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URDU LINGUISTIC MINORITIES AND EDUCATION

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The Plight of the Urdu Linguistic Minority

This paper is a modified version of the presentation made in a Workshop on National Commission on Religious and Linguistic minorities. The Workshop was chaired by the Honourable Justice Ranganatha Mishra.

My intent in this presentation was that, as a representative of the Urdu linguistic minority, I would bring to the notice of the National Commission the plight of the Urdu linguistic minority, who, like any other minority, faces collective discrimination and suffers from the sense of victimization on account of language.

I represented Urdu not just because it is my mother tongue, but also because it occupies a unique position, decidedly unusual, in the Indian linguistic scenario. Even if it is looked at in isolation, there is always a metaphysical presence of Hindi, which inevitably makes any discussion on Urdu to be looked at in relation with each other. This fact is altogether missing in the case of other Indian languages.

Urdu is an Indian Language

Born in the Indian soil and a product of an intimate interaction between the linguistic currents of Indo-Aryan and Perso-Arabic groups, Urdu genetically belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages, and has been for centuries a language of the people of all faiths. But, with the passage of time, the political and economic exigencies narrowed down the base of the language and bracketed it with certain social roles and group identity—Urdu as Muslim. The shared space, thus, became a site for identity politics.

The communal contexts within which discussions about the historical origins of Urdu and its role in national movement were framed, and the rhetoric used during the freedom struggle through the religio-nationalist and linguistic slogan of *Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan* heightened tension between Hindi and Urdu, and further distanced the possibility of engaging in any debate in the domain of civility.

Conceded that Urdu is, by and large, a language of Muslim religious minority today, does this perceived affiliation release the democratic state of India from the responsibility of according a rightful place to the language in education?

Advancement of the Minorities Through Education

Education is the key to all human advancement including economic and social uplift; hence it is a potential site for political contestation and struggle. It is empowering and constraining as well. Lack of education is the single most constraint in the way of people due to which they cannot avail of benefits from the socio-economic politics of the Government. Besides being empowering and disempowering, enabling and constraining, education is also an equally important tool for linguistic genocide. In fact, it is one of the most successful means of promoting or retarding, cultivating or destroying languages.

Fate of any language, its growth and development, largely depends upon its use in the domain of education.

The Role and Responsibility of the Democratic Polity

Does the democratic polity respect the right of minorities to protect and promote the use of their language in the domain of education? Is our language policy all about upholding the rule of majority without caring to nurture and fulfill the linguistic aspirations of minorities and protecting their languages that have been subordinated to the languages of the majorities in different regions?

Language and Social Backwardness

Although language may not be a determinant of socio-economic backwardness, or there may not be any direct correlation between religiousness and backwardness and corresponding linguistic backwardness, the discriminatory policies of various States vis-à-vis Urdu language has been one of the major reasons for Muslim educational backwardness, particularly in North India.

Muslims, a Least Educated Indian Community

According to several official reports carried out by different agencies, Muslims rank among the least educated communities in India. Muslim educational backwardness became an accepted fact when the states, for the first time on the basis of Program of Action for Minorities laid down in the National Education Policy of 1986, recognized Muslims as an educationally “backward” community. The High Powered Panel headed by Gopal Singh to look into the conditions of five religious communities, namely, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis and Buddhists, found that Muslims were one of the most marginalized communities in the country, hardly better off than the Dalits.

Of course, there can never be all India generalizations, for Urdu-speaking Muslim as a category is not homogenous – demographically, socially, culturally and economically. In fact, there are significant inter-regional diversities in all these attributes. The processes of proletarianization, indigenization, impoverishment and formation of the elite class have taken different courses altogether in different regions. Even their response to the impulses of social change, literacy and education has regional variations. Thus, while Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka responded to education enthusiastically by setting up educational societies, the response in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar was rather different.

Language Development and Language Maintenance Depends on School System

Much of the development of a mother tongue, especially in the formal domains, takes place within the school system. Hence, it becomes necessary to see what kind of educational language-related minority rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and other legal covenants and declarations by the Centre and States. What provisions are granted to use the minority languages as medium of instruction and examination? Do the children of linguistic minorities have a right to become bi – or multilingual?

Overtly Non-Discriminatory and Maintenance Orientation of India’s Language Policy

India's language policy is overtly non-discriminatory and maintenance-oriented. Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution provide certain rights to linguistic minorities and also make provisions as to how these rights can best be safeguarded and realized. Together they meet mutually supportive rights for minorities and minority institutions. Further, the Constitution seeks to protect the rights of linguistic minorities with in-built institutional arrangements under its Articles 347, 350, 350A and 350B along with Articles 32 and 226.

The Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities is in existence, since 30th July 1957, on the basis of Article 350B, which recommends for appointment of a Special Officer for linguistic minorities by the President. The duty of the Special Officer is to "investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution and report to the President on those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all reports to be laid before each House of the Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned."

Serious Gaps between Policy and Implementation

However, a serious gap exists between policy pronouncement and their implementation practices. Despite the guarantees provided to the minorities to conserve their languages and the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, languages of the linguistic minorities are still struggling for survival – Urdu being no exception here. The gap becomes more discernible in the educational system where the rights to use Urdu as medium of instruction and examination or even establishing Urdu medium schools or seeking recognition for Muslim educational institutions are being constantly denied, thus resulting in the educational backwardness of the Urdu linguistic minorities.

A Conflict Paradigm

From the perspective of a conflict paradigm, the causes can be analyzed from both structural and ideological perspectives.

(a) **Structural:** It could be a state, an institution (e.g., schools), laws and legislations, directives and issuance of certain orders, which cover linguistic rights or the position of different languages on time-table in schools, budget allotted for teacher-training or material production in minority languages, and a whole range of other facilities like getting government publications, advertisements, etc.

(b) **Ideological:** It is norms and values ascribed to different languages and their speakers which bring about certain positive or negative identification with the mother tongue and the sense of utility and worth of the minority language and its speakers.

Structural dimension

Covert policy of the State contributing towards discouragement in the use of Urdu as media of instruction and examination has made Urdu suffer immensely. Although Constitution guarantees instruction through mother tongue, lack of educational facilities of schools, teachers, non-availability of textbooks and teaching materials, and discouraging and daunting attitude of the state machinery have been forcing the children to take instruction in Hindi in place of Urdu.

This has been particularly so in case of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, but not so much in Bihar. In fact, it is in Uttar Pradesh that the educational facilities for instruction through Urdu at the secondary level are discouraged by the Government authorities, as the Uttar Pradesh High School and Intermediate Board has decided not to grant permission for teaching through the medium of Urdu in 1952 at the High School level (Fatihi, 1999).

Literacy in Urdu and Job Positions

As a result, Muslim literates educated through Urdu have been occupying very low positions in Uttar Pradesh as compared to their counterparts in other states. This fact emerges from Ahmad's study (1996), which is based on Field Survey in certain districts in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and a few areas in Delhi. According to this study, only 16.47% of the Muslim literates were educated through the Urdu medium in Uttar Pradesh as against 84% in Bihar and 34.17% in Delhi.

Table 10.1: Distribution of Literates by Medium of Instruction: Muslim Population by Sex.

Medium	Uttar Pradesh			Bihar			Delhi		
	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %	Male %	Female %
English	5.89	5.37	6.88	4.76	4.56	5.13	28.70	30.45	26.02
Hindi	77.29	76.78	78.25	9.50	10.60	7.37	35.85	37.82	32.81
Urdu	16.47	17.49	14.52	84.04	83.50	85.08	34.17	30.65	39.60

The same study also looks at the variation in the relative position of different languages as medium of instruction at various levels of education in all the three states.

Loss of Urdu Space for Other Languages

In Uttar Pradesh, the study shows that two-thirds of the literate population at the primary level is being taught through Hindi as the medium. At the middle, high school, Ten Plus Two and graduation levels the proportion goes up to more than 90%, while at the post graduate level it is slightly less than 90%. Compared to Hindi, Urdu shows "a continuous decline as a medium of instruction at all levels from the primary to the graduation level. It recovers its position slightly at the post graduation level... So far as the Muslim population is concerned, Hindi holds sway at the levels of education" (Ahmad, 1996: 14).

This decline of Urdu as a medium of instruction at various levels of education has also been observed in Delhi particularly as one goes from high school onward. However, in Bihar the situation is quite in contrast with Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Urdu retains its dominance at all levels of education in Bihar.

Table 10.2: Distribution of Literates by Main Medium of Teaching and by Educational Levels: Muslim Population

State	Medium	Primary %	Middle %	High School %	10+2 %	Graduation %	Post Graduate %	Professional %
Uttar Pradesh	TOTAL							
	English	10.05	1.17	0.34	0.76	4.06	14.03	13.09
	Hindi	62.94	89.66	96.58	96.06	92.52	77.38	78.38
	Urdu	26.64	8.84	2.87	2.55	2.87	8.14	7.50
	MALE							
	English	9.38	9.87	0.39	0.76	4.75	15.72	12.8
Hindi	60.89	89.46	96.31	96.23	92.12	76.92	78.55	
Urdu	29.38	9.33	3.09	2.38	2.43	7.02	7.44	

	FEMALE							
	English	4.18	1.86	0.26	0.76	2.54	10.49	14.71
	Hindi	24.80	90.13	97.08	95.65	93.38	78.32	77.45
	Urdu	8.23	7.73	2.47	2.93	3.82	10.49	7.84
Bihar	TOTAL							
	English	7.42	1.10	0.66	5.55	4.22	8.29	19.79
	Hindi	80.16	79.88	79.89	79.39	75.55	79.26	69.91
	Urdu	0.95	0.62	0.42	0.40	0.43	--	2.14
	MALE							
	English	7.76	1.06	0.58	1.14	1.75	8.33	21.25
	Hindi	82.41	82.86	81.04	80.66	78.35	81.55	68.12
	Urdu	0.77	0.78	0.54	0.28	0.49	--	2.50
	Bengali	8.82	14.79	17.55	15.92	16.78	9.52	8.12
	FEMALE							
	English	6.98	1.16	0.81	1.31	4.84	8.16	11.11
	Hindi	77.21	75.70	77.86	76.47	66.81	71.43	66.66
	Urdu	1.17	0.39	0.22	0.65	0.22	--	--
DELHI	TOTAL							
	English	27.83	11.63	12.49	22.76	41.45	66.64	78.00
	Hindi	36.99	46.08	46.45	38.66	27.05	13.54	11.41
	Urdu	34.92	42.03	40.78	38.50	29.69	18.41	13.88
	MALE							
	English	27.30	11.62	12.74	24.30	43.12	69.19	79.14
	Hindi	38.53	50.36	51.72	42.24	29.56	13.68	10.28
	Urdu	33.88	37.77	35.20	33.33	26.01	15.41	10.28
	FEMALE							
	English	28.41	11.63	12.10	20.32	38.66	61.51	73.73
	Hindi	35.01	39.28	38.37	32.39	25.00	13.26	15.64
	Urdu	36.25	48.81	49.33	46.68	35.56	24.40	27.37

Poor Educational Facilities in Urdu

Fatihi (1999) reviews the provision of educational facilities in Urdu in Uttar Pradesh for the academic year 1994-95. The following table provides the data regarding number of schools, and teachers and students in different types of schools, namely, Primary Schools and Junior High Schools in Uttar Pradesh:

Table 10.3: Educational Facilities in Primary Schools and Junior High Schools in Uttar Pradesh

Type of Schools	Number		
	Schools	Students	Teachers
1. Primary Schools where Urdu taught as a subject	5581	175000	6082
2. Primary Schools where Urdu is medium of instruction	422	268000	--
3. Recognized Maktabas	1155	-----	-----
4. Aided Maktabas	814	-----	-----
5. Governments Junior High Schools where Urdu is taught as a subject	4453	-----	-----
6. Government Jr. High Schools where Urdu is the medium of instruction	0	-----	-----
7. Private Jr. High Schools where Urdu is taught as a subject	364	59972	4817
8. Private Jr. High Schools where Urdu is the medium of instruction	18	224	73

If we make a comparison of the figures of the two levels of schools provided in the table 10.3, one can observe that there is significant percentage of dropouts, which is alarmingly high. Only 14% of the total number of students joining Urdu Primary Schools takes up Urdu as a medium or subject at the Junior High School level, i.e., a total dropout percentage at the Junior High School level of those students who join Urdu Primary Schools is as high as 86%. In Urdu medium Junior High Schools the dropout percentage goes up to 99.7%, thus suggesting that only 0.83% students of Urdu medium Primary Schools continue their study at Urdu medium Junior High Schools.

Non-availability of Books, etc.

Invariably non-availability of books, teaching materials, shortage of adequate number of students opting for the Urdu medium, lack of proper arrangements for teaching facilities, dearth of financial resources to conduct Teachers' Training courses and for hiring teachers create a hopelessly impossible situation for those aspiring to learn through Urdu.

However, this problem is not unique to Urdu. Even other linguistic minority groups had to face the same situation. Children of these linguistic minorities had been deprived of the facility to receive education through their mother tongue.

Solutions and Strategies Not Achieving Declared Goals

This invited the attention of some and necessitated serious deliberation. Finally, a solution came in the form of evolving certain formula 10:40 at the Primary stage and 15:60 at the Secondary stage. That is, if there were 10/15 students in a class of 40/60 in the school claiming any language as their mother tongue, instruction should be provided in that language. But in practice, the Principals/Headmasters would not allow 10:40 or 15:60 students to come together. When the formula did not yield the required results, Advance Register System was introduced. According to this system, the students of the linguistic minority group would get themselves registered in advance and as soon as the required minimum number would reach, facilities for instruction in the minority languages would be made available. However, no system can succeed if its implementing agency remains biased. Hence, the Advance Register System also failed.

Further, since the facilities for Urdu Teachers' Training are very rare, availability of teachers becomes a problem. Thus, the Revised Program of Action, brought out by the Union Government in 1992 with a pious proclamation on Muslim education, envisaged a scheme for providing Urdu teachers, Urdu textbooks, and Urdu Teachers' Training facilities. But the scheme did not find any takers, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Today in Uttar Pradesh there is just one Junior Basic Training Institute for Urdu medium primary school teachers.

While all these have been happening in Uttar Pradesh, the situation is not better in Delhi. For instance, opening new schools in Urdu areas or adding new sections for Urdu, etc. has received stiff resistance. Individuals pursuing this matter are discouraged at every level by the people who matter. This is evident from the following observation made by no other than a Deputy Director of Delhi Administration who is on record to say that "... we can allow opening a Urdu section in a certain Government School if guardians can manage the teacher and pay his salary" (Siddiqui, 1998: 62).

Discriminatory Treatment

Use of Hindi as a medium of instruction is an unmarked provision. However, in principle, rules also allow the use of Urdu and English as medium of examination. But in practice, discrimination exists not only against Urdu vis-a-vis Hindi but also in relation to English. When it comes to using Urdu and English special permission is to be sought in advance. While the Principal of the College can grant permission for English medium, permission for Urdu medium can only be obtained from the District Inspector of Schools who, besides creating routine harassment, will raise innumerable questions before granting any such permission. Many a time even satisfactory answers to the questions raised has not ensured formal grant of permission.

Rights of the linguistic and religious minorities to conserve their language and establish institutions of their choice emanate from Article 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution. But when it comes to establishing Urdu medium schools or seeking recognition for Muslim educational institutions, it becomes difficult to get permission and recognition from the Government. In fact, more than one hundred cases are pending with the Uttar Pradesh Government awaiting clearance for recognition. Although the situation may not be as bad in other States, Uttar Pradesh is the main homeland of Urdu where one-third of the country's Urdu population resides.

The erratic supply of textbooks further adds misery to this situation. In Central Schools and all other schools following CBSE pattern, NCERT books are prescribed, which are produced in English, Hindi and Urdu. The base for Urdu books is English for which translation is commissioned through outsourcing. At this point several problems arise, which need to be properly attended to:

- (1) At the administrative level there is no uniform policy regarding the use of technical terminology or even the use of simple language. Terms are created by the advocates of purism and pedantic groups having least concern for the comprehensibility of the materials.
- (2) Since translation is outsourced, production of these textbooks gets delayed, so much so that at times the books are not available all through the year or are supplied much after the onset of the academic session.
- (3) Sometimes with a view to meeting the demand as quickly as possible, books with howlers in language structure are pushed into without being vetted. They are not only incomprehensible to learners but are great demotivators for the novices.

As a result, Urdu students are discouraged and disenchanted and are consequently faced with a painful dilemma either to go for Hindi/English textbooks or to go without textbooks.

The Three-Language Formula

Keeping in view the language policy in India, three-language formula was introduced with the objective of upholding the plurilingual and multicultural fabric of the country and giving emphasis to mother tongue in imparting instruction to a child. The three-language formula, which is being implemented practically in all over the country (except Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry) has, however, failed to preserve and support the education rights of linguistic minorities. Majority of the schools at all stages of school education are imparting education through one medium only. The number of schools using two or more than two media of instruction is very small. This is evident from the Statement 1 given below:

Statement 1: School according to Media of Instruction

School Stage	Area	Number of Media			
		One-medium More than Schools medium	Two-medium schools	Three-medium schools	Three medium Schools
Primary	Rural	548603 (98.56%)	6701 (1.20%)	1297 (0.23%)	51 (0.01%)
	Urban	72240 (96.77%)	2061 (2.76%)	323 (0.43%)	32 (0.04%)
	Total	620843 (98.34%)	8762 (1.39%)	1620 (0.26%)	83 (0.01%)
Upper Primary	Rural	142298 (98.25%)	2098 (1.45%)	390 (0.27%)	43 (0.03%)
	Urban	39864 (93.64%)	2289 (5.37%)	407 (0.96%)	13 (0.03%)
	Total	182362 (97.21%)	4387 (2.37)	797 (0.42%)	56 (0.03%)
Secondary	Rural	44322 (97.02%)	1217 (2.66%)	101 (0.22%)	44 (0.10%)
	Urban	1906 (88.46%)	2169 (10.06%)	279 (1.29%)	40 (0.19%)
	Total	63391 (94.27%)	3386 (5.04%)	380 (0.57%)	84 (0.12%)
Hr.Sec.	Rural	6740 (94.45%)	372 (5.21%)	22 (0.31%)	02 (0.03%)
	Urban	6901 (82.85%)	1330 (15.97%)	93 (1.12%)	05 (0.06%)

Total	13641	1702	115	07
	(88.21%)	(11.01%)	(0.74%)	(0.04%)

Source: Fifth All India Educational Survey

The Kendriya Vidyalaya System – Explicit and Implicit Preferences

If one looks at the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sanghathan's Annual Report, one finds that instruction is imparted only through the medium of Hindi and English. Although provisions are there to teach regional languages and mother tongue, if 20 or more students are willing to study the language, KVs have language teachers only in Hindi, English and Sanskrit. This is obvious from the status report on the number posts of language teachers sanctioned as on 31.10.1995:

Language	PGT	TGT
Hindi	956	1940
English	984	2100
Sanskrit	53	972

(Source: *Muslim India*, 151, July 1995 and 157, June 1996)

In fact, Sanskrit is being taught as a compulsory third language from Class V to IX in all KVs and it can also be offered as an additional optional subject in Class X and as an optional subject in Senior Secondary Class. According to a report documented in *Muslim India*, if a non-Hindi speaking child wishes to learn Hindi and English in a capital city of India, he must sacrifice his mother tongue because a child has the option to choose any two languages from the list in which, beside all other scheduled languages, foreign languages, Hindi and English have also been included.

A Malafide Operation

The Programme of Action also expressed firm commitment in adhering to the official three-language formula, but in spite of this commitment Urdu-speaking minority children have been denied their right to learn Urdu in Schools. It has been a malafide operation in Uttar Pradesh in such a way that an Urdu speaking person has to forgo his right to study English properly if he opts for Urdu as his mother tongue. This has been done by falsely demoting Sanskrit from its status as a classical language of India and categorizing it as a modern language, which it is not. Urdu has been unnecessarily being pitted against Sanskrit. Of course, one may study it, but not at the cost of depriving the right to education in our mother tongue to preserve our heritage. We also have a right to master

English to secure our livelihood. In fact, at one point of time during the time of erstwhile BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Urdu was bracketed with Science, a move which was finally withdrawn under tremendous pressure.

Writing about three language formula, Shahabuddin rightly points out: “Considering that 90% of Primary education is through Government or Municipal Schools, it is no wonder that when the roots are cut the watering of the leaves cannot prevent the withering. The Urdu speaking community has to struggle against this denial, along with other linguistic minorities in every state.” (1999: 566)

Early Declarations Relating to Facilities for Urdu

Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, in 1958 issued a statement on languages, specifying facilities for Urdu:

“In the areas and regions where the Urdu language is prevalent, the following facilities should be specially provided:

Facilities should be provided for instruction and examination in the Urdu language at the primary stage to all children whose mother tongue is declared by the parent or guardian to be Urdu.

- (1) Arrangements should be made for the training of teachers and for providing suitable textbooks in Urdu.
- (2) Facilities for instruction in Urdu should also be provided in the secondary stage of education.
- (3) Documents in Urdu should be accepted by all codes and offices without the necessity of translation or transliteration in any other language or script and petitions and representations in Urdu should also be accepted.
- (4) Important laws, rules and regulations and notifications should be issued in Urdu language also in areas where this language is prevalent and which may be specified for this purpose.”

But in spite of these policy decision, directives and issuance of Government orders, Urdu still remained outside the fringes of use. The situation became more acute in Hindi state, which is evident from the Press note of 1958 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs:

“6. Hindi has not only been given pride of place in our Constitution but is also the state language of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as well as some other states in India. There can be no question of any rivalry between Hindi and Urdu. Hindi necessarily occupies the dominant position in such states. But in accordance with the provision of the Constitution and desirability of encouraging an important language of India, spoken and used by considerable number of people, it is desirable to encourage and facilitate the use of Urdu by those who have been in the habit of using it and those who consider it as their mother tongue. This would apply especially to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar,

as well as to Delhi, which has been, for hundreds of years, one of the principal centers of the Urdu language.”

Stated Policies and Actual Conditions – Covert Practices

Although the stated policy has been to encourage and facilitate the use of Urdu particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi, it is in these states and particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi where there are maximum cases of denial of rightful position to Urdu in education and administration.

Despite the recommendations of Commissioner for Linguistic Minority in India, particularly with regard to Urdu in Uttar Pradesh, practically no papers written in Urdu are accepted at any government office for any of the purposes mentioned below:

- i. Documents written in Urdu to be accepted by Registration offices;
- ii. Publication of important rules, notifications, regulations in Urdu;
- iii. Issue of Government Orders and circulars of public importance in Urdu also;
- iv. Publication of important Government advertisements;
- v. Publication of Gazette in Urdu also;
- vi. Display of important sign board in Urdu also;
- vii. Receipt and reply of publications/representations in Urdu also.

Even applications written in Urdu for issuance of a ration card is not accepted, and, interestingly, advertisement for recruitment of Urdu teachers by the Basic Education Department at the District level has been only in Hindi.

Implementing Agency has been ignoring most of the orders of the Government with regard to Urdu. For instance, the then Uttar Pradesh Government issued an order on 6 May 1984 that the name plates and sign boards in all Government and semi Government offices be displayed in Urdu also. Although it was supposed to be complied by 31st May 1994, neither any office followed this order nor did the Government care to bother for its implementation.

Another instances of such covert policy is when the Northern Railway published timetable in Urdu, the copies were rarely made available for sale at most of the stations, and ultimately its publication in Urdu was discontinued.

Ideological Dimension

The term “minority” has been questioned by many as having very narrowed down connotation, which is based on two wrong assumptions that:

- (i) Hindus are a close knit, monolithic group, and
- (ii) Religious minorities are any more disadvantaged than some sections of the majority community.

In fact, it would be wrong to consider minority only on the basis of religious differences. Minorities are, rather, based on social disadvantaged and deprivation. There is yet another negative connotation associated with the term “minority”. It invariably invokes a sense of discrimination and stigmatization, perhaps also suppression. The moment one describes oneself as a member of a minority, one admits to belonging to a group which is discriminated against. It enhances the syndrome of *linguicism* where not only minority children negatively identify themselves with their mother tongue and culture, and consequently devalue their linguistic resources, but also the society looks down upon the children studying in minority language medium schools. At times they are even treated with disdain and not ever considered as being educated. Hence most of the time these children suffer from inferiority complexes.

Enforced Loss of Urdu Facilities and Urdu Space in the Curriculum

Even post-graduates with degree in Urdu grow up with negative feelings. When we hear someone say ‘*meraa man nahii kartaa* or *mujhe dukh is baat kaa hai* or *kasam* (in place of *qasam*) or *kalam* (in place of *qalam*) etc., perhaps these deviants may be rattling the purists and conformists of Urdu linguistic norms and it must do also but these are also suggestive of a shift which Urdu is undergoing from public sphere to private sphere. At an institutional level Urdu is neither a language of instruction nor of administration. It has now been relegated to the private sphere of the family and the highly restricted public sphere of the literary production. Today in an urban, petty bourgeois background where the role of the family in the construction of social and cultural agents has considerably declined and is being replaced by peer in schools and workplace, occurrence of such deviant expressions or linguistic forms in the speech repertoire of young Urdu knowing generation or even their loss of language is inevitable.

Urdu speakers are now faced with an impossible culturally schizophrenic situation. While on the one hand they are aware of the decline in Urdu and hence clamor to learn it, on the other hand the compulsions of market forces and highly competitive world of schooling have left hardly any incentive for the child to learn Urdu. It is the social disadvantage and deprivation coupled with linguicism that brings about an invisible ideology, which makes an appeal to learn a single dominant language. If linguistic minorities learn the dominant language then they will not suffer economic and social inequality. Attitudinal studies conducted by some scholars suggest that in spite of the demand for using mother tongue at pre-primary and primary levels in state-run schools, minority language speaking parents prefer to send their children in English or regional language medium schools because of socio-economic reasons.

Forced Gloomy Picture of Gains and Losses of Urdu Education

Getting education and accruing benefits from education go hand in hand. The issue of educability cannot be delinked from the question of returns from education. As it is, the Muslims are educationally backward and this backwardness has further been accentuated by:

(i) The belief that education is hardly providing any significant returns; on the contrary it is distancing the generations from their traditional occupation. Hence the peasantry, artisans, and the works doing petty jobs like carpentry, tailoring, motor/scooter mechanics, etc, which constitute overwhelmingly large chunk of Muslim population in India, do not see any value in this kind of education.

(ii) Lack of facilities to teach through mother tongue has generated many social forces to operate both consciously and subconsciously. While at the conscious deliberate level *madarsas* are set up as an alternative mode to conserve and sustain the vitality of Urdu in education system. At the subconscious level, since education is being imparted through Hindi, Hindi-Urdu antagonism with religious overtone in the back of their mind, made the Urdu speakers look at having education through Hindi as an imposition, therefore, developed negative attitude towards it. As a result, despite having been exposed to Hindi for a fairly good number of years in school Urdu speaking children hardly developed competence in it.

Struggle for Structural Power and Material Resources – Spatial Disability of Urdu

The above facts amply make it clear that there has been struggle for structural power and material resources between groups based on language. Even other scheduled languages have been witnessing this struggle particularly in those regions where they are not the principal languages. But compared to Urdu, these languages are relatively in a better position because they enjoy the privilege of being the principal language of the state (Sindhi being an exception).

Urdu suffers from spatial disability and its speaking population is in minority everywhere, even in Jammu and Kashmir where it enjoys the status of an Official language. How does the reproduction of unequal division of power and resources on the basis of language get its legitimacy and effectuation particularly in case of Urdu? Why has the language policy of some states been discriminating against Urdu? Like all other Indian languages, Urdu is equally rooted in Indian soil. Why learning of Urdu or making claim for rightful place of Urdu (or any other minority language) is looked at as an attempt to subvert what has been constructed as the Indian 'mainstream' - the mainstream which epitomizes Brahmanical, Sanskritized, largely communalized version of the Indian identity or is seen as virtually asking to be stigmatized and set apart?

The Misunderstood Socio-Political Contexts of Urdu

Answer to these questions can be found by locating Urdu in its socio-historical contexts, for Urdu has its relationship with immediate socio-political conditions. In fact, it is very rare to find, in any other Indian language, this blatantly obvious and striking co-relation between language and its immediate socio-political conditions that have a bearing on the ontological well-being of a language.

Embittered communalist contexts and skewed history particularly against the backdrop of creation of Pakistan have brought about an attributed association of religion with Urdu

and the widespread perception that Urdu has been the determinant of nationality (along with religion), and consequently Urdu is held responsible for the partition of India and Pakistan. No doubt after 1857 Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his followers were anxious to shake off disloyalty with the British and preserve their standing in their own premise, and perhaps on account of this anxiety that the Urdu speaking elite of North India were energetic in orchestrating and demanding a share of representation of Muslims, which subsequently became a prelude to partition.

Urdu, a Language of Pakistan?

However, to assume that Urdu has been the language of Pakistan movement would be an overgeneralization. For such an argument not only suffers from historical accuracy but also becomes a victim of reductionism.

The link between Islam, Urdu and Pakistan largely emanates from the speech of Liyaqat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, when he said: “Pakistan is a Muslim state, and it must have its lingua franca... and a language of hundred million Muslims is Urdu.” However, if we look at the 1951 Census Report taken just after three years of Liyaqat Ali Khan’s assertion, we can fairly conclude how far-fetched such a claim was which is evident from the following statistical information:

- (1) 62% of Indian Muslims and around 93% of Pakistani Muslims did not think of themselves as Urdu speakers.
- (2) 38% of Indian Muslims and 7.2% of Pakistani Muslims thought of themselves as Urdu speakers.
- (3) Even in Uttar Pradesh only 48% returned Urdu as their language.

Attributed association of religion with Urdu, its role in the movement of Pakistan and deep cultural prejudices where Urdu, given its link with Persian and Perso-Arabic script, are perceived as a product of Muslim conquest. At this point it may not be out of place to mention here that perhaps it is on account of its link with Persian, which has rendered Urdu suffer from what Oommen (2001) calls, “Constitutional Disability”.

Article 351 of the Constitution reads, “it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expression used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eight Schedule, and by drawing wherever necessary and desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages”

Emphasis or Overemphasis on Selected Languages

Here not only that emphasis placed on Sanskrit has been partial and prejudicial, at the cost of Persian (and even some other classical languages like Persian, Tamil, Pali), but also treats Sanskrit language and literature as providing a foundation of the composite

culture, notwithstanding the fact that if composite culture of India is relevant, Urdu is more a visible product of our composite culture. Further if the forms style and expression used in Hindustani are to be invoked to develop Hindi, relevance of Persian cannot be ignored.

Keeping Alive the Wounds and Prejudices

Interestingly, all these attributes are being re-enforced by the action of a section of Muslims in the subcontinent—be it in the form of misplaced enthusiasm and support displayed during cricket, imposition of Urdu as an official and national language of Pakistan and declaration of Urdu as the official language of Jammu and Kashmir. Malicious and divisive discourses are deliberately whipped up to keep the wounds and prejudices caused by history alive. May be inadvertently this is how states' discriminatory policy vis-à-vis Urdu gets justified as cultural revenge and, thus, every Urdu speaker is made to feel it as his or her uniquely punishing destiny.

Urdu is Not Exclusively a Muslim Identity Language

Identification of Urdu with Muslim can hardly be substantiated. It is only in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that we find Urdu as an icon of Muslim identification, and these two states accounts for only one-third of the Muslim population. This attributed religious affiliation with Urdu has serious political implications and is violative of linguistic human rights. By denying the right to be educated through mother tongue, we are not only discriminating against the section of Muslim minority but also a linguistic minority who is not Muslim. This Muslim identification is also detrimental to sustenance of any discourse, which is sensitive to the linguistic minorities from the humane liberal position. Unfortunately we have around us discourse being generated from perversely liberal position and it is this discourse that makes demand for “protection” because Indian Constitution and Indian secularism itself demands that the rights of every religious and linguistic minority be protected. In common perception (and thanks of our myopic visionaries) Urdu conjures up the religious identification. So tantalizing is this perception that it has even blinded our humane liberals, who in the enthusiasm of their religious piety gloss over the actual history of Urdu.

The Madrassa System

The State policy of suppression of Urdu not only contributed towards distancing the Urdu speakers from Urdu to the advantage of Hindi, but also “resulted in almost disuse of Urdu in the state of Uttar Pradesh, except for the backyard of the traditional madrasa-maktab system.” (Ansari, qtd. In *Muslim India*, 150, June 1995). Poverty, lack of access to political influence, scarcity of jobs, and unemployment reinforced this belief and further brought backwardness among Muslims. Hence many chose government schools for madrasas. Madrasas system of education had been established in the past; however, its proliferation in India today is a post Partition phenomenon.

Madarsa system drew its patronage and support from feudal estates and princely houses. The system suffered a tremendous set back with the dissolution of feudal estates and princely houses, and also discriminatory practices adopted by the state vis-à-vis Urdu language. These madrasas were consequently set up for imparting education through mother tongue, i.e., Urdu and many parents preferred to send their children to these madrasas. Such preference indicates a strong desire to maintain separate identity through the use of Urdu as medium of instruction.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh has the largest number of such madrasas in which the younger generation is provided education through mother tongue, for it is in this state where there are hardly any Urdu-medium schools, which is in gross violation of the Constitutional right of Muslims to be taught in their mother tongue. However, the situation is not uniform all over the state.

For instance, in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, there are several Urdu medium schools funded by the State governments. In Uttar Pradesh madrasas also came as a response to the *safronization* of the curriculum run by the government schools and unleashing of negative and denigrating references to Islam and Muslims in particular in government prescribed textbooks.

The council for religious education (Deeni Taleemi Council) established a number of maktabs with a view to providing religious and secular education as well as teaching of Urdu up till 5th grade. Thereafter, the students were allowed to join government schools. In fact, in some states, e.g. Assam and Maharashtra, there are government – recognized madrasa education boards affiliated to the State Board of Secondary Education, which provides teachers' salaries and prescribe a syllabus for affiliated madarsas. These students are allowed to join mainstream schools because the Board recognizes their certificates. Not only that madarsas have tremendously increased over the last few years but also there has been spurt in its growth mostly in the rural areas. Religious and linguistic awareness among the rural masses and their commitment to Urdu has demolished the highly accepted myth that Urdu is only a language of the Urban elite.

Recommendations

As per suggestions put forward in the Program for Action for Minorities, the onus of implementing Muslim education rests with the state governments. Despite these suggestions, the state's policies on minority education have not been able to check the problem of Muslim educational backwardness. Hence the following recommendations are suggested:

1. There is a need for statutory action at the Central level to fully implement various minority related programs funded by the State and to streamline the procedure for recognition, affiliation and funding of minority educational institutions. Also the Centre must work in tandem with the States in matter related to education. Conceded that education is in the State list and the States are committed to provide for universalization of the primary education, but when the Constitution talks about

compulsory and free education for the children up to the age of 14 years, it does not refer to the Union or the State. It refers to both. Hence despite elementary education as a subject is allotted to the State government, the Central government has launched various schemes like Operation Black Board, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, etc., from time to time. This can be achieved by involving National Minorities Commission and Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities. Additional statutory powers can be provided to them and also to the various State Minorities Commissions. There should be separate unit to deal with educationally marginalized minorities.

2. Linguistic Minorities Education Board can be established at the Central as well as State level to help the government implement various programs meant for educationally deprived linguistic minorities.
3. Extra powers must be given to the CLM to enforce its recommendations and Commissioner Linguistic Minority must be entrusted with sufficient power to take necessary action against those States where its recommendations are not implemented.
4. 86th Amendment to the Indian Constitution must be utilized to grant minority languages the status of first language for ages of 6-14 since children have a fundamental right to education.
5. Communalization of politics has resulted in reinforcement of the essential notion of identity. This essentialist notion of identity and polarization of language with respect to a particular group is a regressive step. But unfortunately it is being cultivated—Punjabi as a preserve of Sikhs, Hindi of the Hindus and Urdu of Muslims, thus causing erosion of shared space of language use and loss of multi-lingual identity of an individual. It is the responsibility of the federal and state government to ensure that essentialism does not prevail over multi-linguality and language should not be a preserve of any one religious community. India as a secular, democratic country can avoid the divisiveness on the basis of linguistic diversity. In fact, linguistic diversity is a resource and an asset, which must be developed creatively by inculcating it in the educational system. Urdu, and for that matter any other minority language should be offered to children of Primary Schools. It should not be made available only to first language learners but also to those for whom it is not the first language. This would not only help in developing better inter-cultural understanding but would also create greater facility to learn second and third language.
6. If the option for instruction in mother tongue is not available, maybe on account of lack of facilities to teach through mother tongue, then at least Urdu script and vocabulary as a second language at a later stage must be added after basic skill and grammar via Nagari have been acquired. This applies to other minority languages as well.
7. If by implication spurt in the growth of madrasas is attributed to lack of facilities to teach through mother tongue, i.e. Urdu and, consequently, marginalization of Urdu at infant, Primary and Secondary School levels, then every effort must be made to ensure that mother tongue teaching is seriously conducted within the framework of secular education. It is also important that status of Urdu be enhanced and its teaching be allowed in the main stream Schools. This would not only reverse proliferation of religious institution through which exclusivities (or “siege mentalities”) are enhanced but would also instill confidence and positive self-

evaluation among the Urdu speaking linguistic minorities. Godbole (2001) has rightly emphasized this necessity of giving preference to the teaching of Urdu in the mainstream schools when he writes about the 93rd Amendment; “while opening new government schools, preference must be given to the areas in which Muslims reside in sizeable numbers, as otherwise the neglect of such areas will lead to proliferation of madrasas.”

8. If we concede to the general perception that Urdu is the language of Muslims, language policy with regard to education must not allow the usage of Urdu to be delimited to Muslims alone. In fact, any such approach that supports a simplistic equation of “Muslim = Urdu = Unpatriotic” would be “counterproductive not just for a community but also for the country” (Gundara, 2003: 53).
9. Equal opportunity and facility must be provided for developing and learning all Indian languages irrespective of whether or not they are incorporated in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution.
10. Corollary to this is the issue of special position rendered to the Scheduled Languages. Regarding the languages of the Eight Schedule the general impression is that these languages have exclusive rights and enjoys special privileges. Although Commissioner Linguistic Minorities has been, time and again, issuing the clarification that this general belief is “an erroneous impression” (and) “in reality there is no such distinction at all in so far as the use of various languages for educational purpose” is concerned (41 Report), all this has not been able “to remove the presumption that the inclusion of a language in Schedule VIII means a special position.” Hence, either all the 114 languages be included in the Eighth Schedule or Eighth Schedule be abolished and the languages of Indian Union be treated as the national wealth of the State and on the line of the Constitution of Russian Federation, “the Union and the State guarantee to all its people, regardless of their numbers, equal rights to preservation and comprehensive development of the native language, freedom of choice and use of the language of communication.”
11. Of course, Constitutional protection has to be sought, but one should not rely only on constitutional protection and not make effort ourselves. The minority language speakers must bestir themselves to teach their children and dependence their language through their private, individual, and collective efforts. Perhaps, one way to promote it is through books, producing cheap paperbacks, on the lines of Penguin Books, etc.

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