

## Chapter 4

# **Hindus And the Punjabi State And Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi'**

This chapter is exclusively the reproduction of the relevant excerpts from a small-sized book 'Hindus And the Punjabi State'(HINDU PRACHARA SABHA PUNJABI MOHALLA, AMBALA CANTT. 1955), by 'Professor Om Prakasha Kahol, Ex-Member Working Committee, and Central Parliamentary Board, All-India Hindu Mahasabha'. And its 'Foreword' ends with: Hariana, Hoshiarpur Dist., (Pb.). May 10, 1955. Om Prakasha Kahol.

Perhaps I should not but still I want to say that in what the late professor wrote, he was calling for Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi' with a deep commitment. Aspiring for a bright future of our country and the region, I believe Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi' will prove a reliable anchor for all and will not allow us to splinter again.

But before I proceed further, let me underline my Punjabiyat once again here with this coincidence: I noticed during this revision (and today is 07-09-2017) 'Hariana' mentioned by the professor in his 'Foreword' as above and therefore his connection with that town in Hoshiarpur district. But Hariana was already significant for me which made me write 'My village Mastiwal' and add it to the Ch. 2 'Punjabiyat', again during this revision.

\*

Principles are important. Principles are fundamentals on which one has to build. And principles be based on Truth. Any error in this process must not be insisted upon but rectified. What follows was written by Professor Kahol immediately after Partition. And the context seems to be the Indian Punjab of that time. There is no mention of Punjabis of Pakistan nor any mention of Muslim Punjabis in the context of united Punjab of pre-Partition days. Walls of religions made Punjabi Muslims invisible from that side and Hindu and Sikh Punjabis from this side. If this was alienation, we have to understand it. Fighting it back, we take into account what the professor wrote which I believe is helpful for the unity of Punjabi language. In this way, the alienation on the part of the Professor, if it was there, has been proved in the historical sense to be

Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

transitory. Anyhow, such were the effects of Partition. And behind Partition there was a long process which led to it. History tore people apart. In this religions played their part for defending against the aggression or making aggression. How Punjabi could not have been affected?

Principles are important. People should not be torn apart. One should resist those who do that. Even if overwhelmed by them, we should struggle to keep our feet on the ground. In principle, is unity of Punjabi language sacrosanct or not? Let me add immediately that the unity of Punjabi language means the unity of its script. And the script of Punjabi language is Gurmukhi. Where it is not so, it is the compulsion of circumstances. We must understand that repeating the scenario of Hindi and Urdu over scripts must not be repeated in Punjabi. I have said this even though I know that we should expect bad things before some good can happen.

As Urdu Party exists in Pakistan, how is it possible that it has not penetrated Punjabi Party? But where is the Punjabi Party in Pakistan? It can be put in another way, that Punjabi Party is practically the Urdu Party. Due to Urdu Party's historical cultural influence, Punjabis cannot detect this development. Putting it in another way, as Punjabis are not aware of the historical process, they believe what Urdu Party made them to believe, their movement or initial stirrings for Punjabi have already been hijacked by the Urdu Party and if not it is bound to happen. I do not see Punjabi escaping this phase – perpetuation of the present split of Punjabi language along the boundary line of the two scripts. These difficulties will emerge as we move forward. But as Urdu's own existence is in the last phase, it seems Urdu Party's machinations will not remain unexposed for long when the space under its own feet is daily shrinking. With deep faith and commitment we must stand firm on the fundamental principle of the unity of our language. The future belongs to our principled struggle and victory.

\*

Now what follows belongs to

Professor Kahol:

### **Geneology of Punjabi**

Punjabi is one of the many Aryan languages of Bharata. It is connected with Sanskrit through Apabhramshas and Prakritas. Its collaterals among the modern Indian languages are Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Assamese, Kashmiri and Sindhi. Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam, Tulu, and Gondi are some of the non-

Hindus And the Punjabi State  
And Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi'

Aryan languages of the same status as Punjabi. Sanskrit is the classical language which feeds modern Indian languages – Aryan as well as non-Aryan – and supplies them with technical and literary terms. Although ancient, and a few modern, writers of Punjabi have fashioned their literary works after Persian and Arabic, the natural source of inspiration of Punjabi is, and should be, Sanskrit lore.

### **Punjabi – Not a Dialect, But a Language**

Punjabi is not a dialect, but a full-fledged language, with its own dialects and literary style. If Punjabi is described as a dialect of Hindi then Gujarati, Nepalese and Sindhi will have more justification to be described as such. Irish will have to forfeit its claims to be an independent language. And Dutch and Danish will have to be called dialects of German. The difference between a dialect and a language is rather technical and subtle and cannot be brought out clearly, except by trained philologists. The wily politicians can only misuse technical terms to serve their own selfish ends. Punjabi is not a dialect anymore than Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Oriya are dialects of Hindi, or Telugu and Malayalam, of Tamil.

### **Gurmukhi – Proper Name for Punjabi Script**

The natural script of Punjabi is called *Gurmukhi*, just as the natural script for Kashmiri is called *Sharada*. In the recent past, there was a general fashion to give a script a definite name and often-times, the same script was employed for writing more languages than one. The Devanagari script is issued for writing Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi and Napalese. The *Grantham* script is used for writing old languages in South India. The *Pehlavi* characters were used for writing in the pre-Islamic times. The script called Modi was generally used for writing Marathi during the Moghal periods. The name of the script, employed by Ashoka for his inscriptions, was *Brahmi*. The official native script of the Indo-Greeks, which was in general vogue in Afghanistan and North-West of India during the centuries just before and after Christ, was called *Kharoshti*. The words '*Devanagari*' '*Brahmi*' '*Kharoshti*' or '*Grantham*' do not refer to any geographical region, they signify some higher idea. In the same way, the script of Kashmir was name '*Sharada*' and that of the Punjab, '*Gurmukhi*' which with slight variation, continued to be applied to Sindhi language too, along side with Arabic, till about the close of the last century.

Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

### **Importance of Language – A Lesson from Islam**

Language is the index of a nation's mind. Decay of language suggests, beyond the slightest doubt, the beginning of decay of a nation's existence. And the script of a language is verily its physical body. The sounds of a language can have no more physical and permanent existence without the script, than a human soul can have without the body.

### **Origin of Hindu Scripts: Brahmi**

Now when Islam entered the land of the Hindus, it applied its patent process of Arabicisation to "Hindu languages." This last word, too, does not represent any family, or stock, of languages in the philological sense. By "Hindu languages" we mean those languages which are written in derivatives of the Brahmi script and which derive their vocabulary and literary inspiration from Sanskrit sources. They belong to different stocks, genealogically. Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam, Tulu and Gondi are Dravidian Hindu languages. Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Sinhalese are Aryan Hindu languages. Burmese, Siamese, Tibetan and Indo-Chinese are Mongolian Hindu languages. At one time they were all written in slightly varying shades of the Brahmi script, but in course of time, the shapes of original letters underwent changes and at different places their appearance became different. Thus came into existence the various Hindu scripts, we find prevalent in Tibet, Siam, Burma, Java, Ceylon, besides India, today. Their common source is Brahmi.

### **Devanagari not more Akin to Brahmi Than Other Derivatives**

It should be noted that all the Hindu scripts – Bengali, Devanagari, Gurumukhi, Sharada, Grantha, Malayalam, Siamese or Sinhalese – we see today, are very different from the original Brahmi. They have all equally degenerated or developed from the parent script and it is wrong to suggest that Devanagari is more faithful representative of Brahmi than Gurumukhi or Sharada is. If anything, scripts other than the Devanagari have preserved their similarity with the original Brahmi letters more faithfully than the Devanagari has.

### **Devanagari Vis-à-vis Other Derivatives of Brahmi**

When the Muslims came to India, the various provincial speeches and scripts of this land had assumed definite shapes and set forms. Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi and other languages had already developed their outstanding distinctive features. The forms of characters used for writing regional languages in various parts of the country had become markedly different from Brahmi, though they could be easily deciphered by the learned people. And for various reasons, Devanagari characters had been

Hindus And the Punjabi State  
And Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi'

recognized more or less universally as the most suitable for writing Sanskrit. This practice gave Devanagari a distinct superiority over provincial scripts and gave it the inter-national importance among the Hindu nations, that it enjoys to this day.

### **Muslims' Bid to Oust Hindu Scripts**

When the Muslims set foot on the soil of India and came into direct conflict with the Hindus, they applied the process of "Arabicisation" to native languages, too – a process, which they had already tried in Persia, Afghanistan, Assyria and Africa, with tremendous success. Having ousted Pehlavi script from Persia, kharoshti from Afghanistan, Cuneiforms from Assyria and Hierographs from Egypt the Arabic script made a bid to unseat Devanagari, Gurumukhi, Sharada and other Hindu scripts from the lands of their birth. The Muslim free-booters, with the active help of native collaborators, who had embraced Islam to escape the wrath of the Ghazis, tried the experiment of clothing various Hindu languages – Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri and even Bengali and Marathi in Arabic garments. The neo-Muslims, made of Indian elements, were encouraged to use more and more Arabic phrases in their native languages. While the Muslim foreigners actuated by missionary zeal and the native Muslims eager to please their masters, worked for popularizing Arabic characters and vocabulary among the native tongues, with the help of sword and Quran, the Hindus resisted the combined onslaughts of the aliens and their native stooges with a superior religious fervour. The use of an Arabic word in speech was almost regarded as a sacrilege and the application of Arabic characters to Hindu languages was almost banned. Such strong injunctions as "*Na pathet Yavanim basham*" (Let no Hindu read a Muslim language), so often found in our medieval literature, indicate clearly how strong was the Hindu sentiment against the planned ruination of their languages and scripts.

### **Conflict Between Hindu & Muslim Scripts**

The results of this linguistic and cultural antagonism between the natives and the aliens was that every **India** language developed into divergent literary trends; the Hindus tenaciously stuck to the Hindu script, indigenous vocabulary and local literary traditions, the Muslims preferred the Arabic to the native system of writing, used abundance of Arabic words (often with a conscious effort) and drew all cultural matter and inspiration from Islamic (i.e. mainly Arabic) sources. In course of time, the two styles lost this pristine purity and each was slightly influenced by the other. The Hindus unwittingly learnt a few Arabic words and the Muslims likewise absorbed a few un-Islamic traits through inadvertence. But the two trends progressed along distinctly

Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

divergent lines. The Islamic missionaries wanted to repeat their old exploits on the Indian soil, the Hindus were determined to prove that Devanagari, Gurumukhi and Sharada were more fit than Pehlavi, Kharoshti and Hieroglyphs, to outlive the struggle for existence.

### **Hindus' Successful Resistance to Arabic**

The experiments of Arabicising Hindu languages yielded different measures of success. The Muslim style of Hindi – Hindi written in a derivative of Arabic script and saturated with Arabic words, which often goes by the name of Urdu – did attain the status of a standard language, though the Hindu style of Hindi also continued to develop side by side. Bengali written in Arabic script could never get recognition as a language, though the protagonists of Arabic script have continued their efforts to this day. The creation of an independent Muslim State of East Bengal has given the frustrated Arabic zealots a new impetus and they may now succeed in effecting the conversion of Bengali, proving thereby that a cultural struggle sometimes yields the desired results after centuries, provided the sponsors have the necessary endurance. Gujarati and Marathi too have Hindu and Muslim styles but Arabic script is now rarely used for them. Muslims of Mysore and Malabar frequently employ Arabic characters for Kanarese and Malayalam languages, respectively, though their accepted scripts are derived from Brahmi. Sindhi language has gone the way of Persian and has lost its original Hindu script. It is now invariably written in Arabic characters. The same is more or less true of Kashmiri, whose original script, Sharada is learnt only by a few Pundits as a religious duty. After a thousand years' strenuous efforts, the Muslims have succeeded in Arabicising only three languages of this land to any considerable extent, viz., Sindhi, which has lost the native style and characters completely; Kashmiri, which too has almost succumbed to Arabic onslaughts; and Hindi, whose Muslim style, Urdu, became at one time a serious rival of the Hindu style but could never wipe out the native script and vocabulary.

No other Hindu language submitted to the demands of Islamic fanaticism.

### **Resistance to Arabic in the Punjab**

When Punjabi language received the impact of Islam, it had just started its existence as an independent language. Its grammatical structure had then been more or less set, the shapes of its characters had been fixed and literary compositions had just begun to be written in it. In keeping with their tradition, the Muslim writers, who chose Punjabi language as their vehicle of expression, employed Arabic characters for the purpose of writing and loaded it with Arabic words. It was at this time that Sikhism appeared as a force on the Indian political arena. The arrogant Muslims never cared to draw subtle

Hindus And the Punjabi State  
And Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi'

distinctions among the “Kafirs”, and whether the Sikhs liked it or not, the Muslims never distinguished between the Sikhs and other Hindus and beat them both with the same cudgel. The Sikh Gurus felt most strongly for the lamentable plight of the native language and the script of the Punjab under the hostile Muslims and took up the work of their preservation with a religious zeal. Sanskrit was, at that time, written by the Punjabis in Medieval Devanagari script (often called “Shastriya” or simply “Shatri”, that is, the language of the Shastras or scriptures), while the local tongue was committed to writing in a rather simplified form thereof. This latter script, which was facing extinction owing to the menace of Arabic, was the real Punjabi script. The Sikh Gurus chose this neglected and forlorn script for writing their religious precepts. It appears highly improbable that the Gurus had invented a new script, similar to the cognate Sindhi and Kashmiri, for writing their “Words” (Shabdās) meant for the masses. Since the Muslims had claimed divine origin for Arabic and made its study a religious duty of their followers, the shrewd Gurus attached the same sanctity to Punjabi language and script and declared their learning and preservation a religious duty of their “disciples” (Sikhs). There was no other way of combating the jeopardy to the indigenous speech and writing and all progressive Punjabis rallied round the Gurus in the defence of their cultural heritage from the Semitic fury. It was under these circumstances that the Punjabi script came to be called ‘Gurumukhi’ – that pertaining to the mouth of the Master. The Muslims continued to develop Punjabi along Islamic lines, and the Sikhs along native lines, all these centuries. No one was in a mood to yield. Arabic script could never enjoy the unquestioned supremacy in the Punjab, as it had enjoyed beyond the Indus. Gurumukhi successfully warded off its attacks, thanks to the penetrating intelligence of the Gurus and the indefatigable zeal of their Sikhs.

### **Valiant Role of Sikhs in Defending Punjabi Script**

The defence of Punjabi language and script, from the menace of Arabic, was a duty of every Punjabi, but the Sikhs of the Gurus displayed exceptional enthusiasm in this direction. Very naturally they took up the cause of native language with missionary zeal as their religious Gurus had enjoined, and became the main champions of anti-Arabic agitation. Other Hindus were more or less indifferent in the matter; most of them kept witnessing this life-and-death struggle between Arabic and Punjabi – between the alien and the native culture – with criminal apathy. Majority of the Punjab Hindus began learning Arabic and Persian and became abject slaves of Islamic languages. Hindi they knew not, Sanskrit they could not learn, and Punjabi they would not. It is through the indefatigable efforts of the Sikhs that Punjab has been able to preserve its language and script to this day and we are in a position proudly to say that

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

we had a system of writing before the Muslims came and taught us this art. If the Sikhs, under the guidance of the Gurus, had not resisted the Muslims' cultural invasion on Punjab, we would have none but the Arabic characters now. The contribution of the Sikhs to the cultural uplift of the Punjab can never be exaggerated. The other Punjabi Hindus, who have made no sacrifice in the defence of their language, can little imagine what Punjabi means to a Sikh. Punjabi script verily symbolizes the Sikh victory in an open competition with the Muslims. The Hindu, priding in his command over the alien rulers' languages, - Arabic, Persian or Urdu, has been a disinterested spectator of Sikhs' cultural struggle. No sane man can congratulate the Hindu upon his indifference in matters of language.

### **A Grievous Mistake of Sikh Rulers**

It is argued the court language during the Sikh rule was Persian and that even the Sikh rulers did not deem it feasible, or possible, to carry on administration of the State through the imperfect Punjabi language and Gurumukhi script. In the first place, the alleged poverty of Punjabi language is a very sad commentary on Punjab Hindus' intellect; and by advertising this fact we can only make ourselves laughing stock of the world. Secondly, if Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not replace Persian by an Indian language, we cannot justify him. The actions of autocratic rulers are motivated by personal whims and considerations of political expediency. However may some people lionize Maharaja Ranjit Singh and glorify his rule, we cannot call it an ideal Sikh regime and the fallacious reasoning, which led him to abandon the idea of making Punjabi the court language in his State, cannot convince any modern man. It was a pity that uplift of Punjabi did not interest the Sikh rulers as much as expansion of their territories did. If Punjabi had been given its rightful place in Statecraft by them, most of our present day problems would not have at all cropped up. In common with other Hindu princes, the Sikhs cared more for personal aggrandizement than for the propagation of their culture and languages.

### **Hindu Languages under the British**

Under the British crown, the court language of the Punjab was Urdu, along with English. The British encouraged Punjabi as well as Hindi, but neither the Sikhs nor other Hindus evinced much anxiety to get rid of Urdu, by taking advantage of the facilities afforded by the English. The language question, to be very frank, never genuinely interested our people. Whenever we raised it in public, it appeared too academic to the money-minded Hindus including Sikhs. And not more than one or two Khalsa, Arya or Sanatana Schools, considered it feasible to abolish Urdu as medium of instruction. Broadly speaking, the spoken language of all Punjabis then was Punjabi,



Hindus And the Punjabi State  
And Punjabi's 'Ghar Wapsi'

script known to the majority of literates was Urdu (Arabic) and language of the rulers, as also their henchmen, was English. Prevalence of Urdu (Arabicised Hindi) in the Punjab was a clear proof of Muslims' cultural domination over us and a disgrace to our national pride. But leaving aside a few incorruptible idealists, the generality of non-Muslims had reconciled themselves to the rule of Urdu and opposition to it, if any, was negligible. Even such eminent Hindus as Raja Narendra Nath and Lala Lajpat Rai, who pretended to be uncompromising champions of Hindu cause, saw no anomaly in their openly patronizing Urdu and Persian and promoting their studies among the Hindus. Confused thinking and inconsistent behaviour have always been the bane of Hindu leaders. And the Sikhs have inherited this vice from the parent stock – the Hindus. During the whole century of British rule in the Punjab, no Sikh leader ever raised any movement worth the name, against the rule of Urdu and Persian. In the thirties of the twentieth century, when Gandhi openly lent his support to Urdu, it appeared that Arabic script had come to stay in the Punjab; Devanagari and Gurumukhi scripts were rarely seen even in temples and gurudwaras.

### **Language Question in the Punjab After the Departure of Urdu**

Then came the holocaust of 1947, after which the East Punjabis found the Muslim, the main supporter of Urdu, suddenly absent from their midst. In the heat of the moment, somebody suddenly banished Urdu from the East Punjab and people came to know of it only when it had disappeared from the scene. Tears were shed over its departure but it was too late. Every secularist – Socialist, Communist and above all, Gandhist – mourned the death of Urdu in touching words, but what could not be cared, had to be endured. What should now be the language of the Punjab? Children had to be taught something in the first primary class; government notifications had to be issued in some language: rural programmes had to be broadcast in some speech. The problem was: which language should step into the shoes of Urdu and which script should be employed for writing it?

### **Irrational Attitude of Punjabi Hindus**

If the minds of the masses had not been vitiated by crafty political demagogues, the people who had all along been speaking Punjabi in their homes, should have unanimously demanded that their spoken tongue, written in Gurumukhi script, should replace Urdu. The plea, that Gurumukhi was not known to majority of them, should not have stood in the way of their granting recognition to it as the provincial script, because its rightful place had been usurped by Arabic. With the sudden disappearance of Urdu, the Punjabis should have seized the earliest opportunity to undo the wrong

## Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

done to Punjabi language and script and to draw out a comprehensive plan to acquaint the children, as well as the adults, with it in the shortest possible time. When Ireland became free, the Irish script was known to hardly five persons out of a hundred, the remaining ninety-five being conversant with English only. But they exhibited not a moment's indecision to make Irish the court language in Ireland. The Punjab Hindu, misguided and misled by selfish politicians, however, adopted a course, which was not only irrational, unfair, ignoble and anti-national, but also injurious to his immediate political interests. Strangely enough, he opposed Punjabi in Gurumukhi characters being made the court language in the Punjab! He overnight fell in love with Hindi in Devanagari script – of which he was as ignorant as for Gurumukhi – and just to oppose the Sikh; he began to clamour of Hindi to be made the only court language in East Punjab!! The money minded Hindu, the secularist Hindu, the Muslimised Hindu, who never seriously revolted against Urdu and Persian in the Punjab, who has not even now learnt one word of his classical language, Sanskrit, and pronounces Hindi in the Arabic accent, has pitted his full force against his own mother-tongue, Punjabi. How true is the saying that the Hindu fights with full vigour only when he has to fight a Hindu! And what are Sikhs if not Hindus in the truest sense of the word? The whole world, and our own country men in other Indian States, are laughing in their sleeves. They hear us speak Punjabi; they enjoy the sight of Punjabis making futile attempts to speak Hindi, and they deride at us when we disown Punjabi! A few mischievous journalists, who have spent a life time in serving Urdu journalism and are shamelessly propagating the same language in the country to this day, have launched a wicked campaign against Punjabi in Gurumukhi script. The persons, whose Aryatva or Hindutva was not despoilt by Urdu, are refusing to study Punjabi, lest they are rendered impure! They daily swallow camels and begin to sneer at a gnat. ■