

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 11 : 11 November 2011

ISSN 1930-2940

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Urdu Education at the School Level in Kerala Since Independence

Hashim.M.H

Urdu Entry in Kerala

Kerala in the southern part of India is home for people professing various faiths, such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Jews; all of them use Malayalam in day to day transactions. Newspapers are published in this language for one and all. Urdu is on its way to become popular among sections of people in this state. Years ago Kerala comprised three regions – Malabar, Cochin and Travancore which had Malayam as the regional language. Urdu made its inroads in Kerala from the coastal area of Malabar. In the sixteenth century, Bijapuri ruler of the Adilshahi dynasty sent forces to stop the Portuguese intruders in order to help the local Samutiri Raja. These soldiers settled in Calicut after the end of the hostilities. They used Urdu as their mother tongue. Thus Urdu got an entry in the Malayalam lexicon. This is how Urdu got gradually established in Kerala.

Early Teaching of Urdu in Limited Schools

After independence, Urdu teaching at the school level remained confined to a few schools. In J.D.T. Islam High School in Calicut; B.E.M. High school, Mubark High School, St. Joseph High School in Thalassery; Haji Isa Haji Musa High School in Cochin and Hindustani School in Kasargod provided Urdu teaching. Connore's Municipal High School also provided Urdu Teaching. However, with the sudden death of Urdu teacher

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Abubakr Munshi Fazil, it came to an abrupt stop (into Hindi) because in the entire state there was not a single teacher holding a certificate to teach the language. The Kasargod High School too witnessed a similar situation with the expiry of Urdu teacher's tenure.

Move to Popularize Urdu in Kerala

To popularize Urdu learning at the school level, Syed Mohammed Sarwar Valapatanam Abdulla, Ishaque Mohammed Faqir, and other eminent persons worked hard and led movement for the propagation and promotion of Urdu. In 1958, Sarwar Saheb and his colleagues established Arjuman Taraqui Isha'at (publications). In 1962 Valapatanam Abdulla founded Urdu Prachar Sabha. In 1970 Ishaque Mohammed Faqir revived Anjuman Islahul Lisan. In 1972 K.T.C. Beeran established Urdu Prachar Samiti. All these organizations formed a common front and urged the government to popularize Urdu and continued the movement to ensure the introduction of Urdu in school syllabus.

Positive Steps to Teach Urdu after 1968 Elections

When the government was formed after elections in 1968, Muslim League was also a constituent of the government. Two members, Ahmed Kurikal and C.H. Mohammed Koya, joined the cabinet. Syed Mohammed Sarwar was quite close to Ahmed Kurikal. After Ahmed Kurikal's assumption of office as minister, S.M. Sarwar Saheb went to Thiruvananthapuram and persuaded him to promote teaching of Urdu.

Ahmed Kurikal and C.H. Mohammed Koya, both gave the request a serious consideration and announced a test for Urdu at the lower and higher levels in schools, and a government order was issued. A committee was also constituted for overseeing the implementation.

The ministry developed a set up for conducting the examination. In this syllabus formation committee, Sarwar Saheb himself along with Shakir Saheb of Brannen College, and Mohammed Ibrahim of Farooq College were the members. Thus the examination for Urdu lower and higher came into being. Quite a good number of young persons took the examination and were declared successful.

Framing Syllabus

The Movement for introducing Urdu in school syllabus continued which resulted, in course of time, teaching of Urdu in many government and semi-government (aided) schools from 1972-73. There was provision for appointment of an Urdu teacher if there were more than 50 students upto 5th standard opting for it as a subject. Later on this requirement was reduced to 30 students, thus providing more opportunities to teach Urdu and to employ more Urdu teachers. At the present moment only 12 students opting to learn Urdu are needed for the appointment of an Urdu teacher in a school. The Urdu teachers are paid salary at the same rate of pay scale for the other subject teachers who are selected through public service commission.

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Teachers Association and Background of Teachers of Urdu

“Kerala Urdu Teachers Association” came into existence by untiring efforts of Syed Mohammed Sarwar, Ishaq Mohammed Faqirs and K.T.C. Beeran to help solve problems of Urdu teachers since with the promotion of Urdu at the school level several new problems were also experienced.

Not only students but also the teachers whose mother tongue was Urdu began encountering difficulties. Translation from any language, to a considerable extent, affects the final performance and quite often the meaning also gets changed. This was a great hurdle in teaching Urdu to Malayali students. For example, in order to express something pleasant, an Urdu speaker would say, “come on, for this we shall have a cup of tea (or sherbat) or have some sweet”. But for a Malayali speaker it would imply “Buy me some tea” or “Buy me some sweets.” Those unaware of nuances in using Urdu language used to translate the Malayali expression quite literally and thus the message used to get distorted.

Imported Textbooks from Neighboring States

When Urdu was introduced in the school syllabus, there was no Urdu text book designed by the state boards (of examination). Hence, Kerala relied on text books from Andhra Pradesh or from Tamil Nadu. The books prescribed in Andhra or Tamil Nadu from standard first to fifth were followed in Kerala from fifth to tenth standard. This also used to create a lot of problems for the teachers as well as for the students because the text books were meant for pupils whose mother tongue was Urdu. 1980 onwards the textbooks for Urdu prepared met the needs of students and teachers.

The irony was that there was no Urdu linguist in Kerala to guide the project, hence experts from other states were invited to help. Kerala text books in Urdu for the first time were prepared under the guidance of Andhra Urdu Academy. After 1985 text books are revised after every five years. This is a responsibility assigned to the SCERT which earlier was called S.I.E (State Institutes of Education). Under the supervision of Urdu research officer of SCERT, experts and teachers were selected and workshops were organized. With continuous interactions and discussions during the workshops, textbooks were drafted.

Keeping in view the cultural requirements, harmony and amity, problems relating to the selection of content, etc., were solved to some extent and difficulties got reduced. However, mere preparation of textbooks was not enough. How to get the lessons and textbooks practically introduced in the classroom remained.

Involvement of SCERT and DPI Offices

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For this also SCERT and DPI (Director of Public Instruction) introduced in service-programmes for the teachers. The strategy adopted in these courses was to teach the text to non-Urdu pupils. Such teacher training courses proved extremely beneficial to teachers and to a great extent the teachers suffering from inferiority complex, because of their non-Urdu background, developed self-confidence.

At the present moment, teaching of Urdu at the school level has taken deep roots. In Kerala schools (from standard one to ten) Urdu is being taught. Urdu as the first language is being taught at the primary level in one school, at the upper primary level in 1261 schools and at the high school level in 377 schools. The number of schools catering to standards from primary till high school stands at 184 schools. Except the districts of Tiruvananthapuram and Pathanamthitta, twelve other districts impart Urdu teaching at the school level. The maximum number of Urdu scholars are enrolled in Calicut and Malappuram. In the entire state, students learning Urdu from Class V to X total 110186 with 1637 Urdu teachers. In addition, there are 100 teachers who work on temporary basis. Among the Urdu teachers 40% are non-Muslims.

District-wise Distribution of Urdu Teaching in Kerala

A district-wise statistical analysis is as follows:

Trivandrum:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	896
Schools providing Urdu teaching	:	Nil

Kollam:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	861
Upper primary school	:	11
High School	:	02
(including two high schools from Upper primary)		
total number or students		358
No. of Urdu teachers		11

Pathanamthitta:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	696
Facility of Urdu teaching	:	Nil

Alappuzha:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	722
School providing Urdu teaching	:	003
Schools at Upper primary level		001
Schools at High school level	:	002
(teaching Urdu)		
(including one mentioned above)		
Total No. of students		102

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Total No. of Urdu teachers		003
Kottayam:		
Total number of schools (I – X)	:	857
School providing Urdu teaching	:	006
Upper primary level schools	:	005
High school level		001
(Including one of Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		386
No. of Urdu Teachers		006.
Idukki:		
Total number of schools (I – X)	:	453
School providing Urdu teaching	:	002
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		002
No. of Urdu students		078
No. of Urdu Teachers		002
Ernakulam:		
Total number of schools (I – X)	:	910
School providing Urdu teaching	:	008
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		006
High school level		002
(Including one of Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		468
No. of Urdu Teachers		008
Trissur:		
Total number of schools (I – X)	:	925
School providing Urdu teaching	:	143
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		111
High school level		045
(Including 11 teaching of Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		3624
No. of Urdu Teachers		155
Palakkad:		
Total number of schools (I – X)	:	903
School providing Urdu teaching	:	194
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		158
High school level		043
(Including 5 Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		8143
No. of Urdu Teachers		201

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Malappuram:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	1328
School providing Urdu teaching	:	468
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		346
High school level		138
(Including 24 Upper primary schools)		
No. of Urdu students		56236
No. of Urdu Teachers		483

Kozhikkode:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	1198
School providing Urdu teaching	:	280
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		223
High school level		064
(Including 12 Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		14563
No. of Urdu Teachers		287

Wynad:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	272
School providing Urdu teaching	:	072
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		061
High school level		014
(Including 5 Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		4342
No. of Urdu Teachers		75

Kannoor:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	1240
School providing Urdu teaching	:	316
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		277
High school level		053
(Including 14 Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		16726
No. of Urdu Teachers		330

Kasargod:

Total number of schools (I – X)	:	507
School providing Urdu teaching	:	074
Upper primary level schools(for Urdu teaching)		062
Primary level school		001
High school level		013
(Including 7 Upper primary level)		
No. of Urdu students		5164
No. of Teachers		76

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Kerala has a total of 531 private and non-aided schools, among which eight schools impart teaching in Urdu. In such private schools, teachers are paid salary from the management fund (as no government contribution is provided).

Lack of Environment to Practise Urdu Outside the Classroom

In order to help teachers in teaching Urdu, the state SCERT has produced a Teacher's Hand Book which helps in solving the problem partially. However, what Kerala lacks is the environment. If training for Urdu teachers in Kerala is specifically arranged, it would, to a great extent, help in facilitating Urdu teaching. In spite of a lack of outside-classroom environment to use Urdu, better teaching strategy and techniques will be of great help. It would be a great boost to learning if mushaira quawwali and ghazal programmes are held frequently.

Shortage of Urdu newspapers is a disadvantage to the teachers as well as the students. The quarterly journal published by Kerala Urdu Teachers Association "Urdu Bulletin" is 70% in Malayalam and only 30% in Urdu. Urdu Research Officer of SCERT supervises the production of Urdu literary articles under the training course which also proves quite useful for the teachers. But these cover a very limited range. The prevailing problems can be solved to a great extent if an Urdu Academy is established in Kerala. In this matter the government of Kerala has begun to take some initiatives in this direction.

Committee Report

Kerala Education Minister E.T. Mohammed Basheer, in consultation with the representatives of Kerala Urdu Teachers Association and office bearers of Anjuman Tarque Urdu, have constituted a three-member task force consisting of R. M. Sulaiman Moulavi, N. Muhiuddin Kutty and T. Mohammed to submit a report to the government about the Academy. The three member committee has already submitted the report to the government.

Along with Kerala Urdu Teachers Association, Anjuman-e-Taraqqi Urdu are simultaneously working together to propagate and promote Urdu.

Seminars, Workshops, etc.

Kerala Urdu Teachers Association has been organizing seminars, workshops, refresher courses for helping the teachers under the patronage of Anjuman-e-taraqqi Urdu in co-ordination with the State Council for Education and Training, directorate of public instruction, National Council for Promotion of Urdu, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Centre for Urdu Teaching and Research, University Grants Commission and similar organizations. This has proved beneficial to the teachers to a great extent. If these institutions conduct and organize more literary and academic programmes, these will

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undoubtedly benefit the teachers immensely but shall also be extremely useful for the students as they would be highly motivated to learn.

Sources

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