



Urdu: The most underrated vehicular language of the Indian sub-continent

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Urdu: The most underrated vehicular language of the Indian sub-continent

Introductory Public Seminar, 19 April 2016

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Inalco and the Urdu connection

- ❖ Establishment in 1669 by Colbert with the name Ecole des jeunes de langue
- ❖ In 1795, creation of “Ecole spéciale des langues orientales”
- ❖ Initially started with three posts of professor or *Chairs*
 - *Vulgar & Literary Arabic*
 - *Turkish & Tartar of Crimea*
 - *Persian & Malay*
- ❖ Langlès appointed as the head of the Inalco (1796-1824) followed by Silverstre de Sacy (1824-1838).
 - First scholarly work on Hindustani > “*Monuments anciens et modernes de l’Hindoustani* “ (1821) by Langlès.
- ❖ 1828 > Silvestre de Sacy recommended his student Garcin de Tassy for Hindustani chair.

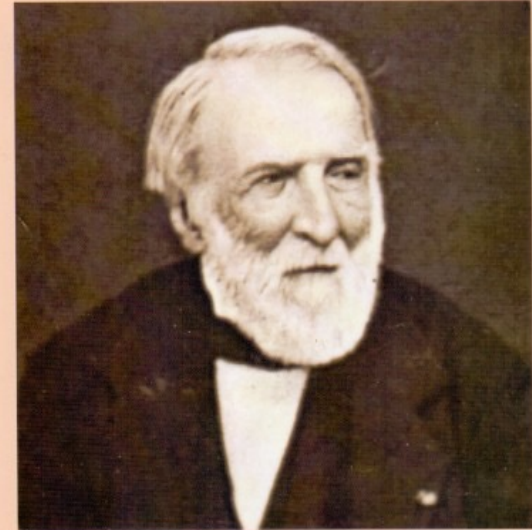


تاریخ ادبیاتِ اردو

مصنفہ
گارسین دتاسی

ترتیب و تدوین اور تقدیم
ڈاکٹر معین الدین عقیل

فرانسیسی سے اردو ترجمہ
لیلیان سیکستن نازرو



پاکستان اسٹڈی سینٹر
جامعہ کراچی



Garcin de Tassy – the scholar of Hindustani

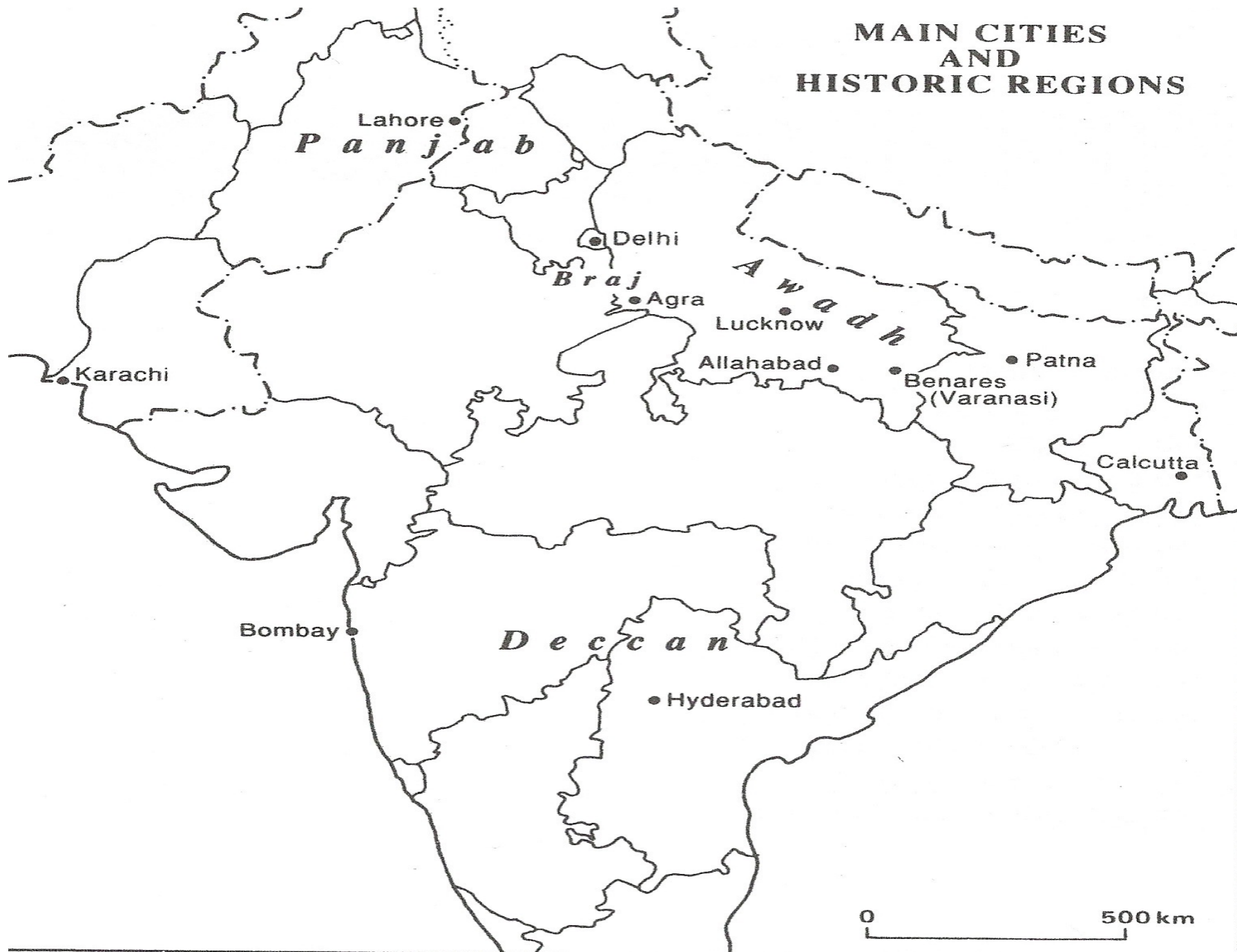
Garcin de Tassy, an orientalist and expert of Hindustani language

- Born in Marseille (1794-1878)
- He knew already Arabic, Persian and Turkish which helped him learning Urdu from 1827
- He never went to India
- A great scholar of Islamic texts and Indian culture, particularly Hindustani language
- He published more than 150 works including around 20 works on Hindustani language

Brief description on origin of Urdu language

- ❖ Language begins around 12th century, influenced by many languages.
- ❖ Before 18th century several names of Urdu language
 - Musulmani Bhasha
- ❖ Religious period > 1350-1590
 - Writing of poems and tracts to diffuse the teaching of religion
- ❖ Literary works in Urdu > 1590-1730
 - Most of the works were produced in Deccan, and in North India it was in Persian
- ❖ Urdu spoken by speakers of Azimabad

Urdu before British Empire– 13th-14th centuries



Urdu as vehicular language in 18th century

لوگوں کوں جب کھول بتاویں

ہندی میں کہہ کر سمجھاویں

Lōgō kō jab khōl batāvē

Hindī mē kaēh kar samjhavē

(When they explain clearly to the people

It is in Hindi that they speak to make them understand)

Tarīkh-ē-Gharībī, 1170 Hijri/1756–57

وہ اردو کیا ہے یہ ہندی زباں ہے

کہ جس کا قائل اب سارا جہاں ہے

Vo Urdū kyā haē yē Hindī zubā haē

Ke jis ka qā'el ab sarā jahā haē

(What that 'Urdu'? It is the Hindi language

Which now the whole world acknowledges)

Pir Murad Shah 1203/1788–89

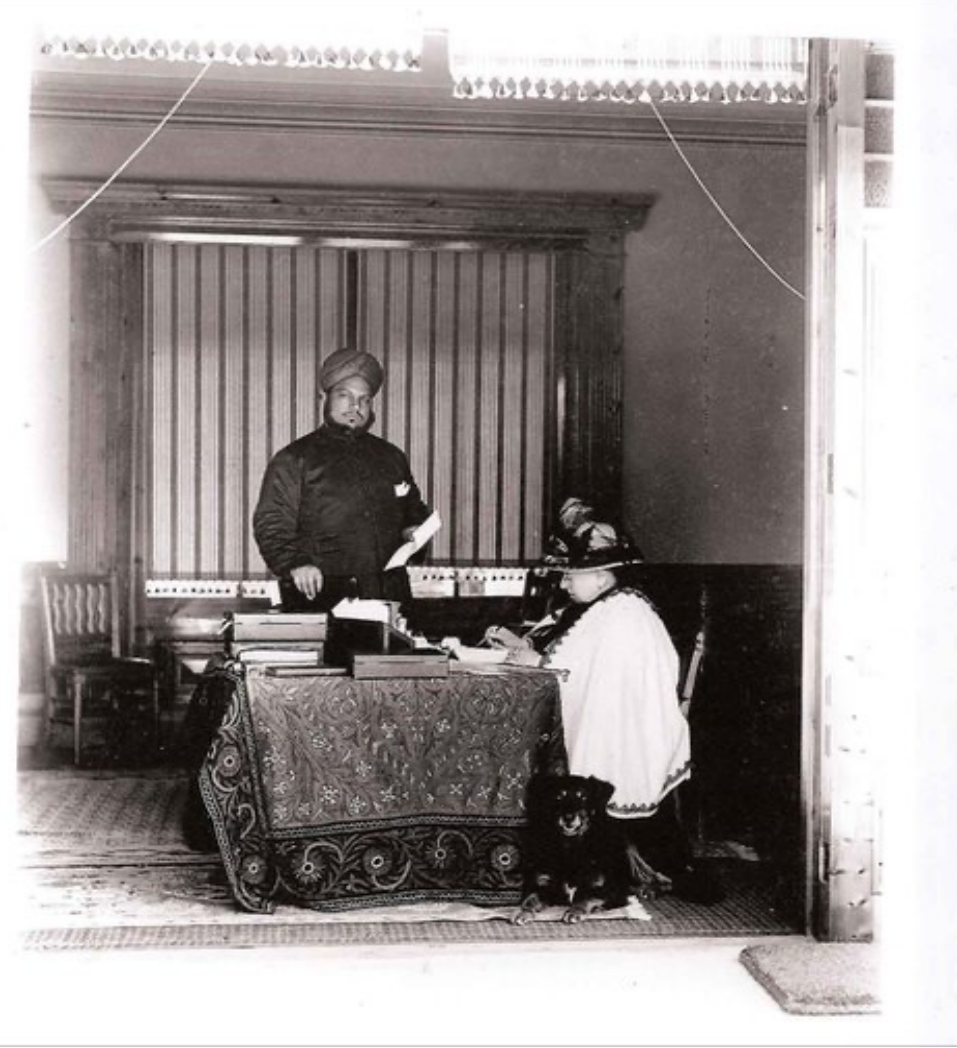
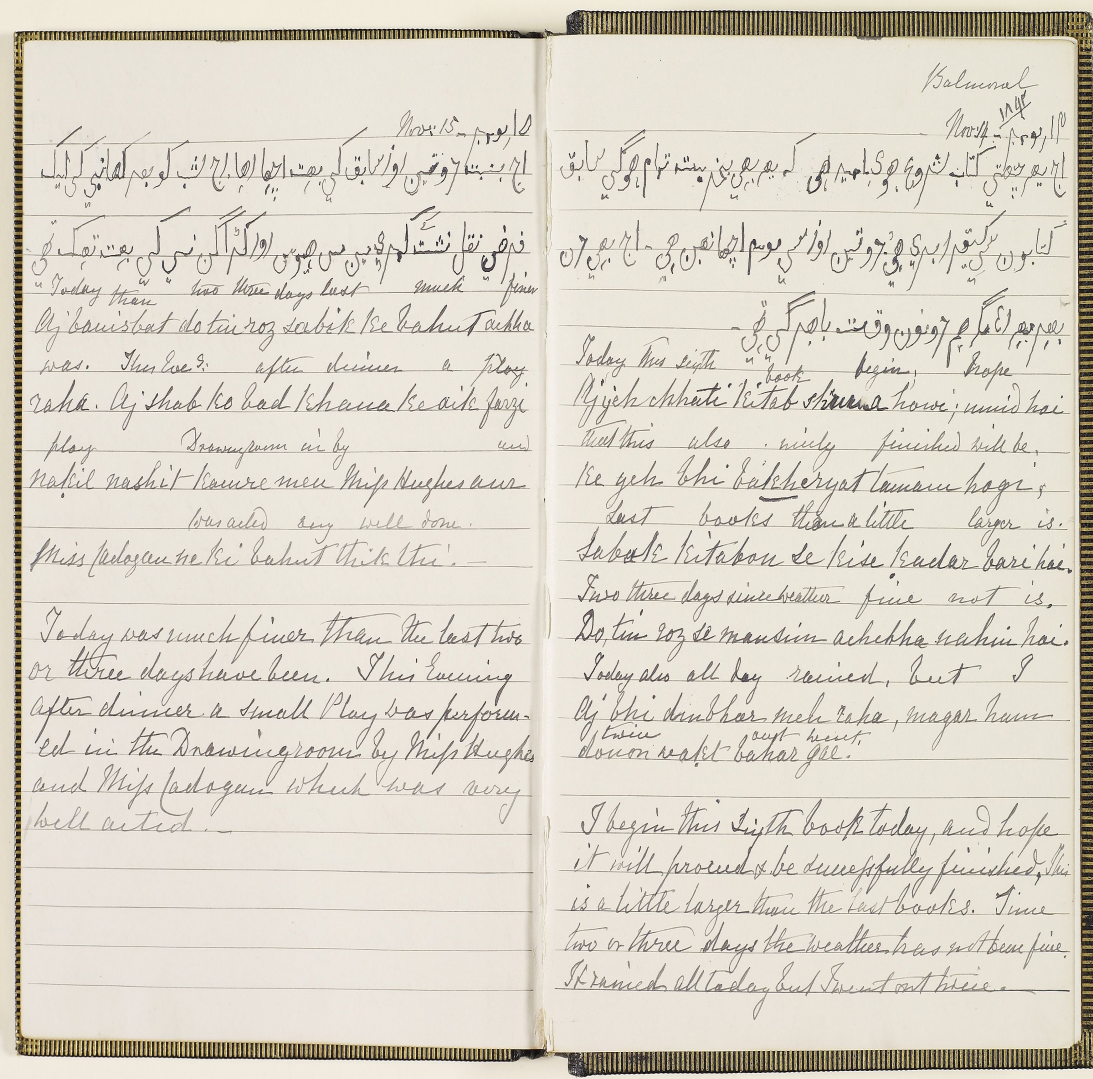
Hindustani as a vehicular language - I

- ❖ British considered Hindustani the *lingua franca* of India
- ❖ Colebrook (1808), an officer scholar wrote of Hindustani
 - Which is used in every part of Hindustan and the Dakhini; which is the common vehicle of colloquial intercourse among all well-educated natives, and among the illiterate also in many provinces of India, and which is almost everywhere intelligible to some among the inhabitants of every village
- ❖ Another scholar Williams (1871) writes that:
 - It is not only the regular spoken language of Delhi, Lucknow and at least fifty millions of persons in Central India, the North West Provinces and the Punjab, but is also the common medium of communication between Musalmaans throughout all India
- ❖ Chapman mentions it in his Urdu textbook in the early 20th century :
 - Hindustani, the lingua franca of India, is a composite language, derived from Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. It has several recognized varieties of which Urdu and Hindi
- ❖ British employed Hindustani in the army, in the schools and courts of North India
- ❖ British learned Hindustani to rule better / to become *pukka sahib* (authentic master)
- ❖ Printing presses, radio and film also used more Hindustani

Hindustani as a vehicular language - II

- ❖ An extract of article from Paris Journal (*Le Moniteur Universel*, 16/06/1828) by anonymous author cited by Hussain (1962) on the Hindustani language and its teaching at Inalco :
 - An idiom which, is born from the mixture of Arabic and Persian with Sanskrit, offers the means of communication with the nations which occupy the whole sub-continent of India
 - Even if we speak 10 to 12 different idioms in different provinces, Indostani is sufficient to foreigners to pass their message in almost every part of this vast region
 - Other languages such as Bengali, Tamil are limited to their own provinces but Indostani can be regarded as the lingua-franca or the common language of the country
- ❖ Anonymous 1897 Pamphlet cited by Brass (1974):
 - Urdu had been a lingua franca of the North for several hundred years, used equally by Hindus and Muslims
- ❖ Queen Victoria took lessons in the Urdu language

Urdu lessons of Queen Victoria, 1897



Distinction between two languages

Hindi

- ❖ Nagari script (Devanagri)
- ❖ Of uneducated folks (till late 19th century)
- ❖ Sanskritization began in late 19th century.
 - ❖ Cultural language of Hindus.
 - ❖ Marker of Hinduism
- ❖ Religious discourses (Hinduism)
- ❖ Protagonist and Heroes (political & religious)
- ❖ Rama, Krishna, Bhima, Shivaji
- ❖ Sardar Patel, Chandara Shekhar Azad
- ❖ Dialects: Bhojpuri, Chhattisgarhi, Magadhi, Rajasthani, Mewari, Bundelhi, Awadhi, Marwari, Khortha (Census 2001)

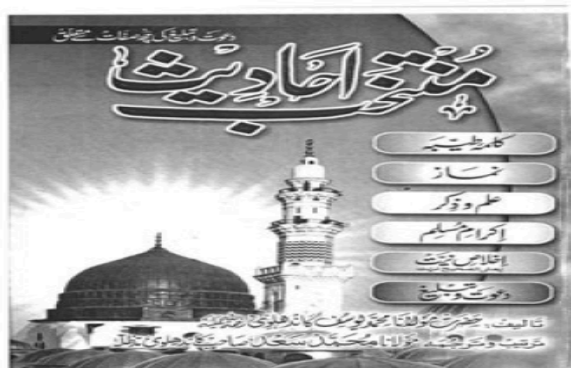
Urdu

- ❖ Persian script (Perso-Arabic)
- ❖ Language of highly educated and elite class (till late 19th & early 20th c)
- ❖ Language of refinement and upper classes (till early 20th century)
- ❖ Urdu continued to borrow from Persian language.
 - Cultural language of Muslims
 - Symbol of Islam
- ❖ Literary genres (inspired from Iran)
- ❖ Religious discourses (Islamic)
- ❖ Different protagonists and heroes (political and religious)
 - Prophets, Ali, Soufis, Aurangzeb
 - Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Muhammad Ali Jinnah
- ❖ Dialects: Dakhini, Lakhnawi Urdu, Dehlavi, Bambayya Urdu, Pakistani Urdu etc (Rahman 2011)

Re-birth of Hindustani language & Urdu as common language of India

- ❖ Gandhi proposed the re-merging of both Hindi & Urdu
 - He called it Hindustani
 - He thought it could be written in either script
 - He advocated for the infusion of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit & other indigenous languages into Hindustani
 - Hindustani of early 20th century different from Hindustani of 19th century
- ❖ Hindustani was the adopted language of Indian National Congress in 1925
- ❖ 2007 > Sonia Gandhi wrote a letter in Urdu to some prominent Muslims of U.P. seeking their votes, and signed the name in Urdu
- ❖ Use of the word « jumla » by the BJP Party President
- ❖ Usage of Urdu by the Indian Foreign Minister on her Pakistan trip (in 2015)
- ❖ Urdu maintained as a language of the lower courts and police stations
- ❖ A 74-year-old Hindu man declares Urdu as his mother tongue, he reads Gita in Urdu and all journals and books in Urdu. (Case study by R. Ahmad 2015)
- ❖ Link of Urdu with Islam in Bangladesh as it is in India and Pakistan
 - ❖ « Urdu should be reclaimed as an integral part of the subcontinent's Islamic culture » (Farrukhi 1989)

Muntakhab Ahadis in the Arabic script



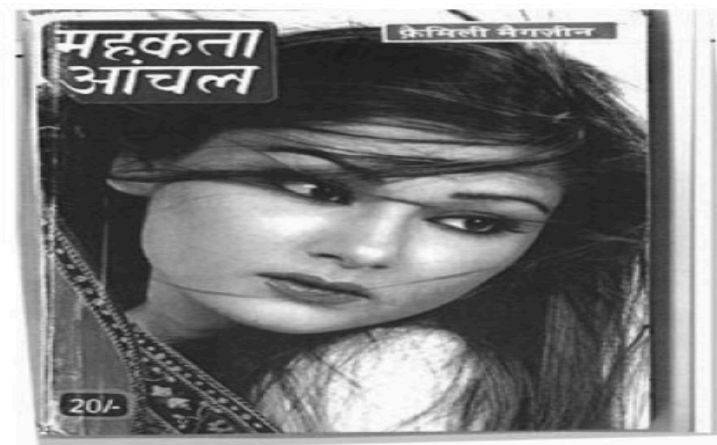
Muntakhab Ahadis in Devanagari



Mahakta Anchal in the Arabic script



Mahakta Anchal in Devanagari



Landscape – Urdu with other languages -India



Advertisement on wall in India



Urdu as vehicular language in Pakistan

- ❖ Before 1947, Urdu was not spoken in a single household
- ❖ Only 8 per cent of the total population of Pakistan (Census Pakistan 2001)
- ❖ 75 % of the inscriptions on Pakistani trucks plying on the roads of Pakistan are in Urdu (Rahman 2011)
- ❖ They are mostly Urdu couplets and inscriptions to decorate trucks
- ❖ Urdu is the most widespread language of Pakistan among ordinary people connected with business activities (Rahman 2011)
- ❖ Urdu is celebrated as a language of Muslims and its ownership is not shared with the Hindus (Rahman 2011)

Urdu in the popular culture

Several Pakistani originating actors and musicians

Several Urdu lyricists

- Considered as a melodious language, many songs use words with Urdu origins
- Films of 60s, 70s and 80s dominated by Urdu only songs

Big blockbuster movies in Urdu for Indian public

- Mughl-e-Azam (The Emperor of the Mughals)

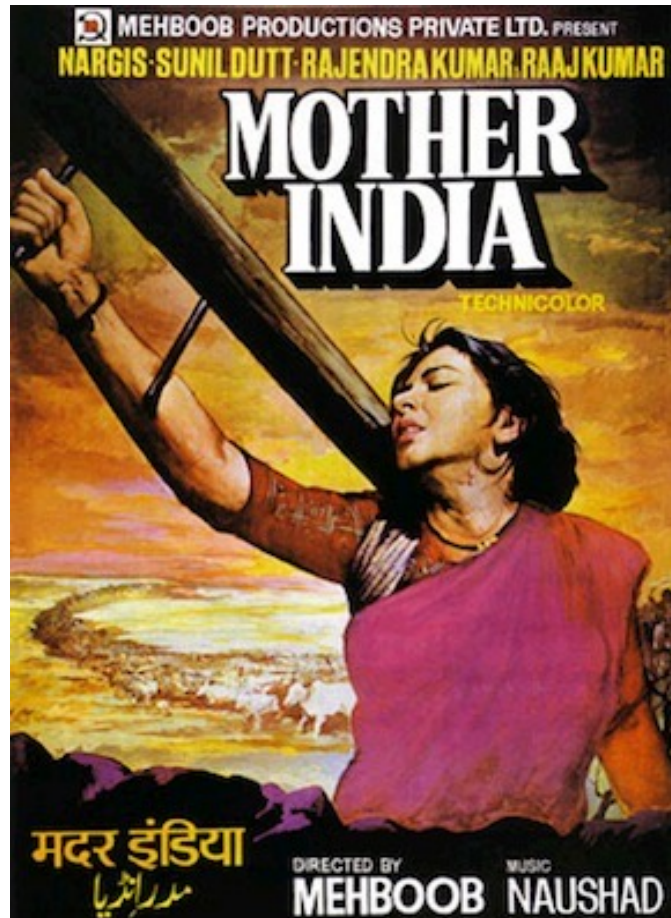
Requirement for actors to master Urdu

- Urdu classes taken by many actors and actresses

Urdu spoken form popularized by Bollywood and TV plays and songs (Rahman 2011)

- Songs can be heard on the streets of Delhi, Karachi, Lahore
- Oral comprehension by non-Urdu speakers

Urdu in Bollywood posters



Urdu literary festival : Jashn-e-Rekhta

- ❖ Celebrated since two years in India
- ❖ Around 30 000 people attend from all walks of life
 - Poets, writers, Urdu scholars
 - Non-Urdu readers, Urduphiles
- ❖ Urdu poems on Hindu God (Rama, Shiva) in Devanagari script



Urdu in the Indian sub-continent: some quantitative data

Country	L1 speakers	L2 speakers	Percentage
India	85 million		6.70 % (2011 Census)
Pakistan	14 million	94 million	8%
Bangladesh	2,50,000		0,14%
Nepal	692,000	22,900	2,6%

Source : Ethnologue, Census India 2011, World FactBook, CIA.

Urdu speakers in South Asian countries

Bangladesh

- Most people in the streets of Dhaka would understand Urdu
- People over 60 have had school level education in Urdu
- Urdu film industry prior to 1971
- Hindi has penetrated into the cultural circle, many films and songs in Hindi widely circulated
- Around 0.25% of Biharis in Bangladesh > 250,000-300,000
 - Community called « stranded Pakistanis », community highly persecuted
- News broadcast in Urdu language

Nepal

- Urdu and Persian usage in royal court was regarded as symbols being cultured
- King Pratap Malla (1624-74 A.D.) inscribed Urdu on his coins
- Urdu spoken in many parts of Nepal (Naseem 2008)
- Qazi Community speaks Urdu (L2)
 - Numbering around 4,200
- Kashmiri Muslims and Madheshi Muslims speak Urdu
- News broadcast in Urdu language
- More than 106 Urdu words found in Nepali language



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