

Arabic and Urdu in International Perspectives

Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi

This paper gives an overview of the development of Arabic and Urdu in South Africa up to 1984 when Indian languages as a school subject were introduced from standards two to ten. It sketches the state of Indian languages at the various universities in the country and proceeds to place these languages in an international perspective. From the article it becomes clear that Arabic cannot be ignored by any scholar who seriously intends to probe the problems of our times. In the last instance, the article focuses on South Africa again, where Urdu, in particular, is flourishing, and where several poets have earned widespread acclaim. It concludes that the future of Urdu in this country has never been brighter.

Met hierdie artikel word 'n oorsig gegee oor die ontwikkeling van Arabies en Urdu in Suid-Afrika, tot en met die instelling in 1984 van Indiese tale as skoolvak vanaf standerd twee tot matriek. Die stand van hierdie tale aan verskeie plaaslike universiteite word geskets en daarna word die Indiese tale binne 'n internasionale perspektief geplaas. Die artikel stel dit dat 'n kennis van Arabies onontbeerlik is vir enige geleerde wat werklik die probleme van ons tyd wil deurvors. In laaste instansie keer die perspektief terug na Suid-Afrika, waar veral Urdu sterk groei en waar verskeie digters wye erkenning geniet. Die gevolgtrekking is dat die toekoms van Urdu hier te lande nog nooit beter was nie.

Introduction of Arabic and Urdu from standards two to matriculation and the dimensions of linguistic dispensation

The future of Arabic and Urdu seems to be as bright in South Africa as it is in any part of the world. The language dispensation granted by the Department of Education, Indian Affairs, in order to protect the cultural and linguistic identities of the various Indian communities as well as to safeguard the rights of minorities will have far-reaching effects on the future development of the Indo-Pak culture in South Africa. It is bound to lead to intensified research in these languages and will formulate the socio-linguistic and audio-lingual programmes among the Indian communities in South Africa. These will include the use of teaching aids, mobile language laboratories, the compilation of textbooks conducive to South African situations, and above all the involvement of the Media in

language teaching. There will have to be teacher training crash courses and adult education programmes, and finally the religio-cultural and socio-economic motivations of the Indian children who are going to opt for any of the five languages that have been introduced from standards two to five and onwards from January 1984.

The Arabic and Urdu languages, already popular with the community, will receive an additional boost. Arabic is not only the language of the Middle East and of the Arab World, but it is also the second language of the entire Muslim World, where Arabic is taught and learned for understanding the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna. Moreover, the current political situation in the Middle East cannot be comprehended either by a European or an Eastern scholar without a knowledge of Arabic.

No different is the case with Urdu, the third largest spoken language of the world, which comes after Chinese and English (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XI, 1968:463). It is the official language of Pakistan and is spoken, not only in India and Bangladesh, but also in the furthest corners of the world where people of Indo-Pak origin have settled. It is now being taught in Europe and America and universities have established Departments of Urdu for an understanding of the Indo-Pak civilization and its impact on the cultures of the world.

The teaching of Indian languages from grass-root levels will, consequently, create, among the Indo-Pak population of South Africa, an awareness of their rich cultural heritage and will arouse among the South African Europeans or various Asian populations, curiosity to know the splendours of the Indo-Pak civilization. The move of the Department of Education, which convened various meetings to discuss the subject, is, therefore, commendable.

A joint meeting of subject-committees for Indian languages was held in Durban in 1983. The chairman of the committee, Mr C.A. Naguran, the Chief Educational Planner, addressing the representatives of subject-committees, such as Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu and Arabic, outlined the purpose and the functions of the subject committees and asked the members of the committees to make recommendations to the Director of Education on all aspects pertinent to the subject. Mr E. Osman, the chairman of the subject committee, made it clear that the subject committees were constituted from purely professional personnel and certain members of the community had been included to safeguard the wider interest of the community. It was disclosed that the Indian languages from standards two to five would remain non-examination subjects and would be offered at Indian Schools subject to certain conditions. The ever-growing enrolment of students in the Department of Arabic, Urdu and Persian at the University of Durban-Westville was referred to as indicative of the increasing interest among Indian students in their languages. The problems of crash courses for teacher trainees were also discussed. The subject committees were authorized to draft and finalize the syllabuses as well

as to recommend suitable text-books and reference books produced by local scholars to avoid the high cost of imported books.

I was invited as a representative of Arabic and Urdu and was asked to prepare syllabi for the two languages. I suggested that Indian languages be treated as examination subjects as soon as was practicable. Mr Ebrahim Osman, the chairman of Arabic, Gujarati and Urdu, gave the necessary directions to the subject committees for Arabic and for Urdu. The basic structure of the Arabic syllabus was accepted and approved by the subject committee meetings in 1983. The Urdu syllabus was also accepted in principle. Details are still to be worked out.

It must be borne in mind that Arabic is neither an Indian language nor does it belong to the family of Aryan languages. It is purely a Semitic language. Since it is the language of the Qur'an, the Holy Book of the Muslims, it has become, religiously speaking, the lingua franca of the non-Arabic speaking Muslim World.

Arabic, as a subject in the primary school, was first introduced in the Orient Islamic Secondary School in Durban in 1975. Since there was no syllabus available, the UNISA Arabic 1 Course of 1973 was used. The course was naturally too advanced for the students and had to be simplified. The first batch of students sat for the matriculation examination in 1979.

The Department of Arabic, Urdu and Persian has given all its support and guidance to the Department of Education since 1975. I came to South Africa as a visiting lecturer and was invited by the Department of Education, Indian Affairs, to take part in the discussion with regard to the introduction and promotion of Arabic and to frame its syllabus. The syllabus was drafted and was submitted to the Department. It was approved with modifications and came into force in April 1976. It is still in operation, but is under revision.

Arabic was being offered at the University of Durban-Westville even before its introduction in the schools. There were 35 students in the Department in 1976. The Institute for Arabic and Islamic Research was founded in 1976 in

order to create greater awareness among the community for the promotion of the Department and its languages (*Arabic Studies*, Vol. (2):1, Dec. 1978, p. 114).

An interview was arranged with Prof. R. van der Ross, Rector of the University of the Western Cape in 1977, in order to discuss the promotion of Arabic at this University. It was suggested by me that a fully-fledged Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, independent of the Semitic Department, be founded. At the request of the Rector, I submitted a memorandum with regard to the introduction of Arabic II and its separation from the Department of Semitics (*Arabic Studies*, Vol. (2):1, December 1978, pp. 119–120). Similar suggestions were made to Prof. J.S. Cumsty, the Head of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town (*Arabic Studies*, Vol. (2):1, December 1978, p. 120). At the invitation of Prof. Cumsty, ten lectures were delivered at the University of Cape Town on the eve of its 150th Jubilee Celebrations during 1979. Three lectures were delivered at the University of the Witwatersrand and a similar suggestion was made to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof. D.J. du Plessis. In order to create greater awareness among the community, questionnaires were also circulated. The motivational lectures and endeavours reached their climax when the Department organized the Iqbal Centennial Celebrations from 28th to 30th April, 1978, and invited national delegates from three provinces to read their research papers. The resolution passed at the conclusion of the conference demanded that Urdu be approved as one of the elective subjects and be promoted at all levels of education in the Republic (*Arabic Studies*, Vol. (2):1, Dec. 1978, p. 116). It was also recommended that national conventions and conferences be convened from time to time in order to revive interest in the cultures and the languages of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Having received a wider appreciation for the works and the contributions of the Department from both the University and the community, the writer prepared a blueprint to develop the Department into a fully-fledged Faculty of Near Eastern Studies. Due to financial limitations the plan did not materialize.

The syllabi of the courses in the Department

were drafted afresh in 1977 when teaching aids and technical methods were introduced and when the use of the language laboratory was made compulsory. No syllabus is immutable. It accepts the challenges of the time. Keeping the contemporary progress and changes in mind, a fresh syllabus was again prepared by the Department in 1983 for introduction either from 1984 or 1985. Since such changes and modifications attract more students, the enrolment in the Department rose quite high, that is, from 41 in 1976 to about 300 in 1983.

In order to promote research and intellectual activities in the Department, *Arabic Studies*, an annual research journal, was published in 1976. Many publications under the auspices of the Department have so far appeared. Text-books in Arabic and Urdu were made available and accessible to students. It was on the eve of the First World Congress on Muslim Education, held in Mecca in 1978, that I met Professor Ameen al-Misri at the Medina University and obtained his permission to reproduce his series of books entitled *Tariqa al-Jadidia*, especially written for the non-Arab speaking Pakistanis. Permission was granted subject only to the condition that it was not to be produced for commercial purposes. Fortunately the book was reproduced in Durban by the Arabic Study Circle through the good offices of the late Dr A.M. Moola.

After these introductory remarks, a look at the expanding horizons of the Arabic and Urdu languages in international perspectives might serve some purpose.

2 Impact of Arabic on literary culture

The Arabic language can be compared to a pool of water in the Arabian peninsula.

Many people regard the Qur'an merely as a liturgical Book, used only for prayers and invocations. The fact is that the Qur'an has influenced the course of both the liturgical studies as well as the literary cultures of various nations. The Orientalists, despite their bias against Islam and the Qur'an, have realized the significance of the Qur'an and its Arabic language.

2.1 The European scene

A knowledge of the Arabic language is considered essential for a better understanding of the Bible and the Torah (New and Old Testaments). Scholars of scriptures in the West felt the need for learning the Arabic language for an interpretation of the scriptures. The first famous man who produced his research works on this topic was Albert Schulton (1686 – 1750), a Dutch scholar who wrote his thesis in 1707 entitled: *The use of Arabic in the interpretation of Scriptures*. Edward Peacock and W. Robertson in England and J. Welhausen in Germany studied the scripture in the same light. The Jews and Christians living in the Arabian peninsula composed poetry and prose in Arabic. Their compositions are still considered as some of the best models of classical Arabic literature. The early translation of the Bible into Arabic, now extant in the Vatican, cannot be studied, compared or adjudged analytically without a knowledge of Arabic. According to Otto Jespersen, the Romance languages in Europe are greatly indebted to Arabic. The interest of the Spanish Christians in Arabic is proverbial. Reverend Alvaro, the Pope of Cordova, once complained that young Christians were so fond of the Arabic language, its style and diction, that they preferred to write letters to their friends in Arabic, rather than in Latin. They even excelled their Arab counterparts in prose and poetic styles and diction (D. Dozy, *History des Musulmans de Spagni*, Vol. II, p. 103).

The Jews, like the Christians, were fond of the Arabic language. The language of the medieval Jews, right from Baghdad through Morocco and Spain, was Arabic. It was only second to their vernacular. Jewish temples in Toledo would announce their religious programmes in Arabic. Medieval Jewish literature—the greater portion of it, if not all—was written according to Arabic metrical patterns. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York, 1901, Vol. II, p. 50).

D.B. Macdonald, in his *The Hebrew Literary Genius*, (1933:26), says that Hebrew literature from the beginning to the present, has been under the influence of Arabic in terms of form and matter. A student of comparative literature is well aware of these facts. Even the history of

modern science cannot be studied without a knowledge of Arabic. Professor George Sarton of Harvard University professes that the history of modern science will remain incomplete without a knowledge of Arabic. Since all medieval sciences started with the Arabs, the knowledge of Arabic is a sine-qua-non for scientists. Professor Sarton himself went to Syria to learn Arabic for his research.

The mundane and the supramundane significance of the Arabic language, developed by the Qur'an, compelled the scholars of Arabic to revise their stand on the subject. Now they hold that a study of the socio-economic conditions of the Middle East is not possible without a knowledge of Arabic. Moreover, the rising Third World and the petro-dollar economy of the world has revived the Arabic language to an extent that international oil companies and firms, trade and commercial centres, banks, engineers and medical doctors, diplomatic sources, etc., are compelled to acquire a knowledge of Arabic prior to their entry into Arab countries.

Among the great scholars of contemporary Europe there are many who realize the significance of Arabic. They hold that a historical, literary, economic and political study of any Arab country and its culture is not possible without a knowledge of the primary sources written in its own original language, that is, Arabic. Four of these scholars merit special mention:

– Prof. H.A.R. Gibb, an English academic, in his essays *Studies in contemporary Arabic Literature*, *Bulletin of School of Oriental Studies*, Pt IV, 1928.

– Prof. S. Kampffmeyer, a German academic, in his essay *Die Anfänge einer Geschichte der neueren Arabischen Literatur* in *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen XXXI*, 1928, p. 170–77.

– Prof. I.J. Karackovsky, a Russian academic, in his article *Proben der Neu-Arabischen Literatur* in *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen XXXI*, 1928, p. 180–99.

– Prof. Nallino, an Italian academic and Prof. Huart, a French academic, in their books, and a German academic, C. Brockelmann in his *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, Suppl. III, 1924. In chapter four the significance of Arabic in the modern world is highlighted.

2.2 The South African scene

The promotion of Arabic in the South African context is equally fascinating. The arrival of Muslims in the country continued from the 17th to the 20th century. With them came the Qur'an. The Muslim scholars wrote on the Qur'anic law or the Shari'a law for the guidance of the community. Such literary endeavours led to the development of "Arabic-Afrikaans" literature in South Africa.

There is a growing realization among South African scholars that a knowledge of Arabic is absolutely essential for the discovery of the rich historical past of South Africa. Hence a series of researches under the caption of "Arabic-Afrikaans" literature was carried out. The following works bear testimony to this:

– Arabies-Afrikaanse Studies 1, 'n tweetalige (Arabies en Afrikaanse) Kategismus, deur A. van Selms, *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afd. Letterkunde, Amsterdam, 1951. (This is a literary curiosum discovered by Prof. A. van Selms, Head of the Department of Semitology of the University of Pretoria).

– Tuan Guru (d. 1807) who arrived at the Cape in 1771, and wrote his book on the Qur'anic law in 1781. This was the *first written work in the Afrikaans language* in Arabic characters. (It is extant in manuscript form).

– The famous book *al-Qawl al-Matin* is a landmark in "Arabic-Afrikaans" literature. It was the *first book ever printed in Afrikaans* (written in the Afrikaans language with Arabic script). Mr. M.C. Schonegevel of Green Market Square printed it in 1856. Five years later the first book in authentic Afrikaans was published in Roman letters (*The Cape Times*, February 1, 1952, p 9).

– Abu Bakr Effendi (d. 1880), wrote his *Bayan ad-Din* on the Qur'anic or Shari'a law in "Arabic-Afrikaans". It was published in 1874 in the Cape. (E.J. Brill published it in 1971.)

– A first number of a Malay Catechism *Ctabelle-malien* was printed entirely in the Arabic language by Mr M.C. Schonegevel (the copy is not extant).

– The Turkish Ministry of Education issued an Arabic-written publication in the Cape Malay dialect on Qur'anic law (Constantinople 1877) for the guidance of the community.

– Ahmad Ataullah Effendi, Principal of the Ottoman-Arabic School in Kimberley, edited the *Mahammedan Journal*, a paper started in Kimberley and printed in English and Arabic for the guidance of the community and for the defence of the Sultan of Turkey (*The Natal Mercury*, Sept. 1898, p. 5).

– A periodical, *al-Islam*, was issued in Arabic from 1907 – 1910. (Copies are extant in the Natal archives.)

These facts reveal the truth that Arabic reached the remote Southern tip of Africa and generated the "Arabic-Afrikaans" literary culture. The earliest printings of the Afrikaans language were in Arabic script. George McCall Theal, the most erudite of South African historians, says that the more he delved into the manuscripts at Lisbon and at the Vatican, the more convinced he had become that the Arabic historiographers and geographers were worthy of being studied by the Cape historian (*Cape Times*, February 1926 and *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, Vol. III, part 1, 1933).

Sir Thomas Arnold expressed his conviction about Cape Muslims as follows:

Very little notice has been taken of those Muslims by European travellers, or even by their co-religionists until recently. (*Preaching of Islam*, London, 1869 p. 284. Second edition 1913, pp. 350–2).

2.3 The Asian scene: The Persian and Urdu literary culture

The large Arabic element in Persian and Urdu is an indispensable part of those languages. The Arabic words incorporated into the Persian or Urdu languages have become either Persianized or Urduized. Persian and Urdu literature abound in quotations from Arabic writings, especially from the Qur'an. The formation of the main derivative Arabic forms are used both in Persian and in Urdu. The following books can be consulted for detailed information:

– *Persian Grammar*, by A.K.S. Lambton. Cambridge University Press, 1963. (Especially Part II: "The Arabic element in Persian".)

– *Hindustani Grammar*, by John Platt, pp. 61 – 210. Urdu, Persian and Arabic constructions have been dealt with at greater length.

Persian

Persian is written in the Qur'anic or Arabic script and follows Arabic grammar and phrases. No student of Persian can understand classical literature without a knowledge of Arabic. The early famous poets during the Samanids, such as Daqiqi (369 A.H.) and Rudki (329 A.H.), wrote extensively and used Qur'anic and Arabic vocabulary. Now, only one thousand lines of Daqiqi are preserved in the *Shahnama* of Firdawsi, while a few hundred lines out of one hundred thousand lines, composed by Rudki, are extant today, which reveal the impact of Arabic and the Qur'an on Persian. Until the first half of the fifth century, Persian contained only 5% Arabic words but during the second half of the fifth century the ratio increased to 50%; and during the sixth and eighth centuries the ratio of Arabic elements in Persian reached 80%. This happened because of the impact of the Qur'an.

Urdu

The impact of Arabic on the Indo-Pak subcontinent is obvious. The creation of Urdu was the result of Arabic and Persian intermixture in the subcontinent. Linguists hold that a mass of

Arabic words established themselves in almost every Indian language, though their influence is more perceptible in the Indo-Germanic family than in the Turanian family.

Like Persian, Urdu is also written in Qur'anic or Arabic script. Twenty eight languages of the world are written in Roman script while twenty four languages in the Muslim World are written in the Qur'anic script. The Arabic sound system was also adopted by them. Urdu, belonging to the Indo-Germanic or Indo-Aryan group, has been influenced by Semitic grammar.

The impact of the Qur'an on Persian and Urdu poetry—especially the mystic, philosophical and moral poetry—is quite manifest, Urdu poets using the teachings of the Qur'an as poetic motifs. The Holy Qur'an has been translated into all the major languages of the world. About 90 translations have been made in Urdu alone, while in Persian there are 52 translations. Dr Mas'ud Ahmad has discovered 155 names of scholars who have either translated or have written commentaries on the Qur'an. Many of them are not extant.

Urdu poets have versified the Qur'an, its commentaries and translations. This tradition of versifying the messages, the teachings and the morals of the Qur'an was inherited by the Persian and Urdu poets from the primary Arabic sources. The Qur'an had, therefore, a direct impact on the languages, literary creations and poetic motifs of the poets in the Muslim World.

3 The significance of Urdu as the third largest spoken language of the world

3.1 Introduction

The Urdu-speaking community has been described by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as the third largest community in the world, coming after English and Chinese. But the fact is that Urdu may be regarded as the second largest spoken language of the world, after Chinese. The vast majority of the Indian population of about 576 000 000 (*The Liberal Hindu*, magazine of the Hindu students' Association of the University of Durban-Westville, Vol. 2(2),

1983, p.7), despite its various local dialects or languages, speaks, understands and comprehends Urdu (or Hindustani). Be he from the south or from the north, the Indian uses Urdu as the common medium of expression to which he has given the name *Hindustani*. The political leaders of the Indo-Pak deliver their speeches in Urdu and the Indian/Pakistani Parliamentary proceedings are carried out in the same language (or in English when necessary). Former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, adopted Urdu or Hindustani as a common medium of expression among the various groups of the Bengali-speaking population and communities. The official language of Pakistan is Urdu. Bearing these facts in mind, one is inclined to regard Urdu as the second largest spoken language of the world and not as the third as concluded by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

The term, Hindustani, was coined for the first time for the Urdu language by John B. Gilchrist in 1787 and the designation has been in use by Europeans ever since. However, the term was referred to in some of the writings extant as early as 1616.

Europeans regarded it as the lingua franca of modern India. The term "Hindustani" was soon associated with a specialized literary language, Hindi and Urdu, the difference being that Hindi was written from left to right in the Devanagari script with large borrowings from Sanskrit, while Urdu was written from right to left in the Perso-Arabic script, with many loan words from the Persian and Arabic languages. But Urdu belongs to the great linguistic family known as Indo-European and existed in India from the 13th century (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). It was also employed as a spoken language which ultimately became the lingua franca of the Mughal Camp. Despite the Arabic and Persian loan words Urdu remained Indo-Aryan in its essential characteristics.

3.2 The genesis and the growth of Urdu

Early sources reveal that the name of the army of Babar (1556–1606), the founder of the Mughal empire in India, was "Urdu-e-Nasrat Shi'ar" (the language of the victorious army). The meaning of Urdu, a Turkish word, was "army" (lashkar). The epoch of Akbar (1556 –

1606) was the period of the formation of the language. Akbar named his army "Camp" or "Urdu-e-Mu'alla" (Exalted Army Camp). The army market was consequently called Urdu Bazar (Army Market). It was here that the soldiers of Arab, Iranian, Turkish and Indian origins would meet for commercial purposes and gradually evolved a common medium of expression—a language called Urdu.

It is reported that the language was officially named Urdu during the reign of Shah Jahan (1627–1658). The language also owes a great debt to Europeans, especially the Portuguese and the English who came to India as traders, rulers and missionaries. The Portuguese influence seems to be noteworthy. From the Hindustani Press in Bengal came the large grammar of the Hindustani language (1796) written by Gilchrist. His dictionary, English and Hindustani (1787–90) is the first major work on Hindustani philology.

3.3 Urdu promoted by the Deccan, Delhi and Lucknow schools

3.3.1 It is interesting to note that Urdu, in its nascent stages, was nursed in Deccan (south of India), and poets used it as a literary genre for social, moral and political reforms. The majority of the poets, being mystics, used the language as a vehicle for social and moral reforms.

3.3.2 The northern part of the Indo-Pak sub-continent presents a more fascinating picture of the development of Urdu. The Delhi and the Lucknow schools in the north were the linguistic academies for the promotion of Urdu. The poets of the first period of the Delhi school, and above all, the celebrated Ghalib, created the golden period of Urdu literary culture. Similarly, poets of the first period of the Lucknow school, and Nasikh and Atish of the second period contributed to the refinement of Urdu.

After 1857 the new age dawned on Urdu, when poets and writers preached the philosophy of "Art for Life's sake" and rejected the idea of "Art for Art's sake". This gave rise to the sociological approach to the Urdu language and literature, for the literature was brought closer to life, and the human soul became the centre of

art. The golden age of Urdu started in the nineteenth century when several writers employed Urdu prose for social and religio-cultural advancement. Dr Nazir Ahmad (d. 1912), merits special mention for his works expanded the horizons of Urdu prose for social reform.

4 The relationship between Urdu and the South African Muslim cultural communities in historical perspective

The future of Urdu in the South African situation can be determined only through empirical studies of the development and growth of Urdu in South Africa, its relationship with the community and the positive psychological attitude of the community towards Urdu.

Urdu came to South Africa from the Indo-Pak sub-continent with the Muslim emigrants who came either from the north, speaking Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Panjabi, Marati, Kokni, or from the south, speaking Tamil or Telegu. Shaikh Hassain, the first Muslim emigrant from the Indo-Pak sub-continent, came to Natal in 1860 aboard the ship S.S. Truro which carried the first batch of emigrants. He was followed by a band of Gujarati tradesmen who reached South Africa in 1869. They formed the first Muslim cultural communities in the area. In 1899 the British brought her army from the Panjab and the Northwestern Provinces (now in Pakistan) in order to fight against the Dutch. Many of them settled in this country. The Kokni from Bombay also arrived here for business purposes. The intermixture of these groups necessitated a common medium of expression. The religious schools were established for the education of children and mosques were built for prayers. The Imams for the mosques and the leaders for Madaris, who were imported from the Indo-Pak sub-continent, were the graduates of great religious institutions of India such as Randher, Deohand, Dabhel, and Breli, all with Urdu as the medium of instruction. Thus the common language of the mosques and the Madaris in South Africa became Urdu. Lectures were delivered in Urdu. The marriage ceremonies are still largely performed in Urdu. Thus Urdu gradually emerged as a great inter-communal cohesive cultural force in the multi-lingual Muslim communities of South Africa.

Since the medium of instruction in Madaris was Urdu and the syllabi prescribed Urdu books, the children learned Urdu by heart and were quite attuned both psychologically and socially to accept Urdu as a lingua franca of the Muslim communities.

Local scholars came to the fore and wrote Urdu books. Moulvi Abu Bakr, a graduate of Madrasa Nizamiyya Frangi Mahal, Lucknow, inaugurated the era of writing books in Urdu. His books on grammar, theology and religion created a most favourable and encouraging climate for the growth and development of an Urdu literary culture in South Africa. Moulvi Khatib of Durban is well-known for promoting both Urdu and Persian. Moulvi Loot produced his own *New Urdu grammar* written in Panjabi. The most sterling work in promoting Urdu was done by the Waterfall Islamic Institute (Transvaal) which prepared the syllabi for Madaris in Urdu and established its own press to reproduce Urdu books on any subject, imported from the Indo-Pak sub-continent. They published books on Theology, Urdu language and Islamic history, and thus stimulated the growth of Urdu in the country. The services that the sufis (mystics) rendered to the promotion of Urdu, should be mentioned.

The Department of Arabic, Urdu and Persian was established in Durban in 1961 in response to the wishes of the community. The library of the University is now richly equipped with books in all three languages.

Our discussions will remain incomplete without having a cursory glance at the evolution of poetic taste in particular and the promotion of Urdu literary culture in general. The taste for Urdu poetry (Shir-o-Adab) and other literary activities was promoted by local poets who awakened the consciousness among the masses of their own poetic heritage. Safi Siddiqi, a genuinely inspired Urdu poet of Durban and Ghulam Majim of Laudium are responsible for creating a unique taste among the radio listeners.

Development of poetic taste in any community is an indicator of the intellectual refinement and maturity of a particular culture. Moulana

Tajammul Hussain, the principal of Madrasa Anjuman, Islamiya, Pinetown, is worth mentioning in this regard. He has played a splendid role in promoting the poetic taste in South Africa. Syyaid Umar Qadri, another champion of poetic art, made Urdu poetry an integral part of our society both in Natal and in the Cape. The institution of Musha-e-ra (public poetic recitals or a poetic tournament) has been a great promoter of Urdu poetry in the sub-continent. It is here that the critical genius, vision and insight of a community for appreciating a particular poem is tested. It has been an accepted tradition of Urdu literary culture imported from the Indo-Pak sub-continent. A Mushaera committee was also instituted in Durban and the first Mushaera was held in Durban in 1935 followed by another Mushaera in 1936, both being presided over by Moulana Ahmad Mukhtar Siddiqi. Muhammad Ahmad Mehtar Faruqi has been instrumental in promoting Urdu poetry in South Africa. He is, perhaps, the only poet who has published his Diwan (anthology of Urdu poems). Imdad Ali Sabri in his book entitled *The Urdu poets of South Africa*, written in Urdu and published in Delhi, has mentioned the names and works of South African Urdu poets. The book, despite its shortcomings and limitations, furnishes interesting information about the development of Urdu poetry. Many private and public literary societies have also contributed to the promotion of Urdu. The Iqbal study groups in Durban, in Pretoria and in the Cape have revived Urdu poetic taste and kept it alive.

Great poets of the sub-continent such as Maher-al-Qadri, Bekal, Iqbal Safipuri and Raghīb Muradabadi visited the country and revived the Mushaera institutions from time to time. Such Mushaeras are now organized as regular features under the auspices of Bazm-e-Ardab (Urdu Literary Society) in the country. Bazm-e-Adab, in Durban, Benoni and in Cape Town has been quite active. The Department of Arabic, Urdu and Persian in Durban has been promoting the language through motivational lectures, radio talks, Iqbal centennial celebrations (April 1978), and has organized Mushaeras, awarding book prizes to the best students in Urdu. It was due to these endeavours that the enrolment in Urdu is growing annually. The statistics show the rising tendencies. From four or five students of special Urdu in 1976, we now have 142

students and the total strength of the Department in the three languages has grown from 35 in 1976 to around three hundred.

An examination of the statistics reveals how the psychological attitude of the community towards Urdu was favourably created and how the close relationship between Urdu and the community has been maintained since the earliest days. The language behaviour of the community towards Urdu has been quite promising. It must, however, be borne in mind that a reaction against Urdu was stirred for a short while, i.e. 1950-55, by certain individuals in the community, which had consequently led to the replacement of Urdu-orientated syllabus in Madaris as well as Urdu-speaking teachers and Imams by the English-orientated syllabus and English-speaking teachers and Imams. But the reaction was short lived. The Tablighi movement through its Urdu programmes, books and lectures turned the negative attitude once again towards co-operation and understanding. As a result of the change in attitude the young graduates would like to go to the Madaris of the Indo-Pak sub-continent with Urdu as medium of instruction for higher degrees and after their return they would love to deliver their talks and lectures in Urdu, citing even poems from Urdu poets in order to make their lectures and statements more elegant and effective. All the religious scholars who come to South Africa from the Indo-Pak sub-continent deliver their lectures in Urdu. The Jamiat al-Ulama (Natal), and the Waterfall Institute (Transvaal), have been offering courses in Urdu and the Madaris run by them follow the same course. These pupils, while joining the schools or the universities, are psychologically prepared to take Urdu as one of the courses. It is wise to adopt Urdu as a home language rather than English. Urdu as a cohesive force can play the same role in South Africa as it has played in Pentalingual Pakistan. It can unite the various Muslim cultural communities, such as the Kokni, Mamani, Surti and the Gujarati, into one linguistic group on the local scene and tie them up with the Indo-pak sub-continent on the international scene. In the environment of linguistic diversity in South Africa, Urdu can play the role of lingua franca as it has been doing in Pakistan. The introduction of Urdu from the grass roots, i.e. standard 2, is perhaps the greatest motivation in this regard.

It will improve the prospects of Urdu in this country.

Urdu can never jeopardise the universally established position of Arabic. Arabic is not the national language of non-Arab Muslim countries or of the Muslim minorities. Such attempts were made and are still being made but cannot succeed. Urdu has served Arabic in the sub-continent and has accepted its dictates in terms of script and grammar, poetic metres and

rhymes, loan words, imageries, metaphors and similes. The influence of Arabic on Urdu is so great and well-known that we do not need to repeat it here. Urdu is, therefore, protagonist for Arabic and not an antagonist either in South Africa, in the Indo-Pak sub-continent, or in the Europo-American countries. Maher al-Qadri, the celebrated poet of Urdu, has rightly said about the future of Urdu in this country in the following couplet, which he composed in South Africa, during his visit:

ہو پھول میں رنگت کتنی ہی
خوشبو جو نہیں تو کچھ بھی نہیں
اس دیر میں چاہے غصہ ہر سے
اردو جو نہیں تو کچھ بھی نہیں

Language was not powerful enough to describe the infant phenomenon.

– Charles Dickens

*Though man a thinking being is defined,
few use the great prerogative of mind;
how few think justly of the thinking few,
how many never think who think they do!*

– Jane Taylor