

STUDENT PAPER

“Hit It With a Stick and It Won’t Die”:
Urdu Language, Muslim Identity and
Poetry in Varanasi, India
by Christopher Lee
Syracuse University

Nazm on Urdu

*Jabīn-e vaqt par kaisī shikan hai ham nahīn
samjhē
Kō’ī kyūn-kar ḥarīf-e ‘ilm-o-fan hai ham nahīn
samjhē
Kisī bhī shama’ sē bēzār kyūn hō ko’ī parvāna
Yeh kyā is daur kā divāna-pan hai ham nahīn
samjhē
Buhāt samjhē tḥē ham is daur kī firqa-parastī
kō
Zubān bhī āj shaikh-o-barhaman hai ham
nahīn samjhē
Agar urdū pe bhī ilzām hai bāhar sē ānē kā
To phīr hindūstān kis-kā vaṭan hai ham nahīn
samjhē
Čaman kā ḥusn tō har rang kē phūlōn sē hai
Rāshid*

*Kō'ī b'ī p'ūl kyūn naṅ-e čaman hai ham
nabīn samj'ē¹*

—Rāshid Banārsī

What kind of wrinkle is on the forehead of
time? I don't understand.

How can someone be the enemy of art and
knowledge? I don't understand.

Why would any moth show distaste for any
candle whatsoever?

What is the madness of this age? I don't
understand.

I understood a lot about the prejudices of
this age

Today languages too are Brahmins and
Sheikhs? I don't understand.

If there are charges against Urdu, that it too
is an outsider

Then whose homeland is India? I don't
understand.

The beauty of the garden comes from
flowers of every color, Rāshid

Why is any flower at all a disgrace to the
garden? I don't understand.

WHILE researching Ansari Muslim poets and their poetry during 1996–97 in the Hindu pilgrimage center of Varanasi (Banaras),² I became acutely aware that for many of the poets I was working with, Urdu was not just a language. Every word, spoken or written, carried important traces of identity, of memory, of a halcyon age of grandeur. As Rāshid reminds us, Urdu is a language of art and knowledge, a flower in the gar-

¹Rāshid Banārsī, 'Abdu 'l-Ḥayy, *Urdū*. Unpublished poem; personal collection.

²I'd like to thank the American Institute of Indian Studies for the grant which made this research possible. All translations of poetry and interviews are mine, unless noted.

den of tongues. Rāshid's *nazm* (poem) is only one of many references to the Urdu language that I encountered in Urdu poetry during my field-work: some were *nazms*, but the majority were *ghazal* couplets, the most common form of verse produced by the poets with whom I worked and studied. Many of these poems extolled the virtues and accomplishments of Urdu and expressed disbelief at its current treatment. It seemed to me that they were asking the same questions about Urdu as I was asking about Muslims and Muslim society in North India.

The present paper is an investigation of the relationship between North Indian Muslim identity and the Urdu language, through the lens of Urdu poetry produced by Muslims in Banaras. I will consider, first, a somewhat speculative history of Urdu in North India, focusing on how Urdu came to be associated with Muslims, briefly talk about the status of Urdu in contemporary India, and finish by looking at another poem. I have interspersed related selections from interviews with these poets throughout the paper in order to allow them to speak in their own, albeit translated, words.

Excerpt From an Interview With Rashid Banarsi (1 January 1997)

CHRISTOPHER LEE: What's your opinion of the state of Urdu—?

RASHID BANARSI: [answers quickly, interrupting] Not good. The state of Urdu is not good at all. Because in every area, attempts have been made to totally crush it. But Urdu is still alive, and if it gets a chance, it will continue to grow. And in this country, there is a lot of Urdu, and it can progress, too, but some people are interested in crushing Urdu. They want that having crushed it, it will be written in Hindi script. If it's written in Hindi, the meaning is to finish Urdu. Because Urdu language is different and Urdu's writing and everything is different. So they will kill its spirit, meaning the life will be taken out of it. You can write Urdu and call it Hindi or call it anything... Look, you can see how the attempts are being made to crush Urdu, just look at films. In films, all the language is Urdu. But they're given Hindi certificates.

CL: How did this happen?

RB: It's a punishment. When if the truth is told, then the reason

is if you're going to try to kill someone, then first grab their *zubān* [tongue]. Even though this is not just the language of Muslims, it's everyone's language, Hindus and Muslims, big big poets like Firāq Gōrakhpūrī and so on, like Čakbast Lakḥnavī, etc., they're all big Hindu poets. But they said that it's the Muslim's language, so there was an attempt to snuff it out. When really it's not only Muslim's language. If it were the Muslims, then why is Bangla the language of Bengal? Like this, why is there a Kashmiri language in Kashmir? In Afghanistan why is there Pushto, and other languages? Urdu is not a Muslim language, but because it is said that this is a Muslim language, there is an attempt to snuff it out.

C L : What will happen in the future?

R B : In the future, in my opinion, there is hope that it will continue. Because this thing is not about to die—this is not a thing which dies. Hit it with a stick, and it won't die.

Urdu and Language Histories in Northern South Asia

Linguistic histories in South Asia are highly contentious, particularly the histories of Urdu and Hindi. According to most scholars³ Hindi and Urdu were not strongly differentiated until the eighteenth century. Previous to this differentiation, the language now referred to as Urdu was called, among other things, Hindustani or Hindi (the language spoken in Hind, the Persian gloss for India, the “land of the Indus”), Hindavi, or Rekhta (“mixed”). The language now known as Hindi was referred to as Hindustani, Hindi or Bhakha (“spoken”). This similarity in naming has led to a considerable amount of confusion, and a lack of referential specificity when dealing with historic documents, clouding the potential for clear linguistic histories.

The most commonly stated history of Urdu, which we can call “the

³See, for instance, Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Christopher King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth-Century North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

patois theory,” I have encountered in a variety of contexts: in the United States, among language teachers and professors of South Asian Studies; and in South Asia, among informants and friends, as well as in a variety of newspaper articles in the Urdu, Hindi and English press. It goes as follows:

From the tenth century until about the eighteenth, northern South Asia was invaded and ruled by Muslims from Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia. It became part of the Islamic world in which Persian was the language of culture, government and diplomacy. *Zubān-e Urdū-e Mu'allā* (“exalted language of the camp”), a mixture of Persian, Turkish, Arabic and local languages, was what the patois used for communication in the army between the Persian speaking rulers and their subjects (who spoke Braj, Avadhi, Marathi, etc.) was called. This language, eventually shortened to just “Urdu” became the form of communication used throughout the Mughal Empire.

This is a logical, convenient and concise history; the only problem is that it is a myth. Unfortunately, there is currently no detailed and scholarly history of Urdu in South Asia that takes many new findings into consideration. However, considerable research has been done on the history of Hindi, particularly the Hindi Language Movement in the nineteenth century and its connection to the nationalist enterprise.⁴ In all these works, Urdu functions almost as a “shadow,” an “also-ran” for linguistic superiority in northern South Asia. However, we can piece together a hopefully illuminating picture, admittedly with gaps, by looking at these histories of Hindi. In this brief synopsis, I rely heavily on Vasuda Dalmia’s detailed work on Bharatendu Harishchandra, entitled *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*, both because it is one of the most convincing and detailed histories of the Hindi Language Movement to date, and because of its focus on Banaras as a center for the Hindu Nationalist Movement.

Most scholars seem to agree that before the arrival of the British, language in northern South Asia was a fluid concept, with Persian being spoken in the courts and the general populous speaking a variety of related languages: Khari Boli, Hindavi, Braj Bhasha, Avadhi, and Bhojpuri among others. Education and position determined language,

⁴See works cited in previous footnote. Cf. also Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

not religion.

When the British assumed power, they quickly realized it would be necessary to learn the local languages in order to facilitate their command and “explain the benefits of British rule.” John Gilchrist, a noted linguist and doctor, founded the Oriental Seminary in Calcutta in 1799 to teach the required languages. Gilchrist believed that Hindustani had three definable “styles”: the “High Court” or “Persian” style, which was the language used in the royal courts, and the language of literature and politics; the “Middle” or “Genuine Hindustani,” which was typified by use of equal numbers of “Muslim” and “Hindu” words (or “foreign” and “original” words, as Gilchrist understood them); and the third, the “vulgar of the Hinduwee,” or the “Pristine,” which had far fewer “foreign” words, was the language of the Hindu “rustic,” and the language spoken before the Muslim invasion. The “Middle” or “genuine Hindustani,” since it was the language of both Hindu and Muslim, was to be called “Hindustani”—not the language of Hindus, but the language of the land of Hind.⁵ This was the language he saw as most useful for communication, and is the language which he taught, and some would say, created. Gilchrist saw the danger in supporting one script—either Nagari or Nasta’liq—over another, so he chose originally to use neither; rather, he used a modified Roman script for the language he taught. However, this failed to catch on, and Gilchrist’s Hindustani was taught in Nasta’liq.

After his appointment at Fort William College, established in 1800 for British entering the East India Company, he continued to teach Hindustani in the Nasta’liq script, which was associated with Muslims and Muslim culture, Gilchrist asked that there be some arrangements made to teach Hindui or Bhaakhaa, which was written in the Nagari script associated with the Hindu community. This action, as Dalmia points out, lays out the foundation for Urdu as the language of the Muslims and Hindi as the language of the Hindus, as Hindui becomes Hindi, and Hindustani becomes associated with, if not exactly, Urdu, and foiled Gilchrist’s well-meant attempt to have a single unified language for Hindus and Muslims in North India.⁶

By the mid-nineteenth century, Hindustani written in the Nasta’liq script had become the language of administration. For example, in 1837,

⁵Gilchrist’s biases and beliefs regarding linguistic histories are obvious in the names he chose for the languages he demarcated.

⁶Dalmia, p. 166.

the language used in Indian law courts changed from Persian to Hindustani. As Hindustani in the Nasta‘liq script became the language of administration and the language necessary to secure a highly desirable government job, all those who had learned Hindavi in the Nagari script—the most often taught language and script, according to Dalmia⁷—were at a serious disadvantage. Thus arose a growing disaffected and wealthy Hindi speaking class whose rise to profitable government jobs was essentially blocked because of a lack of linguistic skills.

Out of the concerns of this disaffected group arose the Hindi Language Movement in the late nineteenth century, with Allahabad and Varanasi as centers. Bharatendu Harischandra was a central figure of this movement, which was highly Hindu and stridently nationalistic. The movement strove to have Hindi recognized as the national language under the slogan, “Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan.” The movement created a prepackaged language—Hindi, in the Nagari script—which it claimed was the traditional tongue of the Hindus. The package offered a language with all the markers of the language of a great nation: religious literature—taken from pre-Mughal as well as contemporary Braj Bhasha and Avadhi sources; a respected history, drawing connections to Sanskritic and Aryan origins; and finally and most importantly, a language with the ideology of the Hindus as central, the language of the Hindu hearth, spoken and preserved in the home for ages.⁸

The creation of such a linguistic “package”—complete with a prestigious history—is an extremely important factor in considering the histories of Hindi and Urdu in South Asia. It carries with it the idea that there is a Hindu “nation” in India, separate from the Urdu-speaking Muslims, fulfilling Johann Gottfried Herder’s idea, current among the British and English-educated Indians at the time, that “national languages were the expression of the most characteristic features and aspirations of the particular people who spoke it,” or, as he put it later, “the genius of the people.”⁹ Furthermore, it subsumed all Hindus into a single class, created and represented by the aspirations of wealthy North Indian merchant Hindus. But most importantly, it gave Hindi a prestige to match—or better—that of Urdu.

The accepted history of Urdu at the time, as mentioned earlier, was

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁹ As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 162.

that it was a creole, or at best a macaronic language formed through the interactions between Persian-speaking Muslim invaders and their Hindi-, Avadhi- and Braj Bhasha-speaking subjects. Hindi, however, as it was packaged by Harischandra and others, was a language that came from prestigious Sanskritic and Aryan sources, and could trace its roots back millennia through the Hindu hearth. But while Hindi was assumed to have such prestigious, even divine roots, Urdu had none such, and was not understood to be a language with history—it is just a derivative of Persian and Indian languages, a language created in the Army Camps, a language of the “hoard.” Obviously Hindi, it would be argued, is an “authentic” language, while Urdu is just a hodge-podge.

Linguistic histories during this period are colonial histories, and are determined in a similar fashion. As Bernard Cohn points out in “The Command of Language and the Language of Command,” “the tribute represented in print and manuscript is that of complicated and complex forms of knowledge created by Indians, but codified and transmitted by Europeans. The conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge.”¹⁰ The power to bind a history to a language is power over its speakers. By creating a history of Urdu through incorrectly assumed back-formations and accepting as true the history of Hindi as presented to them by Harischandra and others, the British denied native speakers of Urdu an “authentic” language and history.

**Excerpt From an Interview With Shorish Banarsi, an Elderly Poet
(14 April 1997)**

CHRISTOPHER LEE: what is your opinion on the future of Urdu?

SHORISH BANARSI: My opinion is that Urdu is in danger. Since we gained independence, there has been pressure and cruelty on poor Urdu. But it is such a honeyed language, such a sweet language, that if Hindustan is able to chase it away, or to crush it, then the language of Hindustan will be crushed. The respectable society and culture [*tehẓīb*] of Hindustan will be crushed. And the blame is ours, the Urdu speakers. [...]

¹⁰Cohn, p. 16.

The situation here is such that—before I came here, I went to the bank. I tried to sign in Urdu on a check that I had. But they wouldn't let me. That's not what they wanted. They said, "Look on the board. It's written that you can't sign your checks in Urdu." They say, "Hey brother, don't you [*tum*] know Hindi?" That's the situation. So we are forced. I would have said something, but there were people behind me saying, "Come on, hurry up." So like this, how can Urdu go forward?

Urdu in Contemporary India

Obviously, it is still the case that Urdu is a second-class citizen in its own homeland. Nur, an Urdu poet in Anita Desai's requiem for Urdu language and culture, *In Custody*, states,

Urdu poetry? How can there be Urdu poetry when there is no Urdu language left? It is dead, finished. The defeat of the Moghuls by the British threw a noose over its head, and the defeat of the British by the Hindis tightened it. So now you see its corpse lying here, waiting to be buried.¹¹

Not surprisingly, as blame was placed upon Muslims for Partition, Urdu was disregarded as a national language after Independence. Ralph Russell reports that while he was in India soon after Independence in 1949–50, "in the area regarded as the heartland of Urdu, U.P. and to a lesser extent Bihar, the state governments were doing everything possible to destroy [Urdu]."¹² Shortly thereafter, in 1951, Urdu lost its status as an official language in Uttar Pradesh state. Although several organizations and movements have pushed since then to reestablish Urdu's place in U.P., they have met with little success. There was a brief respite in the 1980s, when Urdu was recognized as an official language, but by ordinance, rather than formal decree, and upon the assumption of power by the Bharatiya Janta Party the ordinance was allowed to lapse.¹³

¹¹(NY: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 42.

¹²Ralph Russell, "Urdu in India Since Independence" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34.1–2 (1999): 44.

¹³Paul Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 156.

While I was in the field, the matter of the status of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh erupted yet again. Two newly elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) for U.P. asked, then demanded, to take the oath of office in Urdu. This right, allegedly guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, was not granted by the U.P. government, and led to agitations and demands that Urdu be recognized (again) as a second official language in U.P.

The “Oath Controversy,” as it became known, justifiably became an important issue for the poets with whom I was working. The editorial pages of local papers (Urdu, Hindi and English) were filled with impassioned letters, and it was the main subject of debate wherever people would gather: at tea stalls, *mushā’iras* and *mehfils*, around the silk loom or at the local shops. During this period, I was invited to dinner with Āghā Jamil Kashmīri, (the nephew of the Urdu playwright Āghā Ḥashr Kashmīri) and Dr. Hanif Naqvi, Chair of the Department of Urdu at Banaras Hindu University. Not surprisingly, the Oath Controversy was a major topic of conversation. The following excerpt from that conversation puts into eloquent words the feelings of many people with whom I spoke:

HANIF NAQVI: Look, the basic thing is this: the oath is a sacred thing; it is special. It is sacred, religious. So the oath should be given according to the desire of the oath taker. If he wants to take the oath in Urdu, then he should be able to do so. If he wants to take it in Hindi, he should be able to do so. That is a basic thing. The other is that all over India, every individual speaks, has conversations in, and interacts with his world through his mother tongue. If I want to take the oath in my mother tongue, then I should have the right to do so. In U.P., Urdu has the status of a second language—the announcement was made several years ago, I think in 1989. But because a political party gets voted into office, they can say, “Let’s go, let’s rub Urdu into the mud,” in order to keep Muslims from being aware. That is a broken oath from the Congress Party and many other parties. The result of this is that Urdu is not a second language, it is a second-class language.

Since Urdu is a second language, you should be able to do official business in it; you should be able to take exams in it. But because the rulers are against the language, or the speakers of the language, Urdu gets rubbed into the mud. They are the enemies of everything: our culture, our imagination, and our history. Of

course they don't give permission. They don't understand anything else.¹⁴

Poetry

Perhaps the only aspect of Muslim culture that is not under attack in North India is Urdu poetry.¹⁵ The *ghazal*, the form of poetry which my informants used most often, is traditionally understood to be love poetry. “The key to understanding the *ghazal*,” Ralph Russell claims, “is the realization that it is the poetry of illicit love, of the love of a man for another man’s betrothed or another man’s wife.”¹⁶ However, it has been my experience that nowadays it is often also used to talk about social ills and problems in both overt and covert ways. In my larger work¹⁷ I show how the traditional metaphors and imagery of Urdu poetry—described as “fixed and stereotyped ... [full of] dead images ... incapable of showing any real feeling”¹⁸—are being reworked in new and significant ways by the poets with whom I worked: for example, the caged bird wistfully admiring the inaccessible garden is no longer the stereotypical lover captured by the birdcatcher-beloved, but is the Banārsī Muslim, who finds himself trapped in his Muslim-only neighborhood by the cage of his fears of communal violence. Whether or not this has always been true (and I would suggest that it has), the traditional metaphors and imagery of Urdu poetry are being reinterpreted to discuss matters close to the hearts of those who participate in it.

Umrā’ō Jān Adā, the main character in the Urdu novel of the same name, remarks that poetry is used so people can express, without embar-

¹⁴Personal communication, 15 October 1997.

¹⁵Although one could speculate that there are significant attempts to “Hindi-ize” it in a variety of contexts.

¹⁶Ralph Russell, “*The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*.” (London: Zed Publishing, 1992), p. 35.

¹⁷In my Ph.D. dissertation “Poetry, Politics and Performance among Banarsi Muslim Weavers” (in progress).

¹⁸Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 17. For the origin of this line of criticism, see Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and her forthcoming translation, with S.R. Faruqi, of *Āb-e Hayāt*.

rassment and in any company, things that would not be possible to say in ordinary conversation.¹⁹ Eighty-seven years later, Lila Abu-Lughod makes a similar comment:

Poetry cloaks statements in the veils of formula, convention and tradition, thus suiting it to the task of carrying messages about the self that contravene the official cultural ideals.²⁰

The *ghazal* is a particularly effective vehicle for such messages, as the strictness of its form and the perceived conventionality of its metaphors and imagery allow the poet to create a space wherein s/he can voice the otherwise unsayable. By framing speech as poetry, the author makes an ontological statement without the danger of ontological commitment, and what is betrayed is packaged in a fashion that makes the messages complicated and ambiguous. Poetry aestheticizes the message, effectively containing the potential for social strife or violence.²¹

In poetry, Muslims can raise their voices against the thousand daily injustices they face as minorities in North India, messages that contravene the “official cultural ideals” of amity and inter-community brotherhood. Muslims in North India feel that their language, their imagination and their very culture [*tehzīb*] are threatened, as they themselves are in a myriad of ways. As Rashīd Banārsī said, if you’re going to try to kill someone, first grab their *zubān* [tongue]. What I had noticed originally—that Urdu poets were asking the same questions about Urdu as I was about Muslims and Muslim society in North India—I now know is wrong, at least partially. Urdu poets were asking the same questions as I was about Muslims—but couched within the millennial safety of metaphor. What I have come to realize is that the Urdu language, when used as a subject in Urdu poetry, often represents both Urdu-speaking society [*tehzīb*], as well as ultimately, Muslims themselves. Consider Rashīd Banārsī’s poem which begins this paper: Urdu has been accused of being an outsider, has not been respected despite its many contributions, has not been viewed as another flower in the garden of India—all things which might be said for

¹⁹Mirzā Muḥammed Hādī “Rusvā,” *Umrā’ō Jān Adā* (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab, 1963 [1899]), p. [?].

²⁰Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 239.

²¹Steven C. Caton, *Peaks of Yemen I Summon: Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 253.

Muslims as well.

I'd like to close with a poem written by Laṭīf Ṣiddīqī, a Varanasi lawyer, in honor of 'Ālim Badī 'Aẓmī and Vasīm Aḥmad, the two MLAs mentioned earlier who demanded to take the oath of office in Urdu. A thorough consideration of the poems which open and close this paper will undoubtedly make my point in a stronger fashion than I possibly could otherwise.

Urdu!

Jō hai urdū kā mukhālīf voh hai dushman dēsh kā

*Yeh mirī pyārī zubān hai, yeh mirī pyārī zubān
Sab sē yeh nyārī zubān hai, sab sē yeh nyārī zubān
Kūk kōyal kī hai is mēn, yeh papīhē kī zubān
Bulbul-e hindūstān, yeh dēsh kī apnī zubān*

*Is kē lafzōn sē hai pairāhan muzaiyan dēsh kā
Jō hai urdū kā mukhālīf voh hai dushman dēsh kā*

*Yeh payām-e dōstī, yeh āshtī kā āsmān
Fikr-o-fan kā yeh samandar, yeh zubānōn kā jahān
Is mēn 'irfān-e ukhuvvat aur muḥabbat hai nihān
Yeh hai ik tehzīb-e akmal, yeh nahīn ṣirf ik zubān*

*Gauhar-e shā'istagī sē pur hai dāman dēsh kā
Jō hai urdū kā mukhālīf voh hai dushman dēsh kā*

*Barf kī ṭḥandak hai is mēn, is mēn ātish kī lapak
Ḥusn kī ra'nā'iyān hai, 'ishq kī is mēn hamak
Sīm sī yeh pur-zīyā hai, is mēn sōnē kī damak
Lashkarī hai yeh zubān, shamshīr kī is mēn čamak*

*Dushmanī is sē karē jō voh hai Rāvan dēsh ka
Jo hai urdū kā mukhālīf voh hai dushman dēsh kā*

*Yeh sarāsar j'ḥūṭ hai yeh dēsh urdū sē baṭā
Yeh sarāsar j'ḥūṭ B'hārat kō diyā is nē daghā
Yeh b'hī bilkul j'ḥūṭ hai urdū zubān hai bē-vafā
Sač agar kahdūn tō hō jā'ē gā muj' sē tū khafā*

*Yeh hai yakjehtī kā parčam, yeh hai darpan dēsh kā
Jō hai urdū kā mukhālīf voh hai dushman dēsh kā*

*Āfirīn 'Ālam Badī' aē nāzish-e urdū zubān
Tērī himmat sē bar ā'ī khvābīsh-e urdū zubān
Aē Vasīm afzā hai is sē tābīsh-e urdū zubān
P'īr bhāyak uṭṭ'ī hai dil mēn ātīsh-e urdū zubān*

*Jō aqalīyat kā mārē haq voh rahzan dēsh kā
Jō hai urdū kā mukhālīf voh hai dushman dēsh kā²²*

—Laṭīf Ṣiddīqī

He who is against Urdu is an enemy of the country

This is my beloved language, this is my beloved language
This is a language most unique, this is a language most unique
It is the trill of the black cuckoo, it is the call of the white cuckoo
The nightingale of Hindustan, this country's own language

Its words decorate the garments of the country
He who is against Urdu is an enemy of the country

This is the language of friendship, the reconciliation of skies
An ocean of art and knowledge, this language of all
In it the vision of brotherhood and secrets of love
This is a complete culture, not just a language

It abounds in the essence of propriety, this garment of the
country
He who is against Urdu is an enemy of the country

In it the chill of ice, in it the sparkle of flame
In it the beauty of gracefulness, the language of love
As bright as silver, it has the brilliance of gold
It's a warriors' language, in it the shine of a sword

Whoever is its enemy is a Ravana to the country
He who is against Urdu is an enemy of the country

It's completely a lie that this country was divided by Urdu
It's completely a lie that it's been treacherous to India
It is completely false that Urdu language is unfaithful

²²Laṭīf Ṣiddīqī, *Urdu!*, in *Āvāz-e Mulk* [voice of the nation] (Varanasi), 2 September 1997, p. 6.

If I should tell you the truth, you'd become angry with me

It is the flag of unity, it is the mirror of the country
He who is against Urdu is an enemy of the country

Bravo, 'Ālam Badi'; Oh, the elegance of the Urdu language
Your bravery for the sake of the aspirations of the Urdu language
Oh, Vasim, the brilliance of Urdu is increasing thanks to you
Once again the flame of Urdu language has come to blaze in the heart

He who withholds the rights of the minority is a robber of the
nation

He who is against Urdu is an enemy of the country.

□