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## Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the role of the various overt and covert dimensions, which have led to the emergence and acceptance of a non-native language (Urdu) in defining community identities among the members of Kashmiri speech community in the Kashmir region of India.

The paper based on quantitative and qualitative techniques is part of a larger effort, which was aimed at studying the linguistic assertions of community identities in the multilingual context of the Kashmir region.

Urdu was nobody's first language in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and yet it has come to represent the state on the linguistic map of India. It is the official language of the state, and acts as the *lingua franca* for the three culturally diverse regions of the state.

Within the region of Kashmir, the language functions as the prestige norm. Urdu is the medium of instruction in the government schools, and is learnt as the first language under the three-language formula of the Indian Union. It occupies the central space in print and broadcast media; education, religious and political discourses, the legislature and the judiciary, and can even boast of an indigenous literary tradition. The Kashmiri speaking community in Kashmir reports Urdu as one of the languages in its repertoire, and language choices with respect to Urdu and Kashmiri reflect a sharp functional separation comparable to the English/regional language divide in many regions of the country. Attitudes to Urdu across the community reflect accommodation and acceptance. In the context of the separatist

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

movement, Urdu has acquired another dimension: it is perceived as the symbol of the sub-continental pan-Islamic identity.

This paper examines the various factors by providing an account for the probable dimensions responsible for creating persuasive space for the acceptance and the maintenance of (non-native) Urdu—not only as the language of masses but also as the state official language—devoid of any resistance.

## 1. Introduction

Urdu is the mother tongue of sixty million Indians (2001 census). It is also a national language of Pakistan. It also functions as an identity symbol of Indian Muslims. It is associated with Islam and the Muslims in South Asia. This association is a result of the British colonial rule that replaced Persian, the official language of the Mughal rule, with Urdu at lower and English at higher level, particularly, in North India. Urdu is one of the languages recognised in the 1950 by the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

As far as the religious and the linguistic significance of the Muslim religion is concerned, Urdu is not as sacred as Arabic, despite the fact that it has also a number of Arabic loanwords. Nevertheless, it has borrowed large number of lexical items from Persian and some Turkish origins; it is a derivative of *Hindvi* (also called early Urdu), the parent of both modern Hindi and Urdu. It originated as a new common language of Delhi, which has been called *Hindavi* or *Dahlavi* by Amir Khusrau. (Amir Khusrau Dehlavi (1253-1325 AD), a prolific classical poet, was associated with the royal courts of more than seven rulers of Delhi Sultanate. Hundreds of playful riddles, songs, and legends were attributed to him. Through his enormous literary output and the legendary folk personality, Khusrau represents one of the first (recorded) Indian personages with a true multi-cultural or pluralistic identity.)

After the advent of the Mughals on the stage of Indian history, the *Hindavi* language enjoyed greater acceptance and space. The Persian words and phrases came into vogue freely. The *Hindavi* of that period was known as the *Rekhta*, or the Hindustani and later as Urdu. The name Urdu seems to have been used first time around (1780), before that it was called *Rekhta*.

Amity and tolerance between the Hindus and the Muslims tended to foster the *Rekhta* or Urdu, which represented the principle of “unity in diversity,” so marked a feature of Indian life at its best.

The ordinary spoken version (bazaar Urdu) was almost identical with the popularly spoken Hindi. Most of the prominent scholars in India hold the view that Urdu is neither a Muslim nor a Hindu language; it is an outcome of a multicultural and a multi-religious encounter.

## 2. Urdu in Kashmir

With the advent of Islam and the Muslims in the Kashmir valley, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian languages also came along, but the encounter of Urdu in Kashmir has a unique

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

historical background. Urdu did not encounter resistance from the inhabitants of Kashmir. However, the Urdu language and associated culture encountered several issues in Kashmir, as discussed below in this paper.

More specifically, Urdu played a neutral role of not being a native language among the three geolinguistically different regions, Kashmir, Ladakh and Jammu, with Kashmiri, Ladakhi and Dogri as the primary languages of the regions respectively. In addition to other factors, religious-affinity was one of the significant factors, which made the ingress and acceptance of Urdu among the Kashmiri speech community confrontation free.

During the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there was enormous increase in religious writings in Urdu within the sub-continent. Urdu emerged as a language of Islamic revivalism. A journalist from Delhi, Maulana Maududi (1903-1979), wrote various religious books and interpretation of various Arabic scriptures in accessible Urdu. He wrote in easily comprehensible Urdu rather than the Arabic-laden jargon of *molvis*. His writings (in terms of language) were the main source of religious literature that arrived in Kashmir, and influenced the people deeply. Furthermore, Urdu was a link language between Maharaja Pratap Singh and the Britishers. He recognised Urdu as the state official language in 1889.

During the linguistic reorganisation of the Indian states in 1956, Urdu continued to be the state official language of Kashmir, ironically, the only state in India where a non-native language is the official language.

Farouqui's (2006) discussion shows that how Urdu in India has become largely confined to the Muslim minority educational institutions and *madrassas* (Muslim religious schools), which mostly accommodated the backward and the poor Muslims. However, in Kashmir, Urdu is being associated with social prestige, and is perceived as means of upward economic and social mobility. In North India, Urdu and modernity first became social forces to reckon with in the Muslim culture and identity.

Nevertheless, in case of Kashmir, it depicts a different picture, where it was promoted by the socio-economically upper sections of the society, and where Muslim middle class adopted it as a path and tool for socio-economic mobility, growth and as a symbol of prestige. During the early stages of the development of Urdu in Kashmir, it was embraced by educated upper middle class who could afford to send their children to Urdu medium educational institutes, and could talk to their children in Urdu even in their homes, as a symbol of prestige.

### **3. Language Interference**

In language contact situations, there is always interference from L1 (first language) to L2 (second language/s) or the other varieties. Analogous situation appears in the Kashmiri-Urdu language contact situation. Because of mother tongue or L1 interference, the pronunciation, accent, and intonation of some Kashmiris speaking Urdu (as L2), do not wholly resemble the Urdu variety spoken by people of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and other Urdu speaking zones. Even highly qualified people in the state who have learned Urdu as L2 make mistakes while speaking Urdu.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

Kashmir had various rulers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, in the past, the people of Kashmir never accepted the languages of the rulers. The interesting question is: why are they assigning a different role for Kashmiri while they extend their favour and preference for Urdu now? There is no overt force on them from any quarter to use Urdu as it was the case with some other languages like Persian.

This paper seeks to provide an answer to this question by describing the factors responsible for the acceptance and maintenance of Urdu among the Kashmiri speech community.

#### **4. Urdu Discourses in Kashmir: Major Factors of Acceptance**

The question to be asked is how Urdu became the official language of the diverse, plural, multicultural, and multi-religious state like Jammu and Kashmir. It is an implicit fact that for Pakistan, Urdu is the symbol of Islamic identity and is somehow linguistically similar to Punjabi, Pahari, and Dogri, hence, the people of these geolinguistic expanses seem to have accepted Urdu without much reservation. However, Urdu is structurally, genealogically, culturally and linguistically different from Kashmiri. In spite of that, there was no resistance to Urdu, and it was easily endorsed by the masses of the state. As a matter of fact, there are many social, political, cultural, and religious factors for the recognition and acceptance of Urdu in Kashmir as a language of masses in general and official language in particular.

Persian prevailed in Kashmir for a quite long time; consequently, it had an immense impact on the socio-cultural psyche of the people. Following the downfall of the Mughal rule in Kashmir, Persian started losing its hold, which created a vacuum in the literary and socio-cultural spaces. Urdu was perceived to be the only language to compensate for this lacuna, because of its cultural and linguistic proximity vis-à-vis Persian.

In other words, following Sanskrit and Persian, only Urdu attested to be the source of literary accomplishment of the people of the State. During the regime of the Dogra rulers, Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh, Persian served as the state official language. However, Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1889, declared Urdu as the state official language. It is perceived as the golden period for the growth and establishment of Urdu, as it was already flourishing in other parts of the India with greater acceptance. By the time Urdu got the privilege of being on the official linguistic map of the state, its usage had already been extended to schools, government offices, and judiciary of the state.

#### **5. Religious and Cultural Dimensions**

There has always been a strong correlation and nexus between religious discourses and language/s religions employ. From the cultural and the religious perspectives, Persian was perceived to be more associated with the Muslim dominated population and culture. The presence of Persian speaking people and Kashmiri-Persian language contact situation lasted for almost six hundred years. When Urdu became the medium of religious awareness and moral education among the masses, Urdu got considerable recognition among the Kashmiris. Nevertheless, it could not replace Kashmiri as their mother tongue.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

When Persian started downswing from the linguistic space of the state, the only accessible culturally and religiously close language, the Kashmiris could have thought of and affiliated with, was Urdu. Urdu encountered Kashmir with religious sentiments; a significant amount of literature (including religious) was published, printed and reprinted in Urdu. Urdu started establishing its space in *madrassas* (religious seminaries) and *maktabs* (part time religious schools) and replaced Persian, since very few people in Kashmir were able to read/understand Arabic—the language of the Holy Qur'an. Thus, Urdu translations and interpretations of the Holy Qur'an, *Islami Fikha* (Islamic jurisprudence or Islamic law extracted from detailed Islamic sources) and other important Islamic literature, which had not reached the Kashmiris' earlier, were made available through Urdu, which could be comprehended with ease.

While Persian and Arabic were available to only those who had formal education, Urdu as a language of common parlance across North India became more accessible to all, especially at the spoken level. This practice succeeded to construct associate religious sentiment with Urdu, which proved to be rewarding for its acceptance and subsistence.

Religious movements played significant role in encouraging the growth and development of Urdu in Kashmir. Both the Muslim and Christian missionaries used Urdu as a tool to achieve their goals and expand their projects. In this context, the *madrassa* education played an essential role for the promotion of Urdu, as *madrassas* wholly employed Urdu as the medium of education and instruction. Similarly, the Christian missionaries also began with Urdu medium schools. Swami Dyanand's Arya Samaj movement used Urdu as a medium to popularise the movement. Besides all these efforts, Urdu in Kashmir also enjoyed the support of the writings and poetry of famous writers from the subcontinent like Mirza Ghalib, Allama Iqbal, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and Mir Taki Mir. Their writings deeply influenced the psyche of the Kashmiri people. Interestingly, Urdu was flourishing in other parts of India also; Urdu patriotic poetry and writings played a significant role in India's freedom movement from the British. Urdu acted as a unifying force among the people of different faiths and cultures. This indeed created an accommodating environment for the maintenance of Urdu in the Kashmir valley.

Furthermore, many *Imams* (religious preachers, who lead in the prayers and memorise the Holy Qur'an) were well-conversant in Urdu, and employed 'pure' Urdu for preaching and Islamic teachings. These Imams have been employed from other parts of India, particularly the northern India. This definitely had overtly or covertly supported the acceptance of Urdu in Kashmir inculcating a religious sentiment.

Islam accords great importance to written texts/scriptures. For Muslims, the language of religion acquires special significance. For example, the Holy Qur'an must be recited only in its original tongue to maintain the sacredness of its contents. While Arabic and Urdu cannot be treated as equal based on the functions they are called upon to perform in Islam, the use of Urdu for centuries to expound Islamic tenets has led Muslims to highly value Urdu as the language of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. Richness of the Islamic heritage and content in Urdu, the ease with which common people could understand it in northern India and the status of a lingua franca bestowed upon Urdu/Hindustani by both Mughal and British

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

rulers, and ultimately its recognition as the official language of Kashmir by the Maharaja, all added to the emergence of Urdu as the preferred medium of religion and education in Kashmir. Urdu became a symbol and part of religious identity.

In Kashmir, as far as religious discourses are concerned, Urdu entirely dominates in praying and conceptualising the religious scriptures. The people associate the religious identity with the Urdu language, as one Kashmiri scholar, M. M. Shah (2009), mentions that “our identity—religious-intellectual identity—is linked not only to Kashmiri but to Urdu as well”.

The additional affinity of Islam with Urdu happens to come also from the script similarity with the Arabic language. Thus, it is being considered as sacred as Arabic and is symbolically associated with the Muslim culture and identity.

More significantly, in the South Asian region, there has always been a nexus between language and religion. Religious discourses, as discussed earlier, overtly or covertly, have supported Urdu by providing the translation of all the major Islamic texts including the Holy Qur’an. Most people in Kashmir, like in other parts of South Asia, are unable to understand the original Arabic texts. Therefore, they use Urdu translations and interpretations to understand them. This ultimately has created a space of religious affiliation for the Urdu language.

Urdu is also seen as a pan-Islamic identity within the subcontinent. Walter Lawrence (2004) pointed out that there was a time when the preachers of the famous *Jamia Masjid* in Srinagar (grand mosque) never spoke in any language but Kashmiri. Nevertheless, in recent times, most preachers deliver their speeches in Urdu in the same mosque.

There may be two reasons for such a language choice. Firstly, to make sure that the message reaches to wider audiences including the political circles in New Delhi and Islamabad through national and international news circles. Secondly, the speakers may presume that all the people present in the mosque know/understand Urdu language. Thus, the careful language choice makes it possible to communicate a single message via common code for diverse audiences. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the strong affiliation of Urdu with the religious ideology has played a prominent role in the acceptance of Urdu language in Kashmir.

## **6. Role of the Political Discourses**

The Kashmiri people started travelling for various purposes to other parts/states of India and adopted Urdu as a link language to communicate with the people of the country, specifically, in north India. Urdu discourses extended from revenue offices and legislature and made its space in almost every important sphere of life like educational, literary, media, religious and cultural discourses. Moreover, most of the administrative officers of early period in Kashmir were non-Kashmiris, and were well-read Urdu scholars and writers. They started interacting with common masses in Urdu, which consequently had a great influence on the people. Interestingly, Urdu is still used in judiciary, revenue records, *Nikah Namah* (Nikah or marriage is a solemn and sacred social contract (in a written form) between bride

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

and groom) invitation cards, police records, business, and journalism. The Urdu language maintained the order of formal discourse in administration and government meetings. Court and legislature use Urdu for the pleading and proceedings of the cases.

One of the reasons why Urdu was embraced and why it attained a strong hold is that Urdu imparted political consciousness among the masses. It became the voice of the common masses, raised through various newspapers. Newspapers were very cheap and affordable for the common masses. Sheikh Abdullah, (an important political figure, and the then Prime Minister, and later, the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir State) employed Urdu poetry to create socio-cultural and political consciousness among the masses. He inaugurated a library in June 1931, and subscribed several Urdu newspapers, journals, periodicals and other literary material. It not only served as a centre for the political consciousness but also a nerve centre for the awareness for the importance and nuances of Urdu language.

In 1940, Molvi Abdul Haq, a renowned Urdu scholar, visited Jammu and delivered an exciting lecture in favour of Urdu, which resulted in the establishment of the first branch of *Anjuman Tahreeki Urdu* (Hind), (Society for the Promotion of Urdu) in Jammu and Kashmir. In the same year 1940, the government asked the then chairperson of education, Khwaja Ghulam Syideen, to prepare a linguistic report of the state education system. In the report, he acknowledged that:

Urdu is a medium of education from first to M.A. It is true that Urdu is not the native language of the most of the Kashmiris, but it is close to Dogri, Ladakhi, and Punjabi and to some extent, it resembles Pahari and Gojri also. Therefore, it should not be a problem even for the students who do not know the Urdu language (Sarwari 2:25).

In the same year (1940), the government implemented *Aasan Urdu* (easy Urdu) to teach in Nagri and Persian scripts in the government schools. The objective of the implementation of the two scripts was to exercise them as a unifying force and conciliation factor for both the Urdu and the Hindi speakers.

Sarwari (1993) notes that on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1941, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in a public speech mentioned that his party (the National Conference) believes that “Urdu is the language adopted by the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir that would fulfil the educational and constitutional needs in the coming years. This language is accomplished for the growth and development of the people” (2:27). Hence, the National Conference decided to continue with Urdu as the state official language. However, post-1947, the Kashmiris sensed threat to their national and linguistic identity. To preserve their distinct identity, they employed the instrument of the Kashmiri language. Nevertheless, Urdu had already pervaded in the linguistic space of Kashmir, and established as the language of trade, judiciary, revenue, and media discourses. As Taseer (1973) explains, the National Conference, the major political party of that phase raised the slogan of *Nayaa Kashmir* (New Kashmir) in their manifesto, promising that Urdu would continue to be the state official language. This historical manuscript of National Conference, *Nayaa Kashmir: Seyasi Aayeen aur Aktisadi Mansooba*, (New Kashmir: Constitutional and Political Manifesto) was based on fifty Articles concerning the issues of the management of the state, in general, and law and order,

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

political, socio-cultural, and economic development of the state, in particular. The Article 28 deals with the development and enrichment of literature and languages of the state. The Article emphasises that national languages of the state would be Kashmiri, Dogri, Dardi, Baltistani, Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi. Urdu would have the status of an “international language” in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This encouragement at the political front, proved to be a significant approval for the sustenance of Urdu.

The assertion of Urdu as the state official language could be its nonaligned role as compared to the other languages spoken in the state. For instance, had the Maharaja or the succeeding regimes introduced Ladakhi, Dogri, or Kashmiri as the state official language/s, every other group might have objected to it. Since Urdu was nobody’s mother tongue, it was the only “best available neutral alternative” to unite the people of different geolinguistic zones speaking diverse mother tongues, holding different cultures and faiths. Although, the Maharaja himself was a native speaker of Dogri, he could not formulate it as the state official language, being aware of the prestige and power of Urdu, and the linguistic and cultural diversity of the state. Thus, Urdu was easily incorporated in the repertoire of the people. Keeping the diverse nature of state in mind, Urdu was designated the status of link and the state official language. Besides, people from all the three regions, that is, Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh had been conversant with Urdu and felt closer to it. The Kashmiri Hindus and the Muslims had been writing and speaking Persian since the era of the Shahmiri Sultans. The similarity of script, homogenous alphabets, grammar, and a great treasure of vocabulary absorbed in Urdu made it more acceptable to Dogra rulers than the Punjabi or Dogri languages. The state’s practical association with Urdu, therefore, became imperative.

Nevertheless, the significant issue one would like to argue is that why Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the successive regimes and the Indian state even after 1956 (linguistic reorganisation states) continued with Urdu as the state official language. The most probable reason could be that it had already been recognised, accepted, and adopted by the people of all the three major regions of the state, and had occupied enough space in the psyche of the masses. Moreover, its attachment with the religious sentiments of the Muslim-majority of Kashmir was significantly adequate for its maintenance. Thus, had the then Government replaced it with Kashmiri, the people of the other two regions might not have accepted it so easily. Similarly, had they introduced Dogri and Ladakhi or Pahari, any of them might not have been accepted by the Muslim majority Kashmiri speaking people and/or the people of the other regions. Moreover, Urdu was the only language that was able to operate as a lingua franca with the other regions of the state, the country and the subcontinent.

In the year 2008, the state government advertised the posts of revenue officials where the knowledge of Urdu was the main criteria for the job. In the assembly elections of 2008, National Conference, the leading political party, in its manifesto mentioned that they would promote Urdu. In the same way, another political party, the Indian National Congress, published its manifesto in Urdu. According to the state Congress Party president Prof. Saifudin Soz (2008) with and NDTV interview, “people enjoyed reading it in Urdu.” Moreover, in the legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir most of the members took oath in Urdu. All the court proceedings, revenue and police records employ Urdu as a medium of communication. Thus, the political discourses proved to be a great cause for the emergence and provisions of Urdu discourses in Kashmir.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir



## 7. Urdu and the Separatist Movement

The historical link of language with identity and with nation, according to John Edwards (1985) is, in large part, a product of the German Romanticism of the late Eighteenth and the early Nineteenth Centuries. Emphasising the nature of the relationship between language and national identity, he avers that nations are really language groups, and thus nationalism is a linguistic movement. His discussion further offers an explanation to the fact that how the Germans were considering “themselves and their nation superior” than others because of “the power of the German language, which they think, was superior to other languages” like French and Latin (25-26). It is being contended that language is associated with the “soul” or the “spirit” of the nationality.

The two decades old separatist movement has also overtly or covertly nurtured and flourished the use of Urdu in Kashmir. Firstly, the separatist movement and its ideological, cultural, and religious constructs of Kashmir and its people have further weakened the case for support and promotion of the Kashmiri language as an exponent of *Kashmiriyat*. All the printed material related to the movement, the constitution, proceedings of the meetings, press releases, notifications, pamphlets, banners, slogans, names of the organisations, speeches in public places and mosques were entirely in Urdu. One of the separatist leaders clearly announced in a public meeting: “Urdu is our language, it is our identity and Urdu is our future.” However, the conclusion which can be drawn from the interviews with some separatist leaders is that they are not very clear almost what would be the language policy of the (imaginary) independent Kashmir vis-à-vis the Punjab separatist movement which was having a clear language policy of promoting Punjabi language in the Gurmukhi script.

Secondly, the movement brought almost six lakh (six hundred thousand) security forces to Kashmir, who mostly communicate with all the Kashmiris in Hindi/Hindustani, which is mutually intelligible with Urdu. Present in the remote rural settings, the security forces communicate even with the older and illiterate people in Hindustani/Urdu who try to reply in broken Urdu/Hindustani. In this exercise, several people (for example, the shopkeepers) who were constantly interacting with the security forces have learned spoken Hindustani/Urdu. In this way, the separatist movement implicitly or explicitly have supported the sustenance of Urdu discourses in Kashmir further. In other words, while emphasis is on Kashmir in the ideology of separatism, the only discourse that flourishes is Urdu language.

## 8. Role of the Media Discourses

One more important factor for the flourishing of the Urdu language in Kashmir is the media, specifically the Urdu press. Presently, besides Srinagar and Jammu cities, various Urdu dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies, journals and periodicals are being published in every town of the State. Urdu journalism and media impact changing the proper names, place names, kinship-calling from Kashmiri to Urdu root words in the Kashmiri speech community. Urdu press is flourishing in Kashmir, with wider readership. Interestingly, even the English dailies (like Greater Kashmir) publish some content, specifically advertisements and notifications, in Urdu also. Within the media discourses, the most popular cable television networks (e.g., Star Plus, Colors, Zee TV) play an imperative

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

role. The much-celebrated family television serials e.g., *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* meaning “because a mother-in-law was once a daughter-in-law” telecast on the most-watched television channel Star Plus are watched even by the womenfolk of remote areas who hardly have seen a book or gone to school in their childhood. Besides, the songs sung and the language used in the world’s second largest film industry, the Bollywood, also play a crucial role at least in the learning and the conceptualisation of the Urdu/Hindustani songs. It is interesting to note that people in Kashmir can easily comprehend the language (Hindustani) employed in the Bollywood Hindi movies and may take them as Urdu movies, because both the languages are mutually intelligible. Similar is the case with serials telecast over cable television networks like STAR Plus, Sony Entertainment Network, and Zee TV Channels.

It is complex for the common masses to differentiate between the Hindi-Urdu lexicon and the sentence structure, which, of course, is very much alike. Most of the people in the valley are able to read and write Urdu, which helps expand the circle of Urdu readership. Very few people are able to read or write Kashmiri and the availability of the literary material in Kashmiri is almost negligible. Media is interestingly emerging as a new context for the acquisition of Urdu. However, most of the people are as illiterate in written Hindi as they are in Kashmiri.

In a study by this researcher, the respondents were asked to state their preferences for various programmes broadcast over radio and television. The analysis of the responses showed that Urdu in general dominates such preferences. Due to the prevailing circumstances in the last two decades, people who were keen to know the daily happenings around switched to Urdu news channels broadcast from independent sources like the BBC Urdu and Voice of America. People were of the opinion that the Indian and the Pakistani News channels do not provide objective reporting of the facts and happenings, whereas the BBC Urdu Service and Voice of America provide the factual reporting without any exaggeration, prejudice, and partiality. Surprisingly, the local cable television channels in Kashmir telecast news reporting and programmes in Urdu more than in Kashmiri. Time slots allotted for telecasting the Kashmiri programmes including songs are much less than those for Urdu programmes. It is notable that a good amount of code-mixing (Urdu-Kashmiri) is being employed while broadcasting programmes in Kashmiri. As far as the music and songs are concerned, keeping in mind the rising market for Urdu/Hindi songs, some noted Kashmiri singers have started singing in Urdu/Hindi also.

Radio forms an important mass medium in Kashmir. In this context, the role of Radio Kashmir Srinagar, the important media institution of Kashmir in the development of Kashmiri and literature, cannot be underestimated. It used to broadcast programmes in Kashmiri, which includes songs, news bulletins, and other programmes. However, it also was influenced by the prestige of the Urdu language. For example, during the Muslim holy month of *ramazaan* (month of fasting for the Muslims), the radio Kashmir used to broadcast the religious programmes in Kashmiri during *saheer* (eating before dawn), but it is currently broadcasting such programmes in Urdu.

Among the several channels, the most important one is the *DD Kashir*, a Kashmiri language satellite channel supported by Doordarshan studios in Srinagar, Jammu, and Leh. It was launched in 2003 and it telecasts everything ranging from entertainment serials,

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

infotainment programmes, news, and current affairs, social and cultural programmes, and the movies. In the terrestrial mode, *DD Kashmir* is available to 96 % of the population of the valley. It used to be operated from Delhi, but in the year 2006, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India decided to shift the operations of Doordarshan's *Kashmir* channel back to Srinagar from Delhi after more than seventeen years since the outbreak of the separatist movement in Kashmir in late 1980s. *DD Kashmir* had already become a 24-hour channel from 15 August 2000. Earlier, it used to telecast a fourteen and half hour programme daily. Another four and half-hours are taken by in-house and news/current affairs programmes. The remaining four hours were devoted to the archival programmes daily. The special audience programmes cover Gojri, Pahari, Ladakhi, Dogri, Shina, Balti, Pushtu, Bhadarwahi and Punjabi audiences. The channel telecasts the verses from famous Kashmiri Sufi poets like Sheikh Noor-ud-Deen and Lal Ded, but translates them in Urdu, as most of the people could not comprehend the lexicon employed in these verses. Interestingly, *DD Kashmir*, telecasts Kashmiri-Urdu bilingual serials like *aab dar naav* (water and boat), *lalvin dag* (experiencing pain) where the characters often employ code-switching from Kashmiri to Urdu and vice-versa. More often, the characters wearing old traditional Kashmiri attire communicate in Kashmiri, where as the characters wearing western clothes articulate/respond in Urdu also. Such Kashmiri-Urdu bilingual serials on the television channel simply demonstrate the essence of Urdu discourses among the common masses in Kashmir. It also telecasts documentaries in Urdu with casting in Kashmir, Urdu, and English. It is significant to note that *DD Kashmir* employs Perso-Arabic script for the Kashmiri language.

One unobserved factor of language change would be that Kashmir has become a highly accommodative place for labourers, skilled and unskilled workers from the other states of India. They mostly communicate in broken Hindustani with most of the Kashmiris. This exercise, overtly or covertly, has also helped the growing trend of Urdu in Kashmir. Among other agencies of communication, the State Information Department, State Cultural Academy, Radio Kashmir Srinagar, Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar, newly launched *DD-Kashmir*, the Iqbal Institute and the Urdu department of the University of Kashmir are in the forefront.

## 9. Conclusion

The paper examines the diverse ways in which the non-native code, Urdu language, has been accepted, accommodated and mixed in the repertoire of the Kashmiri Speech community implicitly and explicitly and also how Urdu is perceived as a symbol of prestige and upward social movement. Although, the Kashmiri language had been in contact with several other languages from the past several centuries, history is witness to the fact that the Kashmiri language was never given due encouragement or support to give it its deserving lingua franca status among the vast population of the valley. Other non-native languages had not occupied any place of importance in any context as Urdu did.

The acceptance, growth, development and maintenance of Urdu are an outcome of several social, cultural, attitudinal, literary, religious and media discourses. All the factors have contributed equally for the sustenance of Urdu and finally it was welcomed openheartedly and had become the language of the masses. The other possible reasons for the

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11 : 9 September 2011

M. Ashraf Bhat, Ph.D.

Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir

acceptance and maintenance of Urdu in Kashmir include the printing press, schooling system, government policies, semi-government agencies, NGOs, the textbooks, political speeches, the separatist movement, pamphlets and other written discourses, the media (both print and electronic). All such factors play a prominent role in the emergence of Urdu discourses in Kashmir.

Arguments in favour of expanding the domains of use for the Kashmiri language in Kashmir are not forcefully adumbrated. It is doubtful whether such arguments in favour of the native language, a prominent voice in every major linguistic region in India, will ever be made at all in Kashmir, given the prevailing socio-political and religious context.

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11 : 9 September 2011  
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11 : 9 September 2011  
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Emergence of the Urdu Discourses in Kashmir