

## Chapter 2

### **The Untenable Existence of Urdu**

As the problem is historic, its solution lies in history which means the problem will not go away mechanically in one go. The Muslims of India tried to occupy or take ownership of the Indian language Hindi on their own terms. Writing it in Persian script and giving it the name of Urdu was a sort of occupation of Hindi. In spite of the British help, they failed. But by this time they had found an escape route – the Partition of India. So the war between Hindi and Urdu which lasted for about a century ended without the Urdu Party conceding defeat. In a certain way like Kuomintang escaping to Taiwan and continuing to claim China with the Western support, the Urdu Party after defeat on all India basis, escaped to Sindh, Punjab and Bengal and were able to accomplish there - Western hand always behind them - what they could not do in United India? And how, then, could they be called a defeated party? With all tools of a sovereign state in their hands, their local cousins already entrenched in these, for them, new lands, it was a sort of 'Delhi Sultanate' of 1206 all over again.

As far as the Hindi-Urdu war was concerned, the Partition of India brought a cease fire in its wake without any mention of it. It was strange. Hindi Party got India and independence and Urdu party got Pakistan who never aspired independence. If Urdu was the problem for Hindi and later for Bengali and Sindhi, how could it be that it would not be a problem for Punjabi? But problems, for a period, can remain dormant. Unlike Punjab, Urdu was challenged in Bengal and Sindh. Completely defeated in Bengal, it sustained the challenge in Sindh because of the weakness of the Sindhi Party. There is no cease fire but a lull there presently.

But there are differences between Sindhi and Punjabi cases. As you can read in Part II, the British contributed to streamline the issue of Sindhi script in Arabic characters to make Sindhi language functional, but in Punjab they imposed Urdu. The time frame is practically the same. They conquered Sindh in 1843 and Punjab in 1849. By 1947, imagine Punjab had been under Urdu for a century and during the same period, Sindhi was sovereign in Sindh. Further, when Urdu was imposed on Punjab, present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was part of Punjab. It was separated in 1901. And Punjab of that time was the united Punjab. It included present Indian Punjab, Pakistani Punjab and the Indian States of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. It means, like Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs too lived under Urdu's regime in Punjab for a century.

Presently for Urdu, all is quiet on all fronts. But still there are apprehensions in Urdu Camp! Do they know they had committed theft? Do they know they had sold to us Hindi erasing name of Hindi from the package and writing Urdu instead?

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When we opened the box, it was Hindi inside. Do they know they had cheated us saying that Urdu was the language of the Muslims?

If on the one hand the 'existence of Urdu' is untenable but on the other all seems quite on all fronts of Urdu presently, it can be explained as that as yet the patient is not bed-ridden. The apparently long lease of life of Urdu is not only due to Pakistan. The non-clarity of the issue in India is also one of the reasons and contributing factor. There is the factor of inertia of culture and habit as well. It takes time. And then, in India, there is the politics of Urdu which generates blurred images of Urdu for the Indian Muslims. The vicious circle has to be broken.

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## Non-Clarity about Urdu in India

Apparently it seems strange to say that there is non-clarity about Urdu in India. But this is the stark reality. Here, I mention two clear examples of the non-clarity about Urdu in India: Indian Constitution and 'The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language'.

### Indian Constitution

For example PART XVII of the Indian Constitution deals with Official Language which has the following four chapters: Chapter 1. Language of the Union, Chapter 2. Regional Languages, Chapter 3. Language of the Supreme Court, High Courts, etc. Chapter 4. Special Directives.

This Part contains articles 343 to 351. Further Eighth Schedule of the Constitution relates to Articles 344(1) and 351. And Article 351 reads: 'It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.'

And the 22 Eighth Schedule languages are: 1. Assamese. 2. Bengali. 3. Bodo. 4. Dogri. 5. Gujarati. 6. Hindi. 7. Kannada. 8. Kashmiri. 9. Konkani. 10. Maithili. 11. Malayalam. 12. Manipuri. 13. Marathi. 14. Nepali. 15. Oriya. 16. Punjabi. 17. Sanskrit. 18. Santhali. 19. Sindhi. 20. Tamil. 21. Telugu. 22. Urdu.

Those who are well-versed in linguistic matters can appreciate the wisdom and the depth of understanding of the Constitution makers. For example in Article 351

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(given above) they have sought the enrichment of Hindi from ‘Hindustani’ and ‘the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule’. But the primary place has been given to Sanskrit. Have you noticed that Hindi is not shying away from Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi? There will be more clarity of the matter when the reader goes through the Chapter on Hindustani.

But the wisdom and the depth of understanding of the Constitution makers of India did not or could not remove the long-standing ambiguity of Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani. Or perhaps, it was not any ambiguity for them. Somebody’s help is needed here to throw light on the issue. But, having studied the historical process with a commitment to the concerned people anywhere, I believe that Urdu and Hindustani, whatever were believed to be, were nothing else but Hindi. To state this explicitly by Independent India was the need of the hour. If distortions and ambiguities created by Muslim rule and British colonialism from the standpoint of the peoples of India were to continue and that too without stating any inevitable difficulty, it was something like being less respectful to the spirit of freedom of India and those who kept this spirit alive for centuries. This contemplation really saddens me.

Further it was not only for the past, keeping ambiguity intact could not have been good for anybody in the future. So much so that apparently unbelievable, it was more harmful for the Muslims of India. Giving Urdu the status of a language at par with other languages of India was to give justification for future politicization of the issue. Presenting Urdu as a victim of the majority to the already bewildered Muslims would have been handy for the demagogues. Ultimately, removal of ambiguity and standing firmly there would have been most beneficial for the Indian Muslims.

And what about Pakistan Constitution? It has one Article: 251. National language. (1) The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day. (2) Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu. (3) Without prejudice to the status of the National language, a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a Provincial language in addition to the National language.

That is all. Dealing mechanically and saying “The National language of Pakistan is Urdu” as if Urdu is some physical object. This depicts the collective mind of the Urdu Party in Pakistan – the successor of the Urdu Party in pre-1947 India. The National language of a country has to be the language of the people, if not of all at least of the vast majority. The case of Hindi and India is the nearest example for us. And such a language is the embodiment and expression of the long historical experience and wisdom, of pain and moments of happiness, of deepest emotions and thoughts and aspirations of a people. What was Urdu for Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Pakhtuns and Baloch people? But historical circumstances favouring

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them, Urdu was the tool in the hands of the Urdu Party to keep themselves in a dominating position over other peoples of Pakistan. But this could have been only a transitory phenomenon. And after the experience in Bengal, nothing was learnt. Obviously the Urdu party were never builders. Urdu being itself a fake of Hindi, they were comfortable in imposing it on Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans and Balochis. And nothing is explained about Urdu which they claimed to be a language. It is obvious nothing could have been mentioned. There was nothing which belonged to it which could have been mentioned. Strange to say that even the languages of Pakistan do not exist in the Constitution of Pakistan. If Hindi looks forward to Punjabi and Sindhi for its enrichment, Pakistan's 'National Language' does not need Punjabi or Sindhi or Pashto or Baluchi for its development! In fact this was an insult for the real languages and peoples of Pakistan. And behind this lied the false ideology of the Urdu Party, rote-learned without ever thinking and checking by the so-called elected representatives of the peoples of Pakistan or army dictators and their teams who ruled Pakistan so far. All this has become untenable. We must now turn a new page of history.

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### **The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language**

As if mistakes made and inserted in the Constitution of India regarding Urdu were not enough (logically there must have been other mistakes also during all these years which I do not know), the Government of India set up '[The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language](#)' on April 1, 1996. On its website (<http://www.urducouncil.nic.in/>), under the title 'A Historical Perspective of Urdu', the Council states:

'Urdu is a major language of South Asia, and it has been gaining in popularity since the independence of the Indian sub-continent. It is one of the eighteen national languages of the Union of India as well as the declared national language of Pakistan. Although influenced by Arabic and Persian, but quite unlike Arabic and Persian, Urdu is an Indo-Aryan, language akin to Hindi, which originated and developed in the Indian sub-continent. Both Urdu and Hindi belong to the new Indo-Aryan sharing the same Indic base. At the phonological and grammatical level, they are so close that they appear to be one language, but at the lexical level they have borrowed so extensively from different sources (Urdu from Arabic and Persian, and Hindi from Sanskrit) that in actual practice and usage each has developed into an independent language. This distinction is most marked at the orthographical level, where Hindi uses Devanagari, and Urdu uses the Arabo-Persian script indigenously modified to suit the requirements of an Indo-Aryan speech. According to a general estimate, Urdu and Hindi taken together form the third largest speech community in the world today. ...

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‘Nonetheless, major Urdu writers kept referring to their speech as Hindi, or Hindavi till as late as the beginning of the 19th century:

*najane log kehte hain  
kis ko suroor-e-qalb  
aya nahin ye lafz to  
Hindi zaban ke beech*  
- Mir Taqi Mir (d. 1810)

*Mushafi farsi ko taq pe rakh  
Ab hai ashaar-e-Hindavi ka rivaj*  
- Mushafi (d.1824)

‘The divide between Urdu and Hindi occurred under the colonial impact with the growing cultural consciousness as part of the processes of political modernization. A beginning, in fact, was affected at the Fort William College, Calcutta (established 1800), under John Gilchrist (1789-1841). There is enough evidence to show that the British rulers tied down the question of the varieties of 'Hindavi', first to the cultural heritage and social hierarchy, and later to religion and political power play. Thus, it was at the Fort William College that the two distinct trends in literary prose writing came to the fore. On the one hand, we had Mir Amman's Bagh-o-Bahar (1800-1802) and, Hyder Bakhsh Hyderi's Aaraish-e-Mehfil (1802-1804) as Urdu prose, and, on the other, Lallu Lal's Premsagar and Sadal Mishra's Nasiketopakhyan as Hindi prose.’ [1]

[1] [http://www.urducouncil.nic.in/council/aHistorical\\_Perspective\\_Urdu.html](http://www.urducouncil.nic.in/council/aHistorical_Perspective_Urdu.html)

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It is really interesting and ironic but a reality of human behaviour. Formation of specific human perceptions, whatever, takes time. Once formed, collectively, they become along with other strands a part of the culture of the society which consequently determines its behaviour. Seeing through the eyes of the past - experience - a society looks at others. Obviously, it cannot be dissimilar for individuals. Voices of dissent, right or wrong, are always there, but during a given era or at a specific given time, what matters is what dominates.

By accepting ‘Urdu’ as a language, it is not possible to understand the linguistic reality of pre-1947 India. And I believe, it was precisely for that that the reality was not understood then. And therefore, it continues to be not understood to this day. And if you add the British product ‘Hindustani’ which they too called a language like Muslims called Urdu a language, the situation becomes even more

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complicated and confused. With this state of affairs, how could at the Government of India level been positively said and decided accordingly that Urdu was not a separate language from Hindi? And that it was in fact Hindi written in Persian script. And without this authoritative decision Muslims continue to be misled wasting their energies. And many continue to discuss and analyse from this and that angle, writing and publishing books and articles. Naturally, what has outlived should be allowed to go by giving it its due place in history thus ending the confusion spanning, we can say, more than two centuries.

If we are on the right track in this manifesto regarding these issues, 'The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language' cancels itself for being tasked for promotion of Urdu language. There is no work anywhere in the world, I believe, which can promote Urdu. A thing which needs preservation cannot be promoted and Urdu at the best needs preservation not promotion.

When basic perceptions are wrong what comes out of them cannot be anything but wrong. Look at this above-mentioned statement of the Council: "Urdu ... has been gaining in popularity since the independence of the Indian sub-continent." What a scholarship! A destitute is being told that he is a rich man! This should be a 'breaking news' for the Indian Muslims! The argument is: "It is one of the eighteen national languages of the Union of India as well as the declared national language of Pakistan." First, it should be corrected that the number is not eighteen but now twenty two. And being the 'declared national language of Pakistan' is a transitory phenomenon as in the case of Bangladesh.

And then: "At the phonological and grammatical level, they are so close that they appear to be one language, ...". As it becomes difficult to deny an obvious reality, but then they keep an escape route open. Therefore this "they appear to be one language." And what other level except phonological and grammatical should have determined that Urdu is Hindi? Should Persian script have determined its separateness? And borrowing from different sources as has been argued elsewhere should not have been seen as "to have two languages, but to have a language capable of being enriched from two different sources." As far as the distinction at the orthographical level is concerned, did Persian remain Persian when its script was changed after Muslim conquest? And what about Turkish language? And did the British not use to write what they called Hindustani (Devanagari and Persian scripts) in Roman script? Is Punjabi not being written in Gurmukhi and Persian scripts? And what is happening today on cell phones with the unimaginable number of SMS messages being exchanged?

The way out from all this was and is to accept Urdu within the fold of Hindi and contribute from its legacy to the mainstream, I should say, Hindi commonwealth. Then there is lot of work for Urdu to be done.

### **Pessimism and Confusion in the Urdu Camp**

#### **Urdu in India**

At what they called the 'Third session of the Second International Urdu Conference' on Sunday 13-10-2013 at Lahore, there is no understanding of history and therefore no vision for the future. I believe what had happened is beyond the capabilities of these 'scholars'. It is a barren scene: 'The theme for the session was Urdu in India. The panellists included Dr Shamim Hanafi, Zubair Rizvi from India, Asghar Nadeem Syed and Dr Nayyer. Intizar Hussain presided over the session. Dr Nayyer said the Indian government had deliberately lowered the status of Urdu after partition. Asghar Nadeem Syed said, "The future of Urdu in India is not that gloomy." Dr Rizvi, a script writer and researcher from India, said "Urdu has its own status that cannot be diminished by any other language." Dr Hanafi said, "The state of Urdu in India is not deplorable. However, whenever I think of Urdu I think of Pakistan. ... Muslims were responsible for the demise of Urdu in India and they are the ones who must fix it now, the language needs all the help it can get to regain its vigour." Inizar Hussain concluded by seconding Hanafi's statements and said, "All that had to be said has been said. Whatever I can add to it would not be of much value." [2] [2] [The Express Tribune, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013.]

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#### **Urdu in India and a man with a mission**

It is about Arif Iqbal of Old Delhi and his Urdu Book Review. Yoginder Sikand (14 June 2007) writes:

'A narrow lane leads out from a maze of crowded, winding streets in the heart of Old Delhi's Jama Masjid area. Ancient crumbling havelis line the lane, which, probably dating back to Mughal times, is lined on either side with open drains laden with garbage. Cycle rickshaws, cattle and pedestrians jostle with each other amidst the interminable din of bells clanking, customers and shopkeepers loudly haggling and craftsmen in dim-lit hovels hammering away at tin sheets. At a nondescript building at one end of the lane a flight of broken stairs leads down to a dingy basement. It is there-housed in two diminutive rooms - that Urdu Book Review, India's only Urdu journal devoted solely to book reviews, has its premises - a telling comment on the sad state to which Urdu has been reduced in the land of its birth. Muhammad Arif Iqbal, the amiable middle-aged editor of the magazine, is a man with a mission. "Urdu has been grossly neglected, by the state and by Urdu-speakers, and Urdu Book Review represents a modest effort to revive and promote the language," he says. ... "Since the number of Urdu readers in India is

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rapidly falling, Urdu publishers that used to publish two or three thousand copies of a book have now cut down to around five hundred, and even that takes some two years to sell. That is why some of them are now shifting to publishing in Hindi and English instead," he says. ... "Urdu faces a grim future in India," Iqbal tells me as we wind up our conversation, "but there are spaces and opportunities that we need to make us of." "Ultimately," he says, "it is up to lovers of Urdu to save, protect and promote the language." [3]

[3] [<http://akhbarurdu.com/indianmuslims/index.html>]

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It is understandable why, when Dr. Shamim Hanafi thinks of Urdu he thinks of Pakistan. But it seems there is no way that he can be made to understand that he should stop thinking of Pakistan too.

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### National language: Dying Urdu

The first pillar of strength for every great nation is its identity. And a dominant aspect of that identity is the nation's language. Pakistan's national language is Urdu, yet year after year one witnesses a gradual incline in the number of elite youth whose command over Urdu seems to be on a downward trend. Whether it is reading, writing, speaking or understanding; all four components of the language seem to be disintegrating in the lives of the young Pakistanis who are to lead the nation tomorrow.

There are many factors contributing to this decline; however the leading factor is seen to be the lack of importance given to Urdu by a majority of today's parents whose children are studying in elite private schools. It is becoming a common misconception that not much is to be gained in the future by studying Urdu. In recent times, English is becoming the symbol of the upper class elite and powerful and an inaccurate scale to judge one's literacy.

According to Shama Baqar, an Urdu teacher for primary classes for more than 28 years, "Most parents just don't think there is any need to do well in Urdu. So much so, that some parents will be quite alright with their child being unable to read the headline of an Urdu newspaper." She feels that the first place of



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learning for children is their home and if they don't get any encouragement to study Urdu there, then it is but natural that they will not bother with it either. [4]

[4] FROM INPAPERMAGZINE DAWN 2-9-2014:

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The writer of the above piece and the teacher mentioned obviously belong to the Urdu Party. They are relenting the decline of Urdu which is, as the things stand today, not only a language but the National Language. Their and many others' interpretations can best be the symptoms of the disease but they are culturally incapable of believing that Urdu is a 'diseased language' which I should immediately underline is not a language. The disease of Urdu is its fakeness. Its fakeness means it has been occupying the place of others. Logically, occupying the place of others cannot continue indefinitely. And as it never has been challenged on that ground i.e. of not being a language, any symptom of its disease cannot be diagnosed by anybody. If not challenged on the real ground does not mean that with the passage of time its fakeness had not affected its shine. And that is what has happened. History is doing its job and the end is coming.

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### **Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto Punjabi, national languages**

#### **Sindh Assembly's Resolution**

Sindh Assembly passes a unanimous resolution: 'Karachi: The Sindh Assembly on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution recommending that the Sindh government approach the federal government to declare Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Pashto national languages of Pakistan. Moving the resolution, Pakistan Muslim League – Functional (PML-F) assembly member Mahtab Akbar Rashdi said ... that Pakistan's neighbouring country India has given 22 languages the status of national languages. "The government of India has declared even Sindhi a national language, but we are deliberately ignoring it," Rashdi said. Sindh Assembly also adopted a motion to ensure that the Sindhi language must be taught in all private and public schools, and colleges in the province.' [5]

[5] [By Hafeez Tunio, The Express Tribune, February 25, 2014]

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#### **Not Acceptable to Urdu Party**

Immediately after the Sindh Assembly's resolution, the Urdu Party convened an 'International Urdu Conference' at Bahawalpur and rejected Pakistan's real

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languages which they like to call “regional languages” putting themselves in the center. Rauf Parekh of Dawn reported:

Last week the IUB (Islamia University Bahawalpur) added another feather to its cap by holding a three-day International Urdu conference on its campuses. The recently launched move to declare other Pakistani languages (formerly called ‘regional languages’) the “national languages” of Pakistan surfaced on the very first day of the conference. It echoed in the concluding session, too. But the general feeling was that since Urdu is the lingua franca of the country and it binds all the regions of the country together, the move would harm national unity and Urdu must remain the sole national language.

The theme of the three-day conference ... was Urdu in the 21st century. In the opening session, Prof Dr Zafar Iqbal, vice chancellor of the Federal Urdu University, expressed his resentment over the attempts to declare other Pakistani languages — Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi and Pashto — the national languages of Pakistan alongside Urdu. He said the move was aimed at relegating Urdu to a lesser status but it would seriously damage the national unity.

Intizar Hussain in his speech lamented that though after the creation of Pakistan we declared Urdu as our national language, we simply “forgot it”. He said Urdu was the lingua franca of the subcontinent before the creation of Pakistan. Zubair Rizvi, an Indian poet and intellectual, said Urdu was the common and shared asset of both India and Pakistan.

Reza Ali Abedi, describing how widely Urdu was understood in the subcontinent, in his usual eloquent style narrated how he travelled to the utmost corner of the subcontinent across Kashmir, along the border of Tibet. He said when he went to local people there and asked them in Urdu how they were, they said in perfect Urdu “aap ki dua hai”.

While the delegates of the conference were generally very optimistic about Urdu in the 21st century and beyond, they expressed some apprehensions also and stressed that still a lot was to be done for Urdu. [6]

[6] Dawn Report 31-3-2014

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### **Farce of ‘International Urdu Conferences’ in Pakistan**

How long the fakeness of Urdu ‘language’ could have sustained itself? Rauf Parekh the writer of the above referred report, it seems, became fed up with the farce of ‘International Urdu Conferences’ in Pakistan. He wrote:

WANT to become a scholar of Urdu overnight? Want to be invited to the ‘international’ conferences on Urdu language and literature to present a ‘research paper’? Want to show off on your Facebook page that you have been to so many places and met so many ‘scholars’? A selfie with the chief guest ... an added bonus. So how do you do it? Easy! Just arrange for the airfare and lo and behold! You are a scholar, an international delegate to an international conference on Urdu. Becoming a research scholar and international delegate has never been so easy. You must thank the organisers of such events as international Urdu conferences and, in some cases, the Higher Education Commission for giving you this chance of a lifetime. ... This writer has come across many ‘foreign scholars’ during some ‘international’ Urdu conferences. And, believe me, they were neither of the two. Foreign they were not, since they had migrated to, say, Middle East or Europe or US some 20 years ago. And scholars? Ha ha! ... And if they can become ‘international delegates’ by just paying for their air tickets, why can’t you? Most of these ‘international delegates’ I met were Pakistanis living abroad. ... The housewife’s case is the most brilliant example ... She ... was “very much interested in Urdu literature and was anyway coming to Pakistan. So I thought why not avail of the chance to see what a conference really is”. ... It is useless to describe what she read out at the conference in the name of a research paper. ... Oh boy, you can go to so many international conferences, even the one taking place on the North Pole, if you have the right connections and just “behave properly” with these “highly respectable foreign delegates” (translation: praise them and pamper them). Take the example of a ‘scholar’ living in the UK, who can even finance your ticket to London if you just praise him enough or get an “MPhil (Urdu)” dissertation written on him. [7] [7] Dawn 26-10-2015 ■