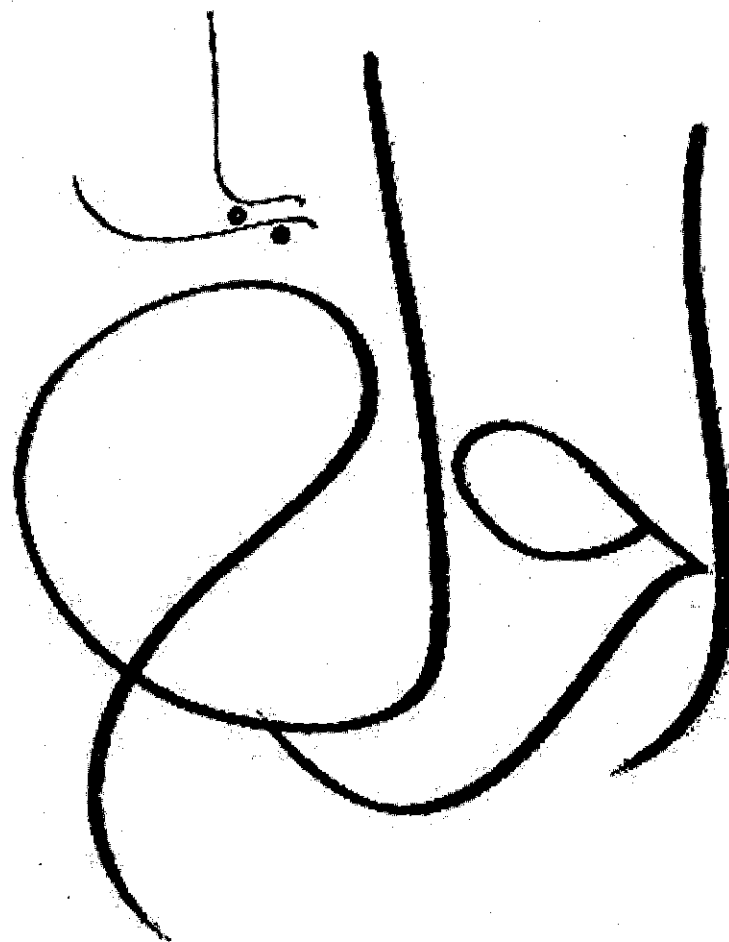


the eighteenth century. Poets examined--with a view to praise or blame--each other's writings, commented copiously on their friends' and pupils' works, avidly awaited news of literary creations from faraway places. Mīr (1722-1810) was not exaggerating when he claimed that his poems had travelled to distant lands, to places even outside the country. The stereotype of the Urdu poet, however, has unfortunately been that of a self-regarding recluse, unaware even of the rose-garden just beyond his window, as a famous (and unsubstantiated) story about Mīr tells us. The Urdu writer's awareness of his literary and social environment is quintessentially expressed in the *tazkirahs*, but unfortunately they were cast aside by most literary historians as of no special use, except for settling--if at all possible--marginal disputes about dates and names.

It was for these reasons that the project 'Literary Cultures in Indian History', designed and directed by Sheldon Pollock, George V. Bobrinskoy Professor of Sanskrit and Indic Languages at the University of Chicago, came as a welcome opportunity for me--and to many others like me working in Indian languages--to organize my thoughts on the literary history and culture of my language, try to see how they fit into the larger Indian reality, and then set down a narrative that made some sense of a material that had remained largely inchoate so far. This book grew out of the paper that I produced for Sheldon Pollock's project.

Numerous debts are incurred during the thinking-out and writing of such a book. It is impossible to acknowledge all my debts. In the notes I have given, I hope fully and accurately, the source of all texts and all information that I owe to other authors. The names of some friends too occur in the notes as having brought some information or text to my attention. Some other friends are mentioned in the acknowledgement at the beginning of the book. All flaws and errors of course are my own.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi  
Allahabad  
September 30, 1999



## Chapter One: History, Faith, Politics-- Origin Myths of Urdu and Hindi

Using the term 'early Urdu' is not without its risks. 'Urdu' as a language name is of comparatively recent origin, and the question of what was or is 'early Urdu' has long since passed from the realm of history, first to the colonialist constructions of the history of Urdu / Hindi, and then to the political and emotional space of Indian (that is, Hindu) identity in modern India. For the average Hindi user today, it is a matter of faith to believe that the language he knows as 'Hindi' is of ancient origin, and its literature originates with Khusrau (1253-1325), if not even earlier. Many such people also believe that the pristine 'Hindi' or 'Hindvi' became 'Urdu' sometime in the eighteenth century, when the Muslims 'decided' to weep away from 'Hindi' as it existed at that time, and adopted a heavy, Persianised style of language which soon became a distinguishing characteristic of the Muslims of India.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In recent times, this case was most elaborately presented by Amrit Rai in *A House Divided*. Rai's thesis, though full of inconsistencies, or tendentious speculation rather than hard facts, or fanciful interpretation of actual facts, was never fully refuted by Urdu scholars. The only extensive rejoinders that I am aware of were by Khalil Ahmad Beg, in his *Lisānī tanāzur*, and Abū Muḥammad Saḥar in his *Hindī/hindavī par ek naẓar*. Both texts first came out as essays in 1986. Abū Muḥammad Saḥar briefly anticipates some of the points made by me in the present work. Unfortunately, Saḥar's text came to my notice only after I had prepared the final draft of this work.

It is not generally known that Rai's thesis was actually based on a milder version developed by his father, Premchand, in an address that he delivered before the Aryā Bhāshā Sammelan at Lahore in 1936. Premchand said, 'During the Muslim period, there must have been three forms of Hindi: one, the pure, idiomatic Hindi, unmixed with loan-words, written in the Nagari script, and called Bhasha, or Nagari;

Quite a bit of the speculation that goes by the name of scholarly historiography of Hindi / Urdu language and literature today owes its existence to the fortuity of nomenclature. Early names for the language now called Urdu were Hindvī, Hindī, Dihlavī, Gujrī, Dakanī, and Reḳhtah, more or less in that order, though until about the middle of the nineteenth century Dakanī continued to be the name for the form of the language used in the Deccan. The English seem to have found a set of names of their own liking, or invention. Edward Terry, companion to Thomas Roe at Jahāngīr's court, described the language in his *A Voyage to East India* (London, 1655) as 'Indostan', saying that it was a powerful language which could say much in a few words, had a high content of Arabic and Persian, but was written differently from Arabic and Persian.<sup>2</sup> Other names that the English seem to have used for this language include 'Moors', 'Hindoostanic', 'Hindoostanee', and 'Indostans'. The latter's existence is attested by the *Oxford English Dictionary*; the others we'll encounter as this study progresses. With the exception of 'Hindustani', no native speaker seems to have used, or even been familiar with, these words as language names.

In the North, both 'Reḳhtah' and 'Hindī' were popular as names for the same language from sometime before the eighteenth century, and the name 'Hindī' was used, in

the other, Urdu, that is, Hindi, mixed with Persian, and written in the Persian script; and the third, Braj Bhasha. The culture of the Muslims is of Iran and Arabia. This began to influence the language. Arabic and Persian words began to enter it [the language of the Muslims] and things are now at such a pass that Hindi and Urdu are like two languages.'

Premchand's text came to my attention through a translation published by Mānak Ṭālah in the Urdu weekly *Hamari zabān*. I have verified and translated from the original Hindi (Premchand, *Kuchh vichār*, pp. 74-75). The mischief inherent in these remarks seems to have escaped Premchand, who earlier expressed much saner views on the Urdu / Hindi question.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Terry, *A Voyage to East India*, London 1655. Quoted in Cohn, 'The Command of Language', p. 300.

preference to 'Reḳhtah', from about the mid-nineteenth century. The spoken language was almost always referred to as 'Hindī'.<sup>3</sup> It was not unknown, in fact, even in the early twentieth century, for the name 'Hindī' to be used to mean 'Urdu'.<sup>4</sup> 'Hindvī' was in use until about the end of the eighteenth century. Muṣḥafī (1750-1824) says in his first *divān*, compiled around 1785,

/Oh Muṣḥafī, put away Persian now,  
Hindvī verse is the mode of the day./<sup>5</sup>

'Urdu' as a name for the language seems to occur for the first time around 1780. All, or almost all, the earliest examples are from Muṣḥafī again. He says in his first *divān*,

/Muṣḥafī has, most surely,  
claim of superiority in Reḳhtah--  
That is to say, he has expert knowledge  
of the language of urdū./<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup>In Mīr (1722-1810) we can find examples of the use of both 'Reḳhtah' and 'Hindī' for the spoken language. From the first *divān* (c.1752):

/It's my own tongue, my dear  
Don't contend with me in Reḳhtah/.

And from the fourth *divān* (c.1794):

/God knows what's the thing called 'joy of the heart'; these  
words  
Do not occur in the Hindī language/.

See 'Abbāsī, *Kulliyāt-e mīr*, pp. 301, 632.

<sup>4</sup>See for instance, Iqbāl, in his Persian *masnavī*, *Asrār-e khudī*: /Though Hindī is, in sweetness, sugar, / Persian style of speech is sweeter/ (Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt-e fārsī*, p. 11). Iqbāl is explaining why he didn't write the poem in Urdu. He uses the name 'Hindī' for it. The poem was first published in 1915. I am grateful to Mirzā Ḳhalīl Beg of Aligarh Muslim University for drawing my attention to these verses.

<sup>5</sup>Muṣḥafī, *Kulliyāt*, vol. 1, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>Muṣḥafī, *Kulliyāt*, vol. 1, p. 38.

'Urdu' here can or in fact should mean the city (of Shāhjahānābād) rather than the language. In the following instance, from the fourth *divān*, compiled around 1796, the reference seems to be clearly to the language name:

/They put *gosh* and *chashm* everywhere in place of *nāk* and  
*kān*,  
And believe that their language is the language called 'Urdu'/?

In a paper originally published in 1926, Hāfiẓ Maḥmūd Sherānī quoted the following *shī'r* (two lines of verse, generally containing a complete utterance; popularly translated as 'couplet') as one of Muṣḥafī's:

/May God preserve them, I have  
heard the speech of Mīr and Mirzā,  
How can I truthfully, oh Muṣḥafī, say,  
my language is Urdu?/?<sup>7</sup>

'Mirzā' here apparently refers to Mirzā Saudā, who died in June 1781; thus this *shī'r* can be dated from before the middle of 1781. This *shī'r* has been quoted also by Naiyar Kākori in his dictionary (1924), in support of the entry 'Urdu' as a language name.<sup>9</sup> Neither scholar gives the source. I couldn't find this *shī'r* in the gigantic printed output of Muṣḥafī, including the press copy of the *Divān-e qasā'id* (the volume containing the panegyrics, satires, etc.) edited by Nūr ul-Ḥasan Naqvī, to be printed shortly by the Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab, Lahore. Sherānī, however, was a careful scholar, and wouldn't have made the attribution without good reason.

There is a manuscript of Muṣḥafī in the Panjab University, Lahore, library; it is reported to contain some material yet unpublished. Sherānī had access to it, and may have found this verse there. Since the *shī'r* apparently refers to Saudā as a living person, it should have been composed before Saudā's death in June 1781--though not much before, because Muṣḥafī,

<sup>7</sup>Muṣḥafī, *Kulliyāt*, vol. 2, p. 578.

<sup>8</sup>Sherānī, *Māqālāt-e sherānī*, vol. 1, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup>Naiyar Kākori, *Nūr ul-lughāt*, p. 265.

born in 1750, wouldn't have begun writing poetry much before 1770. He went to Lucknow for the first time around 1772; Saudā was there at that time, though not Mīr, who was still in Delhi. Muṣḥafī went to Delhi in 1773, and would then have had his first meeting with Mīr. Thus this *shī'r* can be presumed to have been composed between 1771 and 1773. However, the phrase 'God preserve' may well refer to the language, and not to the persons named in it. In that case, its date may be even after 1781.<sup>10</sup>

The name 'Urdu' seems to have begun its life as *zabān-e urdū-e mu'allā-e shāhjahānābād* (the language of the exalted City / Court of Shāhjahānābād, that is, Delhi). It originally seems to have signified Persian and not Urdu. It soon became shortened to *zabān-e urdū-e mu'allā*, then to *zabān-e urdū*, and then to *urdū*. The authors of *Hobson Jobson* cite a reference from 1560 in support of 'urdu bazaar' (camp-market). They also claim that the word *urdū* came to India with Bābur (1526), and that his camp was called *urdū-e mu'allā* (the exalted camp, or court), and the language that grew up around that court / camp was called *zabān-e urdū-e mu'allā*.<sup>11</sup> While the citation is

<sup>10</sup>Jamīl Jālibī refers (*Tārīkh-e adab-e urdū*, vol. 1, p. 661) to a three-*shī'r* poem by Mīr Muḥammadi Mā'il, and dates it as from before 1762. In this brief fragment-like poem, the word 'Urdu' occurs as a language name no fewer than three times. I have grave doubts about its authenticity. For one thing, it sounds too strained and contrived. For another, a point it makes about Shāhjahān is unhistorical, and is very similar to Mīr Amman's remarks (see below) about the origin of Urdu. Lastly, it says that the name 'Hindvī' has entirely disappeared. This is clearly false. Here is a rough translation of the verses in question:

/Having heard me out, he said:  
I asked about the state of Urdu, and why  
You came out with a horoscope of the City!  
Everybody has recorded in the documents of old  
That the popular name of Urdu was 'Hindvī',  
Then from Shāhjahān's times, the name  
'Hindvī' disappeared; 'Urdu' became current./

<sup>11</sup>Yule and Burnell, *Hobson Jobson*, p. 646.

obviously correct, the commentary of the authors is wrong for many reasons: there were plenty of Turks in India before Bābur; Bābur never had an extended stay in Delhi; Hindī / Hindvī / Dihlavī was already a language in and around Delhi before Bābur. No new language grew up in Northern India consequent upon the advent of the Mughals there.

By the eighteenth century, if not sooner, the word *urdū* meant 'the city of Delhi'. It continued to retain this sense until at least the early nineteenth century. Inshā and Qatīl say in *Daryā-e laṭāfat* (Ocean of Subtleties, 1807), that 'the residents of Murshidabad and 'Aẓīmābād (Patna), in their own estimation, are competent Urdu speakers and regard their own city as the *urdū*'; Inshā means that they are really local, and not true citizens of Shāhjahānābād.<sup>12</sup>

Although many of the Mughal royals, including Bābur himself, knew 'Hindī' in some measure (later Mughals knew at least one Indian language quite well), Urdu became the language around the Court only in January 1772 when Shāh 'Ālam II (r.1759-1806) moved to Delhi. The Court's official language remained Persian, but Shāh 'Ālam II, because of personal predilection and his long sojourn in Allahabad, spoke 'Hindī' on informal occasions, and was also a substantial author in that language. In his prose *dāstān* (traditional romance) '*Ajā'ib ul-qīṣaṣ*', Shāh 'Ālam identified the language of the tale as 'Hindī'. He began composing the tale around 1792/3, and

<sup>12</sup>Inshā and Qatīl, *Daryā-e laṭāfat*, 1850 ed., p. 116. Since the major portion of this book, dealing with matters of language, was written by Inshā, *Daryā-e laṭāfat* is popularly described as the property of Inshā. I too will conform to this practice whenever referring to the work's linguistic contents.

It must however be remembered that Inshā is quite familiar with 'Urdu' as a language name too. He seems to use the word in one sense or the other according to his purpose. Abū Muḥammad Saḥar has occasionally erred in reading 'Urdu' to mean the language in Inshā's and Muṣḥafī's texts, when actually the sense intended is 'the city of Shahjahanabad'. See Abū Muḥammad Saḥar, *Hindī/hindavī par ek nazar*, pp. 29, 41.

left it unfinished, probably due to his blindness. Still, the text that he left covers 600 printed pages.<sup>13</sup>

Sirāj ud-Dīn 'Alī Khān-e Ārzū (1687/8-1756), the major linguist and Persian lexicographer of his time, composed *Navādir ul-alfāz* (Rarities in Words) around 1747-52. It is an extended critique of a glossary-like dictionary of 'Hindī' composed by 'Abd ul-Vāsi' Hansvī' around 1690. Khān-e Ārzū, in the *Navādir*, constantly uses both *urdū* and *urdū-e mu'allā* to mean Delhi. Commenting on the word *chhinel*, for instance, he says, 'We who are from Hind, and live in the *urdū-e mu'allā*, do not know this word'.<sup>14</sup>

In another work called *Musmir* (Fruit-bearing Tree, c.1752) Khān-e Ārzū declared that the two ancient names of the Persian language, Pahlavī and Darī, indicated that the language of the *urdū*, or the 'royal city', was the true Persian. He went on to say,

Thus it is established that the most excellent and normative speech is that of the *urdū*, and the Persian of only that place [which is called *urdū*] is reliable. And it is not the language specific to poetry and [formal] composition. And poets of [various] places, like Khāqānī of Sharvān, and Nizāmī of Ganjah, and Sanā'ī of Ghaznīn, and Khusrāu of Delhi, spoke in the same established language, and that language is the language of the *urdū*, with some exceptions, as was stated before.<sup>15</sup>

It is thus obvious that in the 1750's, the terms *urdū*, *urdū-e mu'allā*, and *zabān-e urdū-e mu'allā* did not, at least among the elite, mean the language which is known as Urdu today.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Shāh 'Ālam, '*Ajā'ib ul-qīṣaṣ*', p. 26.

<sup>14</sup>Khān-e Ārzū, *Navādir ul-alfāz*, p. 214. I have collated and corrected all quotes from the *Navādir* after comparing the printed text with the manuscript copy available in the library of the National Archives, New Delhi.

<sup>15</sup>Khān-e Ārzū, *Musmir*, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup>Mīr, in his *taẓkirah* called *Nikāt ush-shu'arā* (Subtle Points about Poets, 1752), says that 'the art of Rekhtah is the art of poetry, in the manner of Persian, in the language of the exalted city [*urdū-e mu'allā*] of Shāhjahānābād, Delhi' (p. 23). This reveals the tension inherent in the literary situation at that time: Mīr wants to assert the primacy of

When used alone, *urdū* would, more often than not, mean 'royal city' (therefore, Delhi). We just saw Khān-e Ārzū freely using *urdū* in this sense, without the least hint that he was using a neologism or that he was using the word in a special sense.

The practice of using *urdū* in the sense of 'royal city' may have begun in Akbar's time--specifically, after 1585, when he left his ambitiously designed and constructed capital city of Fatehpur Sikri, never to return. John Richards says that Akbar devised 'a mobile capital' containing 'all the necessary parts of the central administration'. The royal encampment thus became a city complete with audience and consultation halls, archives, arsenal, treasury, mint, horse and elephant stables, field and siege artillery and, of course, palatial quarters for the monarch and his entourage. The whole establishment consisted of 'canvas tenting, timber, supports, ropes, thousands of yards of cloth passageways, and rich carpeting and hangings. Moreover, each tent and structural component was duplicated so that a second camp could be sent on ahead for assembly and erection in preparation of occupancy at the end of the day's march.'

Richards further says, 'After Akbar's departure from Fatehpur Sikri, the encampment became the true seat of imperial authority--regardless of its location or whether the Emperor was actually journeying.'<sup>17</sup> It is clear that the practice of describing the imperial city-camp as the *urdū* continued when Shāhjahān built his city at Delhi nearly half a century later.

Shāh Ālam II, with his knowledge of languages (including Sanskrit), patronage and love for 'Hindī', and practice of 'Hindī' literature, gave the language respectability by using it informally around the Court. The term *zabān-e urdū-e mu'allā*

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Hindī / Rekhtah as the language of the *urdū-e mu'allā*, but is obliged to concede that its poetry is in the manner of Persian. In a way, Mīr is asserting the 'popular' position, as against the 'elitist' one of Khān-e Ārzū. There may also be seen, hidden behind Mīr's assertion, his hostility toward Khān-e Ārzū. See also Khān-e Ārzū, *Nāvādir ul-alfāz*, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority', pp. 136-38.

must have begun around that time to mean 'Hindī' rather than Persian. As we saw above, in 1792-93 Shāh Ālam II was describing the language of his *dāstān* as Hindī. The name *zabān-e urdū-e mu'allā* should have begun to mean 'Hindī' around 1790-95, and at any rate, from a date not earlier than January 1772. In 1796, John Gilchrist published a grammar of the 'Hindoostanee Language'. He devoted Chapter IX of his book to prosody, and said that he would illustrate his remarks with 'specimens from the various sorts of verse used by the best poets who have composed their several works in that mixed Dialect, also called Oordoo, or the polished language of the Court, and which even at this day pervades with more or less purity, the vast provinces of a once powerful empire'.<sup>18</sup>

Khān-e Ārzū often uses the term 'the Hindī of the books' or 'learned Hindī' (*hindī-e kitābī*) for Sanskrit. In his long *masnavī* called *Nūh sipihr* (Nine Heavens, 1317-18), Khusrāu called it plain 'Sanskrit', and said that it was 'a special language, essential for a Brahmin, named "Sanskrit" from the ancient times. Common people don't know anything of its do's and dont's, only Brahmins do; and not all Brahmins know it well enough to speak it, or compose poetry in it.'<sup>19</sup> Since in the North, the Nāgarī script was available perhaps only to the Brahmins, the Kāyasthas, after breaking away from the Brahmins in the fifteenth century, gradually developed a Nāgarī-based script of their own, and called it Kaithī. It survived in many parts of India until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Gilchrist, *A Grammar of the Hindoostanee Language*, p. 261.

<sup>19</sup>Khusrāu, *Nūh sipihr*, p. 180.

<sup>20</sup>For the vicissitudes of Kaithī in the nineteenth century, see King, *One Language, Two Scripts*. Kaithī is now practically unknown, though instances of individual, isolated businessmen using it for writing their accounts can be found till about the first half of this century. It was fairly widespread until late into the nineteenth century in parts of modern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and modern Madhya Pradesh. The British policy of promoting the Nāgarī script apparently killed off the Kaithī.

Because of the non-availability of a popular, universally utilised and acceptable script, most of the literatures produced in the developing North Indian languages must have been oral. Hindī / Hindvī / Dihlavī was lucky to have the Persian script available for it right from the beginning, because the earliest literary use of the language was made by the Muslims, most of whom were Sufis or, like Khusrau, were attached to Sufi houses as followers or disciples.

In late-eighteenth-century colonial encounters, the name that the British most favoured for Hindvī / Hindī was 'Hindustani'. This was perhaps because it seemed orderly and logical for the main language of 'Hindustan' to be called 'Hindustani', just as the language of England was English, that of France, French, that of Germany, German, and so on. 'Hindustani' as a language name was not entirely unknown. Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī cites occurrences of it in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Persian texts.<sup>21</sup> Yet 'Hindustani' never became as popular as 'Hindī' or 'Rekhtah'. As a language name, *Hindūstāni* does not in fact occur in any major Persian dictionary at all.

The British identified 'Hindustani' largely as a 'Muslim' language, though they also granted that it was spoken, or at least understood, all over India. *Hobson-Jobson* describes 'Hindoostanee' as

properly an adjective, but used substantively in two senses, viz. (a) a native of Hindustan, and (b) (*Hindūstāni zabān*) 'the language of the country,' but in fact the language that the Mahommedans of Upper India, and eventually the Mahommedans of the Deccan, developed out of the Hindi dialect of the Doab chiefly, and the territory around Agra and Delhi, with a mixture of Persian vocables and phrases, and a readiness to adopt other foreign words. It is also called *Oordoo*, i.e., the language of the Urdu ('Horde') or Camp. This language was for a long time a kind of Mahommedan *lingua franca* over all India, and still possesses that character over a large part of the country, and among certain

<sup>21</sup>Sulaimān Nadvī, *Nuqūsh-e sulaimāni*, p. 107. Nadvī in fact favoured 'Hindustani' over 'Urdu' as a language name because of the negative associations of the word 'Urdu' (pp. 103-107).

classes. Even in Madras, where it least prevails, it is still recognised in native regiments as the language of intercourse between officers and men. Old fashioned Anglo-Indians used to call it the *Moors* (q.v.).<sup>22</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, in 1993, is even more explicit in making the identifications made by Yule and Burnell in 1886, defining 'Hindustani' as:

The language of the Muslim conquerors of Hindustan, being a form of Hindi, with a large admixture of Arabic, Persian, and other foreign elements; also called *Urdu*, i.e. *zaban-e Urdu*, language of the camp, sc. of the Mughal conquerors. It later became a kind of *lingua franca* over all India, varying its vocabulary according to the locality and the local language.

Also called *Indostan*, *Indostans* (cf. Scots). By earlier writers sometimes applied to Hindī itself.<sup>23</sup>

Thus both *Hobson-Jobson* and the *O.E.D.* define 'Hindustani' in conformity with British perceptions, or policy: namely, there are two languages, Hindustani for the Muslims, Hindī for the Hindus.

The name 'Hindustani' never caught on. It was not popular among the native speakers, who preferred 'Hindī' or 'Rekhtah'. Somewhat grandly, Gilchrist observed as follows:

Having in my English and Hindoostanee Dictionary given an ample detail of this language, as far as European writers are any way connected with it, I may proceed to state--Hindoostan is a compound word, equivalent to *Hindoo-land* or *Negro-land*, and too well known to require any description here. It is chiefly inhabited by Hindoos and Moosalmans; whom we may safely comprise, as well as their language, under the general, conciliating, comprehensive term *Hindoostanee*, and which I have adopted for the above and the following reasons.

<sup>22</sup>Yule and Burnell, *Hobson Jobson*, p. 417. The authors go on to cite occurrences of 'Hindustani' as a language name in Western sources starting from 1616, down to 1844.

<sup>23</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 769. The *O.E.D.* cites occurrences of 'Hindustani' as a language-name in English authors from 1616 to 1878. The last one reads, 'Hindustani or Urdu is not a territorial Dialect, but a *Lingua Franca*'.

This name of the country being modern, as well as the vernacular tongue in question, no other appeared so appropriate as it did to me, when I first engaged in the study and cultivation of the language. That the natives and others call it also *Hindi*, *Indian*, from *Hind*, the ancient appellation of *India*, cannot be denied; but as this is apt to be confounded with *Hinduwee*, *Hindoo*, *ee*, *Hindvee*, the derivative from *Hindoo*, I adhere to my original opinion, that we should invariably discard all other denominations of the popular speech of this country, including the unmeaning word *Moors*, and substitute for them *Hindoostanee*, whether the people here constantly do so or not: as they can hardly discriminate sufficiently, to observe the use and propriety of such restrictions, even when pointed out to them.

*Hinduwee*, I have treated as the exclusive property of the Hindus alone; and have therefore constantly applied it to the old language of India, which prevailed before the Moosulman invasion; and in fact, now constitutes among them, the basis or ground-work of the *Hindoostanee*, a comparatively recent superstructure, composed of Arabic and Persian, in which the two last may be considered in the same relation, that Latin and French bear to English: while we may justly treat the *Hinduwee* of the modern speech of Hindoostani, as the Saxon of the former, thus:

SAXON	LATIN	FRENCH	ENGLISH
HINDUWEE	ARABIC	PERSIAN	HINDOOSTANEE <sup>24</sup>

Notice how cheerfully and confidently Gilchrist assumes the right to decide for the natives, since they themselves have no discrimination, and don't know what's good for them. Also, he perpetrates a canard on Persian, and Persian speakers (among whom, at that time, there were many Indians as well), by saying that 'Hindu' means 'Negro'.<sup>25</sup> Further, he chose, quite wrongly, to treat Hindvī as 'the exclusive property of the

<sup>24</sup>Gilchrist, *The Oriental Linguist*, p. i.

<sup>25</sup>This canard has found echoes in the modern Indian English-language press, where absurd meanings have been foisted on the Persian word 'Hindū'. The latest is by Wagish Shukla, a normally careful and humane scholar. Reviewing Vasudha Dalmia's book on Bharatendu Harishchandra, Shukla claims that in Persian, 'Hindū' means 'nigger' (*The Book Review*, October 1997, p. 20). See also my reply in *The Book Review*, April 1998.

Hindoos alone'. Though he also recognised Hindvī as the 'basis or ground-work of the *Hindoostanee*', having the same relation to 'Hindustani' as Anglo-Saxon had to English, he omitted to mention, or didn't know, that Hindvī was not a separate language, but was merely an early name for the same language for which he was now prescribing the name 'Hindoostanee'.

Nothing more need be said about Gilchrist's intentions, or his competence in historical philology. I might however note in passing that Gilchrist lifted most of his 'theory' from Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751-1830), who was one of the first to have written a grammar of the Bengali language (1778).

In Halhed's introduction to his *Grammar*, he developed a social historical argument to account for the current language situation as he found it in Bengal. In addition to Sanskrit and Bengali, he identified two other important languages in Bengal, Persian, and 'Hindustanic', which had two varieties, one of which was spoken over most of Hindustan proper and 'indubitably derived from Sanskrit', with which it has exactly the same connection as the modern dialects of France and Italy with pure Latin. The other variety of 'Hindustanic' was developed by the Muslim invaders of India, who could not learn the language spoken by the Hindus, who, in order to maintain the purity of their own tongue, introduced more and more abstruse terms from Sanskrit. The Muslim invaders introduced many 'exotic' words from their own languages which they superimposed on the 'grammatical principles of the original Hindustanic'. Halhed refers to this form of 'Hindustanic' as a compound idiom which was spoken by Hindus connected with Muslim courts. There were those Brahmins and other well-educated Hindus 'whose ambition has not overpowered their principles', who continued to speak and write the pure form of 'Hindustanic' and who wrote it with Nagari characters rather than with the Arabic script.<sup>26</sup>

This doesn't need much comment, except that here we can see the source, not only for Gilchrist's grand prescriptions, but also for the definitions of the words 'Urdu' and 'Hindustani' from Fallon (1866) through Platts (1884) and *Hobson-Jobson* (1886), to the *O.E.D.* (1993). I have already quoted from

<sup>26</sup>Cohn, 'The Command of Language', p. 298. On Halhed see also Rocher, *Orientalism, Poetry, and the Millennium*.



Hobson-Jobson and the *O.E.D.* Here is Fallon's definition of 'Urdu':

an army, a camp; a market. *urdū, i mu'alla*, the royal camp or army (generally means the city of *Dihli* or *Shahjahanabad*; and *urdū, i mu'alla ki zaban*, the court language). This term is very commonly applied to the Hindustani language as spoken by the Musalman population of India proper.<sup>27</sup>

And this is Platts:

Army; camp; market of a camp; s.f. (= *urdū zabān*), the Hindūstānī language as spoken by the Muhammadans of India, and by Hindūs who have intercourse with them or who hold appointments in the Government courts &c. (It is composed of Hindi, Arabic, and Persian, Hindi constituting the back-bone, so to speak):-- *urdū-i-mu'alla*, The royal camp or army (generally means the city of Dehli or Shāhjahānābād; the court language (= *urdū-i-mu'alla ki zabān*); the Hindūstānī language as spoken in Delhi.<sup>28</sup>

The *O.E.D.* identifies 'Urdu' with 'Hindustani', and goes on to distinguish 'Hindustani, the lingua franca', from the tongue which is the official language of Pakistan!<sup>29</sup> It would be difficult to beat these as examples of utterances in which insouciant flattening of logical anomalies has been practiced to such a degree.

By contrast, Gilchrist at least had some moments of doubt, and tried to explain away the facts as best he could so as to bring them in accord with his notions. Thus, in his *A Dictionary, English and Hindoostanee* (Calcutta, 1790), he declared that Sanskrit was derived from 'Hinduwee', which was spoken over much of India before the Muslim invasion. He further suggested that repeated invasions of Muslims resulted in the creation of 'Hindustani': 'Muslims referred to this language as "Oorduwer" in its military form, "Rekhtu" in its poetical form, and "Hindee" as the everyday language of the

<sup>27</sup>Fallon, *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary*, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup>Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu*, p. 40.

<sup>29</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 2203.

Hindoos'.<sup>30</sup> Note the mutilation of the term *urdū-e mu'alla*: Gilchrist doesn't know that it is a compound, and its first part standing alone is meaningless, so that no one ever wrote, or spoke, 'urdū-e'. Note the entirely imaginary classification of the language: military, literary, and Hindu.

We must also observe here that Shakespear, as late as the fourth edition of his *Dictionary* (1849), does not recognise 'Urdu' as a language name. This is how he defines *urdū*: 'An army, a camp, a market; the royal camp, encampment; a horde. *urdū-e mu'alla*, The royal camp or army (generally means the city of Dihli or Shahjahanabad, and *urdū-e mu'alla ki zabān*, The court language.'<sup>31</sup>

Here, we can also see the source for Gilchrist's confident prediction, 'the Hindoos will naturally lean to the *Hinduwee*, while the Moosulmans will of course be more partial to Arabic and Persian; whence two styles arise'.<sup>32</sup> That the prediction found many ways of coming very nearly true should not permit us to ignore the fact that it was based on premises that were morally and historically false.

Since the name 'Hindustani' didn't work in spite of Gilchrist's superior wisdom, the British were obliged, eventually, to give it up. They found a better alternative: 'Urdu' was a name that didn't have the faintest reverberations of a Hindu link. On the contrary: since it was a Turkish word, its Muslim connections were obvious. As we have seen, Shāhjahānābād came gradually to be called *urdū-e mu'alla*, and the language spoken there became 'the language of the *urdū-e mu'alla*'. We have also seen Khān-e Ārzū describing Persian as 'the language of the *urdū-e mu'alla*'.

Sayyid 'Abdullāh has referred to a work by Khān-e Ārzū called *Dād-e sukhan* (Praise for [the poetic] Utterance). I am not familiar with this work at all, but Sayyid 'Abdullāh says that in it, Khān-e Ārzū has defined poetry in 'Rekhtah' as poetry 'in the *hindī* language of the people of the *urdū* of

<sup>30</sup>Cohn, 'The Command of Language', p. 304.

<sup>31</sup>Shakespear, *Dictionary, Hindustani and English*, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup>Gilchrist, *The Oriental Linguist*, p. 2.

India', and written 'most commonly in the style of Persian'. It is clear that at the time of writing this work, Khān-e Ārzū was not familiar with the term 'Urdu' as a name for the language that we call 'Urdu' today. That's why he uses the rather clumsy expression, *zabān-e hindī-e ahl-e urdū-e hind* (the *hindī* language of the people of the *urdū* of India). This also reveals the bias of Khān-e Ārzū: he is not prepared to concede the name 'Rekhtah' for the poetry produced in the Deccan. Here, one might recall Mīr's remarks quoted above. There is inherent tension between the positions of Khān-e Ārzū and Mīr--yet while the former's elitist position is implicitly challenged by Mīr, both agree to deny the rank of Rekhtah poetry to the Urdu poetry written in the Deccan.

With the patronage and practice of Shāh 'Ālam II in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, 'Hindī' rather than Persian began to be called 'the language of the *urdū-e mu'allā*'. But a belief grew that 'the language of the Urdu', Hindī, had been generated by Muslim invaders starting in the fourteenth century. The earliest printed source from an Indian author for this fiction seems to be Mīr Amman Dihlavī's *Bāgh o bahār* (Garden and Verdure), a prose romance produced during the period 1803-04 at the College of Fort William under Gilchrist's direction, as a text for teaching Hindustani (that is, Urdu) to British civil servants.<sup>33</sup> Mīr Amman says that he wrote the story in the 'language of *urdū-e mu'allā*'. He adds that he was asked by Gilchrist to 'translate' the story in 'pure Indian speech, as spoken among themselves by the people of the *urdū*, Hindu or Muslim, women, men, children and young people'.<sup>34</sup> In the pages following, he proceeds to apprise the reader of the 'true facts about the language of the *urdū*'. He says:

...Finally, Amīr Taimūr (with whose House the rule still remains, though only in name), conquered India. Due to his advent, and extended sojourn here, the bazaar of the army entered

<sup>33</sup>The text was composed around 1801-02, sent to press in 1803, and published in 1804; for details see the editor's introduction (Mīr Amman, *Bāgh o bahār*, pp. 43-50, 79-80).

<sup>34</sup>Mīr Amman, *Bāgh o bahār*, pp. 2, 6.

the city. And that's why the market-place of the city came to be called *urdū*....When King Akbar ascended the throne, people of all communities, hearing of the appreciation and free flow of generosity as practiced by that peerless House, came from all four sides of the land and gathered in his Presence. But each had his distinctive talk and speech. By virtue of their coming together for give and take, trade and commerce, question and answer, a [new] language of the camp-market came to be established.<sup>35</sup>

To be fair to Mīr Amman, he left enough gaps in his account to suggest to the attentive reader that his narrative of the origin of Urdu was as fictitious as the story he was about to tell. But perhaps he never expected to get caught: the book was not initially meant for Indian readers. Sadiq ur-Rahman Kidwai says, 'the books prepared under the auspices of Fort William were not primarily meant for the average Urdu readership.' According to Kidwai, 'editions of *Bāgh o bahār* were brought out from Paris and London but not from any town in India, except Calcutta'.<sup>36</sup>

Mīr Amman didn't tell his readers that there was a gap of a century and a half between the coming of Taimūr (1398) and the advent of Akbar (r.1556-1605). He implied that there was a continuity from Taimūr to Akbar, and that the same family had been ruling throughout the century and a half that had elapsed in between them. This, of course, was not the case at all. Then, Akbar never lived in Delhi, and the only time he would have had an army camping near Delhi would have been in 1556, when he fought Hemū at Panipat, 80 kilometres away. Most importantly, Mīr Amman omitted to mention that the language in question was called Hindvī / Hindī from early times, and 'Hindī' was its commonest name in his day. However, the

<sup>35</sup>Mīr Amman, *Bāgh o bahār*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>36</sup>Kidwai, *Gilchrist and the 'Language of Hindoostan'*, pp. 31-32. Kidwai, who is not entirely unsympathetic to Gilchrist, goes on to note the irony that 'the literary works which were not Indian in the sense that they were not addressed to the Indian readership have become the most cherished and well read classics of Urdu prose....This is a strange phenomenon which has not so far been explained by the scholars of Urdu prose.'

immense success of *Bāgh o bahār* as a school text ultimately caused Mīr Amman's narrative to prevail, in every sense of the word.

Even linguists and experts like Grierson fell into error because of Mīr Amman, and were led to believe that 'Urdu' (or 'Hindustani') wasn't a language in its own right, but a hodgepodge, a pidgin. Grierson later disavowed this belief. He said:

It will be noticed that this account of Hindostani and its origin [that is, the one given in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. 9] differs widely from that which has been given hitherto by most authors (including the present writer), which was based on Mīr Amman's preface to the 'Bagh o Bahar'. According to him Urdu was a mongrel mixture of languages of the various tribes who flocked to the Delhi bazaar.<sup>37</sup>

But even Grierson didn't play fair: he didn't mention that Mīr Amman didn't use 'Urdu' as a language name; in fact, as we have seen, Mīr Amman actually said, 'the language of the *urdū*', meaning the city of Shāhjahānābād. And though he must have known that the language's own speakers preferred the name 'Hindi' for it, Grierson seems to be pressing for 'Hindustani' and 'Urdu'. Finally, while he blamed Mīr Amman for misinformation, he forgot to indict Gilchrist—who, as we have seen, had described *Rekhtah* as a 'mixed Dialect'.<sup>38</sup>

It took a long time for 'Hindi' and 'Urdu' to take root as names of two different languages. The native speaker's resistance to the term 'Urdu' may have had something to do with the fact that the name suggested false images about the origins and nature of the language.<sup>39</sup> Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī,

<sup>37</sup>Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. 9, part 1, p. 44.

<sup>38</sup>Gilchrist, *A Grammar of the Hindoostanee Language*, p. 261.

<sup>39</sup>As late as December 1858, Ghālīb was uncomfortable with 'Urdu' as a language name, and used it as masculine in a letter to Shiv Nārā'in Arām. Language names are invariably feminine in Urdu, but *urdū* in the sense of 'camp, camp-market' is masculine (*Ghālīb ke khutūt*, vol. 3, p. 1067). I am grateful to Mirzā Kāzīm 'Alī Khān, of Shia College, Lucknow, for tracing this reference for me.

as we have seen, strongly suggested going back to 'Hindustani' for precisely those reasons. 'Hindi', of course, was unavailable to him by then.<sup>40</sup>

Aḥad 'Alī Khān Yaktā, a poet and physician of Lucknow, wrote *Dastūr ul-faṣāḥāt* (The Code for Standard Speech), a small *tazkirah*-like tract on Urdu syntax—he uses 'Hindi' and also 'Urdu' to indicate the name of the language—in or before 1798. He revised it in 1815.<sup>41</sup> He wrote the book in Lucknow, uninfluenced by British political considerations. The *Dastūr ul-faṣāḥāt* contains the earliest printed observations on the origins of Urdu made by a native and knowledgeable Urdu speaker:

And the reason for the appearance of this exquisite language is...that the wise and the learned of the time and the age, and the masters of all arts and sciences, persons of excellence and erudition, poets and people from good families, wherever they were, came from all sides and all shores of the world, travelled to this large and desire-fulfilling territory, and attained their heartfelt wishes and purposes. And most of them adopted this paradise-adorned land as their own native place. Thus, due to their coming and going to the Court, and having to deal with the local people, it became necessary for them to converse in this language.

Inevitably, during intercourse between them and these, and these and them, in the course of conversations, they mixed each other's vocabulary as much as needed, and got their business done. When this had continued over a long span of time, a state was reached when, by virtue of absorption of words and connections of phrases from each other, it could be described as a new language; for neither the Arabic remained Arabic, nor Persian, Persian; nor on the same analogy, did the dialects and vernaculars included under the rubric 'Indian' [which had contributed to the new language] retain their original form. But even at this time, a single mode, as should be, had not stabilised....And every community and group used to privilege its own idiom over the others.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Sulaimān Nadvī, *Nuqūsh-e sulaimānī*, pp. 101-02. The paper was first delivered as a public lecture in 1937.

<sup>41</sup>Yaktā, *Dastūr ul-faṣāḥāt*, p. 27 of preface.

<sup>42</sup>Yaktā, *Dastūr ul-faṣāḥāt*, pp. 4-5.

Yaktā goes on to say that ultimately, persons of 'knowledge and wisdom, having no choice', laid down a standard register: among its requirements was speech that was

very clear, familiar to the temperament, and easily comprehensible to the plebeian and the elite....But speech conforming to the above conditions is not to be found except among those inhabitants of Shāhjahānābād who reside within the city's ramparts, or in the language of the offspring of these honourable persons, who have migrated to other cities and taken up residence there. Thus the language of those inhabitants of Lucknow who are not its ancient residents, and were not there in the past, is nowadays closer to the standard speech.<sup>43</sup>

These remarks are quite in accord with the privilege that the Delhi idiom arrogated to itself soon after Hindī / Reḳhtah became the main medium of literature there. The literary culture of Delhi became, to all intents and purposes, Urdu's literary culture (as we will see in a later chapter of the present study). The British apparently had no problems with this. But stories about the origin of Urdu were another matter.

Yaktā's observations about the origin of Urdu must have been based on the common perception of educated native speakers of those times. These perceptions were hardly suitable as material for stories about Urdu being the language of 'Muslim invaders' and 'conquerors', a language that only those Hindus had adopted--practically under duress--who were in the employ of a Muslim ruler. Yaktā was no linguist, historical or comparative, and did not know that the dialect now called *khari boli*, the developed form of which is Urdu, had existed prior to the Muslims. Muslims functioned as catalysts in refashioning the dialect into a fully fledged language. But these are the finer points which matter only to the scholar. The broad story of Urdu's birth and growth as given by Yaktā is accurate enough, and it differs from Mīr Amman's British-approved story in every important respect.

Some of Yaktā's observations remind us of another story about Urdu's origins, never given any credence by any

<sup>43</sup>Yaktā, *Dastūr ul-faṣāḥāt*, pp. 5-6.

responsible historian (but liked by Amrit Rai, for obvious reasons), and told quite casually by Inshā in the beginning of *Daryā-e laṭāfat*. Inshā, after praising Delhi as a city unequalled among others, went on to say, 'Excellent speakers and narrative artists of that place [Delhi], having gathered there, and being of one mind, extracted attractive words from many [different] languages, and having made creative appropriations in some words and texts, put together a new language, different from others, and named it "Urdu"'.<sup>44</sup>

This sounds very much like a Pygmalion trick, or a linguist's version of the rabbit-from-a-hat trick. But Inshā here was not propounding a theory of the origin of Urdu, or distinguishing 'Urdu' from 'Hindi' as Amrit Rai seems to believe. He was only creating yet another narrative as a part of the ongoing myth of the superiority of Delhi's Reḳhtah / Hindi / Urdu over others. Accordingly, he devotes the next nearly twenty pages to listing out minor differences of usage and pronunciation between Delhi and 'non-Delhi' places, and treating it as a given that the Delhi idiom is inherently superior and correct.

There is evidence to suggest that the Hindus, for whose 'benefit' a whole new linguistic tradition was being constructed in the nineteenth century, were initially not too happy either. Christopher King says that a class of 'educated Hindī speakers, committed to a style of the khari boli continuum which differentiated them from the Urdu speakers', had not yet arisen in U.P. by the 1850's. In the words of King, 'to find statements by Hindus educated in the Sanskrit tradition, denying the existence of this new style of khari boli, then, should come as no surprise'. He narrates the following incident:

In 1847, Dr. J. R. Ballantyne, Principal of the English department of Benares College, decided to improve the style of what he termed 'Hindi' written by students of the Sanskrit College (which formed the older part of the institution)...He ordered exercises to be written in Hindi by some of his students,...and finally losing patience with the apathy and resistance he encountered, directed them to write an essay on the following

<sup>44</sup>Inshā, *Daryā-e laṭāfat*, 1850 ed., p. 12.

question: 'Why do you despise the culture of the language you speak every day of your lives, of the only language which your mothers and sisters understand?'....A dialogue ensued which made clear that the young men had neither a clear conception of what Ballantyne meant by Hindi nor any sense of loyalty to it. As the reply of their spokesman showed, the students had no awareness of Hindi in the sense of a standardised literary dialect:

'We do not understand what you Europeans mean by the term Hindi, for there are hundreds of dialects, all in our opinion equally entitled to the name, and there is here no standard as there is in Sanskrit.'

....Finally, they had no sense of attachment to Ballantyne's 'Hindi', or in other words, they accepted the equation Urdu = Hindu + Muslim....These attitudes have particular significance when we realize that five decades later, Hindu students at the same college founded the Nagari Pracharini Sabha to promote Hindi and the Nagari script.<sup>45</sup>

That the British finally succeeded in their purpose, is history. That the purpose was motivated by colonial arrogance, and politics, and that its achievement engendered a special kind of faith in 'Hindī / Hindu' identity, and generated strong emotions, and hot schemes, is also history.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup>King, *One Language, Two Scripts*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>46</sup>King says that due to the comparative youth of *khari boli's* literary tradition, 'Hindi supporters of the nineteenth, and Hindi historians of the twentieth, century usually include the older literary traditions of Braj Bhasha, Avadhi, and other regional standards in discussing the 'Hindi' literature of the more distant past. When discussing the literature of the recent past and present, they largely ignore these other traditions in favour of *khari boli*. Part of the process of construction of myths through which elites attach value to symbols of group identity, then, seems to involve ignoring ambiguities or contradictions in these symbols' (*One Language, Two Scripts*, p. 25).

