

Urdu: another angle

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FIRAQ GORAKHPURI says in his article (PATRIOT Sunday Magazine, 22 December) that the Hindi movement began more than a hundred years ago. This shows that he is either ignorant of linguistic history or trying to downgrade Hindu culture.

If he cares to learn linguistic history he will find that seven or eight hundred years have passed since poet Chandrabardai wrote a historical work "Prithviraj Raso" on the life and work of Emperor Prithviraj. Its language is very close to the Brij-bhasha spoken in Mathura district. Tulsidas wrote the Hindi Ramayana about 500 years ago. There were others who wrote in that language at about the same time: Kabir, Surdas, Chaitanya and Guru Nanak.

Firaq says Urdu spread from North to South and East to West and that Hindi did not reach there. This is a misconception. In Central Provinces Hindi was the court language during the British period and Muslims there could use pure Hindi. Bengali Muslims always used Bengali in the Bengali script. All the Hindu states of Rajputana and the Maratha states used Hindi.

Firaq describes Hindi as "no language", as "dead and lifeless, ugly and vulgar, cheap and tenth rate". What are Urdu poems? One poet sings: "O sakhi, let me drink well, and let me drink in the mosque". Ninety-five per cent of the Urdu poems relate to drinking and prostitution. Lacking in poetic values, they are invitations to debauchery. On the contrary Hindi is the language of saints, warriors, traders etc. Hindi literature is full of heroic writings. Hindi poems are composed according to well-established rules.

Kashinath

Mathura

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should be its history, traditions, etc. We should also consider what languages were used as official languages at periods when the country was politically a single unit and with what effect. If experience and practical utility are the tests Hindi cannot be acceptable. Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada are not spoken or understood outside their respective regions.

The three languages which have been used as the official language in the past in this country are English, Pali and Persian. English was imposed by the British and never reached the masses. It is only natural that we should gradually eliminate its use as official language. Pali was India's national language for a long time but declined with Buddhism. Its revival would be unwise and impractical.

That leaves us with Persian which had served official and cultural needs for over 300 years. Even today it is widely known in India and as an Aryan language is as sacred as its sister language Sanskrit. Persian was not imposed on India by any foreigner. It was Akbar's Hindu minister Raja Todar Mal who made it the official language. If India restores to it the position of official language and Pakistan follows suit we will have a large solid linguistic block extending from Bengal to Basra, with India naturally playing the leading role.

I have discarded Sanskrit and Urdu because one is not spoken or understood by the people in general in any part of India and the other is the product of a decaying age and there are prejudices against it among a wide section of the people.

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Persian's claim

INDIA is a multilingual subcontinent. In deciding its official language the important factors