

A Worldly Vernacular: Urdu at Osmania University

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Abstract

Twinned as Urdu has become with the fate of India's largest religious minority, Muslims, and with the emergence of the independent state of Pakistan, for which Urdu is the official national language, the story of Urdu holds a peculiar place and a special significance in histories of the subcontinent. Stories of the Urdu language are dramatic, bound up as they are in questions of politics, the fate of Hindus and Muslims and the vicissitudes of both the Urdu and the Hindi languages. Though Hindi–Urdu language politics are an important part of these languages' colonial history, this article emphasizes another story. For, like the other vernaculars of south Asia, Urdu had to contend as much with English as with Hindi, and it is that story that is emphasized here. This article details how early-twentieth-century Hyderabad's Urdu educators engaged with questions of native education, language, and Western science. It highlights the discussions and disagreements that accompanied this educational project as Urdu advocates re-evaluated their language and its sources of authority, attempting to make the Urdu language a worldly vernacular, useful for more than the subcontinent's Muslim population.

Introduction

In the life of every nation in the world, there comes a time when signs of deterioration begin to appear in its mental powers; material for discovery and creation, thought and consideration are nearly lost; the strength of imagination's flight and vision becomes narrow and limited; the agreement of scholarship rests upon a few customary facts and on mimicry. At that time, the nation either becomes defeated and lifeless, or to recover, it must accept the influence of other advanced countries. In every era of world history, there is evidence of this. Even now as we watch, this has happened to Japan, and this is the condition of India (hindūstān).

Bābā-i Urdu (Father of Urdu) Maulvi Abdul Haq, 1919

The opening lines of Osmania University's textbooks announced the central concerns of this early-twentieth-century educational project.¹ The structuring assumptions of this statement—a world hierarchically ordered, one's own decline or deterioration, a connection between the life of nations and the life of the mind and a faith in universal progress—were not peculiar to this institution in Hyderabad or to India. Like so many other projects launched across the non-Western world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Osmania University was a response to the intellectual challenges posed by the West and those practices of science and knowledge that were understood to be the peculiar mark of the West's triumph.² In fact, if there was any difference between this statement of the condition of the modern world and the presumptions of the civilizing mission espoused by the colonial state in India, it was not in the diagnosis of India's condition but in the scale of comparison. For the emphasis here was on defeat as an experience shared by every country. If the fate of nations was to fall behind and then conceivably also surpass others, this writing suggested that Western triumph was not final, that one's fortunes could be changed by absorbing the success of others—a belief that motivated so many of India's elite, whether they were Hindu or, in the case of Maulvi Abdul Haq and the majority of the scholars at Osmania University, Muslim.

If, as these initial sentences declared, Osmania University was an institution that took world history as its backdrop and the development of India as its impetus, then much of this project was launched on the grounds of the very language in which these sentences were written—Urdu. Osmania University, founded in 1918 in the capital of the princely state of Hyderabad, was India's first vernacular university, the first Indian university to use a modern Indian language, Urdu, rather than English as its medium of instruction. Twinned as Urdu has become with the fate of India's largest religious minority, Muslims, and with the emergence of the independent state of Pakistan, for which Urdu is the official national language, few in contemporary

¹ Reproduced many times, this essay was included as a preface to all of the Osmania University textbooks published in 1920 and many of those published in 1919 and 1921. I use Maulvi Abdul Haq, 'Muqadama,' in Mohammad Elias Barni, *M'āshīāt-i hind* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Osmania University Press, 1920).

² Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University, 2007); Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University, 1999).

India—however correctly or incorrectly—would expect Urdu textbooks to be set against such a large canvas. And yet, it was in the center of peninsular India, in the city of Hyderabad, in a language that languishes in contemporary Indian schools that Indian educators set themselves the ambitious project described by Maulvi Abdul Haq, the regeneration of India through an active engagement with modern scholarship.

Given the year of its publication, one might expect the wider world invoked by Maulvi Abdul Haq to be the wider world of Islam. In November of that year, the All India Khilafat Committee was born, marking the beginning of a mass movement of civil disobedience that brought Hindus and Muslims together in political coalition. The politics of this period have been understood as proceeding on two separate and parallel tracks: On the first were the anti-colonial agitations headed by Gandhi. On the second were the protests of India's Muslim community which coalesced around Muslim frustration over Allied, and in particular British, treatment of the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Caliph, in the wake of World War I. 'But Hindus and Muslims were fairly launched not upon a common struggle but upon a joint struggle; they worked together, but not as one. The philosophy of the *Khilafat* movement was not that of territorial nationalism, but of community federalism, and of a federalism wherein one party, the Muslim, looked outside the common habitat, India, for the *raison d'être* of the federal relationship.'³ And yet, in the writing of Maulvi Abdul Haq and the writings of so many of the Muslim men who acted as teachers, translators and administrators at Osmania University during the Khilafat agitations and into the 1920s, it was precisely the fate of the nation, the people within its territories and the language of national communication which took centre stage.

Maulvi Abdul Haq's diagnosis of India's condition and his injunction to accept the influences of advanced countries especially meant accepting those influences on language itself. It was this preoccupation that unleashed a series of discussions and disagreements at Osmania University about the character of the Urdu language and the direction that the language should take for the future.⁴ And so Urdu, like

³ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1972), p. 190.

⁴ In this, Urdu was not unlike other Indian vernaculars, like Tamil and Hindi. A. R. Venkatachalapathy, 'Coining Words: Language and Politics in Late Colonial Tamilnadu,' in Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar (eds.), *Antinomies of Modernity*

other south Asian traditions, became the ground on which elites staged their engagement with the West. The burden of the project at Osmania University was to bring together elite languages of Western scholarship and common languages of conversation, to bring science to the people through their own language. And yet, the Urdu language had to be transformed to do so. The educators of Osmania University, like their counterparts elsewhere, were beset by the burden of making of Urdu a language representative of common people and, in turn, a language that would be serviceable for them, that would encompass all of their linguistic needs. The desire was to create a vernacular, systematized and uniform, that would perform an unprecedented number of functions, quotidian, administrative, poetic, literary, scientific, philosophical and academic—a worldly vernacular that would rival English as a language of business and learned conversation. Like other vernaculars in the colonial period, Urdu's bid to replace former high languages, in this case Arabic, Persian and English, locked it in ever more complex relationships with those very languages.⁵ The attempt to transform the Urdu language at Osmania University not only illustrates transformations in the linguistic regime of modern India but also highlights the extent to which attempts to expand the linguistic functions of a vernacular and standardize its use could and did move in opposing directions, the complications that accompanied efforts in the colonial era to retain the local and the common and simultaneously lay claim to the world.

'Locked Up in a Foreign Language'

Abdul Haq's comparison of India's condition to that of Japan in the preface to Osmania University textbooks was not incidental. 'After 1905 [Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War] no scholarly or nonscholarly discussion of racism and innate civilizational hierarchies in world politics could ignore the example of Japan... If Japan could achieve progress and development without colonialism, other

(Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press, 2003); Alok Rai, *Tracts for the Times/ 13: Hindi Nationalism* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2000).

⁵ Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Writing, Speaking, Being: Language and the Historical Formation of Identities in India,' in Dagmar Hellman-Rajanayagam and Dietmar Rothermund (eds.), *Nationalstaat und Sprachkonflikte in Sud- und Sudostasien* (Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), pp. 43-46.

colonized Oriental nations could do the same.⁶ Japan first captured the imagination of Asia at the turn of the century as a model of a successful non-Western military and economic power. By the time that Abdul Haq was writing, Japan might only have seemed more impressive, fresh from its military, economic and political successes during World War I. There was also the not unrelated fact that Japan was the first Asian country to initiate successful programmes in mass education—in its own, not a European, language.⁷ The doors of industrial, military and economic progress seemed to have decisively opened for Japan and that too by virtue of a set of relatively brief and self-initiated reforms.

In 1922, the Hyderabad government sent Sayyid Ross Masood (1889–1937) to Japan to study and present a report on its system of education.⁸ Ross Masood was the grandson of colonial India's most famed Muslim educator, Sayyid Ahmed Khan. After the death of his grandfather and the early death of his father, Sayyid Mahmood, a Cambridge-educated lawyer and judge, Masood came under the guardianship of Theodore Morison, principal of Aligarh College. For his higher education, a BA in history, and studies in law, Masood went to England, where he met, amongst others, his lifelong friend and famous novelist E. M. Forster, who dedicated his book *A Passage to India* to Sayyid Ross Masood.⁹ Soon after his return to India in 1912, Masood was offered a post in the Indian Educational Service. He was the Hyderabad State's director of public instruction between 1917 and 1929, years that saw the birth of Osmania University and a significant part of its growth. Along with Maulvi Abdul Haq and others, he was

⁶ Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, p. 9.

⁷ For biographical information on Ross Masood, see Jalil A. Kidwai (ed.), *Khayābān-e-Masood: A Collection of Writings, Speeches, etc., on and by Nawab Masood Jung Sir Syed Ross Masood* (Karachi, Pakistan: Ross Masood Educational and Cultural Society, 1970). Maulvi Abdul Haq describes Masood's Bismillah ceremony in 'Sayyid Ross Masood,' in Jalil A. Kidwai (ed.) *Muraqqa-i Masood*, (Karachi, Pakistan: Ross Masood Education and Culture Society of Pakistan, 1966). Abdul Haq also explains that Masood originally had to be convinced about the scheme for Urdu education at Osmania before he took it up wholeheartedly.

⁸ Others had gone from India to Japan and reported on its educational system. One such person was W. H. Sharp, professor of philosophy at Elphinstone College, though he was not at all convinced of the benefits of education in the Japanese language. See W. H. Sharp, *Occasional Reports, No. 3: The Educational System of Japan* (Bombay, Maharashtra, India: Government Central Press, 1906), pp. 395–403.

⁹ For more on the relationship between Forster and Masood, see Jalil Ahmad Kidwai (ed.), *Forster-Masood Letters* (Karachi, Pakistan: Ross Masood Education and Culture Society, 1984).

involved in discussions held in 1917–1918 to set the curriculum at Osmania University College and served for a brief period, because he was director of public instruction, as principal of the college.¹⁰

If his grandfather had travelled to England before he founded the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, which took Harrow and Cambridge as models, then Masood trekked off in the opposite direction for educational inspiration. As his early diary entries from this trip testify, he was not particularly well disposed to the Japanese when he arrived there.¹¹ As he spent time in Japan, however, Masood grew more appreciative, and by the time he was writing his official report explained, ‘To those to whom my account of Japan may appear as too eulogistic . . . my request is to remember that I am an Asiatic, and as such, have understood, perhaps in a more personal way than it is possible for any European or American to understand, the exact weight of each obstacle which Japan has had to remove from her path in her march towards national unity and full independence.’¹² It was this fascination with Japan’s success that caused Masood to devote half of his report on education to providing a political, cultural and constitutional account of Japan’s history, explaining throughout Japan’s peculiar relationship with European nations and visitors.¹³

Japan’s national unity was for Masood particularly significant. Japan had developed and had not been colonized, he reasoned, because the Japanese, unlike Indians, were a united and patriotic nation. If India was both underdeveloped and colonized because of its disunity, then the problem could not be solved by forcing one of India’s many cultures upon its people. For India, according to Masood, could or should never be a homogenous country in language or religion. The problems of India, however, could become even more intractable *because of* education. Western education in India had been limited to

¹⁰ Hyderabad Government, Installment 80, List Number 4, Serial Number 663, Andhra Pradesh State Archives and Research Institute (APSA). After leaving Hyderabad, Masood served as vice-chancellor at Aligarh Muslim University and in 1933 was knighted.

¹¹ Sayyid Ross Masood, *Travels in Japan: Diary of an Exploring Mission* (Karachi, Pakistan: Ross Masood Education and Culture Society, 1968), p. 30.

¹² Sayyid Ross Masood, *Japan and Its Educational System: Being a Report Compiled for the Government of His Exalted Highness the Nizam* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Government Central Press, 1923), p. iii.

¹³ For Masood, the most important events in the political history of Japan were the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the constitution of 1889 granted by the emperor. He was particularly impressed by the respect shown for the emperor as patriarchal head with semi-divine status.

and marked off by a small group of elites. He charged, '[W]e [in India] created a kind of monopoly by adopting the selfish policy of reserving for ourselves what we had learnt of Western knowledge.'¹⁴ And as long as modern thought and modern knowledge remained in Masood's words 'locked up in a foreign language,' India would not be able to compete with the other nations of the world.¹⁵

The estrangement of an elite class of Western-educated Indians from their countrymen was something that Masood felt personally. He believed that his own Western education first at Aligarh and then in England had not equipped him properly for the service of his country. In a speech that he delivered in 1936 as the inaugural address at the University of Calcutta, Masood narrated his frustration with the limits of Western education in India:

In this connection I cannot help narrating to you an episode from my own life, which brought me great humiliation at the time. Many years ago, my old mother, who would be considered uneducated . . . happened to be living with me in a place where bubonic plague had broken out. At my request, as a precautionary measure, she had herself inoculated against it. When the fever and pain which sometimes follow such inoculation had left her, she asked me to explain to her the principle that underlay all inoculation. I thought over the answer for a few minutes and then had to confess to her that as she did not understand either French or English and I did not know enough of my mother tongue for the purpose, I could not explain the theory of it to her. Thereupon my mother looked me straight in the face and said: 'My son, of what use will your education be to your country if it does not enable you to remove the ignorance even of her of whose very bone and flesh you are made?' I leave you all to guess what my feelings must have been at that moment.¹⁶

After the spread of bubonic plague and British anti-plague measures at the turn of the century, this story was meant to dramatize the potential of modern science. Clearly the problem was not with Western science or Western knowledge per se. What concerned Masood was that Western science had been limited in its influence. Couched in a language of personal embarrassment, Masood's anecdote was meant to highlight the shameful condition of India's condition. This problem was formulated specifically as a problem of language, of translation. Unlike the translations produced by European scholars of the Orient, who

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁶ Sayyid Ross Masood, 'Mass Education Possible through Mother Tongue Alone,' in Jalil A. Kidwai (ed.), *Khayābān-e-Masood* (Karachi: Ross Masood Educational and Cultural Society, 1970), pp. 148–149. Though this quote is taken from the last years of Masood's life, he had also mentioned it on early occasions.

were trying to understand Indian customs or the Indian social order, translation here was not an act of knowing the other; it was necessary for understanding one's own daily life. It was an admission peculiar to non-Western societies, where the explanations of modern quotidian experiences were thought to lie definitively in some other place or in some other language.

In the years following the founding of Osmania University, Masood became a spokesman for vernacular medium higher education. There were clearly many people who had doubts about the desirability or necessity of such a programme, as the British themselves never took up the project. How would Urdu, they asked, find a vocabulary to express the complexity of contemporary science? Wouldn't the creation of a scientific vocabulary, coining new terms in Urdu to replace English scientific words and phrases, make learning *more* difficult for students? Masood responded to these types of questions with another story:

My use of the word 'coin' was perhaps wrong. I should say, we have rediscovered new combinations of formerly well-known words. I will give you an instance. In the early stages of our translation work, I happened to be in charge of it, and we came across the very ordinary geographical term 'watershed'. Never having studied in our own mother tongue properly, we did not know how to render it correctly into Urdu. Now, our committee of orientalists coined a word which sounded to me very difficult. Our great authority on Persian translated it by the term 'Fasil-i-Ab.' I said to him that three-fourths of the idea was correct but that one-fourth of it was wrong. So, that word was put aside for the time being.

Five weeks later one of us happened to be touring in the Marathi districts of our State, namely Aurangabad, the whole of which district contains miniature watersheds. On asking a farmer: 'What do you call such hills?', we learnt that they were called 'pan-dhal', which is a literal translation of 'Watershed'. In this way we were able to discover a precious term. Perhaps, I ought not to say that we 'discovered' it, for, it had been in use for hundreds of years and we were ignorant of it, simply because we had not paid any attention to our vernacular. This poor villager was thus able to show the way to our committee of learned Orientalists.¹⁷

This example is similar to the one that Masood presented about his mother in that both were taken to indicate concrete realities in the lives of Indians. Masood's understanding of the necessity for translation lay in the nuances of these anecdotes.

The inoculation of Masood's mother was an experience made available through modern science; it was a new experience, one made

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 181–182.

possible by the expanding frontier of medical science. While this otherwise intelligent woman had access to medicine, she had no access to its rationale. The second example was not necessarily modern; it was something to which the peasant had complete access by virtue of living where he did. Masood marked these as two directions for the project of translation. In one, knowledge of the logic of modern science was simply unavailable to some Indians; his mother wanted to understand the medical procedure just performed on her. In the other, science itself seemed to be in search of language with which to make itself understood. But as the second of these two examples illustrated, Masood diagnosed the problems of translation as arising not only from the inadequacies of the Western-educated elite. Here Orientalists, as much as the English-educated, were accused of ignoring the vernacular.¹⁸ This was a new India, an India that could not be understood and explained to Indians themselves by either the Western-educated elite or by traditional scholars. It was translation that could bring together the worlds of the Anglicised elite, Oriental scholars and the uneducated.

And translation was one of the largest and most critical projects for this newly established university, undertaken in its Bureau for Translations and Compilations, where all of its textbooks were produced.¹⁹ While the translation bureau engaged in the composition of original Urdu textbooks for the new institution's curriculum, the bulk of its work was translation and most of that from English into Urdu. Before the classrooms of Osmania University opened their doors, the translation bureau began to draw men from all over India, including its director of many years Maulvi Inayatullah, the son of the well-known Urdu translator, Maulvi Zakaullah. The recruitment

¹⁸ This was to some extent true. Aligarh Muslim University did not have MA Urdu courses until Masood himself instituted them, after he left Hyderabad and returned to Aligarh as vice-chancellor. And the first full-fledged departments in Hindi were not at Benares Hindu University, until 1922, and Allahabad University, until 1926. See Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 105.

¹⁹ This translation bureau was referred to, for the main part, by two different names; officially *Sar-rishta tālif-va tarjuma* (department for compilation and translation), it was more often referred to as *Dār-ul tarjuma* (literally the abode of translation or the translation bureau). The second title is perhaps more accurate since the bureau was much more engaged in translation than it was in the compilation of new texts. For the sake of simplicity, I have used the English, translation bureau, throughout. For an introduction, see David Lelyveld, 'The Osmania University Translation Bureau: A Brief Account,' in *Osmania University Diamond Jubilee Souvenir* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Osmania University Press, 1978).

of men from outside the princely state of Hyderabad was a tacit acknowledgement of a longer tradition of Urdu translation from English, especially in Urdu's north Indian heartland.²⁰ Throughout the nineteenth century, in places like Fort William College, Delhi College (before 1857), Sayyid Ahmed Khan's Scientific Society in Aligarh, Newal Kishore Press in Lucknow, Punjab University and even earlier at the Native Medical Institution in Calcutta, British and Indian scholars and educators had been involved in publishing Urdu translations. It was the work done at these institutions, along with the introduction and refinements in the lithograph press, the creation and distribution of pamphlets and newspapers, the work of the north Indian ulema and the continued use of Urdu for administrative work across large portions of British India, which was essential in forging this language of courtly poetry into, as Gail Minault has called it, a language of 'scholarly prose and public discourse' over the course of the nineteenth century.²¹

While the translation of English texts into Urdu might not have been new, the sheer quantity of translations that took place at Osmania University and the resources that were invested in that work, were entirely unprecedented in India. In a firman (royal order), dated 14 August 1917, the nizam (the ruler of the Hyderabad State) ordered that a translation bureau be founded and that its annual budget lie somewhere between Rs 56,256 and Rs 80,364.²² This was a considerable amount of money for any education-related activity in the nizam's dominions. It was more money, in fact, than was budgeted for the entire college department in the years 1917 and 1918 (to be used at Hyderabad's two collegiate institutions, Nizam College and

²⁰ For an account of the tension produced by this recruitment see Karen Leonard, 'The Mulki-Non-Mulki Conflict,' in Robin Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1978).

²¹ Gail Minault, 'Qiran Al-Sādain,' in Jamal Malik (ed.), *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History, 1760-1860* (Leiden, Boston, MA, USA: Brill, 2000); Maulvi Abdul Haq, *Marhōm Delhi College* (New Delhi: Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu Hind, 1945); C. F. Andrews, *Zaka Ullah of Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gail Minault, 'Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi and the "Delhi Renaissance,"' in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi Through the Ages* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); Tariq Rahman, 'The Teaching of Urdu in British India,' in *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 15, (2000), pp. 31-57.

²² Hyderabad Government, Installment 80, List Number 4, Serial Number 661, p. 11, APSA.

Dār-ul Ulūm).²³ And this amount was only increasing. The translation bureau was reported to have spent Rs 1,21,006 in 1924–1925 and Rs 2,55,316 in 1930–1931.²⁴ Like the educational system of British India, that of Hyderabad was both inadequately funded and top-heavy, especially after the creation of Osmania University.

The work of the translation bureau was undertaken by a staff of regular, salaried translators, along with commissioned translators who were engaged on a piecemeal basis to undertake the translation of single texts. At its inception in 1917, the translation bureau had a staff of eight translators, under the direction of Maulvi Abdul Haq.²⁵ By in 1928–1929, the bureau had grown considerably with 15 salaried translators on its staff.²⁶ One scholar, Dr Mujib ul-Islam, who has done the most thorough study of Osmania University publications, has argued that in the 30 years from 1917 to 1947, the translation bureau translated, compiled and wrote a total of 457 books, a large number for the Hyderabad publishing world of that time. Of the volumes produced, 426 books were translations and 31 were compilations, that is original compositions. Most of the textbooks published by Osmania University then were primarily translations of extant texts. These translations were drawn from a number of languages, French, German, Persian, Arabic and English—in that order of frequency. The vast majority of the total, 306 texts, were translations from English. Not all of the volumes produced, however, saw publication. Of the 457 books that were created at the translation bureau, the university published, in total, 395.²⁷ Texts translated from French,

²³ *Report on the Administration of His Exalted Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1327 Fasli (6th October 1917 to 5th October 1918)* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Government Central Press, 1919), p. 37. The college department was reported to operate at a net cost of Rs 34,397.

²⁴ See *Annual Administration Report of the Osmania University for the year 1335 F./Oct. 1925–Oct. 1926* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Government Central Press, 1928); *Annual Administration of the Osmania University for the year 1340 F./Oct. 1930–Oct. 1931* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Government Central Press, 1933).

²⁵ Hyderabad Government, Installment 36, List Number 5, Serial Number 11, APSA.

²⁶ Hyderabad Government, Installment 80, List Number 4, Serial Number 661, p. 65, APSA.

²⁷ Mujib ul-Islam, *Dār-ul tarjuma osmania kī 'ilmī aur adabī khidmāt aur urdu zabān-va adab par us kē asrāt*, (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1987) p. 144. His list of Osmania University textbooks, by title, is the most complete. He has not only cross-referenced official translation bureau lists of publications but has also compared and listed collections of these books that exist at Delhi University, Jamia Milia and Aligarh, Kashmir and Hyderabad Universities. For annual reports from the translation bureau for several

German, Persian and Arabic, as well as the few that were original compositions were commissioned, produced and then not published. The only exceptions to this general trend were the English texts, all 306 of which were published by the university. The fact that most of these published textbooks, 306 of 395, were translated from English was one sign of how closely the Osmania University curriculum mirrored the curriculum of the English medium universities of British India.

Some of the themes presented by Masood were echoed in the writings of Maulvi Abdul Haq, the tireless Urdu language promoter, scholar, literary critic and lexicographer, with whose words this article began.²⁸ Like Sayyid Ross Masood, Abdul Haq was amongst the many *ghair-mulki* men, men not native to the Hyderabad dominions, who were central to the establishment and functioning of Osmania University. Maulvi Abdul Haq, known as *Bābā-i Urdu* (father of Urdu), was the secretary of the *Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdu* (Organization for the Advancement of Urdu), an organization which was the literary wing of the Mohammedan Educational Conference based in Aligarh and coordinated India-wide efforts to promote the Urdu language. The Anjuman was born of the Hindu–Urdu conflict in North India, founded in 1903 in the wake of Anthony MacDonnell’s orders permitting the optional use of Hindi in the courts and government offices of the United Provinces.²⁹ The Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdu had several distinguished secretaries, but it was Maulvi Abdul Haq who truly built the organization. He began working in the city of Hyderabad in June of 1896, within a year of completing his BA at Aligarh. From Hyderabad, he moved northwestward in the nizam’s dominions, first to Medak and ultimately, in 1911, on to the town of Aurangabad in the state’s Marathi-speaking districts, where he made his home for some 27 years. There, Abdul Haq set up operations on the outskirts of town in the

of these years, see Hyderabad Government, Installment 80, List Number 4, Serial Number 672, APSA. In addition, in 1946, the translation bureau published a list of publications. M. Nizamuddin, *Literary Services of the Compilation and Translation Bureau, Osmania University, Hyderabad-Deccan, 1917–1946* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Osmania University Press, 1946). Many of the government publications, however, yield contradictory statistics.

²⁸ Biographical information in Masarrat Firdaus, *Bābā-i urdu maulvī Abdulhaq kī khidmāt qiyām-i Aurangabad kē dawrān* (Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India: Muhammad Ahsan Siddiqi, 1999).

²⁹ Hardy, *Muslims of British India*, p. 143; Christopher King, *One Language, Two Scripts: the Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp. 163–164.

vicinity of the tomb of Rabia Daurani, the tomb of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's wife, a structure that had been modeled on the more famous Taj Mahal. Surrounded by the gardens of this tomb complex, Abdul Haq took personal interest in their cultivation, along with his official duties as the chief inspector of schools for the Aurangabad District. In 1912, the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdu's head office was officially shifted from Aligarh to Aurangabad, Abdul Haq's new home. It was under his guidance that the Anjuman started establishing local branches in different cities. The first in 1914 was quickly followed by others, and by 1920 there were close to 40 branches of the Anjuman promoting the Urdu language.³⁰

Abdul Haq was also, from 1917 to 1919, the head of the translation bureau as well as the Urdu department at Osmania University and continued his association with Osmania University and its faculty until he moved, in 1947, to Pakistan. In the early years of Osmania University, before the subsequent movement to and consolidation of its buildings at their present site at Adikmet, the translation bureau was located in front of Nampally train station, that great symbol of advanced communication. What is clear from Abdul Haq's preface to the Osmania University textbooks is that he, like Ross Masood, saw the unavailability of Western science as a serious problem.³¹ And also like Masood, Abdul Haq understood language as an enabler of cultures and communities. Language, he argued, was not simply a reflection of, but also an 'instrument in the creation of communities/nations.' While Masood tended to emphasize the divisions between literate and illiterate Indians, Abdul Haq spoke of those between or even within religious communities. He explained, 'There was a time when Muslim lands were spread across the world, but their literature and language united them all in every place.'³² If Arabic had functioned to unite Muslims, then the mandate of Urdu was to bring Hindus and Muslims together. In the closing lines of his preface, Abdul Haq addressed the language that Osmania University used: 'It [Urdu] was born from the friendly relations between the people of India and even now it will discharge this duty. This is why it can become the language of education and the exchange of ideas, and why it can make a claim to

³⁰ Khaliq Anjam, *Maulvi Abdul Haq: Adabī-va lisānī khidmāt* (New Delhi, India: Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdu Hind, 1992), pp. 7–10.

³¹ Haq, 'Muqadama.'

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

be the national language.³³ Not only then did Urdu have the right to claim to be a national language but it had also to discharge a duty. Disguised in this sentence about the birth of Urdu was an argument about its duties in the present and in the future.

While Abdul Haq admitted that the first duty of the translation bureau was to prepare books for the educational curriculum, he also envisioned a larger program for the translation bureau of the university. The books compiled and translated would serve to 'create in people a greater passion for knowledge, spread light through the land, create effects on thoughts and souls, and destroy ignorance.'³⁴ This statement bore a remarkable similarity to the goals set by the colonial state for the spread of education.³⁵ It assumed both a general darkness and the ability of education to 'create effects on thoughts and souls.' Abdul Haq expanded on this formulation by explaining that ignorance did not simply mean the lack of knowledge; it included poverty/neediness (*iftlās*), cowardliness (*kam himmatī*), narrow mindedness (*tang dilli*), shortsightedness (*kota nazari*), shamelessness (*bē ghairatī*) and immorality (*bad akhlāqī*).³⁶ Easily read as the marks of a conquered people, the elimination of ignorance was not a matter of the simple or straightforward transmission of knowledge. Osmania University and its textbooks, according to Abdul Haq, would influence the character of India's people, fashion a disciplined, self-reliant and ethical society. Translation at Osmania University was conceived as a project that would both create and direct a new public.

Unlike Ross Masood however, Abdul Haq's description of the project of translation at Osmania University was more clearly redolent of the work of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European philologists. 'Knowledge of the true historical development of the human mind,' he wrote, 'can be obtained through the study of the history of language.

³³ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁵ Susie Tharu analyses the language of the colonial vernacularist position in Susie Tharu (ed.), *Subject to Change: Teaching Literature in the Nineties* (New Delhi, India: Orient Longman, 1997), p. 12.

We cannot afford to forget that to represent and define humanity thus is also to subject it to strict control. Vernacularist metaphors like those of Enlightenment humanism, betray this double agenda. They speak of awakening, vitalizing, vivifying the subject and of breathing life into him or her in a final totalizing move. However key terms in the vernacularist texts—manly, noble, trustworthy, honourable, mature, capable of independent reasoning—make it quite clear that personal awakening and the designs of government were closely bound together.

³⁶ Haq, 'Muqadama,' p. 20.

Words help us to think the way that eyes help us to see. And so the progress of language is in reality the progress of reason.³⁷ The privileging of language study as a sure means by which to access history had risen to prominence through the work of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European scholars concerned with understanding the origins of human history.³⁸ But the latter part of Abdul Haq's quote was moving away from a history accessed through the study of languages, towards a more pedagogic and future-oriented project. Following from this statement was the connection that Abdul Haq made between the extent of a nation's development and the character of its language: 'To whatever extent a nation is developed it is to that extent that its language is expansive and has the capacity to express subtle thoughts and scholarly concerns. And to whatever extent a nation's language is limited, it is to that extent that its place in civilization or rather, amongst humanity (*insāniyat*), is lowered.'³⁹ And so for Abdul Haq, the attempt to create and direct a new public meant implicitly also the transformation of the Urdu language, which did not possess, at the moment, sufficient 'stores' to be the language of higher education. But languages and cultures constantly borrowed from one another, and so should India. Just as Greece influenced Rome, Arabia influenced Persia, and Persia in its own turn influenced Arabia and just as Islam brought knowledge to Europe, Abdul Haq argued that India too should accept knowledge from others. Maulvi Abdul Haq's was ultimately a plea to open up the Urdu language, a plea to open it to Western knowledge and to new vocabularies.

The Inadequacies of Urdu

Even as these educators were defending the use of Urdu in higher education, Maulvi Abdul Haq and many of the translators at the translation bureau were also declaring the inadequacy of the Urdu language as it existed at the time. Chaudary Barkat Ali, a professor of chemistry documented his difficulties compiling an Urdu book of astronomy.⁴⁰ In his 1919 request for financial assistance, Barkat Ali

³⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁸ Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Aryans and Semites, a Match Made in Heaven*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Other Press, 1992).

³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁰ Hyderabad Government, Installment 80, List Number 4, Serial Number 660, APSA. Chaudary Barkat Ali received his BSc from Allahabad University, was a

compared his own project to one of Al-Biruni (973–1048 CE), the medieval Muslim scholar. Chaudary Barkat Ali explained that Al-Biruni had written an Arabic book on astronomy and presented it in the name of Masood Ghaznavi, the Ghaznavid ruler whose father had brought Al-Biruni to India. The choice of comparison was not coincidental. It highlighted a medieval Islamic scientific tradition and, by referring to Al-Biruni, a Persianate scholar who had travelled to South Asia, linked that tradition concretely to south Asia. Barkat Ali argued that he had thousands of more problems than Al-Biruni. In Al-Biruni's day there were only a few books on astronomy, but now the art was considerably vaster. The constantly expanding frontier of European sciences, the difficulty of translating a corpus of knowledge that seemed to be perpetually increasing were the things that troubled other translators as well. But Barkat Ali's concerns were not only about the qualities of European science; they extended to the nature of the Urdu language itself. Al-Biruni wrote in Arabic, which, according to Barkat Ali, was an incredibly expansive language, whereas he was trying to state the meanings of this vast art in Urdu, which until then had been in its age of infancy (*tiflī*).⁴¹ Urdu was not only the medium of instruction for growing students and a maturing public, but it was also—or so these men thought—in need of some growing itself.⁴²

Having compared his project to Al-Biruni's, Barkat Ali also explained how he overcame the difficulties posed by Urdu scientific composition. He acknowledged that he had benefited from many Arabic astrology books. As a result, whatever ancient astrology continued and whenever it made an appearance in modern works of astrology, for those terms and concepts, he used the same Arabic words that were utilized by Islamic scholars (*ulema-i islam*). And wherever there were truly modern thoughts that needed new terms, he created his own.⁴³ Chaudary Barkat Ali called attention to the fact that Arabic, whatever its associations, had a scientific literature.

professor of chemistry at Aligarh College from 1909 to 1917 and later became a professor of chemistry at Osmania University and a member of the translation bureau.

⁴¹ Hyderabad Government, Education Department, 1328 Fasli, Record 1036, File 959, APSA.

⁴² In understanding the relationship between colonial philology and the deployment of developmental terms to understand Indian languages, I am indebted to Rama Mantena, 'Vernacular Futures: Colonial Philology and the Idea of History in Nineteenth-Century South India,' in *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2005), pp. 513–534.

⁴³ Hyderabad Government, Education Department, 1328 Fasli, Record 1036, File 959, APSA.

Underscoring the scientific pedigree of Islam and the Arabic language exercised the attention of Muslim intellectuals in Hyderabad as far back as the writings of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Muhib Husain (late nineteenth-century Hyderabad's most prolific journalist) in the Urdu journal *Mu'allam-i Shafiq* which began publishing in 1880.⁴⁴ The relationship between Islam and Western science had become even more pressing, as an intellectual concern across the Islamic world in the wake of Ernest Renan's argument about the incompatibility of the two. Renan was not alone in his understanding of Semitic languages and cultures—however peculiarly defined (as Al-Afghani himself pointed out)—as essentially unscientific.⁴⁵

The attempt to recover an Arabic tradition of scientific learning was something that also exercised the attention of a section of the north Indian Muslim elite, especially those connected to Aligarh College. 'In part, they recalled the historical glories of the Muslim past; in part, they cherished the hallmarks of elite Persianate urban culture as it had evolved in India.'⁴⁶ This recollection was present in Abdul Haq's introduction, which reminded readers of Islam's contribution to European science. It was also present in the pages of *Islamic Culture*, a journal that began publishing from Hyderabad in 1927 and continues publishing today. In its early years, *Islamic Culture's* 'editorial board was heavily dominated by Osmania faculty, members and high government officials, all Muslims and almost all recent immigrants.'⁴⁷ Issues from the journal's first year of publication contained papers that specifically addressed the scientific contributions of Muslims and Arabs: 'The Muslims and the Greek Schools of Philosophy', 'Constructions of Clocks and Islamic Civilization', 'Physiology and Medicine Under the Khalifs' and 'Islamic Architecture'. The subsequent two years of publication continued with some of these themes, and included the following articles: 'The Renaissance of Islam', 'The Newsletters of the Later Moghul Period', 'Modern Astronomy and Islam', 'The Place of

⁴⁴ John Roosa, 'The Quandary of the Qaum: Indian Nationalism in a Muslim State, Hyderabad 1850–1948' (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1998), pp. 180–254.

⁴⁵ Olender, *Languages of Paradise*; Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*; Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-din 'al-Afghani* (Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press 1968).

⁴⁶ Barbara Metcalf, 'Nationalist Muslims in British India: The Case of Hakim Ajmal Khan,' *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 122.

⁴⁷ Leonard, 'The Mulki–Non-Mulki Conflict,' p. 88.

Oriental Thought in the Field of Political Science' and 'A Plea for Deeper Study of the Muslim Scientists'.⁴⁸ These were celebrations of 'cosmopolitan or Islamicate symbols, that is symbols derived from those aspects of civilization associated with Islam in which non-Muslims played significant roles.'⁴⁹ Furthermore, what was central to this reading of Islamic culture as it developed in Hyderabad and other parts of India was the argument that much of what was admired in Western culture could also be attributed to the work of Muslims and Islamic institutions, from the great universities of the middle ages and the architectural glories of Muslim rulers and empires to the strides that Islam had made in clock making and medical knowledge. The work of the *Islamic Culture* was to demonstrate to the world at large not only the cosmopolitan character of Islam's past but also Islam's contribution to modern material civilization and culture and, in particular, to modern science.

If Chaudary Barkat Ali tried to salvage what he could of Arabic scientific terminology as he composed his Urdu text, then others interested in the scientific heritage of the Arabic language arrived at slightly different conclusions. The July 1925 issue of *Urdu*, the literary journal of the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdu, carried an article on the coining of terminology by Dr Abdur Rehman Bijnori.⁵⁰ Dr Bijnori had written this article upon the request of Maulvi Abdul Haq, who while working with the translation bureau hoped to collect the thoughts of different scholars on the question of translation and scientific vocabulary. Bijnori, like Barkat Ali and Maulvi Abdul Haq, also wrote about the scientific legacy of the Arabic language, though somewhat more skeptically. Bijnori believed that much of Arabic science had been proven wrong by modern researches. And yet, and somewhat

⁴⁸ Syed Ameer Ali, "The Modernity of Islam," in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan. 1927), pp. 1-5; Syed Suleyman Nadvi, "The Muslims of the Greek Schools of Philosophy," in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan. 1927), pp. 85-91; Abdus Sattar Siddiqi, "Construction of Clocks and Islamic Civilization," in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (April 1927), pp. 245-251; Harun Mustafa Ieon, "Physiology and Medicine Under the Khalifs," in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1927), pp. 388-405.

⁴⁹ Metcalf, 'Nationalist Muslims,' p. 123.

⁵⁰ Dr. Abdur Rehman Bijnori, a German PhD, had been involved in the movement to make the college in Aligarh into a university. He was one of those largely responsible for drafting the constitution of the Muslim University at Aligarh and was also involved in a scheme to start another Muslim college in Dehradun, independent of government control and patronage. See Minault and Lelyveld, 'The Campaign for a Muslim University,' in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1974) pp. 145-189; notes on Bijnori are to be found on pp. 179-82, especially footnote 178, and 182.

paradoxically, the Urdu language, for Bijnori, was important precisely because it could potentially allow for the interaction of these two (or multiple) intellectual traditions. The Urdu language would serve as a master code, a method by which to bring together scholastic worlds that had grown apart. This work remained to be done. And so he defended the idea of translation from those who claimed that every science should be learnt in its own language. He referred to, and hoped to, refute the arguments of those who claimed that Arabic should be used for learning the ancient sciences and English for learning the modern sciences. Not necessarily opposed to the idea of a polyglot society, he insisted on this idea of a vernacular master code either because it would allow common people to access knowledge that had formerly been inaccessible or because he was convinced of the singularity of the scientific tradition.

For Bijnori, the great tragedy was that Urdu, as yet, contained neither the scientific literatures of the modern European world nor those of the ancient world (as contained in Arabic).⁵¹ He framed the inadequacy of the Urdu language in a very particular way, not as young or undeveloped, but as devoid of both ancient and modern knowledge. ‘What great blame,’ he wrote ‘lies upon the old Arabic college Delhi, Deoband, and all other Arabic and Persian schools and teachers that they until today have not translated the most necessary books of *tafsir*, *fiqh*, logic, philosophy and literature into an easily understood Urdu idiom.’⁵² Bijnori might well have been correct in this accusation, especially as it related to Deoband. As we know, the ulema of Deoband, at least initially, emphasized the study of *hadis* and would not likely have been concerned with spreading the truths of rational Arabic sciences (*ma‘qulat*) amongst the literate Urdu public.⁵³ More generally, if Bijnori was correct, even after the Hindi–Urdu debates of the north, and their increasing association with Islam, Urdu itself did not contain huge stores of Islamic literature per se. In fact, there was a suggestion in the 1925–1926 annual report of Osmania University to fill precisely this gap, to translate the books used by the theology faculty at Osmania into Urdu and to dispense with the

⁵¹ Dr. Abdur Rehman Bijnori, ‘Vaz’ Istalahât,’ in *Urdu*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (July 1925), p. 333.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁵³ Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, reprint edition (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 100–104.

Arabic originals.⁵⁴ The suggestion did not reappear in any subsequent university report, and judging from the Osmania University textbooks that remain in Hyderabad's libraries, it is clear that this project never really took off.

It is difficult to assess Bijnori's comments about Urdu publication against records of publication in Hyderabad, as the latter are woefully incomplete. While the Hyderabad government, like those of the presidencies, required presses within their territories to supply lists of publications for transmission to libraries in London and Calcutta, it regretted that 'experience... [had] shown that neither... [was] punctuality observed in submitting the statements nor accuracy in compiling them.'⁵⁵ From the scattered lists of publications that do exist for Hyderabad, it would be safe to say that Urdu publications, which came to outnumber publications in either Arabic or Persian, were of an eclectic sort.⁵⁶ They included books on accounting, astrology, composition, geography, government, law and medicine and books of poetry, drama, prose, philosophy, biographies, histories and also, of course, religious literature. This accords well with the picture that Francesca Orsini presents of Urdu publication in its heartland. In the United Provinces, she writes, '[I]t is evident that publications in Urdu and indeed in Persian, were more eclectic in nature: they include Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious texts, translations of Persian histories and literary texts used for educational purposes, literary works, Urdu ghazals, books of useful knowledge, and translations of government laws.'⁵⁷ There seem, however, to be significant differences as well. Urdu religious publications in Hyderabad in the first half of the twentieth century seem rarely to include Christian and Hindu texts. But the Islamic literature seems to be as diverse as overall Urdu publications. The publication record includes examples of elegies, poems and treatises on specific religious figures such as Fatima, the Prophet Mohammad and Husain. There were also more polemical

⁵⁴ *Kaifiyat nazm-va nasq jamia osmania, 1335 fasli* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Matbua Dar-ul Tab' Jamia Osmania).

⁵⁵ *Proceedings of His Highness the Nizam's Government in the Judicial, Police and General Departments—(Education.) No. 9/3 Misc* (13 December 1913), Hyderabad Government, Installment 39, List Number 9, Serial Number 47, APSA.

⁵⁶ *Catalogue of Books Published in His Highness the Nizam's Dominions [Hyderabad State]. Hyderabad 1909-1956*, IOL Shelfmark SV 412/26. These lists are perhaps most frustrating in the scanty though interesting glimpses they provide of publications in other vernacular languages, Telugu, Marathi and Kannada.

⁵⁷ Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940*, p. 70.

tracts defending Islam from European accusations that it had been spread by the sword, social reform texts as well as prose and poetry on Sufism. And of the subjects that Bijnori cited in particular, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, logic and philosophy, there were also occasional publications, not to mention publications on *yunānī tibb*, Greco-Arabic medicine. Perhaps Bijnori was right to argue that these did not form the most significant part of Urdu publications, at least in Hyderabad. Indeed, translations from Arabic were rare though not altogether unheard of.

The publication of Urdu texts that took Arabic science as their subject might have been uncommon, but the same could not be said of Western science. The record of Urdu publication in Hyderabad as well as north India testifies to early attempts to make Western scientific knowledge available to an Urdu public. Hyderabad's first Urdu journal, *Risāla-i tibābit-i Hyderabad* (Hyderabad Medical Journal), was specifically interested in Western science and medicine. 'The beginnings of Urdu journalism in Hyderabad happened with the movement for the spread of modern science/knowledge ('ulūm).'⁵⁸ Certainly, in north India as well, people like Master Ramchandra at Delhi College were publishing journals with regular columns on science.⁵⁹ Journals like *Qiran al-sādāin* (begun in 1845, a journal associated with Delhi College), *Fawā'id ul-nāzarīn* (begun in 1845, a bimonthly, edited by Master Ramchandra), *Mohib-i Hind* (also edited by Ramchandra from Delhi, begun in 1847) and *Khair khwāh-e Hind* (published by missionaries from Benares starting in 1837, with an irregular run) were all Urdu journals that explicitly attempted to spread an interest in and a discussion of Western sciences. By the early twentieth century, Urdu publications in the United Provinces contained titles on history and geography (some of them educational), medicine (*yunani* and homeopathic) and science (especially mathematical and mechanical sciences).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Mohammad Anwaruddin, *Hyderabad Deccan kē 'ilmī-va adabī risā'il* (Hyderabad: Maktaba Shādāb, 1997), p. 37.

⁵⁹ Irfan Habib and Dhruv Raina, 'The Introduction of Scientific Rationality into India: A Study of Master Ramchandra—Urdu Journalist, Mathematician and Educationalist,' in *Annals of Science* (Great Britain), Vol. 46, No. 6 (1989), pp. 597–610; Dhruv Raina and Irfan Habib, 'Ramchandra's *Treatise* through "The Haze of The Golden Sunset": An Aborted Pedagogy,' in *Social Studies of Science* (Great Britain), Vol. 20, No. 3 (1990), pp. 455–472.

⁶⁰ 'Statement of Particulars Regarding Books and Periodicals Published in the United Provinces, Registered Under Act XXV of 1867 during the Quarter Ending May 1910,' also consulted Statements for June, September and December 1910 in *United Provinces Catalogues of Books, 1910–1912*, IOL Shelfmark SV 412/38.

In contrast to those scholars who insisted that certain subjects could only be learnt in certain languages, Bijnori believed that 'just as you can move water from one vessel to another whenever you want, in the same way, every science can be translated from one language into another.'⁶¹ The ease that this last statement exuded was belied by Bijnori's own extended discussion on scientific vocabulary and where Urdu should look to find terms for the sciences. For no matter how necessary the work of translation, Bijnori admitted that the people engaged in the work of translation had faced severe problems when confronted with the question of terminology.⁶² Although he was interested in the scientific heritage of the Arabic language, Bijnori himself favored the use of Persian words over those of Arabic and Hindi for the creation of new Urdu vocabulary. This question, about the sources from which Urdu should take its scientific vocabulary, was to have a contentious life.

Coining Terminology

What was apparent to the members of Osmania University's translation bureau was that the modern languages of Europe contained a large scientific vocabulary for which Urdu had no equivalent. How to create such a vocabulary in the Urdu language was a question both for individual translators involved with the translation bureau, for the bureau as a whole and for concerned scholars outside Hyderabad, like Dr. Bijnori. In order to coordinate some of these discussions the translation bureau began to hold meetings on terminology (*majlis vaz' istalahāt*). The first of these meetings for the coining of terminology was held in early 1918 and the last on the 25th of July 1946. In 22 of those years of meetings, the translation bureau was responsible for coining approximately 55,000 words for use in their translations.⁶³

Abdul Haq, throughout the 1920s, published lists of some of the words produced at these meetings in the pages of the Anjuman-i

⁶¹ Bijnori, 'Vaz' Istalahāt,' p. 334.

⁶² Ibid., p. 336.

⁶³ Majid Bidar, *Dār-ul tarjuma jamia osmania kī adabī khidmāt* (Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India: Urdu Academy Andhra Pradesh, 1980), p. 57. Estimates of the numbers of words that were created vary. Bidar explains that records for quite a few of the years do not exist, which is why he gives this figure for a 22-year period, instead of the whole period.

Taraqqi-i Urdu journal, *Urdu*, hoping to elicit responses from the Urdu-reading public about this basic problem of terminology. He explained that in order for these meetings to be successful, they had decided to include at least two types of men, scientific and linguistic experts. This way, the new vocabulary would not seem inappropriate either to scholars (*ahl-i 'ilm*) or to people whose mother tongue was Urdu (*ahl-i zabān*).⁶⁴ Bijnori had agreed with this sentiment, advocating that people who knew Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, English, French and German should be included along with scientists, or scholars of modern sciences, in the process of creating new terminology in Urdu.⁶⁵

Another early Osmania personality and *ghair mulki*, Sayyid Vahiduddin Salim Panipati, who served as a professor of Urdu and also as the head of the Urdu department, was likely invited to Hyderabad because of his expertise and experience with the creation of new terminology in Urdu. Vahiduddin Salim, soon after coming to Hyderabad, published a book, *Vaz' istalāhāt*, devoted to the question of coining new terminology.⁶⁶ He had been a teacher in Bahawalpur and Rampur schools before moving to Aligarh, a move which his friend, and famed Urdu poet, Hali had suggested. In Aligarh, Salim began work as Sayyid Ahmed Khan's assistant. After the latter's death, Vahiduddin Salim acted as sub-editor and later editor of the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*.⁶⁷ In the same period, he is said to have founded the short-lived *Anjuman-i Mutarjamīn*, or Translators' Association, to translate useful books into Urdu.⁶⁸ Among his many accomplishments, Vahiduddin Salim was also the head of the Osmania University's Urdu department and the teacher of two of Hyderabad's most important Urdu scholars, Dr Mohiuddin Qadri Zore and Dr Abdul Qādir Sarwari. In the preface to his book, Salim explained that for some time, he had been creating new words and using them in the articles of the journals under his supervision. When these articles were reprinted, these new words

⁶⁴ Haq, 'Muqadama,' p. 7.

⁶⁵ Bijnori, 'Vaz' Istalāhāt,' p. 336.

⁶⁶ I will be using the Taraqqi Urdu Bureau edition which is based on the 1921 edition of the book. Syed Vahiduddin Salim, *Vaz' Istalāhāt* (New Delhi, India: Taraqqi Urdu Bureau, 1980).

⁶⁷ Maulvi Ghulam Rasool, 'Vahiduddin Salim,' in *Sab ras*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (June 1964), pp. 32-35.

⁶⁸ Manzar Abbas Naqvi, *Vahiduddin Salim: hayāt aur adabī khidmāt* (Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India: Muslim University Press, 1969), p. 118. Naqvi says that these were translations from English, while Khaliq Anjam claims that they were translations of Arabic and Persian texts. See Khaliq Anjam, 'Introduction,' in Vahiduddin Salim, *Ifādāt-i Salim* (New Delhi: Maktabah-i Jamia, 1972).

silently entered the Urdu language. Here, he was writing down for the first time, the principles by which these words were created.⁶⁹

Like Abdul Haq, Vahiduddin Salim had a sense that language and civilization were intimately related. He explained, in his preface, that along with the expansion of knowledge and the development of thought, a revolution in language was incredibly important.⁷⁰ In fact, he began the book by explaining that the more civilized a people, the more words they had in their language! By this account, the people of Polynesia, Salim's example, had less words in their vocabulary than those in other parts of the world, just as rural people had smaller vocabularies than those who lived in cities.⁷¹ With regard to the Urdu language, Vahiduddin Salim explained that there were at that time two different opinions about where words should be found for the creation of new Urdu terminology. The first group of people advocated using Arabic and Arabic terminology as the base for the creation of new terms. The second advocated the use of languages that were elements of the Urdu language, namely Arabic, Persian and Hindi, and that at the time of composition of new terms, only the principles of Urdu grammar should apply.⁷² This explanation did not actually represent the great variety of positions that people took up. As we have already seen, people like Abdur Rehman Bijnori advocated the use of words from Persian over both Arabic and Hindi.

Vahiduddin Salim, himself, was a strong advocate of the second position, of the need to draw from Persian, Arabic, and Hindi to create new words in Urdu. He claimed that after some discussion the Osmania University translation bureau also came to the same conclusion. Vahiduddin Salim almost immediately set about explaining the linguistic pedigree of the Urdu language. Urdu, he explained, was a member of the Indo-Aryan language family, but it had also taken many of its words from the Turkish and Semitic language families.⁷³ The premise of his argument was that language growth must be 'natural,' that is it must follow the precedents set for it in the past. This was why he insisted on the use of Urdu grammatical principles in the creation of new terms. He was also a particularly strong advocate of drawing upon Hindi when creating new Urdu terms.

⁶⁹ Salim, *Vaz' Istalāhāt*, pp. 7–8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–17.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–28.

He justified the use of Hindi by pointing out how many Hindi words were already a part of the Urdu language. For this argument, he turned to the *Farhang-i āsafīa*, a well-known Urdu dictionary of the period.⁷⁴ At the end of *Farhang-e āsafīa*, the compiler, Sayyid Ahmed Dehlavi, counted the numbers of words in Urdu according to their origin. Vahiduddin Salim emphasized that according to this accounting, more Hindi words existed in Urdu than from any other language and that this number was three times the number of Arabic words in Urdu.⁷⁵ To add large numbers of exclusively Arabic words to Urdu would, he argued, destroy its inherent nature.

There were other reasons for Salim's desire to draw from Aryan languages over Arabic. Urdu was, after all, an Indo-Aryan, or Indo-European, language and so would have natural affinities with other Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi. Furthermore, Vahiduddin Salim argued that the structure of the Urdu language lent itself to becoming a scientific language. Because Urdu was an Indo-Aryan language, it, unlike Arabic, had the capacity to create new words through the combination of words and through the use of prefixes and suffixes: 'Where the need presents itself in scientific language for many single roots, it is necessary that those single roots can be combined, and having created compounds, one should be able to create from these compounds new derivatives. This capacity exists in Aryan languages. Semitic languages, of which Arabic is one, do not have this flexibility... In contrast to this, our language, Urdu, is an Aryan language, and it has all of those methods for the creation of single and compound terminology that exist in European languages. The ability to become a scientific language is present in it.'⁷⁶ As Maurice Olender has described, much of the most advanced

⁷⁴ The *Farhang-i āsafīa* was compiled in the nineteenth century by Maulvi Sayyid Ahmed Dehlavi (not to be confused with Sayyid Ahmed Khan). It was published with the help of the Hyderabad government, which also patronized the compiler and later his son. For more details, see Dr Syed Dawood Ashraf, *Guzishta Hyderabad: Archives kē ainē mein* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Shagufa Publications, 2003), pp. 134–143; and Minault, 'Syed Ahmad Dehlavi.'

⁷⁵ The numbers according to Vahiduddin Salim: 54,009 total words of which 21,644 are Hindi (includes Punjabi and Purabi), 17,505 are Urdu (meaning Hindi words joined with foreign words), 7,584 are Arabic, 6,041 are Persian, 554 are Sanskrit, 50 are English and 181 are others (includes Turkish, Greek, Portuguese, Latin, French and Pali amongst others); Salim, *Vaz' Istalāhāt*, pp. 168–169.

⁷⁶ Vahiduddin Salim, 'Usūl-i vaz' istalāhāt,' in Qamar Rais (ed.), *Tarjuma ka fan aur ravā'yat* (Delhi, India: Taj Publishing House, 1976), p. 45. Unfortunately, the editor does not indicate when or where any of these essays was previously published. From

scholarship in nineteenth-century European philology had come to precisely the conclusion (or had begun from the premise) that Indo-Aryan languages were more conducive to a scientific temperament than Semitic languages, especially Hebrew.⁷⁷ And so, with Salim, we run across a third approach to the Arabic language, one that contrasts with Barkat Ali's embrace of the language and Bijnori's qualified embrace of Arabic sciences. In the writing of Vahiduddin Salim, there are traces of a European system of philology that seeks to disqualify Semitic languages as linguistic systems conducive to the scientific spirit of the modern age. Far from traditional Muslim languages standing as symbols of the past to be unproblematically resuscitated, the engagement of these Osmania University scholars with philology, and modern sciences more generally, points to the pressures created in south Asian linguistic regimes, as traditional languages of the subcontinent were disqualified and recuperated simultaneously.

Vahiduddin Salim's book was organized around ideas of language and linguistic invention. A part of *Vaz' istalāhāt* explained different types of compounds, prefixes and suffixes in the English language. He demonstrated the single and compound terminology of English by listing words, like autonomous, auto (self) + nomous (law/government). This word, autonomous, would then easily have derivatives like autonomy and autonomously. Part of the book was dedicated to English, and this was likely the case because of the comparative possibility that such a presentation offered. By far the greatest part of this book was devoted to an exhaustive listing of the various prefixes and suffixes that already existed in the Urdu language, most of which came from Persian and Hindi. But Arabic prefixes like *ghair* and *lā* were also amongst his exhaustive list of the elements of the Urdu language. This was an attempt to create a scientific or linguistic basis for efforts to create new terminology by using English terminology—and Indo-European philology—as a model.

The Words Themselves

The 360 books that the translation bureau ultimately translated from English into Urdu were almost evenly divided between the social

details within the essay, however, it is clear that Vahiduddin Salim wrote this essay while employed at Osmania University, after the publication of the book cited above.

⁷⁷ Olender, *Languages of Paradise*.

sciences and humanities on the one hand and the hard sciences on the other. In subjects like engineering, mathematics, medicine, biology, chemistry, physics, botany and zoology there were roughly a total of 175 translations, while history, political science, economics, philosophy, geography, ethics, law and education saw roughly 185 works translated from English.⁷⁸ And yet, according to Mujib-ul-Islam, in arts subjects, the translation bureau coined 6,288 words, while in science subjects, 56,407 words were coined; quite a large disparity.⁷⁹

The translation bureau at Osmania University attempted to create new terminology in the Urdu language with the help of both scientific specialists and linguistic/literary scholars. Ross Masood explained, 'Besides these translators, we also had a very small body of Orientalists, some of whom knew Bhasha and Persian etc. very well. First, the translators put forward their suggestions for the terms to be used, and then this smaller body of expert Orientalists either adopted them or suggested better ones. Very often I found that our Anglicised translators had suggested harder words than those suggested by the non-English knowing Orientalists.'⁸⁰ The Orientalists whom Masood mentions, the specialist group that was involved in coining terminology in the early years of Osmania University, were Vahiduddin Salim (d. 1928), Maulvi Abdul Haq, Nazm Taba Taba'i (d. 1933), Abdullah Imadi and Mirza Mohammad Hadi Ruswa.⁸¹ Unlike Ross Masood, this group of men had all studied or had expertise in Persian, Arabic and Urdu; the last named—no ordinary scholar—was Urdu's most famous novelist.

In 1926, the translation bureau published a list of all of the words that it had coined from the years 1918 to 1922.⁸² In the preface, Maulvi Inayatullah explained the procedure by which terms were adopted.

⁷⁸ Mujib ul-Islam, *Dār-ul tarjuma*, pp. 260–313.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197. There is a discrepancy between the total numbers presented by me here for the sciences and the social sciences/humanities and those recorded by Mujib ul-Islam. Mujib ul-Islam counts law amongst the science subjects. He estimates the total number of law terms coined was approximately 18,000. So, if law terminology were included in the total of science terms, as Mujib ul-Islam does, one would have a total of 36,407 science terms and 24,288 arts and social science terms. A majority of the terms created by the bureau would still be terms for the sciences.

⁸⁰ Masood, *Travels in Japan*, p. 180.

⁸¹ Mujib ul-Islam, *Dār-ul tarjuma*, p. 151. Also in Bidar, *Dār-ul tarjuma jamia osmania kī adabī khidmāt*, p. 50.

⁸² Mohammad Inayatullah (comp.), *Majmu'a istalāhāt* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: Osmania University Press, 1926).

Individual translators, when they came across English terminology that had no Urdu equivalent, presented the English word requiring translation along with their own recommended Urdu term to the committee on the coining of terminology.⁸³ The committee would then discuss the term and either agree to use the one suggested by the translator or use another according to the majority of opinion in the committee. Many of the scholars who have written about the translation bureau have noted that amongst the group of Orientalists that Masood mentioned, Vahiduddin Salim and Maulvi Abdul Haq preferred to draw from Arabic, Persian *and* Hindi when adopting new vocabulary, while Nazm Taba Taba'i and Abdullah Imadi preferred to draw from Arabic and Persian exclusively.⁸⁴

These studies of the translation bureau have also noted that many of the words that were coined ultimately drew heavily upon Arabic and Persian.⁸⁵ Although Vahiduddin Salim claimed that the group that advocated the use of Hindi words in Urdu had won the debate within the translation bureau, a perusal of the 1926 list of terminology certainly reveals that this terminology was largely derived from Arabic and Persian. The 1926 list, running into 215 pages, is divided into two columns. On the left one finds the English word, or concept, and on the right, the Urdu translation along with the subject or science for which it was intended in parentheses. The recourse to Arabic was not, however, exclusively the case. A handful of words, like actor (as a literary term), ammonia, centigram and nitrogen, were kept in their original English and simply transliterated into Urdu. This seemed to be the case especially with terms for international systems of measurement, as was the case with centigram. On other occasions words from different languages were combined, as with *hajūye nātak* for 'satiric drama', a compound that was formed with the help of the Arabic word *hajū* for satire and the Sanskrit word *nātak* for drama.

⁸³ Bidar, *Dār-ul tarjuma jamia osmania kī adabī khidmāt*, p. 50. He explains that separate meetings were held for the sciences and for the arts. These meetings included the translators in these subjects, and the select group of five 'Orientalists' mentioned by Masood earlier.

⁸⁴ Bidar, *Dār-ul tarjuma jamia osmania kī adabī khidmāt*, p. 50; Sayyid Suiaiman Nadwi, *Yād-i Raffgān* (Karachi: Majlis-i Nashariyat-i Islam, 1983), p. 354; Mujib-ul Islam, *Dār-ul tarjuma*, pp. 151–152, 158. In the last reference, Mujib-ul Islam quotes from an interview with Haroon Khan Sherwani, describing the type of argument that happened between Salim and Taba Taba'i.

⁸⁵ Mujib-ul Islam, *Dār-ul tarjuma*, pp. 160–199; Karen Leonard, *Social History of an Indian Caste: The Kayasths of Hyderabad* (Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 218.

Perhaps it was this mixing of vocabulary from different languages, the fact that the terminology created at the bureau drew in some measure from Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit that Salim was claiming as his victory.

Yet, clearly, the overwhelming majority of these words were taken from Arabic. It is this fact that is often read, alone, to make the argument about this group and their desire to make the Urdu language more Muslim.⁸⁶ How then do we understand this terminology, in the face of the writings and speeches of Ross Masood, Abdul Haq, Vahiduddin Salim and others, about the nature of the Urdu language? Were their pronouncements merely rhetoric, aimed at disguising a much more substantive aim to safeguard the privileges of an Urdu elite and, in fact, safeguarding their privilege by claiming that their language was more representative than Hindi, when in fact it really was not? This latter reading is certainly possible and is offered by Alok Rai in his engaging discussion of how the protagonists of Hindi experienced the claims of Urdu advocates. ‘The famous “syncretic” and “composite” culture of Avadh had repeatedly been deployed against the protagonists of Hindi. It was urged that the Nagari/Hindi protagonists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that their activities were a threat to communal harmony and cooperation. . . . To put it bluntly, *this “syncretic” culture was merely the form in which traditional dominance was mediated to them* [italics in original].’⁸⁷

In relation to the material at hand, the words created by the translation bureau at Osmania University, the question can take a more specific form. Looking at particular groups of terms, one can discern some of the reasons that might have motivated this selection. The aim is not to justify selections but to understand the underlying rationale that might have motivated that selection. In certain subjects, like logic, which had an extant Arabic literature, Arabic words, even less familiar Arabic words, seem definitely to have been preferred. So, for example the word for ‘cause’ as used in logic is given two

⁸⁶ In thinking through this question, David Lelyveld’s review of Amrit Rai’s *A House Divided* has been of great significance to my own thinking; David Lelyveld, ‘Zaban-e Urdu-e Mualla and the Idol of Linguistic Origins,’ in *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 9 (1994), pp. 57–67.

⁸⁷ Rai, *Tracts for the Times*/ 13, p. 60. Particularly useful is the dialogue between Alok Rai and Shahid Amin over this issue; Alok Rai and Shahid Amin, ‘A Debate between Alok Rai and Shahid Amin Regarding Hindi,’ *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 20 (2005), pp. 181–202.).

translations both derived from Arabic, *sabab* and *'illat*; the former, though an Arabic term, might have been, as it is today, more familiar to the average Urdu speaker. The latter term, however, is exclusively used in all of the derivative concepts—'direct cause,' 'final cause,' 'predisposing cause,' 'proximate cause' and 'remote cause'—because that word was more commonly used in Arabic texts devoted to the logical sciences.⁸⁸ Since in this case both *sabab* and *'illat* are Arabic words, the selection is by no means governed by a generic desire to Arabicize the Urdu language. Rather, the choice of *'illat* reflects a certain deference to the meanings of words in their languages of origin.

At other times, recourse to Arabic might not have been based upon extant scholarship but on the customs and usages of the Hyderabad court. For the concept 'city improvement trust,' one finds the Urdu *mahakama-i āra'ish-i balda*. *Mahakama* was an oft-used word in the Hyderabad government to refer to state departments. And the last word, *balda*, an Arabic word meaning 'city' though perhaps not as common in colloquial Urdu as *sheher*, was used by the Nizam's government as an administrative term, especially to refer to the city of Hyderabad.⁸⁹ For the language employed by the Hyderabad court, both its Persian and its Urdu were slightly different from that of north India and had their own relationships to the Arabic language. At times, this deference to local usage was combined with a strict literalism. For example the translation bureau created derivatives using the word used by the Hyderabad government for 'charter,' *manshūr*, coining the terms *manshūriyat* for 'chartism' and *manshūri* for 'chartist'—again, in deference to the language of origin. One should not assume that all Arabic terms were peculiar to Urdu. Arabic-derived words used by Osmania University, like *mahsūl* for 'tax' or 'tax revenue,' might even be found in Hindi.

Already, from these limited examples, one can see that many of these words have not filtered into today's Urdu. There were also a few words, like *sardāla* for 'refrigerator,' that in hindsight, though not particularly difficult, have simply not stood the test of time. This was an objection to which the translators at Osmania would have been open

⁸⁸ Inayatullah, *Majmu'a istalāhāt*, p. 25.

⁸⁹ Mujib-ul Islam, *Dār-ul tarjuma*, pp. 161–162, gives a similar example. He explains that Osmania University used the Arabic term *tassajail* for 'registration,' because it was more common in the Deccan, as opposed to *andarāj*, which was used more frequently to mean registration in north Indian Urdu.

and moreover underscores a point worth making: the 'ease' of a word and its popularity were not necessarily related. Other words, like the translations listed for 'isochronous' and 'semi-cubical parabola,' were more difficult, perhaps as much because of the concept itself as word choice. And herein lies the great problem of vernacular translation. For the many purposes of this translation project—to create a language of higher education and research, to maximize the mental energies of students, to create a language that could be used in common throughout India for the diffusion of science amongst the population and yet to make use of resources that existed within Indian scholastic (and administrative) traditions and within Urdu itself—often worked at cross purposes.

After all, the mostly uneducated population of the Hyderabad State would not really be using words like monism or abstract economics on a daily basis. These were, in the end, meant to be terms for specialists. The novelty of this project, and of others like it, was this attempt to combine in a vernacular language all of these functions of language, specialist and common, administrative and scientific, local and transnational, regional and national, literary and scientific. The attempt was to borrow from other languages, so that, ironically, this language could stand alone. It is in this regard that those who study and explain Hindi and Urdu language politics have much to learn from those who study other vernacular languages. For understanding the transformations of modern Indian vernaculars together might mitigate the over-dependence in discussions of Hindi and Urdu on positions which declare certain words to be more natural or easier than others. More importantly, in this case, borrowing from other languages, namely Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, was motivated by a desire to render vernacular languages useful to a modern public, a public that was, like the language itself, in the process of creation.

Conclusion

In attempting to form a language that could stand alone, the men of the translation bureau at Osmania University navigated the tensions between a new cosmopolitan language (English), old cosmopolitan languages (Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit) and local usages (of the Hyderabad State, for example). This modern project of vernacularization—which aimed to make Urdu a gateway to high scholarship while retaining some of its historical inflections—was

subject to a great deal of negotiation. This paper has sought to make apparent the tensions of the project at Osmania University as well as highlight some of the specific issues over which even those who were Urdu advocates could disagree. The suggestion is that there has always been more than one story of Urdu, more than one imagination of its past and its projects in the present and the future.

To recognize this is to begin to clear way for a more complicated understanding of Muslim politics in those crucial decades between the Khilafat agitations and the fateful decade of the 1940s, which saw the partition of the subcontinent and the independence of both Pakistan and India. For with these men, in the 1920s, there is still clearly a vision of Urdu, through its possibilities as a language of scholarly discourse, challenging English as the language of a united India. Their concern was to assert the status of Urdu as a national language, one whose history spanned the subcontinent and whose varied traditions were not the preserve of a minority. Most importantly, through the translation project at Osmania University, these scholars hoped to make Urdu a language relevant to India's future.

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