Balmukund Gupta: 
Hindi mein bindi (1900)

The essayist and journal editor Balmukund Gupta (1865–1907) was in many ways a successor to Harishchandra, with whom he shared a Vaishya background and a schooling in Urdu. As with his older contemporary, much of the lasting interest of his work derives from the breadthness of his upbringing: born in the Panjab, he spent much of his life in Calcutta; he translated Bengali and Sanskrit works into Hindi, and in the course of his career in journalism he broached a wide range of subjects from the serious to the frivolous. His views on language were often diametrically opposed to those of such establishment figures as Mahavirprasad Dwivedi (12) and the Nagari Pracharini Sabha (N.P.S.), the Society for the Promulgation of Nagari (i.e. Sanskritized Hindi in the Nagari script) set up in Benares in 1893.

A strong personality shows through Gupta's writing. On the one hand he is a forceful advocate of the use of Hindi, whose cause he championed in the Calcutta journal Bhāratmitra which he edited from 1899 to 1907; on the other, he is strongly critical of what he sees as the foolish attempts at the standardization of Hindi style made by Dwivedi and others. He writes with a passion that indicates a strong sense of mission.

Typical of Gupta's Bhāratmitra pieces on language is the short article 'Hindi mein bindi' which appeared in 1900. The very pithiness of the title is portentous of the acerbity which is to follow, when Gupta criticises the pronounciation of the N.P.S. regarding the use of diacritically marked Nagari characters to transliterate Persian and Arabic phonemes.

Gupta's provocative remarks begin with a mocking statement of the N.P.S.'s proposal to differentiate z and j graphically by the use of dotted characters. His contempt for this recommendation is matched only by his brazen dismissal of the very need for such a practice even in Persian. In the second paragraph he discusses the difficulties even writers of Urdu have in distinguishing the various /z/ forms, and points out that the use of a single dotted Nagari graph for /z/ is an oversimplified attempt at transliterating the extensive range of /z/ characters in the Persian script. The result of the N.P.S. policy, he maintains, would be an anarchic situation in which some people used dotted forms and some did not — a fairly accurate prediction of the present reality, through Gupta's vision of chaos proves to have been rather too apocalyptic.

In the final paragraph, Gupta draws attention to some earlier writers who had contracted the 'sickness' of using dotted Nagari characters, and discusses their use by people who are not literate in Urdu and whose solecisms in the use of the dotted forms betray this ignorance.

काशी की नागरी-प्रचारिणी सभा हिंदी में 'बिन्दी' चलाना बाहर है। यह बिन्दी बंधक के ऊपर नहीं, नीचे डुबा करनी है। ऐसी 'बिन्दी' लगाने का जलवा यह है कि उससे उड़ो शव भी हिंदी में गुढ़ लिख जाए जाए। हिंदी में खानी जै होता है और उड़े में - 'जीम', 'जाल', 'जे' और बड़ी 'जे', 'ज्याद' और 'जोय'। 'जीम' के सिवा इस सब उड़े बंधकर का उच्चारण जैसे के उच्चारण के तुल्य होता है। जैसे उच्चारण बिन्दा के ऊपर के दाँत के साथ मिलाने से होता है। नागरी-प्रचारिणी बाल्य चारण यह है कि हिंदी के 'जे' के नीचे एक बिन्दी लगाकर उड़े की 'जे' का उच्चारण करें। हिंदी में ऐसा उच्चारण नहीं है, क्योंकि बाल्य के 'जे' - 'जीम' ही का विकार है। बहु फारसी बाल्य के कुट्टी की खराबी के सिवा और कुछ नहीं है। उस खराबी को नागरी-प्रचारिणी हिंदी में भी ध्यानान्वित किया है। परंतु इस ध्यानान्वित से क्या लाभ है, इसका पता ठीक नहीं लगता।

जैसे - 'जाल' की खराबी उड़े में यहीं तक है कि बढ़त लोग बड़ी शिखर पाने तथा लियों को कीड़ों के तरह बाँट जाने पर भी जैसे - 'जाल' का भेद ठीक-ठीक नहीं हो जाते। कितनी ही बार यह घड़ी में पड़ती है कि बनक शव जाल से है या जैसे से। बड़ा सब उड़े जाने वाले की यह खराबी है, तो नागरी-प्रचारिणी सभा हिंदी की पृष्ठ चेतावनी के अनुसार बिन्दा नहीं होगा। नागरी-प्रचारिणी सभा के बुद्धि के तरह से एक बिन्दी सामने से सबका उच्चारण बढ़ा होगा। परंतु इसमें जैसे - 'ज्याद' और 'जोय' की क्षा पहाड़न रही? यदि जैसे - 'ज्याद' 'जोय' का फॉर्म रचना मंगल नहीं है, तो बिन्दी समान जंगल नहीं हो और रवद उस सब में भेद समझा जाता है। तो फिर जैसे - 'ज्याद' 'जोय' की क्षा पहाड़न रही चाहिए। नागरी-प्रचारिणी सभा के बुद्धि के तरह से 'उड़ी' न जानने वालों का क्षा उच्छारण होता है? यह तैयार नहीं है कि इस बिन्दी से उड़ी न जानने वालों का क्षा उच्छारण होता है?

बिन्दी की बीमारी नागरी-प्रचारिणी सभा के बुद्धि के तरह नहीं जानने वालों में हो चुकी है। बृद्धदास निर्माण पुष्कर रामायण-भाषा गोस्वामी ने नागरितथासंहिता के बुद्धि का छापा था। उसमें उड़ो है शब्द 'बिन्दी' की भूमिका की थी, उसके तक कि जिन शब्द के नीचे बिन्दी नहीं लगाए। उनके नीचे भी उड़ो है 'बिन्दी' लगा दी थी। बिन्दी की प्रचारिणी शब्द प्रतापार्थारण में वह बड़े-बड़े लोट-पोट हो गये थे और कहा था कि 'यह बिन्दी' की बीमारी हिंदी बालों को बुखारी लगी। यह उड़े हो जाने का बहार करवाने। नागरी-प्रचारिणी सभा ही के मेम्बरों में एक बहुत बड़े अवधार है, जो अंग्रेजी-हिंदी के बड़े प्रचारिणी है। बहु वकील शब्द में बंदा काफ बोलते थे। यह उड़े हो समझते थे कि बड़ा काफ बोलने ही से हो जाता है। हमने उनकी समझाया कि साबुन वकिल छोटे काफ से ही है, बड़े से नहीं। इसी तरह बिन्दी की बीमारी में पड़कर उड़ी न जानने बालों को बड़ी ठोकरे खानी पड़ती है।
Despite his palpable prejudice against the PA heritage of U, Gupta's own language in this passage is relatively eclectic in its borrowings. The phonetic background to his arguments can be summarized as follows: (a) Standard U has two graphically distinct phonemes, q and k, whereas H effectively has only k, from which q can be graphically differentiated only by a diacritic. (b) Similarly, U has two strongly distinct phonemes j and z, the latter represented by the four graphemes zāl, ze, zvād and zoe plus a semi-distinct ژ (ze); H effectively has only j, with z differentiated only by a diacritic. Gupta argues against the alleged necessity of distinguishing graphically the semi-distinct z and q in H; but his argument wrongly assumes that the purpose of the diacritic marks is to distinguish PA graphemes, whereas in fact it distinguishes U phonemes (511, 512).

1 kāśi: 'the resplendent' — this is the classical name, preferred in religious contexts, for the town otherwise known as vārānasī (whose MIA form bānāras (E 'Benares') is now out of fashion in Sanskritized H, though common in current speech).

2 callānā: 'bring into use, introduce': cf. the increasingly disparaging 2 lāgānā 'impose', 9 dhaṃsānā 'to stick in'.

3 aksar ke īpar nahīn, nice huā karegi: 'will not be above the character [as anusvār, the only S convention to use the dot] but below it'. The use of huā karnā, implying 'regular occurrence', has a sarcastic edge: 'is to be regularly placed below the character, [if you please!]'.

4 bāri je: adj. designations of this kind are essential in H when two or more U morphemes are assimilated to a single one in H; cf. 34 'bārā kāf' and 35 'choṭā kāf' for qāf and kāf respectively.

5 jihvā ke īpar ke dāntoḥ ke sāth milne se: 'by the tongue meeting the upper teeth' — īpar ke is an adj. phrase qualifying dāntoḥ which, like jihvā ke, qualifies milne se.


7 hindī mēn aisā uccāraṇ nahīn hai: this begs the question entirely, since it allows of no differentiation between H and S phonologies.

7 'je' — 'jīm' kā hī vīkār hai: here and in the following sentence the author betrays the depth of his prejudice, in which non-S phonemes are dismissed as aberrations. Note the separation of subject je by punctuation, a clumsy device which careful drafting would have made unnecessary.

12 kīroḥ kī taraḥ: HU has not needed the help of E in arriving at the image of the 'book-worm', a literal and voracious reality in the libraries of tropical countries.

13 amuk śabd ‘jāl’ se hai yā ‘je’ se: 'so and such a word is [spelt] with zāl or ze'. There is no convenient HU equivalent for E 'to spell'.

14 parāye kāntoḥ mēn ghāsīnā: 'to drag amongst someone else's thorns', i.e. to involve unnecessarily in the predicaments of others. 'N.P.S.' is subject, 'H' is object.

16 nāgarī pracārīṇī sabhā ke rūl se: a delightfully unselfconscious borrowing of E 'rule', given the concentration in this passage on the implications of word origins (922).

18 jarūrat: a nicely incorporated example supporting Gupta's thesis that diacritical marks are redundant in transcribing PA words into Nagari.

20 is bindī se urdū na jāmne vāloḥ kā kyā upkār hai?: this rhetorical question has a straightforward answer, namely that the dot distinguishes z from j in loanwords.

21 vah kaise jāmēnē ki kis śabd ke nice bindī lagānā cāḥiye?: a legitimate answer to this would be, 'By the same minimal degree of knowledge of etymological spelling conventions that is necessary for the correct differentiation of e.g. s and ș in S words used in H'. Gupta's implication that this knowledge depends on actual literacy in PA is an overstatement.

21 bindī lagā-lagākar: 'by constantly applying the dot' (542a).

22 miyān miṭṭhū: 'Mr Sweet-talker', pet name for a parrot (E 'Pretty Polly')
23 hindī khudā ke phajal urdū se bhī saral ho jāegi: ‘by God’s grace H will become even easier than U’ — ‘saral’ is of course sarcastic, with an additional irony in the specifically U khudā ke phajal.

24 tin iīye nau: ‘three times three, nine’.

26 koi ‘bindī’ lagāvegā, koi nahīn lagāvegā: an accurate prediction, but one whose outcome causes no more confusion than does e.g. the use of intervocalic -i- as a variant form for -y- (or zero) in e.g. lagāvegā.

28 nāgaridās-kṛt ‘isq caman’: ‘Nagaridas’ was the pen-name of Savantsingh (1699–1764), Rajah of the Rajput state of Kishangarh; he relinquished the throne in 1757 to live a life of devotion to Radha (or ‘Nagari’, ‘the urbane one’). He wrote much Braj Bhāṣā verse, but used P for his poem ‘Isq caman or ‘Garden of Love’.

32 yah bindī ki bimāri hindī váloh ko acchī lagī: ‘the H-vālās have got a really good dose of this ‘dot’ disease!’.

35 sāhab!: a good example of a technically honorific expression being used for precisely the opposite effect.