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A HISTORY OF URDU LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LANGUAGE AND ITS ORIGIN.

URDU is popularly regarded to be an off-spring of Persian, having been ushered into existence in the camps of the Moslem invaders and the capitals of Moslem Sovereigns in India. People are misled as to its origin by the preponderance of Persianized words, the prosody of its poetry and its script. It is frequently referred to as the language of the Musalmans as opposed to Hindi which is claimed to be the language of the Hindus. An acute controversy has been raging between the protagonists of Urdu and the champions of Hindi over the merits and superiority of one over the other. In the heat of discussion people have forgotten the origin of Urdu. Urdu, by origin, is a dialect of the Western Hindi spoken for centuries in the neighbourhood of Delhi and Meerut and is directly descended from *Saur Senic Prakrit*. This living dialect has formed the basis of Urdu, the name having been given at a later period. It retains its original and essential character in the grammar, idioms and a large number of Hindi words. They all clearly point to its Indian parentage. It was an accident that this dialect became the *lingua franca* of India, for it so happened that Delhi, where this dialect was spoken, became the camping ground and capital of the Musalman invaders and sovereigns. It is therefore clearly wrong to say, as is stated by Mir Aman and early Urdu and foreign writers that Urdu is a 'mongrel pigeon form of speech made up of contributions from the various languages which met in Delhi Bazaar.' It is true that the camp was an important factor in the life of this dialect and influenced it so largely as to give its own name.* This dialect was in a state of flux and readily assimilated new words and phrases and still shows considerable capacity to absorb words from other sources. The English nomenclature 'Hindustani' for Urdu though an improvement over it is misleading, for Hindustani properly comprises many dialects prevalent in Hindustan, e.g., *Eastern Hindi*, *Western Hindi* and *Rajasthani*. It is also slightly incorrect to say that Urdu is derived directly from *Brij Bhasha*, another dialect of Western Hindi as is maintained by Muhammad Husain Azad, for *Brij Bhasha* though closely akin to and having many similarities with the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Delhi, is another dialect spoken in Muttra and surrounding districts. It is its sister dialect that is responsible for the birth of Urdu.

* Urdu is a Turkish word meaning, camp or army with its followers

As is mentioned above Urdu owes its existence to the dialect prevalent near Delhi and Meerut, an off-shoot of Western Hindi. Western Hindi is descended from *Saur Senic Prakrit* and has the following dialects: *Bangaru*, *Brij Bhasha*, *Kanuji* and the dialect spoken near Delhi. Modern 'High Hindi' was developed from Urdu by the ejection of Persian words and substitution of those of Sanskrit origin. This High Hindi was used as a vehicle for prose and writers frequently drew from the opulent Sanskrit vocabulary. Hindi and Urdu are of the same parentage and in their nature they are not different from each other. But each has taken a different line of development. Urdu, under the tutelage of the Musalmans, has sought its inspiration from Persian while Hindi has reverted to its original fount—Sanskrit. Literary Urdu has thus become widely divergent from the literary Hindi of the present where there is a tendency either to Persianize or to Sanskritise the vernacular.

In the beginning the language was quite simple and homely and sufficed for the few wants of the peasants whose needs were few and whose outlook on life was circumscribed. As it began to develop into a literary language, its vocabulary was enriched with various words from Persian and through Persian from Arabic and Turkish. Writers began to draw upon the resonant Persian to secure variety. Persian constructions foreign to the indigenous dialect began to be imported into and engrafted upon the language. The Persian script was borrowed with some modifications as Persian words could only be written with ease and fluency in it. Urdu poetry modelled itself upon Persian poetry and annexed not only metres but themes, imagery, allusions and peculiar phrases and constructions. It follows the laws of Persian prosody completely and implicitly. Urdu prose was for a long time a thrall of Persian prose. For a time, Urdu verses were crude but faithful translations of Persian verses. So complete was the dominance of Persian over Urdu in thought, subject-matter and style that it completely obscured the nature and origin of Urdu and scholars were not wanting who wrote the grammar of Urdu after the manner of Persian.

The Mohammadans came as conquerors and their official language, Persian naturally became the sovereign language in India. The vernacular sank to the position of a handmaid waiting at a respectable distance on the mistress whose manners and methods it was natural for her to imitate. There has always been a craze for the new language and people began to discard the older forms of expression. They disdained to use the homely and simple language of the rustics and turned to the language in ascendant with avidity. The

Cause of the large influx of Persian words and Persian constructions.

large preponderance of Persian words in the writings of early Hindi poets is astonishing. Chand Kavis *Prithvi Raj Ras* teems with these exotics. The narrow range of the dialect tended to absorb words from outside to express various terms and different shades of meaning. The dialect had a meagre vocabulary of Sanskritized words both in their original and corrupted forms. With the advent of the Muhammadans a great change swept over the dialect. The Muhammadan invaders assumed the role of sovereigns and made Delhi their headquarters. They came to stay and ceased to be the predatory freebooters who made yearly incursions into India for plunder. With the establishment of the camp and capital at Delhi frequent opportunities occurred which brought the soldiers and natives together. In order to understand each other they picked up words from each other's language but the subservience of the conquered resulted in the adoption of numerous words to the ultimate enriching of the Urdu tongue. The influence of Hindi on Persian was naturally limited as scholars took care to maintain the purity of their language. The process of change, imperceptible but steady, continued as the Muhammadans took root in the country and settled in their acquired territories. The process was quickened in the time of Akbar when a Hindu Revenue Minister insisted that every Government clerk should learn Persian, thus accelerating the crystalization and standardisation of the language. Many revelled in the use of Persian and polyglot words for their resonance and striking effect and to show themselves off as especially cultured. It was also a ready passport to gain attention and preferment in court. Such a change comes over every language when it is confronted by a similar situation. Anglo-Saxon suffered the same fate at the hands of Norman French after the Norman conquest. There are numerous cases of bilingualism in Urdu as there are in English.

The causes for the influx of Persian words are manifold. The Muhammadans as conquerors brought many things which had new names. No counterparts could be found in vernacular or Sanskrit. No periphrase could be accepted and desired and so the Persian names peculiar to the foreigners were incorporated. These new names relate to dress, food, religion and various other things. Being a language of the ruling class, the language of chivalry, war and love, men delighted to use Persian words which were thought to be sonorous, refined and pleasing to the ear. Old familiar words were neglected and homely phrases ruthlessly discarded. Men saw no beauty in them. English had the same history at the time of the Greek and Latin Revival when learned expressions and 'inkhorn terms' were the order of the day. Mutual intercourse demanded the necessity of a mixed vocabulary which could be intelligible to both and the conquered were more eager to please their masters by adopting their words than the masters who never really cared

for it. Pedants affected foreign words to parade their learning. Urdu literature took its start with poetry and the poetry was a toy in the hands of Persian scholars and poets who dressed it up in the garments of Persianized words. These scholars and poets knew little Hindi and no Sanskrit. It was thus that the child forsook its parents and took its abode with its adopted parents who endowed it largely with their riches. Being in their hands Urdu modelled itself upon Persian in everything. Not only were words despoiled from the coffers of the Persian language but Persian constructions were also annexed. They reversed the position of the governing and governed words, of the adjective and the substantive it qualified, and adopted the use of Persian phrases with the preposition 'ba', all foreign to the indigenous grammar. The literary Urdu of to-day is replete with such borrowed foreign constructions. It must be admitted that the influence of Persian raised dialect to the dignity of a language though it is to be deplored that it destroyed much of what was valuable in the dialect which it had obtained as a heritage from the parent tongue.

The Persian language and literature exercised incalculable influence on the destiny of Urdu. The European languages, Portuguese and English affected it to a great extent. Dutch and French left no mark or so little as not to be perceptible. Portuguese and English enriched the vocabulary. By 1540 A. D. the Portuguese had firmly established themselves in the chief ports of India and were the leading traders in the East. Various colonies dotted the sea-coast and the interior of India. They had more than a temporary interest here. They came in contact with the people as traders, rulers and missionaries. They had advanced themselves considerably and in 17th and 18th century Portuguese was the *lingua franca* of a great part of India. It was the medium of discourse not only between natives of India and Europeans but also between trading Europeans themselves. It was the language of the church through which proselytism in India was carried on by foreign missionaries. It had thus many points of contact with indigenous languages and influenced them in their careers. It influenced Bengali most as it also did the Dravidian languages, Marathi, Assamese and Uriya. It conferred a benefit on Urdu by contributing words and enriching its vocabulary. Such words were introduced in Northern India at the time when the Deccani language which had an opportunity of being influenced by Portuguese owing to its close proximity to the Portuguese settlements and various other Indian languages who had been similarly affected, reacted on Urdu. Portuguese words in native tongues are not found in all their purity but in a corrupted form as they were spoken in India and as they adopted themselves to Indians. The Portuguese not only introduced European words into the

vocabularies of Indian languages but they also transmitted many Arabic, Persian and Hindi words to the opulent coffers of European languages. Some Arabic and Persian words have been re-introduced through Portuguese as the Arabs had exercised influence in Portugal and Spain when they had made a conquest of a great part of those countries. Portuguese words are numerous and a few words are mentioned below. Fruits, Eatables and Condiments :—Achar, Anannas, Afus, Biscuit, Caju, Pamfrit (a kind of fish found at Bombay) Papaiya, Tambaku (tobacco), Taranj, Cha, Sago, Gobbi. Furniture, instruments and arms :—Alpin (pin), Almari (almirah), Arghanun (organ), Bajra (boat), Balti (bucket), Botul (bottle), Pipa (barrel), Pistaul (pistol), Praig (small nail), Chabi (key), Sabun (soap), Koch (sofa), Captan (captain), Karbeen (carbine), Kartoos (cartridges), Mez (table), Towal (towel), Garad (guard). Ecclesiastical terms :—Padri (padre), Girja (church), Kurs (cruz). Wearing apparel :—Saya (gown), Qamis (shirt), Kaj (button-hole), Spat (spats). Miscellaneous :—Ingrez (Englishman), Aya (Aya, nurse), Bamba (pipe), Pagar (pay), Paoroti (loaf), Chhap (printing), Nilam (auction), Mistri (artisans), Kamra (room), Rupia (rupees). The Portuguese were the first to introduce European things in India and hence they introduced them in their tongue with names as they were found in their own language. Ghalib frequently writes about *Portugali Sharab* or Portuguese wine. English is living language and the language of rulers. It has exercised, is exercising and will exercise great influence. The contact with English literature was of incalculable advantage to Urdu poetry and prose and will be described at length in a subsequent chapter. English has supplied words where there are no other equivalents and they are current coins on the lips of everybody. The translations from English have helped to bring many words into Urdu. Caution should be exercised in swamping Urdu with English and the tendency to 'purify' the language by the ejection and dislodgement of those English words which have firmly established themselves should be deprecated. Urdu should be enriched and words suited to its genius should be absorbed from any source, English, Persian or Sanskrit. It is the only way to perfect it, to raise it to the dignity of a first class language and to maintain for it its reputation as a cosmopolitan language, the true *lingua franca* of India.

In every language poetic and prose diction differ. To elevate the language of the style and distinguish poetry from prose, Prose and Poetry. writers employ a more dignified diction rejecting homely words and common place constructions. Persian idioms were engrafted on and imported into the language whole sale. In the early history of Urdu prose rhyming sentences were the order of the day. This jingling prose which was widely

affected and the only recognised standard was a servile imitation of the ornate prose of Zahuri and Bedil. It can be compared to the Elizabethan Euphuism in the use of balanced and antithetical sentences and gorgeousness of imagery. It was the influence of Ghalib and Sir Syed Ahmed and the new era ushered in by Western Education that freed prose from the trammels of rhyme and long-winded Persian constructions. The embellished prose could not live in the practical age which brought in a new movement in literature and the language now employed for prose is simple, natural, direct and vigorous. There is still a preponderance of Persian words but they do not mar the beauty of sentences or make the prose jingling. Simple Hindi phrases are picturesquely used and involved and convoluted constructions are avoided. The poetry still drinks from the fount of Persian and employs an ornate and embellished diction. Hindi idioms are used but sparingly and only when they fit in with Persian words. There has lately been a slight reaction in favour of simple and natural diction from the variegated and florid phraseology which ruled supreme so long. The tendency of the scholar is always, unnecessarily, to indulge in Persianized words, both in poetry and prose and this must be deprecated. The difference, however, between the language of prose and poetry is not deep-rooted and essential.

The spoken language always differs from the written. The simple homely phrases which occur so readily to the tongue are replaced by their more fortunate brethren of Persian extraction who commend themselves by their novelty, dignity, resonance and loftiness. In the beginning the dialect was very poor and had a limited vocabulary. It had not attained the status of a language and was crude and unrefined incapable of expressing subtleties and varieties of thoughts though it had beauties of its own.

It was plastic and readily assimilated the words and constructions it borrowed. Gradually it became crystallized and its fluid condition assumed settled form. In the beginning we find poets writing in a language half Persian, half Urdu. Gradually Urdu asserted itself and the conquered absorbed the conqueror. Persian words and unfamiliar constructions took root and were woven into the texture of the language of which they are now an integral part. To dislodge them now from their positions, as is the attempt of some writers who have predilection for Sanskrit is futile although this wholesale change has not been all for good. The Urdu language has now an enormous stock of words and phrases and is a weapon of great flexibility and strength capable of being wielded for any literary purpose.

The earliest writers in India, Terry and Fryer, called Urdu, as then prevalent *Indostan*. In the early part of the 18th century writers alluded to the language in Latin as *Lingua Indostanica* or *Hindustanica*. The earliest English writers called the language *Moors*. It was Doctor Gilchrist who is first said to have coined the word *Hindustani* about 1787 A. D. and made it current although the earliest reference to the word could be traced as far back as 1616 A. D. when Yule first mentions it. *Urdu-i-Mualla* or the Exalted Army with its transferred significance the Exalted Urdu, was the name given by Shah Jahan when the language was finally consolidated and made fit as a literary medium. *Rekhta* or Scattered (with Persian words) was coined by scholars to distinguish the literary language they used, from the colloquial, disdainful even to use the word 'Urdu' which smacked of the bazaars and rough uncultured armies. The word has now fallen into desuetude although in the beginning it was exclusively used for Urdu poetry there being little or no prose. *Hindi* was long used by older writers of the age of Mir and Mushaffi in its distinction with Persian and in showing the language to be the product of the soil, and not being a foreign tongue.

The alphabets used for Urdu is the same as that of Persian and Urdu Script. Arabic with certain changes and additions for those sounds peculiar to Indian language and not found in the former ones. They are ٹ ڈ ڈھ ڈھل ڈھلہ either ٹ is used above the letters ت د or four dots placed thus :

The prosody of Urdu is the prosody of Persian which is the prosody of Arabic. Accent, so important in English poetry, is not thought of in Urdu. There is however vowel quantity after the manner of the classical poetry of Greece and Rome. Rhyme (*Qafia*) and double rhyme (*Radif*) are of great importance in Urdu poetry. The standard metres are nineteen in number but a few are peculiar to Arabic and some have been modified and thus have acquired the appearance of new ones. The metres are obtained either by repetition of the same foot or by combination and modification of the feet recognised by classical prosodians. The feet are represented after the Persian and Arabic, by the conjugation of an Arabic verbal root, in such a way as to indicate the length and quantity of the feet. The same word is repeated through the entire line with the same or a different conjugational form, so as to represent the various lengths and quantities of the feet. The scansion of verses is in conformity with certain standard metres and it takes into account not only letters which are actually written but also those which are pronounced though not written; while on the other hand no letter which is not pronounced is reckoned in scansion even

though it be written becoming elided. *Alif-i-Mamduda* at the beginning of a word counts as two *Alifs*, *Izafat* counts as one letter. The foot in Urdu is called *Rukn*, literally pillar or post, which supports a house or tent. *Bait* is the name for verse. One half of the couplet is called *Misrah*, hemistich, or one half of a folding door.

The principal kinds of verse forms recognised in Persian and adopted by Urdu are :—

Ghazal or an ode and *Qasida* or 'purpose poem' are largely affected. They differ from each other mainly in subject and length but employ the same metres and are governed by the same principles with regard to rhyme. The *Ghazal* is generally erotic or mystical and seldom exceeds ten or twelve couplets though the rule is never strictly complied with. The *Qasida* may be and is generally panegyric or a satire or it may be didactic, philosophical, or religious. It must not consist of less than 25 couplets and not more than 170. A *Qita* or a segment, or a portion cut off, is a fragment of *Qasida* or *Ghazal* and differs from them in rhyme. It must not be less than two couplets and may be as long as the *Qasida*. Its first two hemistichs need not rhyme but the second hemistich of every verse must rhyme with the final hemistich of the opening verse throughout. The form of *Qita* or fragment is often chosen for didactic poetry and is often times complete in itself. *Rubai* or quatrain consists of two couplets (whence called *Dubaiti* or four hemistichs) of which first, second and fourth rhyme and is written in one particular metre, the *Hazaj*. It is not restricted to a particular subject-matter. The fourth hemistich is generally witty, striking and epigrammatic. *Masnavi* "paired, wedded or double-rhymed" is used for ballads, romances, epics and stories in rhyme. Each hemistich rhymes with its fellow, but the same rhyme does not go through the whole poem. There is no restriction imposed as to the number of verses and it may be composed in metres which are limited to five or seven according to some. *Mustzad* or "complemented" or "increment" poem is a poem in which each line has a few additional words beyond the length of the metre. The additional words have generally the metre of the last two feet of the poem itself and have their own rhyme. *Tarjih-band* or "return tie" and *Tarkib-band* or "composite tie" are two kinds of "strophe poems each consisting of a series of stanzas containing a variable but equal, or nearly equal, number of couplets, all in one rhyme, these stanzas being separated from one another by a series of isolated verses which mark the end of each strophe. If the same verse (which in this case may best be described as a refrain) be repeated at the close of each band or strophe, the poem is called *Tarjih-band*; if on other hand the verses which conclude each strophe be different the poem is called *Tarkib-band*. In both the cases the metre is the

same throughout. *Murabba* or Foursquare or 'foursome' consists of rhyming hemistichs in sets of four, each set of four being followed by a verse rhyming with the first set. *Mukhammas* or "fivesome or Quintet" resembles the foregoing but each set contains five rhyming hemistichs in the place of four. *Musuddus* or "sixsome or sestet" has the similar structure. In this the first two couplets rhyme and are followed by a couplet in a different rhyme, and some times in a different metre. The remaining multiple-poems such as *Musabba* "sevensome" etc., are constructed as explained above. *Wasokht* "burning backwards" "complains of the tortures caused to the lover by the separation of the beloved in which the poet threatens to go away if the sweetheart continue obstreperous and unheeding." *Tarikh* or chronogrammatic poem which gives the year of the event when certain letters are added according to their numerical value.

Fard is any single verse used as a quotation. *Matla* is the opening verse of a *Ghazal* or a *Qasida*. *Magta* is the final couplet which introduces the *Takhallus* or *nom de guerre* of the author. The work of the poet generally opens with a *Hamd* or praise of God and then follows *Naat* or praise of the Prophet; the *Munajat* or prayer for himself which the poet addresses to God; *Madh-i-Sultan* or the praise of the reigning king; the *Sabab-i-Talif* or reason why the book was written and *Sitayish-i-Sakhun* or praise of poetry. The collected works are called *Kulliyat* and it is customary to arrange poems as follows :—*Qasidas*, *Ghazals*, *Qitas*, *Rubaiyats*, *Masnavi*.

Prose is of three kinds : *Ari* (naked) which is simple or unornate; *Murajjaz* or cadenced which has metre without rhyme; *Musajja* or rhymed which has rhyme without metre. There are three kinds of *Nasr Musajja* or rhymed prose; *Mutawazi*, "parallel or concordant"; *Muattraaf*, "top-sided"; and *Mutawazin*, "symmetrical." In the first kind the rhyming words ending two successive clauses agree in measure (*i. e.*, scansion) and number of letters. In the second kind the rhyming words in two or more successive clauses differ in measure and number of letters. In the third kind the words in two or more successive clauses correspond in measure, each to each, but do not rhyme. These sub-divisions are not now of much use as the later half of 19th century dealt a *coup de grace* to such artificial jingling prose which reigned supreme in the beginning.

Works containing biographical notices on the lives of poets are called *Tazkirahs* and anthologies of their works are called *Guldastas*.