

DOMINANCE OF URDU LANGUAGE IN KASHMIR: A CASE OF LANGUAGE COLONIZATION**Hilal Ahmad Dar*, Zahid Bashir Lone** & Azra Rashid*****

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Abstract:

Jammu and Kashmir is a multilingual state. It has a distinctive identity of being a state which has accommodated people of diverse ethnicities. This diverse nature of the state leads to communication gap among the people speaking different languages. To bridge this communication gap, Urdu language was chosen as the best available neutral alternative to unite the people of different geo-linguistic zones speaking diverse mother tongues, holding different culture and faiths. But the emergence of Urdu language results in loss of essence and identity of Kashmiri language. The present paper aims to study the factors of dominance of Urdu language in diverse state of Jammu and Kashmir and its impact on Kashmiri Language.

Key Words: Language Dominance, Communication Gap, Linguistic Diversity & Multilingualism

Introduction:

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three regions Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. It has a distinctive identity of being a state which has accommodated people of diverse ethnicities and where more than ten languages are spoken. In Kashmir region, Kashmiri language, which has a privilege of being one of the 22 language mentioned in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution, is spoken by the majority of people, while as Dogri language is spoken by majority of people in Jammu region and Ladakhi a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Ladakh region. Apart from these major languages there are some minor languages spoken by minority community living in different parts of the state. The minority languages consists of Pahari, Gojri, Pashto, Balti, Purkhi, Poguli, Tibetan etc. there are also few speakers of language isolate Burushaski. The multilingual societies make state a linguistically and culturally divergent area. As these communities live in synchronization with each other and they need to communicate to each other. The need was felt to choose a language which could be used as *Lingua-Franca* and for that purpose Urdu language has been chosen to communicate to each other. Urdu language is native language of none of the speakers of Jammu and Kashmir State. But is understood to almost all. In this linguistic gamut the use of Urdu cuts across the geographical and/or social space in the valley with the result it is dominating various social and functional roles. Urdu language proved to be the source of literary satisfaction to the people of the Valley. Though Urdu had originated far away from the region, the Kashmiris' irrespective of religion, caste and creed nourished this language with the sweat of their brow. It is a language used by administration. Urdu language plays a major role to bridging the communication gap in multilingual societies. Urdu language is the medium of instruction in schools, colleges, Universities etc. It is an official language of Jammu and Kashmir State. Urdu during the course of its history in the valley has produced treatises of creative literature and ingenious literary figures. The language has been the part of education as well as trade and commerce. In spite of the wider domains of functions, Urdu language had not entered into the grass level for day to day conversation till 1970-1980. The media revolution in the valley that started during 1980's has brought a paradigm shift in various levels of cultural trait like food, art and architecture and other areas of social life in the valley. A language is a part of culture and a culture is part of language; the two are intricately interwoven in such a way that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Lando 1957; Burling 1970). The present paper aims study the impact of Urdu language on Kashmiri and its role in bridging the communication gap where people of diverse ethnicities are accommodated.

Urdu in Kashmir: A Historical Perspective:

The Urdu language marked its dawn in Kashmir in 19th century during the Dogra regime. It has, within the period of one and a half century, spread rapidly into most of societal affairs of human life. Entry of Urdu tremendously revolutionized the social, psychological, linguistic and literary trends of the people here in the valley. Hence Urdu intervened in to the most of the domains of interaction like media, the education, the courts and the markets, and some of the domains of daily communication. The legitimacy of linguistic contact of Urdu in Kashmir has been the result of variety of factors. It was due to the political change in the neighbouring regions of Jammu and Kashmir State that had strong linguistic repercussion on the valley. The political change took place in the mid 19th century. The harmonious political and diplomatic relations of the Dogra regime with Britishers, the extension of British imperialism to Punjab in 1858 A.D and the diplomatic alliances of Dogra autocrats with Punjab and Lahore court converged these powers towards a close vicinity. There are some other factors which are also responsible to bring people speaking different languages together such as economic factor, social factor etc. These factors have considerable implications for boosting Urdu language. The increase of trade links between Kashmir and other parts of the subcontinent created for a Kashmiri speaker an indispensable need to have good access with Urdu language. The similar factors associated with trade had been the inflow of tourists to the valley was another similar economic factor which boosted Urdu language in Kashmir. This factor also appeared to for expanding the domains of interaction with other languages for the Kashmiri speaker. The factor finds the way for adding Urdu among the horizons of linguistic repertoire of Kashmiri speakers. The process of urbanization that begins the early period of 19th century was aimed to facilitate the exposure of Kashmir people to the modern world; language resource being the tool of paramount importance to organize, promote and sustain the process of social change towards urbanization. Urdu was felt to be one of the language resources to cater this purpose for inhabitants of the valley. The combination of these factors resulted Urdu to emerge in the form of *lingua-franca* in the linguistic repertoire of the state. Thus Urdu spread for the purpose of routine communication between the groups of people who speak different native languages.

Present scenario of Urdu Language in Kashmir:

Urdu played a neutral role of not being a native language among the three geolinguistically different regions of the state. From its recognition as official language in years 1889 by Maharaja Pratap Singh, it has grown rapidly to be one of the widely used languages in the state. Urdu language was promoted by the socio-economically upper section of the society and middle class society adopted it as a path and tool for socio-economic mobility, growth and as a symbol of prestige. The Kashmiri people adopted Urdu as a link language to communicate with the people of the country, especially in North India. Urdu discourses extended from revenue offices and legislature and made its space in almost every important sphere of life like educational, literary, media, religious and cultural discourses. The Urdu language maintained the order of formal discourse in administration and government meetings. The prevalence of Urdu as a link language is not only due to its being the official language, but also due to its popularization through the publication of books, newspapers and periodicals in large number. Besides the close socio-economic contacts between the people of state and rest of India, the impact of tourism, modernization and educational development have contributed to the use of Urdu in the state, in addition to the mother tongues. In Ladakh too, Urdu was imposed as a medium of instruction, though the majority of people there speak and write Ladakh.

Use of Urdu /Kashmiri in Media:

Urdu language is very rich in literary works and it has produced treatise of creative literature and ingenious literary figures. In spite of being the official language status in the state, Urdu language had not entered into the grass level for day to day conversation till 1970-1980. The media revolution in the valley that started during 1980's played a major role in a paradigm shift in various aspects of life such as, cultural trait like food, art and architecture and other areas of social life in the valley. Access to media particularly to electronic media has engaged the people in terms of major proportion of time. The text of media genre cover major segment in Urdu language. The inclusion of Urdu language in media has revolutionized the Urdu language and it has entered in to the vicinity of almost every house hold. A sociolinguistic survey conducted by the Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir in 2004 indicated that about 80% of young generation (born after 1980) in Urban sector mostly adhere to Urdu language to facilitate their day-to-day conversation. Sheeba (2009) has made the following findings about language-based media in the valley:

- ✓ The newspapers in Kashmir are published in three language; Urdu, English and Kashmiri. No newspaper is printed in national language Hindi from the valley.
- ✓ Total number of 56 Urdu dailies are launched till date in valley out of which 23 are offset and 33 are litho. Urdu dailies rank top position in number.
- ✓ The number of English offset print dailies launched till date is 13.
- ✓ No Kashmir daily newspaper has been launched in the native language of the masses i.e. Kashmiri.
- ✓ The number of Urdu weeklies including offset and litho printed is 15 and 33. Urdu weeklies also rank top position in number.
- ✓ The number of offset printed English weeklies is 11. Urdu weeklies are also four times the English weeklies.
- ✓ Only two Kashmiri weeklies *Sangar Mall* and *Soan Meerass* are launched. But these newspapers cover limited audience.
- ✓ Rest is quarterly, fortnightly and monthly newspaper in Urdu and English. The number is 13.
- ✓ Like other societies, electronic media is expanding its domains in the valley. This media is not maintaining the balance between Urdu and Kashmiri. The radio uses Kashmiri and Urdu besides providing small segments for some other language, like Pahari, Balti, etc.
- ✓ Major portion of population here are the audience of television.
- ✓ The television channels aired for the audience in Kashmir valley are innumerable.
- ✓ In comparison to total number of television channels viewed by the Kashmiri audience a marginal segment cover the programmes in Kashmiri language. The survey has shown that approximately 80% of the programmes in TV channels use Urdu language

Such kind of linguistic environment has laid a due impact on building the concept and behaviour of language valorization. This observation has been tested with empirical evidences.

Conclusion:

From the above study it is clear that Urdu language has played a major role to eradicate the communication gap among the people living in diverse ethnicities where more than ten languages are spoken. Kashmiri language, although the native language of the soil with fascinating linguistic depth, is in the process of losing its functioning role to fulfill various communicative domains among younger generation. Since Urdu language is nobody's mother tongue in the state but it is the only best available neutral alternative to unite the people of different geolinguistic zone speaking diverse mother tongues, holding different cultures and faiths. Unlike aged and middle aged group, the younger generation seems to escalate towards Urdu language. The young generation feels Urdu as the language resource for achieving social power and prestige. This kind of linguistic inclination leads towards the new ordering of communicative and cognitive structures of the people of this age group. But the matter of concern is that the Kashmiri language has lost its essence and identity in the state. It is said that, "if you want to kill a nation, the only way to do so is to kill its language".

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