida 1885: 4:217). Bashir ud Daulah tried to obtain more concessions for Urdu, but this time the prime minister rebuffed him in the following words:

But this revival [of the pro-Urdu movement] is not acceptable to His Exalted Highness [...] because many people do not know the skills for writing (standard) Urdu. [Magar ĩ taehrīk-e-sānī az Sarkār-e-‘Āli manzūr nashud [...] ba ĩ lehāz ke bāz ashkhāsrā saliqā taehrīr dar zubān-e-Urdū nami bāshad.] (Ibid., 47, quoted in Kamal 1990: 101).

Moreover, the prime minister clarified that Urdu was merely permitted, it was not necessary (mumāni’yat nīst va ilā az tarf-ē-madār-ul-mahām isrār nīst) (in Kamal 1990: 101).

In 1876 the prime minister agreed that the administrators (nazamā) and the clerks (munshis) had gained competence in Urdu. It was, however, clarified that their Urdu writing was not meant to exhibit their mastery of difficult Persian words. By ‘Urdu,’ said the order, a high, literary style was not meant (Urdū-ē-mu’allā murād nīst) (quoted from Ibid., 106).

By 1883, it appears that the conservative Salar Jang I was no longer as adamant about retaining Persian as he had been earlier because he gave more concessions to Urdu two days before his death (Ibid., 114), though his orders for the courts were published after his death on 8 February 1883. It appears that he reasoned that if Marathi and Telugu were allowed for officials to record their decisions, then those whose mother-tongue was Urdu should be similarly facilitated (Jarīdā 1885: 1:413). The formal shift in the language of the state took place in the time of Mir Laiq Ali Khan Salar Jang II, who was appointed to the prime-ministership on 5 February 1884 and resigned from the post in 1887.

The first order, dated 21 February 1884, is about the use of Urdu for all types of work in the courts. First, the prime minister complains about the linguistic confusion prevalent in the courts.
Officials use both Urdu and Persian as they please. Then, he advances the argument that this state of affairs must be ended by using the most easily understood language, namely Urdu. In conclusion, the Urdu order says clearly:

Thus Madārul Mahām is pleased to order that as soon as this order reaches the offices of the court, from that time all the work in those offices will be in Urdu (Ibid., Vol. 5: 3 Quoted from Kamal 1990: 117).

Moreover, the officials were asked to write simple rather than ornate and Persianized Urdu (Ibid., 118). However, rural offices would continue to function in the local languages (Kamal 1990: 129–30). The talukdārs (landed gentlemen) were ordered to address higher authorities in Urdu. Local languages were to be tolerated, but not in urban areas such as Hyderabad, where only Urdu was to be used (Ibid., 131–32). Another symbolic event was a speech delivered by Mahbub Ali Khan to the first meeting of the Council of State held on 28 February 1884. This is in Urdu and the language is simple and understandable (Pachauri 1993: 71). In 1886 all offices were ordered to work in Urdu (Jarīdā Vol. 5: 4. Quoted from Kamal 1990: 132–133).

The summary of the memorandum on this subject (Item No. 176, June 1886) as presented by the prime minister to the nizam is as follows:

Solicits sanction for the use of Urdu instead of Persian in all official correspondence, and adds that it is the Secretaries to Government who use Persian in official correspondence, whereas Urdu was adopted in all the offices. Also speaks of the advantages and facilities afforded by the use of Urdu language. The Nizam sanctions the introduction of Urdu in all correspondence carried out by the Secretaries to Government (quoted in Sajanlal 1974: 142).

After this, the Urduization of the state took place very quickly. First, let us look at the expansion of Urdu in the domain of
URDU IN THE PRINCELY STATES

education—a domain as important as the administrative and judicial domains and which, indeed, feeds both.

URDU AND THE ROYALTY

As mentioned earlier, Urdu was taught even when Persian was the official language of the state. The Census of 1871 recorded that ‘Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani’ as well as English are taught (Ali, C. 1885–86, Vol. 4: 471). Royalty were also taught Urdu in addition to Persian and English. The Resident, Mr Saunders, addressed Salar Jang I on 12 January 1871 in ‘Hindoostanee,’ hoping that it was a language that would ‘bear good fruit at Hyderabad… (Ali, S.M. 1883, Vol. 1: 54).

The young Nizam, Mahbub Ali Khan, was educated under the supervision of an English tutor, but he was taught Urdu and Persian as well as English. The overall in-charge of the young Nizam’s education was Captain John Clerk, son of G.R. Clerk, Governor of Bombay. He arrived in Hyderabad in January 1875. Sarwar Jang, the young Nizam’s Indian tutor, mentions how the Prince was taught by elderly, sycophantic courtiers—certainly not the best way to teach a child. However, at the end of 1879, the Prince’s ‘report card showed he was doing well in Geography, Arithmetic and Urdu’ (Zubrzycki 2006: 92). Sarwar Jang also describes how the teaching of Persian was replaced with that of Urdu, which was taught until four o’clock in the afternoon, and calligraphy in its script was taught for half an hour (Jang 1933: 211).

Later, when the question of the education of Mir Osman Ali Khan came up, by this date, at least in British minds, Urdu was important enough to be taught to a major princely ally of the empire. The Resident wrote, ‘[He should] begin with his own vernacular—Urdu’—but also, ‘parri passu, learn English’ (Durant 1892). Accordingly, both English and Urdu were taught to the future ruler. For Urdu, Syed Hussain Bilgrami was appointed tutor to the young prince in 1895. And for English, he had an
English tutor—Bryan (later Sir) Egerton. In addition there were Indian tutors (atāliqs) who taught Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English (Bawa 1992: 40–41).

Others in the royal family, such as Osman Ali Khan’s daughter-in-law, Durr Reshwar (d. 2006)—mother of Mir Barkat Ali Khan Mukarram Jah (b. 1938), the eighth Nizam, who held the title from 1967 until 1971, and daughter of Sultan Abdul Majeed of Turkey—learned it from Aga Haider Hasan Mirza (Zubrzycki 2006: 155). She became fluent in Urdu in less than a year. Mukarram’s education was in Madrassa-i-Aliya to begin with, but then he went to Doon School and Harrow (Ibid., 167). Even Mukarram Jah’s Turkish wife, Esra Birgin, learned to speak Urdu (Ibid., 224). However, in keeping with the increasing modernization and Anglicization of the Indian elite, the young princes were learning more English than any other language through their schooling.

The royalty were not the only ones to learn Urdu, of course. The common people, and especially the middle classes, learned it in order to find employment. There were many institutions and people to promote the learning of Urdu. One of the personalities associated with Urdu, Maulvi Abdul Haq, has been dealt with earlier. Among other things, he wrote two pamphlets on letter-writing in Urdu in 1901. In the second, there is a letter from a father to a son exhorting him to take an interest in the mother-tongue (Urdu). The son agrees and sets out on this path. These pamphlets were written at the request of Syed Husain Bilgrami, probably in his capacity as the Nizam’s tutor. Thus Abdul Haq thus tried to sow the seed of love for Urdu in the future ruler’s breast (Chand 1930: 34).

Maulvi Abdul Haq was also one of the pioneers of Osmania University. He presided over the Dar-ul-Tarjuma and invited eminent people from North India: Zafar Ali Khan, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Abdul Haleem Sharar, Waheed ud Din Saleem, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, Maulana Mirza Mehdi Khan, Ross Masood, and
others (Imami 1930: 133). Abdul Haq considered Urdu, as he told one of his friends, also called Abdul Haq, that he considered him a ‘true Muslim’ because one characteristic of a Muslim was ‘the love of Urdu’ (Urdu kī muhabbat) (Sarwari 1930: 158). Thus, while the upper classes were switching to English in response to increasing Anglicization, the middle classes were fully given to education in Urdu.

**URDU IN THE DOMAIN OF EDUCATION**

There are several accounts of the spread of Urdu in the domain of education in Hyderabad. A detailed account, by Syed Mohiuddin Qadri Zor (1934), informs the reader about Osman Ali Khan’s role in the propagation of Urdu. Another book, by Abdul Qadir Sarwari (1934), gives even more facts and figures about the gradual progress of Osmania University. Both end on a triumphant note because the year 1934, when they were first published, was a high point in the life of Urdu in Hyderabad. It was left to later historians, such as Kamal (1990) and Arshad (1988), to lament the downfall of Urdu after India took over, creating the state of Andhra Pradesh. The ascendant language now was English, though Telugu and other languages were used at the lower level in ordinary schools and in the lower domains of power. The Bureau of Translation (Dār-ul Tarjumā) produced 382 books and provided employment for 129 translators. It burned down in 1955, though some of the books, which had been translated earlier, are to be found in the Nizam Trust Library in Hyderabad (Bedar 1979: 228). Osmania’s Department of Urdu is still proud of its history as the present author found during his visit to it in January 2008.

In 1997, in response to the growing demand for raising the status of Urdu in India, the authorities agreed to the establishment of an Urdu-medium university in Hyderabad. Accordingly, the ‘Maulana Azad National Urdu University [MANUU] Act 1996, No. 2 of 1997’ was passed. On 9 January 1998, the MANUU was
established in order to ‘promote and develop the Urdu language, provide higher, technical and vocational education in the Urdu medium...’ (MANUU, n.d.). At the moment, the university has twelve departments and twenty-eight programmes of study functioning in Urdu. It has a Department of Translation and an Urdu Cultural Centre which preserves archival material including works of art related to the Urdu-using Indian culture.

However, it is obvious from the tone of protest and lamentation coming from the Muslims of Hyderabad, which the present author witnessed during a function for the promotion of Urdu on 9 January 2008, that Urdu is a political grievance for the Muslim community. It also suggests that, for all the rhetoric about Urdu being a heritage of both Muslims and Hindus, the Muslims of Hyderabad (in common with other Indian Muslims) think of it as part of their Muslim identity and part of their specifically Muslim heritage.

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE URDUIZATION OF HYDERABAD

While the Hindi-Urdu controversy weakened the hold of Urdu on the cultural life of North India during the first half of the twentieth century, it became stronger and dominated the local languages in the Hyderabad state.

The domination of Urdu is described, unfortunately, in a triumphant rather than a detached style, by some Muslim writers (Sarwari 1934; Zor 1934). Mustafa Kamal (1990), whose work is otherwise distinguished by the number and authority of the sources he refers to, also does not refer to the political dimension of the Urdu policy of the state. (For a detailed discussion of the policy of the Urduization of education in Hyderabad see Rahman 2002: 231–36). Suffice it to say here that Urdu was promoted in the state at two levels. At the upper level, it was used for higher education, which was in English in British India; at the lower level, it was promoted at the expense of the local languages,
which, as we have seen, had a strong presence in the administration. The creation of Osmania University in 1917, and its emergence as a symbol of the possibility of replacing English at the university level, was a triumph which still inspires people in South Asia.

The scheme for a university in Hyderabad has been traced back to the time of Salar Jang I. In 1875, Sheikh Ahmad Hussain Rifat Yar Jang proposed the establishment of such an institution without making English the medium of instruction. He wrote in Persian that it was ‘difficult for Indians to study all subjects in English and the attempt would be a waste of time (taehsil ē jumālā ālūm ō funūn bāmardam-ē-Hind dar Zubān-ē-angrēzī bavujūh kāsīr qatan dushvār ō mōjīb tazīh auqāt ast...).’ To this the prime minister replied in the same language: ‘I have seen each word and am pleased and felicitate the author and consider this idea very useful (hamā harfan harfan didam ō masrūr shudam ō taelshīn kardam ō ī tadbīr rā musfīd mī pindāram)’ (Ahmad 1979: 103). However, the idea was not implemented until much later, although the medium of instruction at the university is not clearly indicated.

The proposal which succeeded was put forward by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840–1922), a British writer and a sympathizer of the Muslims, (Ali, S.M. 1886: 314–17). Jamaluddin Afghani (1838–1897), an important Muslim political figure and visionary of the period, was also a supporter of such a university as a symbol of Muslim civilization. Nevertheless, the university was not immediately established, though the movement in support of it gathered momentum. Eventually, the Nizam’s order establishing this university, now called Osmania University, was issued in Urdu on 26 April 1917. It states clearly that the medium of instruction will be ‘our language Urdu (hamārī zubān Urdū),’ but English will retain its educational importance (Pachauri 1993: 45). Another order (14 August 1917) establishes the Translation Bureau of the University (Shōbā-ē-Tarjumā) charged with
translating important works from other languages into Urdu (Ibid., 47).

The University was immediately welcomed by eminent individuals. Rabindranath Tagore, himself the pioneer of a university (Shantiniketan), wrote on 9 January 1918, congratulating Sir Akbar Hydari, the then prime minister of the state. Among other things he said, ‘I have long been waiting for the day when, freed from the shackle of a foreign language, our education becomes naturally accessible to all our people’ (quoted in Ibid., 48). The note of triumph struck in this letter was the norm rather than the exception. Indeed, the triumph is all that gets noticed in most writings. The curtailment of space for the local languages is not mentioned at all.

In fact, both are different aspects of the same policy. This policy was defended before the Blatter Commission on 4 October 1924 by Sir Ross Masood, Minister of Education of Hyderabad, on the grounds that ‘you will find Marathi boys speaking Urdu’ even in remote villages (Masood 1924: 20). Thus, from 1944 onwards, all secondary schools used Urdu as the medium of instruction—until 1941, 363 out of 444 secondary schools used the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction—though primary schools could still operate in the local languages (Jang 1944).

The Hindus protested but to no avail and the local languages were marginalized (Resident 1944 a). The press carried reports about the discriminatory policies of the Nizam towards the Hindus, such as the highest posts being dominated by Muslims, etc:

Other allegations included making Osmania a ‘Sectarian’ University and the giving of Prominence to Urdu, neglecting the other local languages. The last allegation, regarding the neglect of the languages of the Hindus, was emphasized by Nihal Singh (Hindu 11 October 1923. Quoted in Subramanyam 1991: 90).
The British realized the political and ideological motives of the Nizam’s decision-makers as Sir Arthur Lothian, the Resident, suggests:

 [...] that the predominating motive of Sir Akbar Hydari, the original protagonist of the policy, was to enforce a Muslim culture throughout the state and so strengthen the Muslim hold on Hyderabad in the event of Federation or independence for India in any other form (Resident 1944 b).

The British did not, however, interfere because the Nizam was their loyal ally. It was only after Hyderabad was absorbed into the Indian Union that this policy was finally reversed.

THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE

Let us now take the case of the Jammu and Kashmir state, which was the opposite of the Hyderabad state, with large Muslim concentrations ruled by Hindus. This state, the second largest in size in British India after Hyderabad, made Urdu its official language in place of Persian in 1889. But, while Hyderabad was ruled by the Muslim elite, who had shifted to Urdu and actually spoke Urdu at home, the Dogra rulers of Kashmir spoke Dogri, a variety of Punjabi, as a mother-tongue. It is something of an enigma, then, that the Jammu and Kashmir state opted for Urdu as the state language.

There are two books specifically on the rule of Urdu in Kashmir: Kaefvi (1979) and Sarwari (1993). Both are in Urdu and both tend to be chronological narratives with details of events but almost no analysis relating to them. This section fills in this gap relating the change of the official language from Persian to Urdu to the political and social realities of the Kashmir state.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir was more heterogeneous and multilingual than any other princely state in British India. The Dogras from Jammu spoke Dogri; the people of the vale of
Kashmir, both Hindus and Muslims, spoke Kashmiri; while the Ladakhis spoke Ladaki. Then there were many other languages—Balti, Burushaski, Shina, Khowar, etc.—dotted all over the state. Persian was the language of the government while the British residents and Europeans used English. Urdu too was present as the Punjab, adjacent to the state, used it in all the lower domains of power, and people travelled to and from the state to the Punjab and the rest of British India.

The state came in closer contact with Urdu when Maharajah Ranbir Singh (r. 1856–1885) sent troops to Delhi to aid the British during the uprising of 1857. These troops came in contact with Urdu-speakers and a letter from this period is said to be in Dr Kiran Singh’s possession (Sarwari 1993, Vol. 1: 86). Urdu was known at least to some officials of the state as Mehta Sher Singh, a high official of the Kashmir state, wrote a report on adjoining countries in Urdu (Ibid., Vol. 2: 100–102). Maharajah Ranbir Singh seems to have patronized Urdu as he got English books translated into that language (Sarwari 1993, Vol. 2: 83; Din 1985: 34).

Besides the state itself, a number of non-state agents established institutions which strengthened the presence of Urdu in Kashmir. For instance, a vicegerent (Khalīfā), of the Ahmedis called Hakim Maulvi Nurud Din, established the office of Tasnīf-ō-Talīf (writing and compilation) from 1876 to 1890 (Kaefvi 1979: 15). The Christian missionaries also established their schools which used Urdu for teaching (Kaefvi 1979: 22–23). Moreover, the state constantly imported functionaries from British India who were at home in Urdu, even if it was not their mother-tongue. Besides, bureaucrats of all ranks, even low-ranking naqībs and the body guard of the ruler, were Urdu-speaking (Kaefvi 1979: 21–23). The Education Department employed a number of people from North India with the encouragement of Ranbir Singh (Ram 1883: 612).
During Maharajah Ranbir Singh’s rule, Urdu was so well established that the Criminal Code of the State was written in Urdu (Ansari 1996: 167). The ruler also set up a printing-press and the state’s first Urdu newspaper *Bidyā Bilās* was published in Jammu (Ansari 1996: 167). The printed word in North India was increasingly in Urdu by the end of the nineteenth century and, along with officials, students, teachers, and tourists, it was finding its way into Kashmir (Ahmad, A 1972).

The actual change of the official language from Persian to Urdu took place during the rule of Maharajah Pratap Singh (r. 1885–1925). While the discussions pertaining to this change are not known, there are proposals about it. For instance, the judicial member of the Maharajah’s Council proposed that Urdu should be used in the courts of Jammu. After a long preamble stating that some courts in Jammu conduct business in Persian while others do so in Urdu, the proposal says that Urdu is so well-known in Jammu that witnesses will understand it better than Persian. Then he comes to the heart of the matter.

Keeping in view these facts I recommend that the courts in Jammu Province be allowed to conduct official business in the Urdu language. Regarding Srinagar province the status quo has to be maintained because Urdu is not understood in that valley and the people are quite conversant with the Persian language (photocopy of the Urdu original is in Din 1985: 478).

The government passed orders (Circular No. 3 of 10 *Phagan* 1945 [1888]) (see orders in English saying ‘forwarded to Chief Minister’ in Din 1985: 479).

A judge of the High Court requested the Maharajah to allow the courts in Srinagar to use Urdu too, but this was turned down (photocopy in Din 1985: 474). The government wanted to move slowly, probably because of opposition from the Persian-educated Kashmiri Pandits, but eventually Persian was phased out and Urdu took its place.
THE SPREAD OF URDU

While the courts and other official institutions gave Urdu its legal position in the Kashmir State, its spread took place through cultural means also. Urdu poetry and drama were much celebrated events in Kashmir. From 1924 there were yearly mushairās. In one of them, held in 1927, Hafeez Jalandhri also came to much acclaim (Kaefvi 1979: 52–53). There were a number of bodies—Anjuman (established in 1895); Bazm-e-Urdu Jammu-o-Kashmir (1937) and the Bazm-e-Mushaira (1914)—functioning to promote Urdu poetry. The dramas of Agha Hashar Kashmiri were so popular that a ‘Hashar Day’ was celebrated (Sarwari 1993, Vol. 2: 139). The drama (Nātak) companies also used Urdu as the language of the dialogues (Ibid., 472–473; Ansari 1996: 168). Tourism was another pro-Urdu incentive as the local guides, hoteliers and boatmen learned Urdu to entertain guests from the plains of North India (Kaefvi 1979: 28). The recruiting officers of the army gave speeches in Urdu rather then Kashmiri or Dogri as between 9 and 11 February 1918 (Kaefvi 1979: 31–39). Besides, the constant inflow of Punjabis, whose formal language of work was Urdu, was changing the linguistic environment of the workplace in Kashmir, even if the common people did not speak Urdu well.

The state of Urdu’s progress is reflected in reports from the State. The Census of 1911 tells us that ‘...the people (especially in Kashmir) confound Persian and Urdu most inextricably in common parlance’ (Census-K 1912 Part 2: 49). Even in 1921, ‘Next to Urdu, Persian is cultivated by the largest number of persons both among Hindus and Musalmans’ (Census-K 1923: 115). However, by 1911, all state business was conducted in Urdu, except in the secretariat where there was also an English branch in order to communicate with the imperial government (Census-K 1912 Part 1: 14–43).

The fact that Urdu was used in the domains of power did not mean, however, that it was also used informally in private
conversation. Thus, the Census of 1921 reports that ‘Urdu, as a spoken language, does not play any important part here’ and is ‘confined to a very limited number of state officials, traders, etc, from the United Provinces or other Urdu-speaking localities’ (Census-K 1923: 127). However, Urdu was gaining ground even in the private domain. For instance, by this time, it was ‘gaining in popularity as a medium of private correspondence, though Hindi and Dogri are still used in the Jammu Province by tradesmen and people of the old school. Similarly, Persian is still used in Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan (Census-K 1923: 130). Written Urdu was gaining ground because young people were not used to writing any other language in their schools. This situation is similar to that of Punjabi and Pashto-speaking people in Pakistan who write letters in Urdu to each other but speak in their mother-tongue when they meet.

URDU AND THE KASHMIRI PANDITS

The Kashmiri Pandits were part of the Maharajah’s civil bureaucracy. They cultivated Persian, the official language of the state, till the 1880s, when the shift towards Urdu started manifesting itself. Zutshi argues that the Kashmiri Pandits picked up Urdu primarily because they belonged to an administrative class while the Muslims got left behind (Zutshi 2004: 190). Initially the Pandits seemed to be keen on retaining Persian which they knew better than their competitors, the Punjabis. However, as pressure from the immigrant Punjabis grew and more and more Kashmiris got educated in British India, where they learnt Urdu rather than Persian, the Pandits gave in to Urdu.

According to Miridu Rai, the State turned away from the Pandits in 1889 ‘when the State Council changed the court language’ (Rai 2004: 243). Thus, the Pandits came under pressure in the State when non-state immigrants, who were used to Urdu rather than Persian, increased. However, as Sender Henny, in his
detailed study of the Kashmiri Pandits notes, the Pandits could switch over from Persian to Urdu. In North India, he tells us:

The shift from Persian to Urdu in 1889 as the official language did not alter the monopoly by Persian literates of the court system; recruitment remained confined to the traditional elite... (Henny 1988: 240).

Thus, it was not for want of skills or adaptability that the Pandits felt concerned about the change of the state language. Their concern was because the number of Punjabis was increasing and, as their power in the court of the Maharaja grew, they invited others to join them. To the Pandits it seemed as if they would be deprived of their rightful share in the state’s resources.

URDU AND THE PUNJABIS

In common with other native states the major division among the educated salaried class in Kashmir during the British period was between the locals and the outsiders. The outsiders were generally Punjabis who sought employment, hitherto the monopoly of the Kashmiri Pandits, in the state bureaucracy. According to the British Resident of Kashmir, Sir Francis Younghusband, there was a tendency among the official of the state not to ‘secure Kashmir for Kashmiris, still less for the British, but for Punjabis and other Indians’ (Younghusband 1908). The Punjabis were adept at Urdu, the language of schooling and the lower domains of power all over North India, and kept increasing the use of the language in the apparatus of the state. This role of the Punjabis has been pointed out by some authors. It is reported, for instance, that in 1888, earlier than the official date of the changeover, Bhag Rae and other Punjabi officials started using Urdu in official documents (Sarwari 1993, Vol. 1: 3).
The role of the Punjabis in Kashmir is similar to that of the ‘Hindustanis’—people from the Urdu-speaking urban areas of North India—in the Hyderabad state. In Hyderabad, as we have seen, the Persian-using local ruling elite were also antagonistic to the new linguistic incursion but eventually succumbed to it. And in Kashmir too the same thing happened. The Kashmiri Pandits changed their strategy for retaining their power by learning Urdu and, of course, English.

HINDU-MUSLIM POLITICS AND LANGUAGE

Urdu served several political interests of the rulers. First, it was foreign for all communities and, therefore, the rulers could not be accused of imposing their own language upon such diverse linguistic groups as composed by the state. Second, Urdu was associated with the Muslim identity in India. Hence, the rulers, who were not Muslims themselves, could fend off any attempt by Muslim politicians to create an oppositional power block along linguistic lines. Thirdly, it tended to give a kind of unity to the literate classes and opened up avenues for employment for Kashmiris in North India and vice versa.

Even the Urdu-Hindi controversy, which was sweeping across India, did not affect the Kashmir state much. According to the Census of 1911:

The political agitation on the Urdu and Hindi question so acute all over the plains of India, has had but a feeble echo in this state, and has undoubtedly operated to vitiate the accuracy of Census returns relating to literacy in Urdu and Hindi to a certain though very small, extent... (Census-K 1912 Part 1: 164).

This was because Urdu was not a Muslim preserve in the State. It was used ‘equally by the members of all communities who can lay any claim to literacy (Ibid., 164). Indeed, even in 1921, the
Muslims were much behind the Hindus in literacy in any language. The Census report of 1921 reports:

The Musalmans have added 4 persons to every 1,000 of their literate population during the last ten years, but they still present a sad contrast to their Hindu brethren as 988 Musalmans out of 1,000 are still unable to read and write (Census-K 1923: 111).

The proportion of Hindus versus Muslims of Urdu-knowing persons out of 1000 being 22 and 5 (Ibid., 115), the Muslims could lay no special claim to Urdu.

However, some of the language-based antagonism in the rest of India did spill over into Kashmir also. In 1936, for instance, the Hindus wanted the Devanagari script to replace the Perso-Arabic script of Urdu to write the language used in official documents in Kashmir. The National Conference of Sheikh Abdullah, however, opposed this move. In 1939, Khwaja Ghulam us Saideen headed a report on the medium of instruction. It concluded that Urdu was established as the language of schooling and the common language of all Kashmiris (Kaefvi 1979: 121–122). However, by now, democratic rhetoric had injected some sensitivity—at least on the surface level—towards the other languages of the state. Thus, it was decreed that the laws adopted by the State Legislative Assembly ‘shall be published in the Urdu language, as well as the language of the nationalities of the state’. (Teng et al. 1977: 487). The court proceedings too would be in Urdu but in the lower courts in ‘the local language’ (Ibid., 491).

The documents from 1942 declare ‘Kashmiri, Dogri, Balti (Pali), Dardic, Punjabi, Hindi’ as the languages of Kashmir while Urdu was to ‘be the lingua franca of the state’ (Ibid., 493). In short, Sheikh Abdullah’s National Conference did not change the Maharajah’s policy of retaining Urdu as the official language of the state.
URDU AFTER 1947

After 1947 the situation did not change much. English continued to be used at the highest level; Urdu was the official language and the lingua franca while the local languages were used informally. However, in 1954 it was promised, in the report relating to citizenship and fundamental rights, that ‘the state shall foster and encourage the growth and development of State and regional languages...’ (Teng et al. 1977: 614). The Constitution of the State (1950) merely endorsed the role of English and Urdu while promising to develop the ‘other regional languages specified in the Sixth Schedule’ (Ibid., 629).

The resistance to Urdu in Kashmir was not on religious lines as it was in the rest of India during the Hindi-Urdu controversy and even now. Indeed, according to Zutshi, the promotion of Urdu at the expense of Kashmiri, went against the Muslim masses of Kashmir. The educational institutions ‘were creating a gap between education and the public sphere, defined largely by publications in Kashmiri, which is perhaps the reason why the educational reform movements had such minimal impact on the Muslim masses’ (Zutshi 2004: 189). The Pandits, according to Zutshi, became supporters of ‘Kashmir for Kashmiris movement’ (Ibid., 190). Kashmiri was conceded by the state but only as a medium of instruction for girls ‘and even in this case it was never implemented’ (Zutshi 2004: 195).

The experiment referred to by Zutshi took place in the 1950s and was supposed to take place in schools from class 1 to 5. Kashmiri was to be the medium of instruction as well as a subject of study, but the experiment was discontinued ‘on the lame excuse of a clumsy script’ (Pushp 1996: 23). According to some observers, this neglect of Kashmiri is because the Muslim leaders of Kashmir were mostly educated at Aligarh and regard Urdu as a symbol of Muslim cultural identity (Warikoo 1996: 209). However, Urdu is opposed in Ladakh by the Buddhists who regard it as an ‘imposition’ according to the report of the Triennial

Another force against Urdu is its association with Pakistan. This, according to one author, is the reason that English is patronized so much. Thus, in Ladakh and Jammu ‘all the official correspondence in educational institutions, courts and offices is being carried [on] in English’ (Ansari 1996: 172). This could also be because of the anti-Urdu bias in these areas even before Pakistan was created and, in any case, Urdu is an alien language—as the Ladakhi report points out above—in these areas.

Yet another reason could be the usefulness of English as a tool for social mobility. Urdu is of no use for educated Kashmiris outside the state. Hindi in the Devanagari script is far more useful all over North India. And for jobs in the higher domains of power, not only in India but all over the world, it is English which has the greatest value. As such, pragmatic considerations force young Kashmiris to aspire to learn English in preference to both Urdu and Kashmiri. However, because the state still uses Urdu, they have to learn Urdu also. In any case, an alternative to Urdu is hard to find under the circumstances. Kashmiri is not only even more ghettoizing than Urdu in India but also confined to the Vale of Kashmir. Ladakhi and Dogri, besides having very little literature and documents in them, are also confined to Ladakh and Jammu. Hindi in the Devanagari script would probably not be acceptable to the Muslim community of Kashmir. In short, Urdu remains the compromise solution for all communities in Kashmir despite some opposition to it.

SMALLER MUSLIM STATES

While very large Muslim states, like Hyderabad, were almost like independent countries and, therefore, somewhat isolated from Indian politics, the smaller states were immediately influenced by it. Thus, Bhopal, Rampur and Tonk—all in the Hindi belt—were much more influenced by the Hindi-Urdu politics than Hyderabad
was. For instance, the census of 1931 says that the language returns were ‘coloured by immediate politics’ all over North India. In Bhopal ‘Urdu was returned...to give effect to a sentiment that Hindus as well as Muslims living in that state ought to have the peculiarly Muslim Variety of Hindustani as their mother-tongue instead of Rajasthani and even instead of Gondi’ (Census-I 1933: 349). As mentioned earlier, after independence the Urdu-speakers declined while Hindi-speakers increased substantially. Moreover, many people stopped using the label ‘Hindustani’ for their languages opting for ‘Hindi’ instead which, of course, swelled the number of the latter (Census M.P. 1954: 74).

In Rampur, Urdu replaced Persian as the official language during the reign of Nawab Mushtaq Ali Khan (1887–1889) (Islahi 2004: 22). The Gazetteer of the Rampur State (1911) records Urdu as the language of official business in the state (Rampur 1911: 44–46) and connects this with the presence of Muslims commenting that ‘it is only natural that they should be able to speak Urdu with accuracy and fluency’ (Rampur 1911: 44). The state also had a press since 1870 which published an Urdu weekly newspaper called the Dabdabā-ē-Sikandari.

In Tonk, surrounded as it was by Rajput states, Urdu was used for official business (Anjuman 1940: 150). The Muslim nawabs patronized Muslim heritage languages and Urdu literature.

Coming now to the states in the areas now in Pakistan, the two largest ones were Bahawalpur and Kalat.

In Bahawalpur, Urdu replaced Persian in 1835. The official proceedings used to be in Urdu though, out of habit, people kept petitioning the state in Persian (see a letter of 18 June 1892 in Shahab 1992: 18). It is important to note that the State did not shift to Punjabi (the Riasati variety of it now called Siraiki). In the Patiala State, also Punjabi-speaking, Maharajah Bhupindra Singh, issued a royal decree on 4 June 1911 that the Punjabi language written in the Gurmukhi script was to be used in the state. In 1942 the state also made the teaching of Punjabi
compulsory in primary and middle schools (Singh n.d.: 15–17). But in Bahawalpur, Muslim political and cultural inclination towards Urdu made it appear natural that Persian would be succeeded by Urdu not Siraiki.

In Kalat the court language remained Persian but one finds letters and other documents in Urdu (Kausar 1986 a). Newspapers, theatre, educational institutions, and printed material kept spreading Urdu in Balochistan (Kausar 1986 b). Moreover, the construction of cantonments and the proximity of British Urdu-using territory, brought in people well-versed in Urdu to the state which popularized the language.

Coming now to the Hindu states of Rajputana, these states speak varieties of Hindi (in the sense of the sum total of all its varieties) but most of them, at one time or the other, did use Persian and then Urdu as official languages. The Hindi-Urdu controversy affected many of them to shift to the Devanagari script for official work. Correspondence with the British was, of course, in English. The Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu carried out a survey of these states in the 1930s. This survey has given details of the language situation and how the efforts of Hindi activists, like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, brought about the shift from Urdu to Hindi (he begged the ruler as a Brahmin for this in Bekanir. See Anjuman 1940: 223). But the Anjuman makes a distinction between language and script. Thus, all the court documents are transliterated from the Devanagari to the Perso-Arabic script and show the same Persianized diction, which similar documents have when written in places where the language is called Urdu. But the language of documents, conservative as it is, is not the only indicator of the actual language in use. The fact is that, probably on account of the pressure of language politics around them, these states shifted to Hindi, notwithstanding the Anjuman’s desire to prove otherwise. In any case, though Persian was used in them in certain official domains, it never had deep cultural roots (Bayly
Thus it was as easy and natural for them to make the transition to Hindi as it was for the Muslim states to Urdu.

To conclude, the politics of language in the native states depended on a number of factors. In the small states in North India where the rulers were Hindus, the imperatives of identity politics, in common with British India, brought in Hindi in place of Urdu or Persian. In the large states of Hyderabad and Kashmir, however, the politics of the inhabitants of the state (mulkī) and outsiders (ghair mulkī) played the determining role. In both cases Persian was replaced by Urdu helping the outsiders consolidate their power in the state at the expense of the inhabitants. In Hyderabad the transition to Urdu came at a time when Urdu became a symbol of Muslim identity and it made the state a pioneer in the use of Urdu as a medium of instruction and a language of administration. However, this came at the cost of squeezing the space for the local languages of the state. In Kashmir the language brought unity at the upper level while depriving the common people, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhists, of their native languages. Ironically, despite the subcontinent-wide association of Urdu with the Muslim identity, this association remains less powerful than Muslim or Kashmiri identity. But let us now turn to two institutions which played a major role in constructing identities: education and printing. First, let us take education.

NOTE
1. The Nizams who actually ruled were the first seven; the last in the line carried the title until 1971 but did not rule: 1) Mir Qamruddin Khan Nizam ul Mulk Asaf Jah I (r. 1724–48); 2) Mir Nizam Ali Khan Asaf Jah II (r. 1762–1803); 3) Mir Akbar Ali Khan Sikandar Jah III (r. 1803–29); 4) Mir Farkhunda Ali Khan Nasiruddaula Asaf Jah IV (r. 1829–57); 5) Mir Tahniyat Ali Khan Afzaluddaula Asaf Jah V (r. 1857–69); 6) Mir Mahboob Ali Khan Asaf Jah VI (r. 1869–1911); 7) Mir Osman Ali Khan Asaf Jah VII (r. 1911–50); 8) Mir Barkat Ali Khan Mukarram Jah Asaf Jah VIII (r. 1967–71).
THE STATE OF URDU IN THE RAJPUT STATES

Jaipur: Urdu was used in the courts of law. In 1884 the state had ordered that unfamiliar words of Arabic, Persian and English should not be used (Anjuman 1940: 37–38). However, Bayly says that in Jaipur, Hindi replaced Persian when it slipped out of the intellectual orbit of Delhi (Bayly 1996: 299).

Kishangarh: The Devanagari script is used but in some departments papers are written in Urdu in the Perso-Arabic script (Anjuman 1940: 79–81).

Jhalawar: Came in existence in 1899 and Urdu in its own script was used but in 1906, Hindi, in the Devanagari script, was substituted for it (Ibid., 89–91).

Bundi: Urdu and Persian words were not allowed to be used (Ibid., 107–108).

Kota: In 1911 Hindi in the Devanagari script came to be used instead of Urdu (Ibid., 123).

Tonk: Urdu was the language of administration and judiciary and schooling (Ibid., 150).

Qarauli: Farsi and then Urdu was the official language till 1930 (Ibid., 155). However, a document of 1913 is in the Devanagari script.

Bhartpur: In 1920 the Devanagari script came to be used (Ibid., 173).

Dholpur: In 1929 the Maharana allowed both scripts and in 1937 the Hindi words came to be used (Ibid., 183–184).

Alwar: In 1910 the ruler substituted Hindi for Urdu (Ibid., 195).

Bekanir: In 1912, on Pandit Malaviya’s request, Urdu was changed to Hindi (Ibid., 223).

Jodhpur: Urdu was used. Subsequently Marvari and then Devanagari scripts came to be used in 1890 (Ibid., 239). The language remained the same.

Udaipur: Urdu language and script were never used (Ibid., 255).

Banswara: Urdu was never used (Ibid., 273).

Sirohi: Urdu in the Devanagari script is used. Some officials, however, kept using the Perso-Arabic script till 1933 (Ibid., 288).

Ajmer: Hindi is the first language (Ibid., 297).

Source: Anjuman 1940.
10

Urdu as the Language of Employment

Under the Pathan rulers, according to Momin Mohiuddin, ‘Hindi was recognised as a semi-official language under the Súrs and the chancellery receipts bore the transcription in the Dévanágári Script of the Persian contents, a practice which is said to have been introduced by the Lódis’ (Mohiuddin 1971: 28). Indeed, it is said that ‘the registers of all revenue accounts were kept in Hindi’ under the Sultans, and it has been mentioned earlier that it was Todar Mal who ordered that they should be kept in Persian during Akbar’s reign (28th Regnal year) (Ibid., 38). But even then some offices and terms dealing with administration and revenue continued to be in Hindi. Thus the glossary of a book on the orders (farmāns) of the Mughals has words used even now by revenue officers in Pakistan such as: Banjar (barren); chak (consolidated area of land; village); chaklā (sub division of a district); chaudhary (headman); chauth (one-fourth); chungī (cess or octroi); patvārī (keeper of records), etc. (Khan 1994: 91–101).

Thus, despite the official use of Persian by the Mughals in the business of the state, Urdu-Hindi diction permeated the lower levels of employment. The Hindu Kaesth class and the Muslims who knew Persian, monopolized the bureaucracy and the judiciary not only under the Mughal emperors but also in the princely states scattered all over India. The story of how some of these princely states—especially the two large states of Hyderabad and Kashmir—switched over from Persian to Urdu in official domains has been narrated earlier. This chapter focuses on the way Urdu functioned as the language of employment in
the present-day UP and the Punjab. Other parts of the Hindi belt, such as Bihar and what is now called Madhya Pradesh, will be touched upon in passing, in order to contrast the language situation there from the areas where Urdu was the language of public and private jobs, but they are not the focus of this chapter.

It should, of course, be mentioned that the kind of employment referred to here excludes the domains covered in other chapters, namely education, printing and publication, media, and entertainment. It also excludes the higher levels of the domains dealt with here, (i.e. judiciary, administration, police, army, revenue, and other services) which functioned in English. The private job market—such as that of advertising (Bhatia and Baumgardner 2008)—is touched upon in passing. The focus, therefore, is on the lower bureaucracy in present-day UP and the Punjab.

The British created the modern bureaucratic structures which functioned in English at the higher level and several recognized vernacular languages at the lower ones. The higher courts of law functioned in English, but when the Warren Hastings Judicial Plan of 1772 was put in place in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, ‘the technical terms used in the courts were all in Urdu, such as moffussil, faujdari, and dewani’ (Bhatia and Sharma 2008: 365). The Adalat System had courts of appeal called the Sadar Nizamat Adalat and the Sadar Diwani Adalat. ‘In 1780 another change was made in which Diwani Adalat was presided by an English judge, who was assisted by native law officers’(Bhatia and Sharma 2008: 365). These structures functioned in languages which, in another context, have been called the languages of the salariat (Rahman 2002a: 97–128). As it happened, in British India these salariats—in Hamza Alavi’s terms (1987: 68)—were the competing Hindu and Muslim educated elites who sought employment. Thus, except at the very highest level, which functioned in English, the fact that Urdu was the language of the workplace mattered
significantly. If it was, certain pressure groups—mostly the Muslims and the Hindu Kaesths in North India—stood to gain. If it was not, these groups were forced out of jobs, unless they re-educated themselves, and their rivals found entry in the same positions.

The story of the replacement of Persian by the vernaculars of India has been narrated several times (King 1994: 56–63; Rahman 1996: 36–37; Rahman 2002: 145–153) and need not detain us here. However, the shift to the indigenous languages of India had been going on since 1798 when an official ‘Resolution of the Board’ from Fort William declared that for the 'office of Judge or Registrar of any Court of Justice, in the Provinces of Bengal, Behar, Orissa or Benares, the Hindoostanee and the Persian languages’ will be required (21 December 1798 in Siddiqi 1963: 72).

The point to note about the final replacement of Persian is that it was not replaced by any one language but several of them. Whereas in present-day UP and the Punjab it was replaced by Urdu in the Perso-Arabic script, there were several areas in the Hindi belt where it was replaced by Hindi in the Devanagari and even in the Kaithi scripts. In the Saugur and Nerbudda Territories (mostly present-day MP) and in the hill districts of the NWP, for instance, it was replaced by Hindi in the Devanagari script. The person who took this initiative was F.J. Shore who, in 1835, ordered his subordinate officials to learn the Devanagari script. He then ordered the use of the Devanagari script in the courts and other official business. Among his reasons for doing so was that the officials from the NWP, who now controlled the major share of government jobs, would be replaced by local officials (King 1994: 60). However, the Persian-using subordinates of Shore resisted the change so much that petitions kept being written in the Perso-Arabic script. He then found out what had happened and describes this as follows:
I discovered that the Amlah [court officials] and Petition Writers who were connected with the former had given out that although the Language might be Oordoo [Urdu] the character must be Persian, in order to preserve their monopoly (Sir John Shore’s Letter to the Sadr Board of Revenue, 16 September 1836. Quoted from King 1994: 61).

Those wishing to preserve their monopoly over government jobs were not only Muslims. Indeed, in this part of India they were mostly educated Hindus of the Kaesth class. And, as the officers themselves came from Urdu-using areas, the pressure of this lobby increased so much that the use of Devanagari decreased and that of the Perso-Arabic script increased by the time the Central Provinces (CP) were created from these areas in 1861.

The battle for the language of employment did not end in CP in the 1860s, however. Gradually the demand for Hindi grew and in 1872 the Government of India allowed Hindi to be used in nine districts—the others used vernaculars anyway—in official business in the courts, the revenue and the police offices. But this was merely a permissive order and the officials found ways of getting around it. Eventually they settled down for writing the same Persianized language which was used in the NWP but in the Devanagari script (King 1994: 71).

Another attempt to use Hindi in the Devanagari script was in Bihar in 1871. Here, Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, heard a welcome address in his honour which was in such a flowery style of Persian that he decided to abolish Urdu and, in 1873, permitted the use of the Devanagari script as well as the Kaithi scripts in the courts and other official business. However, this too was only a permissive order which did not ban Urdu or even its script altogether (King 1994: 72–73).

In 1880, however, Sir Ashley Eden ordered the exclusive use of the Devanagari or Kaithi scripts in Bihar to which Muslims objected vehemently. By this time, of course, the scripts of Urdu and Hindi were not only linked with jobs; they were also indexed to identities.
Let us now turn to the North Western Provinces where Urdu was the language of employment.

In a letter from the secretary of the Local Committee of Public Instruction to W. Muir, secretary to the Government of the NWP, dated 10 February 1854, states the following conditions for government employment in the North Western Provinces:

A person seeking government employment should be able to:

a. Read the ordinary *shakista* handwriting as the Urdu papers presented in the courts were in this.
b. To translate from English to Urdu.
c. To write an order if the heads are told verbally in Urdu.
d. To ‘write a clear, good, quick *shakista* hand’ (Edn. NWP 1854: LXV of Appendix J).

These requirements facilitated the Muslim and the Kaesths in these areas.

A *patvari* was supposed to know both Urdu and Hindi by the order of 10 August 1854, by the Saddar Board, unless he served in Kamaun or the Saugar and Nerbudda territories (Taleem 1854 a: 6) A list of all *Patvaris* who knew Urdu was maintained in the district office (Taleem 1854 b: 11). The Collector could order that *patvaris* and *numberdars*—the latter ordinarily knowing Hindi—learn Urdu (Ibid., 3–4).

In 1872 the Government of India enquired into the conditions of employment of Muslims. The officers who sent in their reports, invariably considered the language of public employment when reporting upon the issue. Even in Bengal, where the local language was predominantly Bengali, Hindustani was considered important in the early 1800s as the following letter suggests:

Of three languages current on the Bengal side of India, the Persian and Hindustanee are necessary for the transaction of business in all
Indeed, it was believed that Bengali was necessary only for the provincial collectors (Ibid., 61). All officers, and even their wives, ‘needed the common Hindustanee, or colloquial dialect’ (Ibid., 60). However, when Bengali did become the official language of the lower domains of government employment, Muslims did lose jobs (Edn. Emp 1886: 239).

In the Bombay presidency the Muslims, either being uneducated or educated only in Muslim heritage languages, did not qualify for employment (Ibid., 264). In the NWP and Oudh, however, the Muslims were preponderant (34.78 per cent) in official jobs as the public offices functioned in Urdu and in the Punjab, too, there was no disadvantage for them. However, their overall level of participation in education was lower than that of Hindus. Even so, a member of the Punjab University Senate, a certain C. Boulnois, said that more respect should be given to ‘Urdu and other Eastern languages in our courts and public offices by our officers both judicial and executive’ where English is given too much importance (Ibid., 212).

The Hunter’s Commission entertained many memorials, bringing out the significance of language for employment. For instance, a memorial about Muslim education claimed that the ousting of Persian as well as the order of 1864 that English alone should be the language of examination for the more coveted appointments in the subordinate civil service had ruined their chances of finding suitable employment (Edn. Com NWP and O 1884: 497). That the order substituting Hindi in the Devanagari script in Bihar still rankled with them, also found expression. However, the Lieutenant Governor did not withdraw that order but he did agree that the B.A. examination—which required proficiency in English—could be substituted by some other means of evaluation (Ibid., 498–499).
Education was invariably linked with employment as many education reports, some referred to in the chapter on education, have brought out. Even as late as 1873–74 an education report comments on the Persian schools as follows:

The Persian schools owed their existence, in the first instance, to the wants of the Mahomedan regime, and they serve the same practical purpose now in supplying scribes acquainted with the style and technicalities of the British Kachahri language (Edn. NWP 1874: 23).

The whole Hindi-Urdu controversy, sometimes referred to as the ‘Language Question’ by British officers, is attributed—as by Kempson, DPI of the NWP in 1874—as ‘an agitation [of the Hindus] against the use of Urdu in courts and districts’ (Edn. NWP 1874: 137).

This was, as the officers pointed out repeatedly, because Urdu is used ‘in the transaction of official business’ in the present-day UP (and the Punjab) area (Edn. NWP and O 1886: 18). The reason most aspiring young men took the vernacular Middle Examination in Urdu rather than Hindi was the same. As a report puts it:

Hindi being of very little use in the Government Courts, and Urdu being quite indispensable, no doubt could arise as to which form of the vernacular was likely to gain upon the other in an examination which is declared to be the test for Government employment (Edn. NWPL and O 1892: 29).

The report of 1893–94 not only repeats this but adds that the preference for Urdu will remain ‘so long as the cause of this circumstance remains’ (i.e. as long as it is used in public offices) (Edn. NWP and O 1894: 48).

It was primarily to this privileged position of Urdu that the Hindi movement objected. Madan Mohan Malaviya’s collection of documents called Court Character and Primary Education in the
N. W. Provinces and Oudh (1897), demonstrates what everybody already knew—that the Urdu of the courts was almost like Persian which was the monopoly of Muslims and Hindu Kaesths. And indeed, as convincingly argued by Paul Brass, the Muslims of these areas were represented much more than their numbers warranted in all professions: army, police, public administration, law, education, etc (Brass 1974: 150–156). This, indeed, was one of the reasons Sir Antony MacDonnell, Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces, allowed petitions in the Devanagari script to be received by official bodies. In his letter of 22 August 1897 to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, he writes:

Out of 240 Tehsildars 140 are Mahommedans. There are 2570 Mahommedan Police officers to 2120 Hindus. Have for the last 18 months been endeavouring to correct this preponderance and to establish a proportion of 5 Hindus to 3 Mahommedans (as the general population of the Hindus are to the Mahommedans as 7 to 1) (MacDonnell 1897).

In order to enable his officials to process documents in the Devanagari script, he wrote in a STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL ‘Minute’ to the Viceroy.

I have recently recast the Departmental Examination... insisting on a better knowledge of both the Urdu and the Hindi language. This is for young ICS officers (MacDonnell 1901: 38).

He goes on to add that though the Muslims and the Kaesths resented his order—the optional use of Devanagari in official documents—it had ‘already given a stimulus to Vernacular education’ (MacDonnell 1901: 40).

However, though much reviled by the Muslim press as an enemy of Urdu and the Muslims, Sir Antony MacDonnell had not thrown Muslims completely out of employment. The Pioneer of
1 August 1900 sums up his record of giving employment as follows:

...out of 359 appointments he had made 177 have been Muslims and 182 Hindus in Deputy Collectors, Tehsildars, Naib Tehsildars and inspectors of police. In District Boards and Municipal Committees he appointed 122 Muslims against 141 Hindus.

However, the Muslims were highly incensed at MacDonnell’s actions and complained of being squeezed out of public service (The Muslim Chronicle [Calcutta] 1 May 1897).

The Hindi movement not only objected to the script of Urdu but also to the diction of the official language. The proceedings of the British lower courts were recorded in Urdu and the settlement papers were written in the Urdu script, but in such a highly Persianized style that even educated people had to hire court officials to help them with the documents. Of course it was in the interest of the landowner (zamīndār) to learn the language so as to be less dependent on the professionals as many stories in Urdu promoted by the British pointed out. However, on the whole the system was very complex as the lowest rung of the land revenue system (the patvārī) recorded transactions in Hindi. Moreover, they also used the Kayethi, Sarrafi or Mahajani script for it rather than the Devanagari one which the British wanted to promote.

But Persian had acquired great cultural capital in the nearly six hundred years of its ascendancy. This cultural capital remained even after the British substituted Urdu for Persian as the language of the lower courts, the police and the revenue service in a major part of North India. Thus, anyone who knew this language—the language of the courts or kutcherī—carried not only social prestige but also a saleable skill which was the monopoly of Muslim clerks, priests and the Kaesths. Let us now discuss this special register which consists almost entirely of words of Persian and Arabic origin which do have Hindi-Urdu
equivalents but which, nevertheless, continues to be used in official documents and which some British officials and members of the Hindi movement found so objectionable.

Babu Siva Prasad, a moderate member of the Hindi movement, said that when Persian was substituted by Urdu as the language of the court the Kaesths put in only Hindi verbs while retaining the nouns and other terms of Perso-Arabic (Prasad 1868: 18–19). Babu Haris Chandra, another supporter of Hindi, made a forceful complaint against the pedantry of the legal terminology. Some of his examples are as follows:

Indivisible: \( ghair \ mumkin \ ul \ taqsīm \)
One fourth: \( rubā \)
Declaration of occupancy: \( Istiqrār- ē-haq- ē-muqābizāt- ē-kāshkārānā \)

He wanted them to be removed from the lexicon of the courts (Edn. Com NWP and O 1884: 200–202).

It appears though, that the Perso-Arabic diction was seen as being iconic of Muslim identity and, like the Sanskrit diction in Hindu discourse, it drew the boundaries of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. For instance when a certain Perkins, an assistant commissioner of Delhi, sent a manual for using easy Urdu in the courts the Anjuman-i Punjab decided not to use it. Among other reasons, the Anjuman said that the identity of Urdu was based upon the use of Arabic and Persian words ‘otherwise how could Urdu be distinguished from Hindi… (\( \text{varnā Hindī ṥ Urdū mē kyā farq ṣ īmtiāz hō sakē gā} \))’ (Anjuman. P 1866: 7).

Javed Majeed, after a study of the legal petitions of the 1860s points out that there ‘is a predilection for using Persian plurals for human beings rather than Urdu plurals’. The examples he gives are ‘Sakinān (inhabitants), bandegān (servants), gavāhān (witnesses), namāziyan (those who pray), dokhterān (daughters), mālikān (owners), Pesarān (sons) and vārisān (heirs)’ (Majeed 1995: 189). He also points out other Persian usages, both grammatical
and discursive, which entered the so-called ‘Urdu’ of the courts (Ibid., 189–199).

The subject of the register of the courts of law was debated among British officials as well as the proponents of Arabo-Persianized Urdu and Sanskritized Hindi. J. Beames, for instance, defended the Urdu of the courts on the grounds that the Perso-Arabic diction is exact, rich, and intelligible through usage in proportion to one’s level of education, and that this process is parallel to that which has made English such a rich language. On the contrary, he claims, borrowings from Sanskrit, which would replace the ‘Arabic element’, would be unintelligible (Beames 1866: 1–13). He was refuted by F.S. Growse who argued that the objection was to Perso-Arabic diction for which there were intelligible and commonly used Hindi (i.e. Hindi-Urdu) equivalents and not to all terms from these sources. On the whole, his plea was for moderation and intelligibility and in the end he warned against the use of a language which ‘robs the Hindus of their most glorious literary inheritance’ (Growse 1866: 181). But the strange ‘Kutcherry jargon’ remained as the prized cultural capital of the service elite.

This is not true only of the 1860s but even of Urdu documents in courts and police and revenue departments of present-day Pakistan where the Arabic walad or the Persian pisar is used for the Urdu bētā (son), and half is still the Persian nisf rather than the Urdu ādhā and so on. Indeed, even in Rajputana, although the script of all the court documents in the 1940s was Devanagari, the diction was the same Perso-Arabic one which one finds in other areas (Anjuman 1940). The Punjab samples of courts documents from the 1860s are in the same language and, in this case, in the Perso-Arabic script (Aslam 1991). Such documents also exist in such far-flung areas of the empire as Balochistan (Kausar 1986 b). And the heart of the empire—present-day UP and the city of Delhi—was the citadel of Persianized court language. It had penetrated these domains so much that even in
modern India, where Sanskritized Hindi holds sway, the courts use a special jargon which, according to Bhatia and Sharma, still includes the following leftovers from history.

These expressions are part of the mixed code, which is illustrated in items such as the following: Dafa 302 (Section 302), Taje Rate Hind (Indian Pernal Code), muwakkil (client), vakilatnamah (lawyer’s form), halafnama (affidavit), banam (versus), vald (son of), muddaiya (plaintiff), muddailaya (defendant), and patwari muharrir (government officers) (Bhatia and Sharma 2008: 369).

All of these terms are used in Pakistan as mentioned above. The point, therefore, is that the lower officials never stopped using the Persian they were familiar with to ensure continuity of their traditional monopoly, their pride in a jargon they understood best and to remain inscrutable and pompous as all bureaucracies tend to do. With this kind of cultural capital available in Persian and Urdu schools, it is little wonder that it was only after partition that some part of this diction was dropped in India in favour of even more esoteric Sanskritic diction but in Pakistan no change was made at all.

In India, as foretold by the more prescient British officers—such as John C. Nesfield, the DPI of Oudh—in the 1870s that if the court language were changed ‘Urdu and Persian would gradually die out’ (J. Sparks the Officiating Secretary of the Govt. to the DPI in his letter of 30 November 1874 in Edn. O 1874: 3), the script yielded to the Devanagari one. Surprisingly, however, despite Sanskritization of the official language, a few conventional legal terms continue to be throwbacks to the past as illustrated by the examples given above.

Apart from the judiciary, police and the administration, the British Indian army also used Hindustani but in the Roman script. However, during the ‘mutiny’ of 1857, the East India Company’s soldiers and their comrades opposing the British also used Urdu. At the highest level—that of the King or the princes—
Persian was used. But otherwise the constitution of the ‘mutineers’ was in Urdu (Siddiqi 1966: 282), commanders and even Bakht Khan, the commander-in-chief of the Indian troops, passed orders in it (Ibid., 298; 317). Even the seal of Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi carried her name in Urdu (Ibid., 388).

But this was a matter of a little more than a year. When the British regained control of India, they continued using Urdu in the Roman script as before. For instance, Frank Lugard Brayne (1882–1952) Adviser on Indian Affairs, Indian Army (1941–46), says:

Armies must have a common language and the Indian Army uses Urdu for all enlisted men whatever their home language (Brayne 1945: n. page).

He advocates the use of the Roman script but Indian, and not British, pronunciation of Urdu.

Yet another letter tells us that Urdu, sometimes also called Hindustani in the same papers, written in the Roman script, had been in use in the army since 1914, i.e. the First World War. Indeed, it was supposed to be the lingua franca of the Army. However, the way Roman Urdu was written was not accurate, despite the fact that Gilchrist had written in the Oriental Fabulist (1803) that Indian languages could be written in the Roman script and had made a ‘Hindi-Roman Orthographical Chart’ for accuracy (Siddiqi 1963: 39–40). Roman Urdu was ‘the language of command in the Indian Army’ in 1942 when Ralph Russell, later a pioneer and champion of teaching Urdu in the UK, arrived in India as an army officer (Russell 1996: 5). The Indian Army Lower examination at this time was entirely in this script though higher examinations were not (Ibid., 6). In order to create accuracy, changes were introduced several times. During this period Brigadier F.L. Brayne was the moving spirit behind introducing the new changes. He first conceded that there were imperfections and then suggested changes.
Roman Urdu used by the Army is only 65% accurate. By a few small changes it could be made 99% accurate, and still could be typed and printed without any alterations or additions to the type fonts and typewriters (Brayne 1945: n. page).

These changes were circulated both to military and civilian officers (Brayne NO. 100677/WD. (Advsr). He wanted the army to adopt them and felt that the civilian bureaucracy would follow: On 24 October 1945 he says.

The Army should go its own way, as it has hitherto. If the revised system is good enough the civil will begin to nibble [Brayne 1945. No. 100672/WG (Advsr/.Z].

Roman Urdu was also taught and used in the Pakistan Army, at least till the fifties, because officers commissioned in the sixties say that it had been discontinued during their time (Durrani Int. 2010).

However, the use of Urdu in the Perso-Arabic script has increased in the armed forces of Pakistan, although the officer corps still operates in English. For instance, instead of English words of command, Urdu and Bengali terms were introduced in the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) in 1970 (personal observation). After the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Bengali words were removed and only the Urdu part (albeit Persianized) remained. In his book on the use of Urdu in the Pakistan Army, Colonel Ghulam Jilani Khan gives several suggestions to increase this usage: improvement in the already published military dictionary which provides equivalents of military terms; translation of training manuals in Urdu; courses in military Urdu; publication of journals, or parts of them in Urdu; the provision of Urdu typing facilities; teaching of Urdu in PMA and so on (Khan 1989: 76–77). If all of these suggestions are accepted there will be many more jobs for people with skills in Urdu than ever before.
As for the use of Urdu in the civilian government, in addition to being used at the lower levels in the revenue and judicial services in most of Pakistan—only in parts of Sindh the Sindhi language is used in these domains—and also serves as the official language of the former Jammu and Kashmir State now indirectly administered by Pakistan (called Azad Jammu and Kashmir). The Government of Pakistan has promised to make it the official language of the country several times. The 1973 Constitution states:

The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day (Article 251, a).

The National Language Authority, created to facilitate the above, now possesses an adequate stock of terms in Urdu which, according to two of its recent chairmen—Fateh Mohammad Malik and Iftikhar Arif—will enable it to be used in the bureaucracy, education and other domains of employment (see NLA 2006 for terms to be used in official work). As neologism—the creation of new terms—has already been discussed in the context of the major languages of Pakistan (for Urdu see Rahman 1999: 265–267), it will not be dealt with here. Suffice it to say that accounts of the process and the ideology behind these efforts are adequately described by Waheed Uddin Saleem (1921) for the pre–1947 period and by Atash Durrani (1993) for the present era in Pakistan.

However, English still remains the language of the higher domains of power in Pakistan and, while letters from the offices of institutions specifically devoted to Urdu may be in that language, English is used by most other high offices. Parliamentary publications are, however, increasingly in Urdu in addition to English. Thus employment for translators has increased. The National Language Authority has recommended the use of Urdu in the examinations for recruitment to the civil service, has
trained government functionaries in the use of Urdu and reports that the language is being used in many domains—oath-taking, functions and receptions, parliament, certain offices—through its efforts even now (NLA 2005a). Otherwise, a study like S. Dwivedi’s study of the use of Hindi in India entitled Hindi on Trial (1981), will show that while contracts, agreements, licences, tender notices, tender forms and letters might have increased in Urdu—as they have for Hindi in India (Dwivedi 1981: 131)—the main language for lucrative and powerful employment in both countries remains English. The tendency in both countries is for the elite to find employment through skills in English while other languages—including Urdu in the case of Pakistan—follow behind as far as lower middle-class and some middle class jobs are concerned.

In the private sector Urdu is used, apart from the domains of education, printing and the media, which will be dealt with later, in advertising, marketing, wall-chalking, calligraphy, and writing decorative inscriptions and epigraphs. As in India, wall advertising is in multiple languages and mixed scripts (Bhatia and Baumgardner 2008: 388). While in India the Lipton advertisement is in Hindi, Urdu and English and in three scripts—Devanagari, Perso-Arabic and Roman—in Pakistan it is in Urdu and English. However, there are a few advertisements which mix lines in Sindhi, Pashto and Punjabi, along with Urdu and English. While in India the socio-psychological motivations for multiple mixing, in the case of Persian-Urdu, are their association with luxury, royal and medieval romance and Islamic culture (Bhatia and Baumgardner 2008: 392). In Pakistan the language is associated with indigenousness, intimacy and, if some high-flown Urdu verse is on display, with medieval romance and tradition. Urdu is also the major language of inscriptions on Pakistani trucks which are highly decorated and transport goods from one end of the country to another. Urdu is the language of 75 per cent of these inscriptions (Rahman 2010: 277). It is also the main
language of inscriptions on gravestones, even in non-Urdu-speaking areas and even graffiti in toilets. This means that artists, calligraphers, painters, and purveyors of quotable quotes and popular inscriptions find employment of some kind for this kind of writing.

In short, because of its use in the lower domains of power, Urdu became a commodity in much demand in a major part of North India in its own script. In these domains this demand remains to this day in Pakistan, though it has shrunk considerably in India. As for writing in the Roman script it became the desiderated language of the army and nowadays functions in modern means of communication.

However, because it was the passport for lower-level public sector employment, it was resisted by the supporters of Hindi in the Devanagari script, who competed for the same jobs. Thus, the British policy of promoting Urdu as the language of employment in Hindu dominated areas fed into the consolidation of the competing communal identities in British India which resulted in antagonism which lives on till date.
11

Urdu in Education

Almost all scholars writing on the Hindi-Urdu controversy have indirectly touched upon the teaching of Urdu. Lelyveld (1978: 70) mentions the experiment of establishing rural schools at the primary level by James Thomason (1804–1853), Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces, during the 1850s. Till then, it would appear, Hindustani was ‘chiefly a colloquial language’ and was ‘seldom written even in transaction of business’ (Adam 1835: 79). But once this policy was enforced, which will be discussed in some detail subsequently, the teaching of Urdu and Hindi fed into the mobilization of the competing Muslim and Hindu communal identities as described by many scholars notably Christopher King (1994); Francesca Orsini (2002: 89–124); Krishna Kumar (1991) who have focused more on the Hindu identity and Hindi educational institutions, processes and materials. The present author also describes the teaching of Urdu to the British as well as the Indians synoptically in his earlier book Language, Ideology and Power (Rahman 2002: 212–217), with reference to the same factors for the Muslims of North India. The following chapter expands upon these earlier works in order to explore more fully the social and political repercussions of the use of Urdu as an educational language.

The focus of this chapter is the spread of Urdu in the domain of education in the areas which now constitute Uttar Pradesh (North Western Provinces and Oudh) and the Punjab. The first is the area where the identity politics of Hindus and Muslims played a major role in creating communal antagonism between
these two communities leading to Muslim separatism. The second is the backbone of present-day Pakistan; the guardian of what is known in Pakistan as the ‘two-nation theory’; and the major supporter of Urdu against the other languages of Pakistan. Other areas, such as the Bengal, will be mentioned in passing but these two parts of India will be used as case studies for the spread of Urdu as well as Hindi through education. Our focus will, of course, be on Urdu, though Hindi will be mentioned in order to understand the role of Urdu in education.

THE NORTH WESTERN PROVINCES

There were a number of indigenous schools in these areas when Lord Lake conquered them in 1803. In the Muslim schools, only the Quran was taught without understanding the language (Arabic) in which it was written. In the Hindi schools, mental arithmetic (tables) and a little writing in the *kaesthi* or *sarrafi* script were taught. The Sanskrit schools, or Patshahals, taught the Hindu religious texts in Sanskrit, while the Arabic schools, or madrassas, taught Muslim religious texts in Arabic and Persian. The Persian schools, however, taught Persian texts and, therefore, prepared their pupils for the public service as Persian was the language of official business.

But in the early 1840s, when the British first introduced Urdu and Hindi in government schools, both of these were not considered worthy of being learned formally in schools despite a considerable body of literature in them.

The Bengal Presidency education reports of the 1830s were mostly about the Bengal but they did allude briefly to Agra and other districts. The local committee at Agra says, for instance, that a Munshi should be hired for ‘teaching the Musalman’s colloquial dialect, entirely excluding Persian’ (Edn. B 1837: 13). The report mentions both ‘Hindui’ and ‘Urdu’ and associates the first with the Hindus and the second with the Muslims (Ibid., 15). However, although Persian was being removed from the domains
of power, the report of 1839–40 says that Persian civilizes Kaesths and removing it will annoy Muslims (Edn. B 1841: 103–105). So, though Urdu was being taught in some places, the Indians (Kaesths and Muslims) of North India still thought of Persian as the desirable medium of instruction while the British, following Lord Auckland’s Minute, gave that role to English, though it was more expensive to find teachers for it (Edn. B 1841: xvi-xxiii).

THE THOMASON EXPERIMENT

James Thomason (1804–1853), was the son of Thomas Thomason who was an East India Company’s chaplain. The senior Thomason learned Arabic, Persian and Urdu in India and is said to have urged the Earl of Moira, then Governor General, to organize a system of national education in the vernaculars in India (Temple 1893: 27–29). His son, born in India but educated at Cambridge and Hailebury, actually made that dream come true. His intention, as he declared in his writings, was for peasants to be able to read in the vernaculars. Other company officers wanted Christianity to be taught but he refused to agree to this policy. Among other things, he is known for having initiated the experiment of creating village schools shared by several villages teaching both Urdu and Hindi (Temple 1893: 170–180).

The original scheme envisaged giving land to village schoolmasters (15 to 10 acres) in all villages (79,033 of them). It was also proposed that ‘no person shall be appointed school-master unless he fully understands, and is able to explain and give instruction in, Ram Surren Doss’s four elementary books both Oordoo and Hindee’ (Thornton 1846 in Selections 1856: 332). A second letter pursued the above ideas and suggested that the system will be introduced in eight districts to begin with, at a cost of Rs 36,000 and a Visitor General from the Indian Civil Service will be appointed to oversee its performance (Selections NWP 1856: 400–401). In a minute entitled ‘Scheme for Promoting Vernacular Education’ (Ibid., 403–405), it is proposed that the
District Visitor should know both Urdu and Hindi as should the ‘pergunnah visitors’ and the masters. The books, in both Hindi and Urdu, would also be sold through the District Visitor (Ibid., 404).

The first Visitor General was Henry Stewart Reid. He wrote four reports on indigenous education in vernacular schools in the districts of Agra, Aligarh, Bareli, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Mainpur, Mathura, and Shahjahanpur. These were cities with a substantial Muslim, as well as Hindu kaesth, presence. Both these elitist groups worked in Persian and considered it a class-marker. However, they were the ones chosen by the British authorities for transition to Urdu. By this time, 1853 onwards, the NWP Government had made the knowledge of Urdu necessary for employment. Among the conditions laid down were that (1) the candidate should be able to read the Shakistā handwriting as petitioners wrote in it (2) to translate from English to Urdu and (3) to ‘write a clear, good quick shikasta hand’ (Edn. NWP 1854: Appendix-J, p. LXV).

The first report of 1850–51 tells us that there were about 3,000 schools offering instruction to 25,000 children to begin with. These formed the basis of the British vernacular schools. By 1 May 1850, village teachers had been appointed and the schools had begun to function. They were classified according to location and, more to the point, according to the medium of instruction as follows:
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic and Persian</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>1284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuran [sic]</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>1257</td>
<td>8503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu and Hindi</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>1259</td>
<td>10090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi and Sanskrit</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>1561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and vernacular</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Edn. Reid 1852: 12. The term ‘Scholars’ is used for pupils in the original.

A school was not necessarily a building for formal instruction specifically built for this purpose. It was any place where the teacher and the taught came together. Thus, if a pious old man started teaching his own sons and those of his neighbours, it was a ‘school’. Likewise, there were ‘schools’ in the houses of the affluent, offices of government officials and under banyan trees. The most prestigious of these schools were Persian schools. They were supported by Muslims and Kaesths. On the whole, the Persian teachers were considered as ‘more intelligent, better paid, and more competent than the Hindi School Master’ (Edn. Reid 1852: 17). The latter, it was reported, was often unable to read and was supported by the poorer agriculturists and lower businessmen (baniyās). The average pay of school teachers was Rs 4 per month which confined them to a working-class lifestyle (Edn. Reid 1852: 16–28).
For some time the term ‘Persian teacher’ covered teachers of Urdu also. In any case, Persian texts were taught through Urdu and the pupils knew the language as a medium of conversation. The challenge for the British was, however, to get Urdu accepted as a language of formal schooling. In some places, like Shahjahanpur and Bareli.

...The study of Persian is popular, and Urdu is proportionately looked down upon. Were Persian taught, numbers would attend. In the 14 Tahsili Schools in the Rohilkhand districts, very few boys are reading Hindi, whereas in all the remaining districts, Hindi scholars preponderate over Urdu (Edn. Reid 1852: 95).

However, such was the prestige of Persian that Urdu was not initially successful. The Report says:

In the Tahsili Schools, the attempt has been made and till now has been persisted in, to introduce Urdu to the entire exclusion of Persian. A year’s experience, however, forces the conviction that the experiment should be, for the present, abandoned. Many will not come near our Schools, who would gladly attend, were Persian also taught (Edn. Reid 1852: 113).

Even at Deoband, an Islamic madrassa which gave pride of place to Arabic, the 1284/1867–68 report conceded that if Persian were taught, people would send their young children to the madrassa and that might eventually create an interest in Arabic (Azhar 1985: 93). The British persisted, however, and offered incentives to Persian teachers who would teach Urdu (Ibid., 119). The students too were rewarded. Indeed, to wean them away from Persian and Sanskrit, rewards were offered only if they studied Urdu and Hindi (Ibid., 120). The district and sub-district (parganāh) visitors of schools, working under the Visitor General, but also reporting to the local district officer, were instructed to distribute funds at their command to increase the study of Urdu and Hindi rather than Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. They were
specifically instructed to 'Persuade the School-Masters in Persian Schools to teach Urdu, and in Hindi Schools, to adopt the Nāgri in lieu of the Kāyasthī character, when the latter is prevalent' (Edn. Reid 1852: Appendix–1; 138–149).

These steps led to the introduction of Urdu in Persian schools in 1851–52 (Edn. Reid 1853: 59). Moreover, the Christian missionaries also taught Urdu in 'the Roman Character'. These schools—only two in number—also had female students (thirty-three of them) so that, for the first time, so many girls were getting formally educated in Urdu (Edn. Reid 1853: 59). By this time there seems to be some acceptance of Urdu as the Report says that people send their sons to the Persian schools so that they 'may acquire a thorough knowledge of Urdu' (Edn. Reid 1853: 88). Thus, in the sixty schools of the eight districts mentioned above, Urdu and Persian were read together (Ibid., 89). In other schools, such as the English-vernacular ones, Urdu and Hindi were taught along with English.

In the report of 1853–54 Reid wrote that: 'we look to Urdū and to Hindi (Symbolled out in Nāgri Character), as the sources where to obtain supplies of healthy mental food' (Edn. Reid 1854: 6). The distaste for Urdu had not quite ended because, as this report of the eight 'experimental districts' put it:

As yet Urdu composition is in the hands of men who have been taught Persian only. A long time will elapse before purely Urdū schools are set on foot (Edn. Reid 1854: 6).

However, in the Tahsili schools, which were directly under the government, ‘Hindi Scholars enter at once on the study of Urdū without going through a preliminary course of Persian reading’ (Ibid., 6). In the indigenous schools, however, the British indulged local prejudices by allowing Persian to be taught. By this time (1853–54) the number of schools and students were as follows:
In short, because of British efforts, Urdu had begun to be established as a language of formal schooling in the middle of the nineteenth century in North India.

Urdu was also the vehicle of modernization. Modern subjects—such as mathematics, accounting, history—were neglected in the traditional Persian schools, but emphasized in the Urdu ones. According to the Report of 1854:

Arithmetic and Accounts are neglected in Persian Schools; while in Urdu Schools we find 795 boys reading the same, in polyglot 102, in Sanskrit 365, and in Hindi 4,172 (Edn. Reid 1854: 18).

Another indicator of modernity was the gender balance in education. Though males preponderated, adult females getting instruction were ‘2, 670 of whom 1,027 appear in the Shahjahanpur returns’. The estimate according to the type of education was as follows:

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>5,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian-Urdu</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>1,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu with other languages</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagari</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>9,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayasthi</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>2,497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Education for Females in (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Edn. Reid 1854: 45.

URDU VERSUS HINDI

The British did not promote Urdu alone. They also promoted Hindi—which is to say Sanskritized Khari Boli—in education mostly because of the sheer number of the Hindus. Later on numbers began to translate into pressure when the Hindus (as well as Muslims) began to mobilize as an identity-conscious group. The education system provided them an opportunity to do so, especially because the education policy was contradictory and unjust. As King brings out:

By sponsoring Hindi in Nagari at the elementary and secondary school levels, the government helped create the very differences between Hindi and Urdu that many British officers decried. The government created, or at least fed, the genie in the bottle and then found itself surprised when the genie tried to get out (King 1994: 186).

The contradiction was not only that many British officers condemned the Sanskritization of Khari Boli—like excessive Persianization of it—as being absurd because of its lack of intelligibility. It was also because bureaucratic jobs were mostly in Urdu. Thus, while the educational system seemed to give a
free choice between all the languages the criteria for employment favoured English at the highest level, Urdu (in most of present-day UP and the Punjab) at the lower one, while Hindi was allowed only in parts of the Hindi belt or in a smaller proportion of jobs—and that too mostly in the education department—in most of North India.

That is why, in the 1850s when the Hindi movement had not fully mobilized its supporters, those seeking government employment chose Urdu over Hindi. Even the lowest level of state employees found Urdu more useful then Hindi for employment. The report of 1853–54 tells us:

Of the 156 Patwaris, who have received certificates, 46 have been examined in Hindi, 86 in Urdu, and 24 in both Hindi and Urdu (Edn. Reid 1854: 48).

The other government employees also required a certificate about which the Report says:

Of the 1,559 individuals examined, with reference to their fitness to hold a certificate of form A, requiring the ability to read and write Hindi, or Urdu, and a knowledge of the elements of arithmetic, 782 have succeeded in gaining a sanad-i-liyākat while 777 have failed... while in Urdu the unsuccessful are 142 in 397, and Urdu-Hindi examinees pass in proportion of 168 to 56 (Edn. Reid 1854: 49).

In short, while the British state promoted Urdu and Hindi both in the domain of education, its employment policies in much of North India tilted the balance in favour of Urdu—a fact which gave rise to much resentment among the Hindu nationalists, whose identity was being mobilized exactly on these very grievances during the nineteenth century.
THE RISE OF URDU

By the middle of the nineteenth century Urdu—but Persianized and gentrified Urdu—was supplanting Persian as the language of prestige and the identity symbol of the Muslim ashrāf. But as competition with Persian decreased, that with English and Hindi increased. English, being used in the highest domains of power was beyond competition, so it was only Hindi which was left to compete with. But initially the dice was loaded in favour of Urdu not only because it was then the language of employment but also because Persian—and by extension Arabic—were also the languages of sophistication, urbanization and gentrification for centuries. Thus, the residual prestige of the Islamic-heritage languages was high even when Urdu itself was less in demand and remained high till the beginning of the twentieth century.

Taking the data of schooling from the 1860s King has already related the general patterns for learning Urdu or Hindi with the rural-urban divide and area. In general the rural areas learned Hindi while the urban ones preferred Urdu (1994: 98–99). In Oudh and the western districts of the NWP (1st educational circle) the Islamic heritage languages (mostly Persian but also Urdu and some Arabic) were more in demand than the Hindu-heritage ones (Sanskrit and Hindi) (53.9 per cent versus 44.4 per cent); in Central NWP (2nd educational circle) the proportion is 19.1 to 78.1 per cent while in the Eastern districts (3rd educational circle) it is 37.9 to 55.7 per cent (King 1994: Table 8, p. 99). The fourth educational circle districts in the Saugar and Nerbudda territories and Ajmer-Marwara which were all detached from UP later are not included here.¹

Taking the same data, we can relate language choice to employment, vertical social mobility, modernization, and class. During the nineteenth century, Urdu was very much in demand in the urban, higher educational institutions of North India frequented by the gentry. The first of these institutions were:

¹
The Delhi College (1825); the Benares College (1792),
The Agra College (1823); the Bareilly College (1837),
The Ajmer School (1851).

In the Delhi College, we are told, that all ‘the students read Urdu.
The Arabic and Persian Scholars learnt enough of Hindee, to qualify them to hold the appointment of Regimental Moonshee’ (Edn. NWP 1859a: 3). Indeed, this college was the pioneering institution for disseminating Western knowledge to Indians through the medium of Urdu. Its second principal, Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893), took advantage of the Delhi Vernacular Translation Society and the learned staff of the College to get several books translated into Urdu (Chaghtai 2006: 115). Moreover both ‘the Oriental and the English departments of the Delhi College adopted Urdu as the medium of instruction for all scientific subjects’ (Ibid., 115). The Benares College emphasized upon Sanskrit and Hindi but even there students studied Urdu in fairly large numbers. In the other colleges, Urdu was studied sometimes alone and sometimes in combination with English—as in Bareilly for many years—so that exact numbers studying Urdu are not easy to tabulate. However, looking at data from the NWP, Oudh and the Punjab, one can venture to state that Urdu was popular at the elite level (Annexure A–1/11 and A–2/11). At the lower levels, however, it was Hindi which was more in demand. For instance, in the Halkabandis Schools and the indigenous village schools, it was Hindi which most students studied (Annexures B–1/11; B–2/11; B–3/11). At the Tahsil level—in small towns—there was slightly more demand for Urdu (Annexure C/11). This increased even further at the middle level (Annexure D–1/11; D–2/11; D–3/11 and D–4/11) and was much higher at the high school level (Annexure E–1/11 and E–2/11). This was not only true for government schools but was also true for private schools of the higher classes of which data from NWP is given in Annexure-A–1/11. It was, therefore, a class phenomenon in
addition to being a rural/urban and geographical variable. The students at the lowest level, having little ambition or chance to rise much in terms of socio-economic class, did not aspire for markers of the higher classes and urban areas (i.e. Urdu and English). In towns and cities, where the higher schools were situated, there was always the possibility of transcending one’s social class through employment which depended on one’s knowledge of Urdu and English. That is why this equation did not change as much in favour of Hindi as the statistics on printing and publication in that language did till Urdu remained the language of employment in parts of North India.

This association of Urdu with urbanization, sophistication and elite status worked eventually against Urdu and the Muslim community. Not only did it provoke the Hindu nationalists to take umbrage at this assumption of superiority on the part of the partisans of Urdu, but also it made them (these partisans) assume superiority even when the cultural capital of Urdu was exhausted in the face of the rising power of Hindi.

The British officers who administered India were neither all against Urdu nor against Hindi. Their objective was to consolidate the empire in India but points of view, strategies and biases differed. One officer in 1854–55 recommended the abolition of Hindi. However, the Lt. Governor insisted upon a ‘familiar acquaintance with the Hindee character’ (Edn. NWP 1856: 21). In a report of 1872–73, the Director of Public Instruction, M. Kempson, agreed that Urdu and Persian supplies ‘the ambitious pupil with the best hope of advancement in life’ but went on to say that ‘Hindi is the mother tongue of the district; and, if our operations are general in character, that is, if their object is the diffusion of knowledge, and the dissipation by its means of superstition and its connected evils, the proper vehicle of school teaching is Hindi’ (Edn. NWP 1873: 21). The Secretary to the Government, however, responded by saying that ‘the point to be considered is whether the people themselves desire it [Urdu] or
not’ (C.A. Elliott’s letter to Kempson, 14 November 1873. In Ibid., p. 7 of ‘Orders of Government’).

But the people’s ‘desire’ was dependent mostly upon the cultural capital of Urdu—the fact that skills in its use could be exchanged for jobs, access to officials, upward social mobility and acceptance among middle-class, urban society. Thus the demand for Urdu kept rising as people aspired for social mobility. A report of 1877–78 says:

The demand for Urdu teaching has greatly increased, and somewhat exceeds the supply. This difficulty will soon disappear, as all new teachers appointed are acquainted with Urdu (Edn. NWP and O 1878: 13).

Another indicator of Urdu’s rising popularity was the number of people who attempted to qualify in the vernacular examination which was the entry requirement of government service. By 1888–89 ‘the number of candidates who used the Nagri character was less than one-third of those who wrote their answers in the Persian character’ (Edn. NWP and O 1889: 22). Indeed, the number of examinees who took up Urdu and Persian rose every year since 1888 till, in 1891 it was reported that the ‘vast majority of candidates appear in Urdu, that being the official form of the vernacular’ (Edn. NWP and O 1891: 29). And this was even when, as the report indicates, ‘the number of failures in Urdu is always greater than that in Nagri because Urdu is more difficult to Nagri students than Nagri is to Urdu ones’ (Edn. NWP and O 1889: 66). For instance, the pass percentage in the two languages for the following years was:
And such was the social acceptance of Urdu that even girls, who did not normally seek government service, preferred that language to Hindi.

If we remember that at the turn of the century 1898–99 Hindus were 75.43 and Muslims 21.52 per cent of the population of the NWP and Oudh, it is a testimony to the British policy of making Urdu the language of the lower domains of power that 78 per cent students took up Urdu as against only 22 per cent who took Hindi in the vernacular examination (Edn. NWP and O 1895: 46).

When the Hindi movement gained momentum after 1900 the number of Hindi publications, as we shall see in the chapter on print, increased and outstripped publications in Urdu. However, vernacular examinations remained more conservative because the language of employment remained Urdu. Overall, during the British period, there was so much official patronage for Urdu that, despite the large numbers of Hindi speakers and the efforts of the Hindi movement, it was Urdu which predominated. The
Educational Gazette, for instance, was written in Urdu and distributed to schools. The Oudh Akhbar, although a private Urdu publication, was also distributed free to schools (Edn. NWP and O 1884: 132). Thus, even up to 1924 when the Hindi movement had gained much ground, the figures for the choice of language in the advanced examinations for vernacular teachers remained as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>Edn. UP 1919: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>Edn. UP 1920: 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Edn. UP 1921: 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>Edn. UP 1923: 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>Edn. UP 1924: 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urdu was not only used in education, administration and the courts of law—albeit at the lower level—but was also used for technical education. The Thomason Civil Engineering College at Roorke, for instance, announced that the prospective candidates for admission ‘must have a good knowledge of the Oordoo language, and be able to read and write it in the Persian character with ease and accuracy’ (Edn. NWP 1866: 63).

**URDU IN OUDH**

Oudh, ruled by an Iranian Shia dynasty, was a major centre of the Persianate Urdu culture in the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth centuries. Here the number of students who opted for Urdu rather than Hindi was higher than most districts of the NWP. While figures for male students have been mentioned in the annexures on schools earlier, it may be noted that even female students preferred Urdu over Hindi for the region as a whole (Annexure-F/11). Students also chose to study Persian.
Indeed, Persian kept lingering on here longer than elsewhere so that a Deputy Commissioner wrote in 1869: ‘They [Muslims] are not satisfied with Hindi and Urdu but want Persian and Arabic’ (Edn O 1871a: 108). The following year’s report noted that ‘the Persian element in the ordinary language spoken in Oudh is very strong’ (Edn O 1871b: 23). Indeed, being a part of sharif culture in Lucknow, the Urdu language—and especially a formal, Persianized variety of it—carried so much cultural capital that the Hindus of Oudh, whether Kaesths or others, wanted to study Urdu and Persian (Ibid., 24).

For these reasons, even in the indigenous schools where normally peasant children learned Hindi in the Mahajani script, the children of Bara Banki opted for Persian (387 out of a total of 622) (Edn. O 1872: 3).

The report of 1872 gave the following comparative statement about the languages learned by boys in schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Persian</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871–72</td>
<td>2,471</td>
<td>25,586</td>
<td>6,118</td>
<td>18,997</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872–73</td>
<td>2,488</td>
<td>28,353</td>
<td>6,527</td>
<td>22,353</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


And the writer of the 1872 report concluded by saying: ‘Urdu is thus by far the favourite study’ (Ibid., 119). The report of 1876 repeated the same story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Persian</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874–75</td>
<td>4,826</td>
<td>33,388</td>
<td>8,517</td>
<td>26,428</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875–76</td>
<td>4,958</td>
<td>33,388</td>
<td>9,580</td>
<td>30,115</td>
<td>1,012</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

URDU IN THE PUNJAB

Urdu was accepted as the vernacular language of the Punjab by the British rulers of India after consulting the officers posted in the districts of the new provinces which they had conquered in 1849 (Rahman 1996: 192–197). The Department of Public Instruction was established in January 1851 but its first report came to light in 1858. However, since Persian had been used by the Sikh rulers as an official language the education report of 1860–61 points out that ‘the desire for learning Persian is so strong in most parts of the Punjab, that it seemed desirable to meet the wishes of the people in this matter...’ (Edn. Pun 1864a: 8). That is perhaps why the Lieutenant Governor asked the DPI whether the courses of study borrowed from the North Western Provinces ‘may not give an artificial prominence to Urdu, which does not naturally belong to it in these provinces’ (Ibid., p. v).

Initially, as in other areas, the British encountered resistance to the teaching of Urdu. There were the ordinary Quran, Hindi as well as Gurmukhi schools. Persian was the desiderated subject of study both for Hindus and Muslims as it led to employment in the bureaucracy. Thus the Administration Report tells us:

Both teachers and scholars especially objected to the study of Urdu. To educate a boy by teaching him his own language seemed to them to be almost a contradiction in terms. It was of course necessary to conciliate the people, and the plan adopted was to give the teachers two lists of books, one of Urdu books which must be read, and another of Persian books which might be read (Adm. Pun 1873: 151).

However, the British also kept political considerations in mind when implementing the policy so the following lines were added:

At the same time Hindi schools were to be encouraged wherever the people desired them, in view of the danger of throwing education
entirely into the hands of the Muhammadans (Adm. Pun 1873: 151).

Gurmukhi schools were also allowed but remained less in number than Urdu ones. Indeed, perhaps because of the widespread use of Urdu in education, works of ‘general interest’ in the Punjabi language were more likely to be published in the Shahmukhi script (Adm. Pun 1904a: 106).

In the Punjab, as in the NWP, there were village and town schools. And, again as in the NWP, there were indigenous schools about which G.W. Leitner prepared a comprehensive report (Leitner 1882). The lower schools did teach the Quran by rote as well as Hindi (both in the Nagari and the Mahajani scripts), but Hindi did ‘not lead to employment’ and, as the DPI pointed out, ‘no one cares to go beyond the elements of reading and writing’ (Edn. Pun 1873: 24). Anyone who aspired for higher education—even for learning English, which was not taught ‘below the middle’ level, were supposed to ‘be able to read and write Urdu and to work sums’ (Edn Pun 1874: 51).

But Urdu did not remain unopposed in the Punjab. It was opposed by the claims of Punjabi which has been written about elsewhere (Rahman 1996: 191–209), English and Hindi. The opposition by people who wanted more English than Urdu to be taught, argued that English was preferable because it facilitated employment and had more prestige. The Anjuman-i-Punjab, the originator of the ‘Oriental movement’, declared that ‘the Urdu language was quite unfit’ for education at the higher level and, therefore, English should be the exclusive medium of instruction in high schools (Edn. Pun 1881: 8m).

Urdu was also opposed by the proponents of Hindi in the 1880s. W.M. Holroyd, the DPI, pointed out that unless the government changed its policy, Hindi and Sanskrit could not be used for teaching science, geography and mathematics nor could terms borrowed from these languages be employed. Instead, it
was Urdu which should also be taught in the villages. He reiterated the language policy in the Punjab forcefully again.

The Urdu language was made the principal medium of instruction in Government schools in accordance with the strongly expressed opinion of Lord Lawrence, Sir Donald McLeod, and other experienced officers, and with full approval of the Court of Directors. The general principle on which this decision was founded was re-affirmed by the secretary of state (Edn. Pun 1882: 66).

It was in line with this policy that Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script was discouraged in the beginning. Thus ‘permission to establish a Gurmukhi class was refused’ (Edn. Pun 1884: 5).

However, by 1888–89 some candidates had presented themselves for Gurmukhi examinations in the Oriental college of Lahore. And even at the lower level many Gurmukhi schools were reported to be ‘in receipt of grants’ (Edn. Pun 1889: 86).

Traditionally, the indigenous village schools did not teach Urdu. They were reorganized in 1889 as Zamindari schools as they catered to rural society. Students could attend in the mornings or evenings and were let off to gather the harvest during the harvesting season. And it was in these schools that Urdu, as well as Hindi and Gurmukhi, were taught. The report of 1889–90 tells us:

Urdu is the principal subject of instruction in 167 of the Indigenous schools examined for grants, Panjabi in the Gurmukhi character in 26, and Hindi in the Nagari character in 9. All the other private schools examined for grants were Urdu schools...’ (Edn. Pun 1890: 133).

The Zamindari schools did not prove to be popular and it was felt that the Gurmukhi schools or classes started in 1889–90, would also be unpopular (Edn. Pun 1895:55). In 1897–98 there were 202 of these Zamindari schools out of which 191 were Urdu and the other Nagri ones (Edn. Pun 1898: 43).
Even in 1911–12 the Punjabi language, which was an optional vernacular in rural schools, had shown ‘little sign as yet of replacing Urdu’ though their number had risen from 32 to 102 and students from 917 to 4,067 (Adm. Pun 1913: 187).

Urdu was also used for medical studies. The Education Report of the Bengal Presidency (1839–40) mentions the idea of training ‘Native Doctors’ for both civil and military service who should ‘be able to read and write the Hindoostanee language, in the Devanagari or Persian character’ (Edn. B 1841: clvi). A similar course in Urdu was instituted in the Lahore Medical College in 1860, which changed its name to the Lahore Medical School later. It was a three-year course after which one could enter the medical profession as a ‘Native Doctor’. The Administration Reports of the Punjab give a yearly report on the number of students in the ‘Hindustani class’ observing ‘that the competition for entry into the Hindustani class continues’ (Adm. Pun 1867: 66) which indicates that the successful candidates found jobs easily. By 1869, the school had passed out ninety-one doctors and was a well-established institution (Adm. Pun 1869: 124). The record available in these reports spans thirty-one years out of which the figures for the ‘Urdu class’ are not mentioned for the last, i.e. 1903–04. Even so, 3,786 studied medicine in Urdu, while 2,631 studied it in English, according to the reports from 1860–61 till 1903–04. The reports keep mentioning the native doctors till the end of the century when information about them disappears altogether.

**URDU READING MATERIAL AND MODERN CITIZENSHIP**

Education was also part of the colonial project of creating useful citizens with the virtues of the Victorians: obedience, non-political and non-militant piety, bourgeois morality and industriousness. James Thomason, whom we have encountered earlier, wrote that, ‘A popular and useful Oordoo literature is
now forming...and it is becoming the vehicle for conveying practical and useful knowledge to all classes of the people’ and this, he felt, would make the new moral citizen he so desired (Thomason 1847). The Muslim reformers fully agreed with these ideals and they produced literature in Urdu which promoted it. This reformist literature for educational purposes has been described by Moinuddin Aqil (2008: 403–418). Similarly the literature on Hindi has been described in even more detail and with great scholarly thoroughness by Francesca Orsini, who looks at textbooks (Orsini 2002: 92–111), informal reading material created by public institutions such as the Arya Samaj (Ibid., 111–116); the role of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in examining candidates (Ibid., 116–124); literature, journals, magazines, etc.

Here we will confine ourselves to only some of the most influential texts in Urdu for their overall influence on the production of the modern, colonial subject on the lines described by Gauri Viswanathan, in her excellent study of the way English literature created the colonial subject in India (Viswanathan 1989). The idea of the moral influence of texts is a perennial theme in colonial education. For instance, among others, Dr Ballantyne taught Shakespeare to his students in the Benares College in order ‘to give the mind of a Hindoo reader some tincture of the higher tone of morality, which belongs to the European civilization’ (Edn. NWP 1848: 24). This was part of the project of shaping the modern consciousness among Indians. And it was carried out by teaching modern Western knowledge through English and the vernaculars.

One way of doing this was through translation of the Western canonical texts into Urdu. The Society for the promotion of knowledge of India through the Medium of Vernacular Languages, also called the Delhi Vernacular Translation Society, translated books from 1830 till 1857. Later Sir Syed founded his Scientific Society in Ghazipur and the work was carried on by
the Darul Tarjuma at Osmania University and still goes on in Pakistan through the National Language Authority, Urdu Science Board (Lahore), Majlis-e-Zuban-e-Daftari (Lahore), Idara-e-Tasnif-o-Talif-o-Tarjuma (Karachi) and in India, mainly through the Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu and some universities (Chaghtai 2006: 116–117). The translations, were representations and, says Margrit Pernau, ‘it becomes clear that the colonial power aimed at controlling both ways: the representation of the Indian tradition for a British Public (and by implication for the Indians themselves), but also the images Indians received about the West...’ (Pernau 2006: 19).

The modern Indian Muslim had to be acquainted with subjects introduced by the modernizing British. Munshi Mohammad Zakaullah (1832–1910), for instance, was one of those who tried to bring modern scientific knowledge through the medium of Urdu to Indians. He is said to have started writing at the age of 19 and published 147 books ranging from subjects as diverse as mathematics to history. He also translated scientific books from English to Urdu. In a sense, then, he was a living Urdu encyclopaedia of nineteenth century Delhi (Hasan 2006: 290–297).

Zakaullah taught in the Delhi College (or Dilli Kalij as it was called in Urdu) where scientific and mathematical subjects were taught in Urdu. Besides Munshi Zakaullah, the college had others on the faculty who translated much Western learning in Urdu. According to Mushirul Hasan, ‘it produced a substantial number of enlightened writers who, in turn, contributed to the development of Urdu prose as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, and encouraged a simple style of writing as against the high-flown, bombastic, and ornate style’ (Hasan 2006: 121). In 1847 there was an outburst of Urdu translations—128 from Arabic, Persian and English books—of both the classical and the modern type (Malik 1980: 55).