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Urdu in Hyderabad State*

THE STATE OF HYDERABAD was carved out in 1724 by the Asif Jahis (Āṣif Jāhīs), the governors of the Mughal emperors in the Deccan, when they became powerful enough to set themselves up as rulers in their own right. The Nizams¹—from Mīr Qamru’-d-Dīn Khān (1724–48) until the sixth ruler of the house Mīr Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān (1869–1911)—used Persian as their court language, in common with the prevailing fashion of their times, though they spoke Urdu at home. Persian was, however, replaced by Urdu in some domains of power, such as law courts, administration and education, toward the end of the nineteenth century. The focus of this article is on the manner in which this transition took place. This phenomenon, which may be called the “Urduization” of the state, had important consequences. Besides the historical construction of events, an attempt will be made to understand these consequences: the link of “Urduization” with power, the construction of Muslim identity, and socio-economic class. Moreover, the effect of “Urduization” on the local languages of Hyderabad will also be touched on.

*The author is grateful to the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan for a grant to carry out research for this article in India.

¹The Nizams who actually ruled were the first seven; the last in the line carried the title until 1971 but did not rule: 1) Mīr Qamaru’-d-Dīn Khān Niẓāmu’-l-Mulk Āṣaf Jāh I (r. 1724–48); 2) Mīr Niẓām ‘Alī Khān Āṣaf Jāh II (r. 1762–1803); 3) Mīr Akbar ‘Alī Khān Sikandar Jāh III (r. 1803–29); 4) Mīr Farkhunda ‘Alī Khān Nāṣiru’-d-Daula Āṣaf Jāh IV (r. 1829–57); 5) Mīr Tahniyat ‘Alī Khān Afẓalu’-d-Daula Āṣaf Jāh V (r. 1857–69); 6) Mīr Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān Āṣaf Jāh VI (r. 1869–1911); 7) Mīr ‘Uṣmān ‘Alī Khān Āṣaf Jāh VII (r. 1911–50); 8) Mīr Barkat ‘Alī Khān Mukarram Jāh Āṣaf Jāh VIII (r. 1967–71).

Linguistic Policy of the Nizams

The question of the language policy of the Muslim rulers of the Deccan is discussed by Muṣṭafā Kamāl in his book on the development of Urdu in Hyderabad (1990, 17–45). Kamāl refers to the claims of Jamāl Jālibī (1987, 185), Naṣīru'd-Dīn Hāshimī (1960 and 1963), 'Abdu'l-Qādir Sarvarī (1934), Muḥiyu'd-Dīn Qādirī Zōr (1969), and others, that Urdu—called Hindi or Hindvi—was used in some offices of the state in the south. However, as Kamāl points out, these authors refer to the historian Ferishta (Farishta). But Ferishta never claims that Hindi was used in the offices of the state. He narrates the tale of a certain Ḥasan, the servant of a Brahmin called Gaṅgū, who enjoyed the favor of Muḥammad Tughlaq. Gaṅgū “made him promise if he ever should attain regal power, that he would assume the name of Gaṅgū, and employ him as his minister of finance” (1612, 2:175–76). When Ḥasan became the ruler of a part of the Deccan he “entrusted his treasury to the bramin [sic] Gaṅgū” (*ibid.*, 180) and, thus, he became the “first bramin [sic] who accepted office in the service of a Mahomedan prince” (*ibid.*). This story, if true, merely claims that Hindus started serving in the revenue department of the state, but it makes no claim regarding the language they used in their work. To assume that this was some form of Hindi, or the ancestor of Urdu, is not warranted by the evidence at hand.

As for the later rulers of the Deccan, once again Ferishta's words are instructive. He writes that during the reign of Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh I (1538–57):

The customs which prevailed in the reign of Ismā'īl 'Ādil Shāh were wholly laid aside; and the public accounts, formerly kept in Persian, were now written in Hindvy, under the management of bramins [sic], who soon acquired great influence in his government.

(*ibid.*, 3:47–48)

Here it is clear that the Brahmins employed in the accounts department promoted “Hindvy,” but it is still not known exactly which language the generic term “Hindvy” refers to. And, of course, if Brahmins used an Indian language at a later date, it does not follow that they did the same earlier. The existing evidence, which Kamāl (1990) refers to, is that there are several documents in the Deccan with Mahratti (Marathi) and even Telugu translations from Persian, but none with Hindvy (or old Urdu) translations. It stands to reason, then, that the local languages, rather than some variety of Urdu-Hindi, were used at the lower levels of the administration. These local languages may have been referred to as “Hindvy” or

“Hindi,” i.e., the language of Hind, but this does not necessarily mean that one of them was the ancestor of Urdu.

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

Table 1		
Religious Composition of Hyderabad State		
	Number	Percentage of
Hindus	8,893,181	2.9%
Muslims	925,929	4.9%
Christians	13,614	51.8%
Jains	8,521	8.9%
Parsis	683	56.1%
Sikhs	3,664	12.9%
Jews	47	19.1%
Total	9,945,594	

Source: Census of 1871 (In Ali, C. 1885–86, 4:391, 434)

The linguistic composition was even more pluralistic.

Table 2	
Language / Speakers in Hyderabad State	
Telugu	4,266,469
Mahratti	3,147,745
Canarese	1,238,519
Urdu	928,241

Source: Census 1871 (In *ibid.*, 432)

At this time, the census reports, “Persian is the official language of the

Government, but it differs slightly from that new spoken Persian” (*ibid.*, 455). The Andhra Archives contains letters, treaties and other documents in Persian up to the time of Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān, when Urdu documents start taking their place. Among these are letters of five governors-general: Warren Hastings (10 July 1784), John Macpherson (23 May 1786), Cornwallis (26 January 1792), John Shore (10 February 1797), Lord Dufferin (17 March 1888), all in Persian. Even the letter of Maharaja Sri Samar Singh Bahadur, ruler of Marwar, though written long after Persian was no longer the court language of the state (23 March 1911), is, nevertheless, in Persian. The treaties of 1792 and 1822 between the East India Company and the Nizam were, of course, in Persian, though a memorandum of 13 August 1872 between the British Government and the state of Hyderabad is in English (all reproduced in Pachauri 1993, 2–20). However, interestingly, Hyderabad city was predominantly Urdu-speaking, and Canarese is not represented at all, though Arabic is (see Table 3). There were also 6,643 speakers of English in the city. The linguistic composition is as follows:

Table 3	
Languages Spoken in Hyderabad City (%)	
Telugu	22.29%
Mahratti	4.25%
Canarese	Not given
Urdu	67.25%
Arabic	3.07%

Source: (*ibid.*, 456)

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

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

Moreover, different departments gave orders in Persian as well as a

local language. In order to write them so that they could be read by the public, writers (*muḥarrir*) of the two languages were hired at a salary of twenty-five rupees per month (*Jarīda* 1885, 3:304). One such order states:

Shahpūr Jī raised the point that the rules for the toll taxes on the road, which are a copy of those already used for the road to Gulbarga, should, in addition to being added to the gazette, also be written in Persian and Mahratti and be pasted on every check post and every place for the information of everybody.

(*ibid.*)²

At another place, an order by the Prime Minister (*Madāru'l-Mabām*), Mīr Turāb 'Alī Khān Sālār Jañg I, who held office between 1853 and 1883, states:

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

(*ibid.*, 4:308)

When district land surveys began in 1886, a school was established in order to teach the principles of surveying and this was done “in the Maratti language” in addition to others (Ali, C. 1885–86, 2:197). Indeed, the diary of Sālār Jañg I records that he told the students:

From the Putwari's office to that of the Talookdar, all official communications are made in that language. Not to learn Mahratti therefore is to place yourselves outside the pale of official employment.

(Diary entry of 8 January 1880, qtd. in Ali, S.M. 1883–86, 3:195)

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

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

(*ibid.*, 200)

Schools were not only in Mahratti or Telugu. There were, for instance, 9 Canarese schools in 1884–85 (*Administration Report* 1886, 176). The “Inspectors of schools were ordered to pass in the vernaculars of their district” (*ibid.*, 179).

In short, the linguistic policy of Hyderabad state was to use the

²All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

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

Symbolic Significance of Persian for the Old Guard

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

The children of the elite were taught Persian at home but schools were also opened for them by the late nineteenth century. For instance, at first Sālār Jañg's sons were initially taught in the palace. In 1877, the class was removed to Rumbolt's Kothi where it came to be known as the Madrasa-e 'Āliya. In this institution, Englishmen were appointed headmasters. The school had an English and an oriental side, and Persian, along with "Arabic, Hindustani and vernacular languages" were taught there (*ibid.*, 192). The Madrasa-e A'izza was another élitist institution where boys were taught Persian along with other subjects (*ibid.*, 25, 194). Hyderabad College was also an offshoot of the Dāru'l-'Umar Oriental College "which was founded by the late Minister in 1855 for the teaching of English, Arabic, Persian, Telugu, and Mahratti" (Ali, S.M. 1883–86, 8:435). However, the upper classes of the urban areas, especially Hyderabad city, paid more attention to Persian in the beginning and then moved to English and Urdu as those languages gained currency in the domains of power. Even the ladies of the upper classes were so conversant in Persian that local gossip in the English press was translated "in Persian having, it is whispered, found their way into the innermost recesses of the zanas" (*ibid.*, 663). At the uppermost level, as in the durbar, the Viceroy's speech was translated into Persian and read out to the Nizam on 22 February 1884 (*ibid.*, 798).

Even up to 1885, when Urdu was gaining strength, the upper-class boys of Madrasa-e ‘Āliya were praised for having improved in Persian. It was further emphasized that “Hyderabad youths cannot dispense with their own classics, if they wish to make themselves useful in after-life” (*ibid.*, 8 suppl.:372). Persian was a symbol of Muslim cultural and political domination until it was replaced by Urdu. The replacement itself was not without opposition. According to Sarvar Jañg, tutor of Mīr Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān, the sixth Nizam (1866–1911), when he expressed (in the presence of Sālār Jañg I) his agreement with Maulavī Mushtāq Ḥusain’s proposal that Urdu should replace Persian in all offices of the state, the Minister’s reaction was as follows:

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

(Jañg 1933, 244)

However, in practice the Minister used Urdu wherever it suited him—such as in meetings with the Resident so as to prevent him from dominating the conversation if it was held in English.

But at this time, while Sālār Jañg I’s own orders were in Persian, other departments had started issuing orders in Urdu (*Jarīda* 1885).

The actual teaching of Persian was also declining by the time Mīr Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān was studying. His tutor, Sarvar Jañg, reports that the young Nizam’s time was being wasted in the learning of Persian because his teachers were unsuitable for this purpose. Moreover, the time for Persian was also reduced (Jañg 1933, 211). The Nizam’s learning of Urdu will be touched upon later. What is notable is that, according to his tutor, the Nizam was not competent in Persian. Thus, when the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, who was learning Persian, paid a visit to the Nizam, he began to converse in that language with the Nizam. Knowing that his pupil was not competent in Persian, Sarvar Jañg suggested that, because Persian was understood by many who should not be privy to the conversation, it was more expedient that the conversation should be in English (*ibid.*, 272).

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

Transition from Persian to Urdu

To understand this transition it must be placed in the context of state politics: specifically the tension between the locals of Hyderabad (*Mulkīs*) and the outsiders, mostly the Urdu-speaking Muslims of North India (*Ghair Mulkīs*). The tension increased so much that Mīr Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān asked for a report on employment and his Prime Minister submitted a report which has been summarized as follows:

	Total Number of Civil Officers	Percentage of the Total Number	Percentage of the Aggregate Salary
Natives	246	51.7	42.00
The rest:	230	48.3	58.00
Hindustanis	97	20.38	24.44
Madrasis	66	13.87	11.40
Bombayites	36	7.56	8.06
Europeans	24	5.04	13.38
Others	7	1.47	0.72

Source: Sajanlal 1974, 130 column 1

The Nizam pointed out that the outsiders drew a higher aggregate salary. The Prime Minister explained that the outsiders (non-*Mulkīs*) were more qualified and had, therefore, been appointed to more lucrative and powerful positions (*ibid.*, 132). They were so powerful that the Executive Council carrying out the administration had twelve members at one time, “all Hindustanees or foreigners” (Ali, S.M. 1883–86, 8:68).

Newspapers were full of complaints against Sālār Jañg I. The *Deccan Times* (18 Feb 1880) reported:

It is notorious that the employment of “Hindustanees” in places of position and trust has engendered a bitter feeling against the Minister, who is not unnaturally accused of taking the bread out of the children’s mouths and giving it to strangers.

(In *ibid.*, 3:441)

The Hindustanis had come from British India where they had been using Urdu rather than Persian in their youth—the language of schooling and the courts being Urdu since the 1840s—they were in favor of using Urdu in the affairs of the state. Among the most prominent of them were:

‘Imādu’l-Mulk, who came to Hyderabad in 1773; Mahdī ‘Alī Khān (1874); Vaqāru’l-Mulk (1875); Čirāgh ‘Alī Yār Jaṅg (1877); and Deputy Nazīr Aḥmad (1877). V. K. Bawa, a biographer of ‘Uṣmān ‘Alī Khān, mentions other important literary figures of Urdu who came from North India and whose stay in Hyderabad, whether brief or lengthy, must have increased the salience of Urdu in the state (1992, 56–58). Nazir Ahmed, a prominent Urdu novelist, reveals in a letter that he faced difficulty working in Persian because he was not used to it (Bilgramī 1912, 79–80). The difficulties of others in this respect, although not recorded, must have been comparable. It is credible, then, that these powerful Hindustani officials created a lobby which promoted Urdu in the state.

Saiyad Ḥusain Bilgramī (Navāb ‘Imādu’l-Mulk) was the Indian tutor to ‘Uṣmān ‘Alī Khān and the chief executive of education for thirty-two years (‘Abdu’l-Ḥaq 1959, 391). He was a great supporter of Urdu as a medium of instruction (*ibid.*, 409). As adviser to the Prime Minister, Navāb Mīr Yūsuf ‘Alī Khān Sālār Jaṅg III (1888–1949), he issued a notice that English words should not be used in Urdu documents (*ibid.*, 415). In short, the pro-Urdu lobby remained active even after the replacement of Persian by Urdu—now to counter the influx of English.

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

Sequence of Events: Persian Yields to Urdu

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

Kamāl points out that, notwithstanding the influence of the

Hindustanis in favor of Urdu, the transition to that language was pioneered by a blue-blooded Hyderabad aristocrat, Bashīru'd-Daulah Sir Āsmān Jāh (b. 1839). He was appointed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (*Ṣadru'l-Mabām 'Adālat*) in 1869. In 1871 he proposed that Urdu be used in place of Persian in the courts of law. The Prime Minister, Sir Sālār Jañg I, conceded only that “the recording of statements in Urdu, that is, the language in common use, is enough.” However, “all other writing would have to be in Persian” (*Jarīda* 1885, 4:217). Bashīru'd-Daulah tried to obtain more concessions for Urdu, but this time the Prime Minister rebuffed him in the following words:

But this revival [of the pro-Urdu movement] is not acceptable to His Exalted Highness [...] because many people do not know the skills for writing (standard) Urdu.

(*ibid.*, 47, qtd. in Kamāl 1990, 101)

Moreover, the Prime Minister clarified that Urdu was merely permitted, it was not necessary (*ibid.*).

In 1876 the Prime Minister agreed that the administrators (*nazamā*) and the clerks (*munshīs*) had gained competence in Urdu. It was, however, clarified that their Urdu writing was not meant to exhibit their mastery of difficult Persian words. By “Urdu,” said the order, “*Urdū-e mu'allā murād nīst*” (an elevated, literary style is not meant) (qtd. in *ibid.*, 105–6).

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

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

Thus *Madāru'l-Mabām* is pleased to order that as soon as this order reaches the offices of the court, from that time all the work in those offices

will be in Urdu.

(*ibid.*, v. 3, qtd. in Kamāl 1990, 117)

Moreover, the officials are asked to write simple rather than ornate and Persianized Urdu (*ibid.*, 118). However, rural offices would continue to function in the local languages (Kamāl 1990, 129–30). The talukdars (landed gentry) were ordered to address higher authorities in Urdu. Local languages were to be tolerated, but not in urban areas such as Hyderabad where only Urdu was to be used (*ibid.*, 131–32). Another symbolic event was a speech delivered by Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān to the first meeting of the Council of State held on 28 February 1884. This is in Urdu and the language is simple and understandable (Pachauri 1993, 71). In 1886 all offices were ordered to work in Urdu (*Jarīda* v. 4, qtd. in Kamāl 1990, 132).

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

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

(qtd. in Sajanlal 1974, 142)

After this the Urduization of the state took place very quickly. First, let us look at the expansion of Urdu in the domain of education—a domain as important as the administrative and judicial domains and which, indeed, feeds both.

Urdu and the Royalty

As mentioned earlier, Urdu was taught even when Persian was the official language of the state. The Census of 1871 recorded that “Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani” as well as English are taught (Ali, C. 1885–86, 4:471). Royalty were also taught Urdu in addition to Persian and English. The Resident, Mr. Saunders, addressed Sālār Jañg I on 12 January 1871 in “Hindoostanee,” hoping that it was a language that would “bear good fruit at Hyderabad...” (Ali, S.M. 1883–86, 3:54).

The young Nizam, Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān, was educated under the supervision of an English tutor, but he was taught Urdu and Persian as well as English. The overall incharge of the young Nizam’s education was Captain John Clerk, son of G. R. Clerk, Governor of Bombay. He arrived

in Hyderabad in January 1875. Sarvar Jañg, the young Nizam's Indian tutor, mentions how the prince was taught by elderly, sycophantic courtiers—certainly not the best way to teach a child. However, at the end of 1879 the prince's "report card showed he was doing well in Geography, Arithmetic and Urdu" (Zubrzycki 2006, 92). Sarvar Jañg also describes how the teaching of Persian was replaced with that of Urdu, which was taught until four o'clock in the afternoon, and calligraphy in its script was taught for half an hour (Jañg 1933, 211).

Later, when the question of the education of Mīr 'Uṣmān 'Alī Khān came up, by this date, at least in British minds, Urdu was important enough to be taught to a major princely ally of the empire. The Resident wrote, "[He should] begin with his own vernacular—Urdu"—but also, "parri passu, learn English" (Durant 1892).

Accordingly, both English and Urdu were taught to the future ruler. For Urdu, Saiyad Ḥusain Bilgramī was appointed tutor to the young prince in 1895. And for English, he had an English tutor—Bryan (later Sir) Egerton. In addition there were Indian tutors (*atālīqs*) who taught Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English (Bawa 1992, 40–41).

Others in the royal family, such as 'Uṣmān 'Alī Khān's daughter-in-law Durr-e Shehvār (d. 2006)—mother of Mīr Barkat 'Alī Khān Mukarram Jāh (b. 1938), the eighth Nizam, who held the title from 1967 until 1971, and daughter of Sulṭān 'Abdu'l- Majīd of Turkey—learned it from Āghā Ḥaidar Ḥasan Mirzā (Zubrzycki 2006, 155). She became fluent in Urdu in less than a year (*ibid.*). Mukarram's education was in Madrasa-e 'Āliya to begin with, but then he went to Doon School and Harrow (*ibid.*, 167). Even Mukarram Jāh's Turkish wife Esra Birgin learned to speak Urdu (*ibid.*, 224). However, in keeping with the increasing modernization and anglicization of the Indian élite, the young princes were learning more English than any other languages through their schooling.

The royalty were not the only ones to learn Urdu, of course. The common people, and especially the middle classes, learned it in order to find employment. There were many institutions and people to promote the learning of Urdu. One of the personalities associated with Urdu, Maulavī 'Abdu'l-Ḥaq (1890–1961), later called *Bābā-e-Urdū* (Father of Urdu), was an institution by himself. Among other things, he wrote two pamphlets on letter writing in Urdu in 1901. In the second, there is a letter from a father to a son exhorting him to take an interest in the mother tongue (Urdu). The son agrees and sets out on this path. These pamphlets were written at the request of Saiyad Ḥusain Bilgramī, probably in his capacity as the Nizam's tutor. 'Abdu'l-Ḥaq thus tried to sow the seed of love for Urdu in the future ruler's breast (Ānd 1930, 34).

Maulavī ‘Abdu’l-Ḥaq was also one of the pioneers of Osmania University. He presided over the Dāru’l-Tarjuma and invited eminent people from North India: Zāfar ‘Alī Khān, ‘Abdu’l-Mājid Daryābādī, ‘Abdu’l-Ḥalīm Sharar, Vaḥīdu’d-Dīn Salīm, Saiyad Sulaimān Nadvī, Maulānā Mirzā Mehdī Khān, Ross Masud, and others (Imāmī 1930, 133). Maulavī ‘Abdu’l-Ḥaq told one of his friends, also called ‘Abdu’l-Ḥaq, that he considered him a “true Muslim” because one characteristic of a Muslim was “*Urdū kī muḥabbat*” (the love of Urdu) (Sarvarī 1930, 158).

Thus, while the upper classes were switching to English in response to increasing anglicization, the middle classes were fully given to education in Urdu.

Urdu in the Domain of Education

There are several accounts of the spread of Urdu in the domain of education in Hyderabad. A detailed account, by Saiyad Muhyu’d-Dīn Qādirī Zōr (1934), informs the reader about ‘Uṣmān ‘Alī Khān’s role in the propagation of Urdu. Another book, by ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Sarvarī (1934), gives even more facts and figures about the gradual progress of Osmania University. Both end on a triumphant note because the year 1934, when they were first published, was a high point in the life of Urdu in Hyderabad. It was left to later historians, such as Kamāl (1990) and Arshad (1988), to lament the downfall of Urdu after India took over, creating the state of Andhra Pradesh. The ascendant language now was English, though Telugu and other languages were used at the lower level in ordinary schools and in the lower domains of power. The Bureau of Translation (*Dāru’l-Tarjuma*) produced 382 books and provided employment for 129 translators. It burned down in 1955, though some of the books which had been translated earlier are to be found in the Nizam Trust Library in Hyderabad (Bedar 1979, 228). Osmania’s Department of Urdu is still proud of its history.

In 1997, in response to the growing demand for raising the status of Urdu in India, the authorities agreed to the establishment of an Urdu-medium university in Hyderabad. Accordingly the “Maulana Azad National Urdu University Act 1996, No. 2 of 1997” was passed. On 9 January 1998 the MANUU was established in order to “promote and develop the Urdu language, provide higher, technical and vocational education in the Urdu medium...” (MANUU, n.d.). At the moment, the university has twelve departments and twenty-eight programs of study functioning in Urdu. It has a Department of Translation and an Urdu

Cultural Center which preserves archival material including works of art related to the Urdu-using Indian culture.

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

Political Aspects of the Urduization of Hyderabad

The late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century was the period of Muslim and Hindu nationalism in the country. Language became an important symbol of the identities created during this time. In North India, the linguistic aspect of the clash of these identities became known as the Hindi-Urdu controversy (Brass 1974; King 1994). In Hyderabad state, however, the domination of Urdu increased and resistance against it was weak and ineffectual.

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

The scheme for a university in Hyderabad has been traced back to the time of Sālār Jañg I. In 1875 Shaikh Aḥmad Ḥusain Rifʿat Yār Jañg proposed the establishment of such an institution without making English the medium of instruction. He wrote in Persian that it was difficult for Indians to study all subjects in English and the attempt would be a waste of time. To this the Prime Minister replied in the same language: “I have seen each

word and am pleased and felicitate the author and consider this idea very useful" (Aḥmad 1979, 103). However, the idea was not implemented until much later, although the medium of instruction at the university is not clearly indicated. The proposal which succeeded was put forward by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840–1922), a British writer and a sympathizer of the Muslims, (Ali, S.M. 1883–86, 8:314–17). Jamālu'd-Dīn Afghānī (1838–1897), an important Muslim political figure and visionary of the period, was also a supporter of such a university as a symbol of Muslim civilization. Nevertheless, the university was not immediately established, though the movement in support of it gathered momentum. Eventually, the Nizam's order establishing this university, now called Osmania University, was issued in Urdu on 26 April 1917. It states clearly that the medium of instruction will be "our language Urdu" (*hamārī zubān Urdū*) but English will retain its educational importance (Pachauri 1993, 45). Another order (14 August 1917) establishes the Translation Bureau of the university (*Shubāʿ-e Tarjuma*) charged with translating important works from other languages into Urdu (*ibid.*, 47).

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

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

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

Other allegations included making Osmania a "Sectarian" University and the giving of Prominence to Urdu, neglecting the other local languages.

The last allegation, regarding the neglect of the languages of the Hindus, was emphasized by Nihal Singh.

(*Hindu* 11 October 1923, qtd. in Subramanyam 1991, 90)

The British realized the political and ideological motives of the Nizam's decision-makers as Sir Arthur Lothian, the Resident, suggests:

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

(Resident 1944b)

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

Conclusion

The substitution of Urdu for Persian in Hyderabad state can be understood with reference to the use of Urdu in the lower domains of power in British India. Since the British used it in much of North India in the lower courts, administration and schools, it came to be linked with employment, urbanization and *ashraf* (elitist) states. It also came to be associated with Muslim identity, which was being shaped in opposition to the Hindu identity—with which Hindi in the Devanagari script was associated—during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, when North Indian Muslims found employment in Hyderabad, they favored the use of Urdu in place of Persian both because it was more convenient for them and also because, in their eyes, the language now had an iconic status that the old-fashioned Hyderabad aristocracy had reserved for Persian. The change, therefore, brought Hyderabad in synchrony with the rest of Muslim India, which considered Urdu a part of their cultural heritage and a symbol of their distinctive identity in India.

At the same time, this excessive focus on Urdu as a defining feature of Muslim identity and political power in Hyderabad had a squeezing effect upon the local languages and, therefore, upon the Hindu majority of the state. The Hindi-Urdu controversy of North India, then, took the form of an Urdu versus local languages conflict in Hyderabad wherein the latter came under pressure, though they were not completely wiped out. However, even the extent to which they were marginalized represents a departure from earlier practices. What would have happened if Hydera-

bad had become autonomous is a question which the historian cannot answer. Hearing the present complaints of the supporters of Urdu in Hyderabad, it is necessary to point out that power and justice generally do not go together. If the powerful understand this and make their policies more just towards the deprived—whether linguistically or otherwise—they will be contributing to a politically stable future for themselves as well as for those whom they rule. □

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