Language in India

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Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 9: 1 January 2009 ISSN 1930-2940

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Status of Urdu and Efforts and Strategies for Its Inclusion in the **Mainstream of Indian Life**

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Urdu – A Panoramic View

'Urdu' is a Turkish word, which means "foreign" or 'horde'. This just shows that the language represents in its origin an amalgamation of foreign with the native elements (of South Asia). Urdu involves numerous elements of Arabic as well as Persian languages. It also derives some elements from Sanskrit. Urdu is not an old language. Urdu is born and brought up in a condition when multiculturalism was in great favor. As this language became a preferred language soon in the courts of rulers, it also became the preferred vehicle for culture.

This language is not bound to any particular area. It traveled to Deccan (South), Delhi, Lucknow, Lahore, etc. So, we cannot say that this language is from any particular place. The language became acceptable to all. We observe in our surroundings that everybody is using Urdu, but they don't speak it in its earlier form. It is now greatly mixed with Hindi and to some extent English. Urdu is with us, but Urdu fraternity fails to use it and we don't help Urdu to nurture to its full potential (Balraj, 2007).

Due to the influence of these languages, although the Urdu language exists, it loses its focus. Added to this, the partition of the nation and adoption of Urdu as the official language in the neighbouring country has given it an alien status in the place where it was born, nurtured and brought up.

Origin of Urdu

Many Indians have been misled to believe that Urdu is an alien language. It is believed that this language had helped in bringing the partition of the nation. It can be mentioned that this language was developed on the Indian soil and acted as a catalyst during the freedom struggle. It may be mentioned that those who brought Islam to India in the northern parts of India were Turks. Turks never knew Urdu, simply because Urdu did not exist at that time. Language of the then rulers was Turkish, their successors - the Mughals - after establishing their kingdom, used Persian as the court language in India. It is only in Bombay films that emperors like Akbar and Shahjehan speak in Urdu, which is not the true picture. Further, Urdu was not the language of Muslim rulers, but grew on the Indian soil as a language of the Bazaars and Chavanis (military

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garrison) of North India, out of the interaction between Persian and Khari Boli, and therefore Hindi and Urdu are close kin.

There are five theories for origin of Urdu, which are discussed here.

1. According to Mahmood Shirani and T. G. Beli Urdu is born in Punjab. It is transferred to Delhi through Muslims in 1193 and the proof is that old Urdu and Punjabi are similar.

Janan Raham Farmao Nan, Ya Mujhe Bulaya Aao Nan Ena Bhi Kya Tarsao Nan, Ya Mujhe Bulaya Aao Nan Hai Dil Manne Ek Arzoo, Ek Roz Apane Rubaroo Aye Janan Man Batlao Nan, Ya Mujhe Bulaya Aao Nan

- 2. According to Md. Hussain Azad the centre of Mughal dynasty was Agra, where the local language was Brijbhasha. Urdu is derived from this native language, namely, Brijbhasha.
- 3. In 'Lissani Jaiza-e-Hind', according Gerareson, Urdu is taken from an Indian vernacular, namely, Khadi Boli, which is also the other name for Urdu (spoken in Uttar Pradesh).
- 4. According to Zole Black, to solve the problem of Urdu and Hindi, investigations have to be done in Haryana.
- 5. According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Sayed Muhiudding Qadari, Urdu has not extracted from any of the above languages. Actually, the origin of Urdu commenced from the Muslim entry to Delhi i.e. 1193 from North India or Lahore to Allahabad.

Different Names of Urdu

Urdu is the gift given by the Mughal dynasty to the Indian sub-continent. In the opinion of some scholars, it became a give and take language during the reign of Babar. According to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, it was spoken in Padshahi ministers and their market. Therefore, gradually the elite adopted the speech and it percolated down to the other lower levels of the society.

Since, the language did not develop at once or at a specific place, the naming of the language is also not easily explained . It has been called by various names in different periods and at different locations, and was used in different formats. Some of the popular names of this language are discussed below:

Urdu was popular as '**Rekhta**'. In 1169 Hijari (i.e., 1782 A.D.) Shah Hatim has given his Deewan Zada in which he has written about himself in Persian as

Dar Shair e Farsi Peeru saeb ast, O Dar Rekhata Wali Ra astarmi Darad

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Amir Khusroo brought some changes in Rekhata, which was used in poetry. Gradually Rekhata became in common use of public. Rekhata was little different from the present Urdu, as it used some Punjabi words.

Sheikh Majid (912 Hijri, i.e., 1506 A.D.) was the first person, who called Urdu **Dahalwi**. Amir Khusroo has also used this word for Urdu and it is found that Persian influenced his writings.

Shah Meeranji Bijapuri has contributed a lot to the Urdu literature. He has named his language as **Hindi**.

Mulla Wajahi, in his book 'SabRas' has mentioned about the language used and called it as **Zaban-e-Hindustani** for Urdu.

The two Sons of Shah Meeranji - Shah Burhanuddin Janan and Ameeruddin Agha, who belong to the Sufi family of Gujrati, named Urdu as **Gujrati or Gujari**.

Kabir Das was a renowned Sufi. He has written many poems and couplets on the love and devotion of the Almighty Lord and named his language as **Purabi Boli**.

In Gujarat, Urdu was popular as Gujrati. Similarly, in South or Deccan it was named as Dakani, which has its own remarkable amount of literature. The two states from the South - Gulkhanda (Golconda) and Bijapur played a great role in the promotion and development of Urdu language.

The Present Scenario of Urdu Language

The basic purpose of using a language is to facilitate communication between individuals. Urdu is also considered as a very beautiful and sweet medium of communication. But at present Urdu is gradually losing its ground.

According to the 1991 Census, states with highest percentage of Urdu speakers were: Bihar 9.91% Utter Pradesh 9.74%, Karnataka 9.54%, Andhra Pradesh 7.84%, Maharashtra 6.94% and Delhi 5.88%. One major tragedy facedby this language is that it lacks a specific home in the physical sense. However, in its very being and essence, Urdu is truly national in character, as the language is spoken and used throughout India. It is treated as a stepchild in India, may be because Pakistan has adopted it as its national language. It is for Indians to understand that Urdu belongs to neither a particular religion nor a political system.

According to the 1981 census, Urdu is the sixth largest spoken language of India. It is believed by the Urdu speakers that if the data collection process of Census of India was meticulous, then Urdu would have come out as the second or third largest spoken language. Even with the available figures, the Gujral Committee has recommended that in the states where Urdu-speaking population is large, Urdu may be used in State Assemblies. It is implemented in Bihar, but Uttar

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Pradesh still doesn't allow taking oath in Urdu in the State Assembly. In this scenario what can be said about the states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, etc.?

A Landmark Report on the Development of Urdu in India

We've referred to the Gujral Committee Report several times in this article. This is a landmark report in the history of Urdu language, literature and uses of Urdu in all possible domains. The report also aimed at the restoration of Urdu.

Here is a brief note on the background of the Report, taken from http://education.nic.in/cd50years/u/47/3X/473X0201.htm a Government of India website. (For the complete report, please log in to Language in India

A brief history of the events which led to the formation of the Committee of Experts is recapitulated in the paragraphs below.

- 18. The Government of India appointed a Committee for Promotion of Urdu under the Chairmanship of Shri I.K. Gujral, the then Union Minister of State for Works and Housing by a Resolution dated May 5, 1972. It was requested to advise the Government on the measures to be adopted for the promotion of Urdu language and the steps required to be taken to provide adequate facilities for Urdu speaking people in educational, cultural and administrative matters.
- 19. The Report of the Gujral Committee was received in the Ministry of Education on May 8, 1975. It runs into 269 pages and contains 187 recommendations covering a very wide spectrum of problems and issues.
- 20. The Gujral Committee Report was placed before the Cabinet on January 30, 1979. Thereafter, it was laid on the Table of both the Houses of Parliament on February 21, 1979. The Cabinet did not take any decision on the recommendations and instead decided that, since most of the recommendations of the Report would have to be implemented by the States, copies of the Report may be sent to the State Governments for ascertaining their views.

Some of the recommendations by the Gujral Committee for the promotion and inclusion of Urdu language in mainstream are as follows:

1. The Education department of the State Government, Union Territories and local Authorities should, in the light of Article 350-A of the Constitution, make necessary arrangements for teaching in Urdu at the primary stage for the benefit of those who claim it

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as their Mother Tongue. A Committee should be constituted to monitor the implementation of these constitutional provisions by concerned states with the Chief Ministers as Chairmen.

- 2. In substitution of 10:40 formula, the Committee accepts the recommendation of the Gujral Committee that;
- a. Where in an area speakers of Urdu constitute 10% or more of the total population, one or more Urdu medium primary schools should be set up according to need. Efforts should be made to keep Urdu and non-Urdu medium students at the same school to avoid segregation;
- b. In an area where Urdu speaking people constitute less than 10% of the total population, an Urdu teacher should be provided in such schools as are likely to get a minimum of 10 Urdu speaking students;
- c. For immediate purposes, bilingual teacher may be appointed in schools mentioned in (b) above. The existing teacher in such schools may also be given incentives to learn Urdu additionally;
- d. The facility of Balwadies and Anganwadies at the pre-primary level should be made available to Urdu speaking children to feed Urdu medium primary schools and improve their standard.

3. Secondary Education

- i. It should be presumed that two third of the students leaving primary schools would be desirous of moving onto the next stage of education. Urdu medium sections should be provided in the existing secondary schools and Urdu knowing teachers should be appointed in anticipation of students offering Urdu as a medium. The emphasis should be on students studying through all media (including Urdu) in the same school;
- ii. In case of higher secondary schools in cities having concentration of Urdu speakers, one Urdu medium higher secondary school should be opened for every group of 8 to 10 feeder primary schools. These schools should be provided Urdu knowing teachers, which should be appointed in anticipation of students offering Urdu as medium. The emphasis should be on students studying through different media (including Urdu) in the same school.
- iii. The State Government should help in raising the standard of teaching in such Urdu medium higher secondary schools, which are run by linguistic minorities themselves;(4.197)
- iv. The pre-conditions, if any, for permitting the setting up of Urdu medium higher secondary schools and sections privately should be relaxed in favours of the Urdu linguistic minority setting up such schools or sections, and the procedure so simplified that the required permission would be granted within two months of the date of application;(4.198)

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v. The facility of Urdu medium secondary schools should, as proposed in the case of primary Education be provided wherever the Urdu speaking population of an area constitutes 10% of the population.

The above-mentioned points discuss various recommendations of Gujral Committee.

Following paragraphs examine the important programmes and interventions taken by different States for the promotion of Urdu.

Lack of Practical Efforts

The Government, Semi-Government, Public Enterprises and General Public have taken several measures for the development of the Urdu language. At the political level, leaders have sincerely made efforts for the inclusion of Urdu language, in present day competition-oriented, information-seeking, modern world. However, at the implementation level of these policies, one notices lack of practical steps.

In the schools run by the Central Government, it is observed that there are more than 500 vacancies of Urdu teachers, which are never filled. The vacancies filled are sometimes with non-Urdu knowing teachers, which ultimately mars and hampers the progress of the language, school and Urdu society at large. Its own employees do not faithfully implement the steps taken by the government for the progress of the language. Based on the recommendation of the Gujral Committee, the Railways department printed timetables in Urdu, but for political reasons the same was not distributed to the public. However it was recorded that the public did not demand it. Hence, further printing and publication was stopped.

The All-India Radio stations have more than 70 vacancies of Urdu producers, which are yet to be filled in with Urdu-knowing personnel. The condition of Urdu in Television is still worse. Most of the Regional and National Television stations telecast programmes in the Regional or the National languages, thereby again ignoring Urdu language. The Urdu news was shown at 14.50, when the viewers were not available.

The Archaeological Survey of India and the Department of Archaeology, Delhi have maximum documents in Urdu and Persian, but the officers maintaining these are not well versed in Urdu or Persian. In a few railway stations the boards are written in Urdu. However, these are not in a readable condition.

Education through Urdu medium schools is facing huge problems in South India. However, this type of education has almost vanished from Northern India. The states like Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa, etc. are providing education in Urdu Medium, whereas the future of Urdu in other states is dismal. When India attained freedom

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there were 50,000 Urdu Medium Primary Schools in Uttar Pradesh (United Province), but gradually the number decreased. Now, it has only 300 schools.

The Gujral Committee has recommended that the localities having 10% of Urdu speaking population should have one Urdu Medium Primary Schools. For 10 such feeder Urdu Primary Schools, one High School should be started. However, this recommendation is not implemented in any state of India. It is observed that when the parents want to admit their children in a Urdu Medium School, the Head of the Institution usually counsels them to admit their children in Regional Languages medium schools, citing reasons of job prospects. The teachers appointed for teaching Urdu are forced to teach some other subjects, thereby creating the problem of not being able to retain adequate number of Urdu language teachers. Large numbers of Urdu teachers' vacancies are reserved for Scheduled Castes, who are generally not familiar with Urdu.

Many States translate Textbooks from Regional Language Books, which are not properly done. The Gujral Committee recommended that States conduct surveys of Urdu teacher requirements at various levels of Education. But none of the states has carried out such surveys.

Failures of Urdu-Speaking Community

It is true that since Independence the Government has shown a sense of apathy towards Urdu and other languages called Regional Languages. But the proponents of Urdu focus almost exclusively on the injustices done to Urdu. The Urdu-speaking community also failed to take advantage of factors that favoured Urdu.

In Urdu-speaking families, people who were generally devoted to Urdu and whose children were also interested in Urdu, had not taught their children to read and write it. Urdu for them was simply the language of the home. Ralph Russell met famous writer Ismat Chughtai and was surprised to know that her daughter did not know reading and writing of Urdu.

Why this condition has arisen? On close observation of Anjuman Taraqi-e-Urdu-e-Hind (an institution established for the development of Urdu Language), it is found that the institution is not doing any productive work except for the publication of a journal, which is only a judicious mixture of news reports regarding Urdu from different parts of the nation. The proposals for the preparation of dictionary and glossary have not taken any practical shape still.

To add to this pathetic condition, Ather Farooqui writes in an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, "At few places Urdu Medium Primary Schools are run by local bodies which have appointed teachers - most of the so-called Urdu teachers, generally do not even understand what is meant by Urdu Medium."

This is the condition of the Urdu language, which is born and brought up in India. It was a language, which was spoken almost in parts of the nation during 18th and 19th Centuries. It is the language, which has given India slogans like "Inquilab Zindabad", couplets like

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Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab Hamare Dil me hai Dekhna hai zor kitna Bazoo-e-Qatil me hai

This language was of prime importance before independence, but, alas, the same status did not continue after the independence. Therefore, there is need to examine how we can help restore the inclusion of this language in the mainstream of Indian life.

The Inclusion Processes of Urdu Language

Urdu is one of the most popularly spoken languages, whether it is spoken in the name of Urdu or Hindi or any other dialect. It is liked, appreciated and spoken by all communities, but, on political grounds, it is attached to Muslims, which is not proper. This is why there is a step motherly treatment meted out to the language and its speakers, which has led to backwardness of this language. The government and other institutions working toward the promotion of Urdu need to make greater and focused efforts to remove the misconceptions regarding Urdu and include it in the Indian mainstream along with other languages.

Demonstrative Efforts to Include Urdu in the Mainstream of Indian Life

As already mentioned, the Government, Semi-Government, Public Enterprises and General Public are seriously and sincerely making efforts for the inclusion of Urdu language, in present day competition-oriented, information-seeking, modern world. But these have not resulted in much practical help. The efforts are made to include Urdu right from the school to the University level; from one to one correspondence to mass Media Broadcast; from literature to electronic devices like computers. A few of these efforts to include Urdu in the mainstream of Indian life are noted below,

- ❖ All India Radio, Darbhanga, broadcasts programmes in Urdu and many such Radio Stations are also broadcasting Urdu Programmes. These are targeted towards utilization of Urdu language and mainstreaming the community using it.
- ❖ In accordance with the recommendation of Sachhar Committee, the Maulana Azad National Urdu University is opening Industrial Training Institutes for Urdu Community.
- Governments like Andhra Pradesh have come forward by proposing reservation for Muslims, which largely and indirectly supports Urdu-speaking population.
- ❖ The Andhra Pradesh government has equipped Urdu schools with modern gadgets like computer. They have also procured Urdu Computer Assisted Instructional Programmes for such schools. The authors have assisted in the development of these programmes.

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- ❖ The Andhra Pradesh government has increased amount of scholarship for Urdu Medium Schools' students.
- ❖ The Uttar Pradesh government has taken up decision to appoint 60,000 teachers, which is a step towards inclusion of the language in modern schooling. Government of Delhi has started similar steps. Bihar Government is also appointing Urdu teachers.
- ❖ Urdu is an official language of Jammu and Kashmir. The state government has decided that all Government, Semi-Government Departments, Public Places, roads, lanes and historical places should have Urdu names in addition to English.
- ❖ Many state like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi have made Urdu as their second official language. Few other states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh etc. are demanding implementation of second language status of Urdu.
- ❖ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has inaugurated the Urdu Doordarshan channel for promotion of Urdu language. This has resulted in telecast of Urdu news in three slots, which is also being transmitted in DD News. This has overcome the problem of telecast of news in the noon, which is mentioned earlier.
- ❖ The government has announced new policy for DAVP. According to this, small and medium scale newspapers will get grants for publication of Government programmes. This will help Urdu newspapers, which do not get private advertisement for running a newspaper.
- ❖ The Government of India is planning Primary and Secondary schools in the pattern of Navodaya and Kendriya Vidyalaya. A few states like Andhra Pradesh are also starting residential schools.
- ❖ Government officials in states like Uttar Pradesh have taken keen interest in learning Urdu. This group mainly consisted of non-Muslim, non-Urdu knowing community.
- ❖ Urdu has gained an important place in five popular languages of Europe. Moreover, this is the second most popularly spoken language of Britain.
- ❖ Urdu is popularly accepted by the Television and Film making community, where actors playing different character consider it useful to learn Urdu. The singers master this language. Most of the songs in films and serials are purely written in Urdu.
- ❖ Urdu has gained popularity through its Ghazals and poetry, which is very well accepted by most of the people.
- One of the authors of this article has been a pioneer in the preparation of radio lessons in Urdu medium for primary schools. He was also permitted by the Karnataka State to initiate

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teleconferencing in Urdu for the first time in India. The proposals for video lessons initiated under 'Edusat' for schools also had provision of Urdu programmes. Such, efforts are required at the highest level for promotion of the language and medium.

- Recently an International Urdu Conference was held in Jeddah on 3-4 June 2008, which has emphasized the opening of Urdu-learning centres and schools in new Urdu colonies at different parts of the world.
- ❖ The Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad has taken initiative to start television broadcasts of content-based lessons for all of its distance mode programmes to cater to the needs of the distance education learners.

The Benefits That Flow Through the Constitution of India

The above efforts of the government and non-government agencies are secured through the Constitution of India, which calls for provisions for education, etc. for the linguistic and religious minorities. These include the Cultural and Educational Rights, which are as under:

Articles 29 - 1 Language, Script and Cultural

- 2 Admission in public institution of irrespective of caste and creed.

Article 30 - Starting of own independent educational institutions

Article 350 - Provision of primary education in mother tongue

The above rights for linguistic minorities, in the case of Urdu speaking minorities indicate that the Urdu language can retain its script and culture, Urdu-speaking minority can seek admission in any public institution, they can start their own educational institutions and also seek primary education in mother tongue. Hence, to look into need and prospectus of Urdu, a committee was constituted (1972), which is also known as Gujral Committee.

Karnataka and Maharashtra are examples of better provisions of Urdu Medium schools at the elementary levels; they also offer opportunities to study in English stream concurrently. According to the 2001 census there are 6.5 million Muslims in Karnataka comprising 12% of the population and Muslim children aged 6-14 year were about 0.2 millions in 2004, comprising of all children in this age group. About 70% of Muslim children report Urdu as their mother tongue indicating that Urdu is an important medium of instruction schools of Karnataka. 77% of institutions that impart primary level education in a minority language are of Urdu medium. Interestingly greater proportions of girls are enrolled in Urdu-medium schools. In view of a large number of children with Urdu as their mother tongue Urdu should be taught, as an elective subject up till graduation.

Some Advice from Leaders

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For the progress of Urdu, the former Prime Minister Mr. Indar Kumar Gujral said, "If the Urdu Institutions and Academies are really interested in promotion of Urdu then they may take a decision that none of the Individual, whose mother tongue is Urdu be kept illiterate".

The former Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajapai says, "Hindi also gets benefit from the promotion of Urdu, and Hindi will become more meaningful".

Shrinking Readership

Concerns have been expressed over the shrinking readership of Urdu. The Delhi Urdu Academy is exploring ways to popularise the language through distant education programme. The Academy functionaries held interaction with prominent educationists to seek their opinions on the benefits of the distant education programme, which had helped to remove illiteracy in the country to a great extend. The Academy has also introduced certificate and diploma courses. Various Urdu Coaching Centres have been set up in the National Capital, Delhi for the propagation of the language.

These are some of the steps taken to include Urdu language in the mainstream life of India, to give a right place to Urdu. If we all try, with full efforts and enthusiasm, and do justice with the language, then, not only Urdu can get its rightful place, but it will also integrate the society at large. Thus, to include the sizable population speaking Urdu into the mainstream, opportunity should be given to them to understand the nation in their own language. Prosperity of the language does not mar the progress of the nation, whereas it enhances the growth of India.

To Conclude

Here are a few suggestions for improving the status of Urdu. The first step is to increase the scope of the language in Teaching-Learning. One need not depend or wait for the opening of Government-run Urdu Medium Schools only. Those who have a command of Urdu can start teaching it in their neighbourhood. For imparting Urdu language to the children, schools alone are not fully responsible. Parents themselves must take the initiative to teach their children. It is the Urdu-knowing community, which has to take keen interest in the development, sustenance and progress of the language.

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