The Learning of Punjabi by Punjabi Muslims: A Historical Account

Dr. Tariq Rahman

Punjabi language has never been used in the official domains of power or taught at a high level, or in its own right, before the coming of the British. However, there is evidence that at the primary level, children were taught some books in Punjabi. The evidence about Punjabi being taught at some level comes from Heer Ranjha, the famous tale of two lovers in verse narrated by Waris Shah among others. The lines from Heer are as follows:

Parhan fazil dars durvesh mufti khoob kadh alhan parkaria neen
Taleel, Meezan te Sarf Bahai, Sarf-e meer bhi yad pukaria neen
Qazi, Qutab te kanz, Anwa Baran, Mas‘oodian jald savaria neen.

Iknavam de Dars harkaran parhde nam-e Haq a te Khaliq Barian neen
Gulistan, Bostan nal Bahar Danish, Tooti nama te Raziq Barian neen
Minsha‘at Nisab te Abul Fazlan, shahnamion, Wahid Barian neen.

Although these books were meant to teach Persian or the rudiments of Islam, they used Punjabi as the language of explanation. This tradition had been established by Abu Nasr Farahi when he wrote his Nisab-ul Sabiyan in 617 A.H in Persian to teach Arabic to Afghan children. A number of such nisab, including one by Amir Khusro, were written up to the tenth century. Hindi nisab came to be written ‘probably from 10th

* Professor, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i Azam University, Islamabad.
century Hijri (15th century). Hakeem Yusufi, the author of Insha'-i Yusufi, has given Hindi equivalents for parts of the human anatomy. The famous Khaliq Bari is part of this tradition but, according to Sheerani, it was written by Ziauddin Khusro, in 1621-22. Khaliq Bari is in the mixed languages of Hindi, Persian and Arabic. It was meant to teach Persian to the children of north India. As such, one wonders whether books like the Wahid Bari could not have been placed among Punjabi books by Shafi and Sabir? This complication, however, is due to the existence of several books of the same title so that we can never be sure exactly which book Waris Shah had in mind. However, the fact that Persian was taught through both Punjabi and old Urdu (Hindi) to Punjabi children, cannot be denied.

Other older books of Punjabi, out of which the Pakki Roti is part of the M.A. course in Pakistan were meant to explain the rudiments of Islam to students in their mother tongue. It is in the form of questions and answers in the accepted Sunni teaching on the subject avoiding complications and controversial matters. The answers were probably acceptable to most Punjabi Muslims. A number of manuscripts are available in the British Library. Among the 34 manuscripts, catalogued by Christopher Shacke, eleven are authored by Muhammad Yar. These, as well as other works, are all religious.

Another major writer was Mawlawi Abdullah Abidi (d. 1664). His language too has Mutilani (now called Sirakiti) form. The importance of Abdullah for students is thus described by Shacke:

The comprehensive character of Abdi's [sic] writings has, however, ensured them a uniquely important and influential position as manuals of instruction; and they have been frequently published, usually in collections of twelve treatises entitled Baran Anwa.

Let us now describe the works of a religious kind which were read both by students and other Punjabi Muslims. The following

---


manuscripts are being mentioned very briefly by way of illustrating this genre of Punjabi writing.

**Baran Anwa**, by Abdullah Abidi Lahori. This is a handwritten manuscript in *nast'aliq* (i.e., the script in which Persian and Urdu are written now) in Punjabi verse. It begins, as usual, with *hamd* and *na'at* and goes on to describe Islamic rituals; ablution, prayer, fasting, giving alms and so on. It also discusses the rituals and regulations concerning purity with special reference to women. Thus there are long sections on pregnancy, menstruation and divorce. The second part is full of historical anecdotes with reference to authorities like Maqoodi. It is a voluminous book and is definitely the one mentioned in *Heer Ranjah* by Waris Shah.

**Fiqh-i Asghar** by Faqir Habib Darzi bin Tauyab from Gujrat. This handwritten manuscript in *naskh* explains Islamic rituals and other matters pertaining to faith in Punjabi verse. The sub-titles are in Persian.

**Muqaddimat-ul Anwar** by Abdul Faqir. Another handwritten manuscript in *naskh* that contains information on Islamic injunctions about marriage, inheritance, and sartorial propriety. They are explained in Punjabi verse while the sub-titles are in Persian. The point of view is very stringent and puritanical. Women, for instance, are forbidden even to use the *dandasa* (a bark of a tree which cleans the teeth and makes the lips red).

**Zibah Nama**: It is a handwritten manuscript in *naskh* probably written during King Muhammad Shah's reign (1719-48) and copied in 1860-61. It explains Islamic injunctions pertaining to the sacrifice of animals, hunting and lays down rules as to which meats are *kosher* and which are not.

**Anwa-i Faqir** too, is a handwritten manuscript in *naskh* probably by Faqir Habib. The sub-headings are in Persian and it has been copied by someone called Karmudden from Jhelum. The date on it is Ziqʻad 1277 A.H (May–June 1861). This too is on faith and the tone is puritanical and reformist.

**Intikhab-ul Kutub: Punjabi Nazm**, probably authored by Kamal-ud Din. The manuscript was copied by Nur Ahmed of Kolia in 1261 A.H (21 January 1806 - 10 January 1807). It too is handwritten in Punjabi *naskh* and the sub-headings are in Persian.
It presents Islamic teachings in verse on bathing, funeral prayers, burial, congregational prayers, marriage, sacrifice of animals and as to which meat is Kosher.

**Mitthi Roti: Punjabi** by Qadir Baksh. This is a printed copy in Punjabi *nast‘aliq* dated 1883. It too describes Islamic injunctions about all aspects of life including coitus. There are many references to Islamic works which suggest that it might have been intended for the use of learned people.

**Nijat al-Mo‘minin**, a religious treatise written in 1086 A.H., (1675) by Mawlana Abd al-Karim (1657-1707) of Jhang district.

**Kissa Kumad**, written by Ashraf in *nast‘aliq*, is an allegorical poem on the sugarcane that describes itself as being cut and ground.

**Kissa Umar Khattab**, written by Hafiz Muizuddin of Takht Hazara in 1176 A.H. (1762-63), is an account in verse of the war of Caliph ‘Umar with the infidel king Tal.

**Raushan Dil** is written by Fard Faqir of Gujarat. Christopher Shackle calls it ‘one of the best-known of all the many basic treatises on Islam to have been composed in Punjabi verse’.5

**Raddulmubtad‘in** is an anonymous treatise in Punjabi verse against disbelief, polytheism and heresy written in 1788 A.H. (1814).

**Anwa Barak Allah** by Hafiz Barak Allah (d. 1871). It is a book in Punjabi verse on the Sunni law of the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. It was probably written in 1254 A.H. (1838) and printed several times later.6

Besides the religious works mentioned above, there are the classical romantic tales of famous lovers (Yusuf-Zulaykha, Heer-Ranjha, Laila-Majnun and many others). A somewhat unusual story is about the King Akbar who wants to test the chastity of the Begum of Hyderabad. The manuscript, in Punjabi verse, is written in the *nast‘aliq* script but all other details are lost. Another story

---

5. *Ibid.*, 46
uses characters from a tale which must have originated before Islam.

_Qissa Raja Kam Roop wa Rani Luttan_ by Mawlavi Ahmed Yar. This is a handwritten manuscript in _nast’aliq_ in Punjabi verse. The sub-headings are in Persian. It is like other romantic love legends with a supernatural, pre-modern setting. The author starts with a supplication to Skelkh Abdul Qadir Jilani.

Apart from the above manuscripts personally inspected by the author, there are many other such manuscripts mentioned by different people scattered in South Asia and other parts of the world. A number of printed books, some of them based on above mentioned manuscripts, are also in circulation. These are called ‘chapbooks’ by Hanaway and Nasir who have listed them in their very useful bibliography of works of this kind available in Pakistani cities. These books appear to fall into two major categories: those which are meant to make Muslims conscious of or knowledgeable about the rudiments of their faith and those which are about romantic love. Those in the first category have probably been written by _mawlavis_ because they present a very strict and highly puritanical view of the _shariyyah_.

In short, although activists of the Punjabi movement make much of the teaching of Punjabi, they ignore the fact that it was not taught for itself in pre-British times. Moreover, although some of them refer to Hafiz Mahmood Sheerani’s article mentioned earlier, they generally fail to mention the fact that Sheerani was trying to prove that Urdu, and not only Punjabi, were taught in the Punjab at this period. Sheerani mentions not only the Khaliq Bari but also the Zauq ul Sabyan written in circa 1207 A.H. (1792-93) by Hafiz Ahsan Allah of Lahore. The language of this book is the same Urdu (or Hindvi) which is used in the Khaliq Bari. Again, like the Khaliq Bari, it too was meant to acquaint students with the vocabulary of Persian through Urdu. According to its author, who was a teacher, the Punjabi boys for whom it was intended

---


understood it without any difficulty which, says Sheerani, suggests that Urdu was not unfamiliar for Punjabis.

If the students did understand Urdu it would not be surprising. Punjabi and Urdu share many core vocabulary items; the teaching of Persian through books like the Khaliq Bari must have familiarised Punjabi students with Urdu words and even before the British period there was communication between Punjab and north India where Urdu literature was coming into its own. In short, the situation in the Punjab on the eve of the British arrival was that Persian was the court language of the Sikhs. It was taught through Punjabi and Urdu at the primary level but those languages were facilitators at best and were not valued in their own right.

**Punjabi on the eve of British Rule**

When the British arrived the schools in the Punjab could be divided, following Leitner, into maktabas, madaris, pathshalas, Gurmukhi and Mahajani schools. The maktab was a Persian school while the madrassah was an Arabic one. The pathshalas were Sanskrit schools while the Gurmukhi schools taught Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script. In the Mahajani schools the Landi or Sarifi script was taught to commercial people.9

The Sikhs considered it a religious duty to learn Gurmukhi enough to be able to read the Sikh holy books. Those following an advanced course studied, among other things, Gurmukhi grammar and prosody.10 The child began his studies at the age of six. He, or she, then proceeded to learn the Gurmukhi alphabet of which Guru Angat himself wrote a primer. The primer, being written by such an eminent spiritual leader, was in itself religious. It was, however, the means to an even more religious end — to enable the child to read the Adi Granth, a sacred book of the Sikhs. After this other works, such as the Hanuman Natak, a Punjabi adaptation of a Hindi drama, were taught. Other subjects, such as elementary medicine and rhetoric, were also taught to Sikh children in Gurmukhi. According to Leitner, there were many people who knew Gurmukhi when he was collecting information for his report.

---

(1880s). Urdu, however, had been brought in and was being established slowly by the government.\footnote{Ibid., 35-7.}

Some educational reports, such as that of 1857, tells us that students were first taught to read books in Persian without knowing their meaning. Later, they would 'translate them literally word by word, into the vernacular, but there was no attempt at explanation'.\footnote{Ibid., 60.} This 'vernacular' was Punjabi which was not taught but was used, as we have seen, as a medium of instruction at least at the lower level before the British conquest. This practice continued even after the conquest and Leitner mentions that in 'most Koran schools' some 'elementary religious books in Urdu, Persian or Punjabi are taught'.\footnote{Ibid., 68.} The Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepur also reported that books on the rituals of Islam, which have been mentioned earlier, were taught in some of the Persian Qur'an schools.\footnote{P. Edn., Report on Popular Education in the Punjab and its Dependencies for the Year 1882-1883, by Lt. Col. W.R.M. Holroyd, Director Public Instruction, Punjab (Lahore: Central Jail Press, 1883).} However, none of these informants has specified which, out of the books listed, were in Punjabi.

Female education is generally said to have always been neglected among Muslims but, according to Leitner, 'Among Muhammadans nearly all girls were taught the Koran; nor could a Sikh woman claim the title and privileges of a "learner" unless she was able to read the Granth.'\footnote{Leitner, 98.} He also gives a Punjabi song which the women had made (loc.cit). Girls were also taught 'the Koran together with little boys, and Urdu or Perso-Punjabi religious books, stories of Prophets, etc. The Sikh girls read the Granth and other books in Gurmukhi.'\footnote{Ibid., 107.} For the Sikhs even Nazeer Ahmad's \textit{Miratul Urus} had been translated into Gurmukhi. Leitner suggests that there had been a decline in female teaching since the British conquest because 'formerly the mother could teach the child
Punjabi. Now, wherever the child learns Urdu, the teaching power of the mother is lost. 17

Some British officers, besides the enthusiastic Leitner, have suggested that first Punjabi should be taught to children and other languages only after that. 18 Leitner, of course, defended this proposition with much fervour because the thesis he argues in his report is that, because of British rule the true education of the Punjabi was crippled, checked, and is nearly destroyed....(and) our system stands convicted of worse than official failure. 19

The removal of Persian from its position of honour and the introduction of Urdu, argues Leitner, are language-teaching policies which have alienated Punjabis both from their traditional high culture as well as the prevalent popular culture. Among other things Leitner provides a brief history of the traditional schools in the Punjab.

Besides ordinary Mosque or Qur'an schools, there were some well-known schools both of Sikhs and Muslims. For instance Mian Sahib Qadri's school at Batala; Mawlavi Sheikh Ahmed's school at Sialkot; Mian Faiz's school at Gujranwala, famous for Persian; Bara Mian's school at Lahore; Khwaja Suleman's school at Dera Ghazi Khan; Mian Abdul Hakim's school at Gujranwala. All these schools were advertised as great centres of Persian and Arabic studies, 20 but Punjabi books like Pakki Roti might also have been taught there.

**Punjabi and the British Conquest**

Immediately after the British annexation of the Punjab, court circulars and notices started to be publish in Punjabi. The Christian missionaries also started distributing the Bible in Punjabi. All this shows that Punjabi, the language of 17,000,000 people could not be ignored. The state functionaries were made to realise the importance of the Punjabi language in a note that stated:

Punjabi is of special importance as being the language of our Sikh soldiers. It is of the greatest importance that the officers in Sikh

17. Ibid., 108.
18. Ibid., 110-112.
19. Ibid., 1.
20. Ibid.
regiments should be able to converse freely in Panjabi. Too many of them employ Hindustani. There is a great deal of tea grown in the Northern Panjab. The European [sic] employed there must be able to speak Panjabi.²¹

However, the official vernacular adopted by the British in the Punjab was Urdu, reasons for which have been given earlier. However, as noted earlier, not all the British officers agreed with this neglect of Punjabi. J. Wilson, Deputy commissioner of Shahpur (in 1894) and Robert Cust (in a letter of 2 June 1862), among others, advocated the cause of Punjabi but to no avail.²² The officers who refused to accept the above point of view were not only in a majority but were also implacable in their prejudice against Punjabi. During this period both Muslims and Hindus developed consciousness about their identity. Religion, language, script, vocabulary and literary tradition were all seen as signs of their identity. Especially relevant for our purposes is the way Hindi and Hindu identity converged in a process mentioned at various places in this book and very competently described by Christopher King. Simultaneously, Urdu too became a part and symbol of the Indian Muslim identity. Thus the Punjabi Muslims began to identify with Urdu rather than Punjabi during the Hindi-Urdu controversy, which began in the 1860s and went on till the partition of India in 1947.

Sikh and Hindu pressure that Punjabi should be taught in the Punjab kept on increasing. In 1867, for instance, Jumna Dass, a tutor to some Sardars (chiefs) suggested that the teaching of Gurmukhi, a sacred language, should be institutionalised by the British at Amballa.²³ Later Hukm Singh, Pandit Rikhi Kesh and Bhai Chiranjeet Singh, through a memorandum, tried to persuade the Punjab University Senate to introduce Punjabi as a language of examinations. They argued that books on grammar, composition and poetry existed in Punjabi and that Sikhs, Khattris and Hindus

---

²² For details, see, Tariq Rahman, Language and Politics in Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 194-96.
would welcome the introduction of their mother tongue at the school level. It is significant that Punjabi Muslims were not mentioned, perhaps because they had begun to identify with Urdu. Reminiscent of later debates about the teaching of Punjabi in Pakistan, they said that they only wanted Punjabi to be ‘taught up to the middle school examination in government schools, like other languages. It is, however, by no means contemplated that Urdu should be supplanted by the Punjabi in the province’. Similar reasons were advanced by Sardar Attar Singh for the teaching of Punjabi. But the Sardar added a political reason to persuade the British to teach it. He wrote:

The Sikhs who form the most important class of the inhabitants, after whom the province is called (he land of Sikhs, and not Hindus or Muhammadans), and who are the most faithful subjects, have the Gurmukhi characters and Punjabi language for their religious and worldly affairs. To reject their language, therefore, would be to dishearten those people.25

At that time Punjabi was taught in the Normal Female School at Lahore. The University Senate that debated proposal XI – about allowing Punjabi to be a subject of examinations – composed mostly of British officers like General Maclagan, Major Holroyd and Perkins opposed Punjabi while Dr. Leitner, Brandreth, Pandit Manphul and Sodi Hukum Singh supported it. Hukm Singh even asserted that the ‘books usually taught in government schools exist in the Punjabi language’ while Brandreth pointed out that ‘there were many well known and popular books in Punjabi before the English came’. However, the opponents considered it below the dignity of a university to teach what they called a ‘rustic’ tongue. Moreover, they felt that if Punjabi was allowed the flood gates of languages would burst open and Balochi, Pashto, Jatki etc., would all clamour for admission. The debate, therefore, ended in a defeat for the pro-Punjabi lobby.26

Although the Muslims in general showed little enthusiasm for owning Punjabi, some of their representatives did not oppose it

25. Ibid.
either. Indeed, Nawab Abdul Majid Khan and Fakir Sayad Kamarud Din, both members of the senate of the Punjab University College, submitted memorandums recommending that the vernacular languages, including Punjabi, should not be excluded from the examination list nor should they be completely neglected.\textsuperscript{27}

A number of private bodies, such as the Singh Sabha, promoted the teaching of Punjabi but mainly among the Sikhs. The Singh Sabha too petitioned the Punjab University College to associate its members in a sub-committee to be set up for the teaching of Punjabi and that the entrance examination (an examination necessary for entering the University), which was in Urdu and Hindi, should also be given in Punjabi.\textsuperscript{28}

This was conceded and Punjabi became one of the options for school examinations. Sikh children could also study Gurmukhi if they wanted to, but employment was only available in Urdu in the lower and English in the higher domains of power. The report of 1901 tells us that ‘Gurmukhi is taught in the Oriental College’.\textsuperscript{29} However, because a major motivation for all formal education, including the learning of languages, was employment by the state, the Gurmukhi classes did not become popular.\textsuperscript{30}

Those who desired to give Punjabi a more pronounced role in the education of Punjabis suggested some important changes. J.C. Goldsby, the Officiating Director of Public Instruction of the Punjab, wrote to senior Secretary to the Financial Commissioner in this context as follows:

It is a question between Punjabi and Urdu, and if the question is decided by the districts or divisions, there is no doubt that Urdu will

\textsuperscript{27} Draft of a memorandum submitted by the Native members of the Executive Committee to the Senate, Punjab university College, on the subject of the Report of the Government Examination Committee in proceedings of the Home Department December 1879, Acc No.799, NDC.

\textsuperscript{28} Sabha, “Translation of an Address presented to the Punjab University College Senate by the Singh Sabha Association”, in proceedings of the Senate of the Punjab University College, Home Department Proceedings, April 1881, Acc No.799, NDC.

\textsuperscript{29} P. Edn., Report on Popular Education in the Punjab and its Dependencies for the Year 1861-62 by Capt. A.R. Fuller, DPI, Punjab, Lahore (Reprinted at the Department Press, 1901), 16.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 117.
invariably be chosen because of its practical utility. But Punjabi has a strong claim to be the language of the home in most cases; and more might perhaps be done to encourage the use of it, or at any rate to remove the impression that it is being purposely neglected.  

However, the report on education of 1907-8 does say that Hindu and Sikh girls were learning Gurmukhi in greater proportion than boys while Muslims, both girls and boys did not learn it. The report of 1910-11 remarks that the demand for Gurmukhi has increased even among the boys in the Lahore and Multan divisions, mostly in Lyallpur (Edn. P 1911:5). Such yearly fluctuations, however, did not change the general pattern that the report of 1916 sums up as: “Urdu continues to be in favour as the school vernacular for boys. Gurmukhi or Punjabi schools for boys and girls numbered 446 with 20,347 scholars, but three-quarters of the latter were girls.”

Punjabi Muslims generally spoke Punjabi in informal domains but they wrote in Urdu (or English) and they used Urdu for political speech making, serious discussions and other formal domains. Mohammad Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, is said to have spoken the Sialkoti variety of Punjabi but he wrote only in Urdu, Persian and English throughout his life. In the only interview that he gave in Punjabi in 1930 to the editor of the Punjabi magazine Sarang, Iqbal made it clear that he did not write in Punjabi because his intellectual training had not opened up that option for him. He did, however, enjoys the language and appreciated the mystic content of its best poetic literature.

Muhammad Iqbal and all the great intellectuals of the Punjab like Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sa`adat Hasan Manto wrote in Urdu. Urdu was also the language of journalism – the Paisa Akhbar, the Zamindar of the irrepressible Zafar Ali Khan and the Nawa-i Waqt of Hameed Nizami and Chiragh Hasan Hasrat. Thus Urdu became not only the language of the

31. J.C. Goldsby, Letter from J.C. Goldsby, Officiating Director of Public Instruction to the Senior Secretary to the Financial Commission, Punjab, Simla, 14 October 1908, No.7285, Acc No.1688, NDC.
32. P. Edn., 22.
33. Ibid., 16.
intelligentsia of the Punjab but also the symbol of Muslim identity. Such was the situation among the Punjabi Muslims that when Dr. P.L. Chatterjee, the Bengali Vice Chancellor of Punjab University supported, in 1908, the view that Punjabi, the real vernacular language of the Punjab, should replace Urdu. The Muslims condemned his views vehemently. Urdu newspapers of Lahore, especially the Paisa Akhbar wrote that Punjabi was not capable of being used as a medium of instruction even at the primary level.35 Whereas some educated Sikhs and Hindus started speaking Punjabi out of prejudice against Urdu. However, he added, working class people — porters, cooks, gardeners etc., — still spoke Urdu.36 Another argument against Punjabi was that it had no standard form.37 Most people, however, felt that the promotion of Punjabi was a conspiracy to weaken Urdu and, by implication, Muslims.38

**Punjabi in Pakistan – the Work of Faqir Mohammad Faqir**

Faqir Muhammad Faqir was the first to become a champion of Punjabi in independent Pakistan. He was an established Punjabi poet by the 1950s, the first collection of his verse having been published in 1941, but more than that he had the dedication, the energy and the confidence to initiate movements and keep them going. Faqir supported Punjabi even before the partition but soon after the establishment of Pakistan he decided to initiate a movement for the promotion of Punjabi. Abid Ali Abid, a noted intellectual and Principal of Dyal Singh College in Lahore joined his movement and held meeting of pro-Punjabi intellectuals. Faqir himself did all the hard work.

At last Faqir’s efforts bore fruit. In the first week of July 1951 the first Punjabi meeting was held. The invitees were distinguished men of letters — distinguished, of course, in Urdu. Among them were Mawlana Abdul Majeed Salik, Feroze Uddin, Dr.

35. See File of Paisa Akhbar, December 1908-April 1909.
36. Ibid., 16 July 1909.
37. Paisa Akhbar, 7 June 1909.
Mohammad Din Taseer, Abdul Majeed Bhatti, Ustad Karam Amritsari, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, Mian Alias and others. Abid Ali Abid, the host, was also among the participants and Faqir, the indefatigable activist of the Punjabi language, listened keenly as Mawlana Salik, the president, gave his speech. He says he was surprised that Salik fully agreed with him but this was hardly surprising because opponents of the idea would hardly have bothered to participate in the meeting. At the end of the deliberations the participants agreed to establish the Pak Punjabi League with Salik as president and Faqir as secretary. Both of them were also entrusted with the task of the publication of a monthly called *Punjabi* which first saw the light of day in September 1951. The purpose of this magazine was to induce the intellectuals of the Punjab to write in Punjabi. And, indeed, to a certain extent the magazine did succeed in making eminent literary figures — Ghulam Rasul Mehr, Zarar Ali Khan Shorish Kashmiri, Hameed Nizami, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, Waqar Ambalvi, Qateel Shifai, Syed Murtaza Jilani, Dr. Mohammad Baqar, Dr. Abdus Salam Khurshid — write in Punjabi.

Faqir Ahmad Faqir, however, did not rest content with this achievement. He also organized the first Punjabi conference at Lyallpur in 1952. In this, among other things, it was resolved that Punjabi should be taught from class-I up to the M.A. level. Since then every conference, every Punjabi language activist, every Punjabi newspaper or magazine has reiterated this demand.

Another major achievement of this conference was that it created an organization to provide reading material in Punjabi. This organization was called the *Punjabi Adabi Akadmi* (Punjabi Literary Academy). It too was headed by a committed activist, Mohammad Baqir, who worked on the lines of Faqir Mohammad Faqir. Besides other works, the Academy started publishing classics of Punjabi literature link the poetic works of Bulleh Shah; the *Heer* of Waris Shah; *Mirza Sahiban* of Peeloo and Hafiz Barkhurdar; *Bol Fareedi*, the poetic works of the saint-poet Fariduddin Masood Ganj Shakar (1175-1265); the poetic works of Ali Haider; *Kakare*, the collection of the poems of Syed Hashim Shah; the *Saif-ul-Mulook* of Mian Mohammad Bakhsh and several epic poems (*varis*) as well as different versions of rhymed folk
tales. In addition to these literary classics the Academy also published textbooks for class 1 and 2 as well as a textbook for B.A. in Punjabi. This book was entitled *Lahran*, a title which was used later for a well-known periodical of Punjabi.

For some time Mian Bashir Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of the Punjab University, appeared to have been converted to Punjabi. This was a feather in the cap for Faqir who wrote that the Vice Chancellor’s statement, that the progress of Punjabi would not harm Urdu, was very welcome. He pointed out that the pro-Punjabi press had requested the university to re-start the Honours, High Proficiency and Proficiency in Punjabi classes which it had stopped earlier. Moreover, the government was also requested to make Punjabi the medium of instruction at the primary level. But, lamented the writer, the university’s decision-makers had not taken any concrete steps in favour of Punjabi despite its Vice Chancellor’s statement in support of it.\(^{39}\)

The contributors of Punjabi, being eminent writers of Urdu and Pakistani nationalists, insisted and reiterated that the domains of Urdu would not be intruded upon. For them Urdu deserved the honour of being a national language (the other being Bengali after 1954); and it also deserved to be the medium of instruction in senior classes; and the language of national communication. Their only concern was that Punjabi should not be completely ignored and devalued. That is why, even when they demanded the use of Punjabi in certain domains, they distanced themselves from the Punjabi of the Sikhs. Indeed, some of them used the term ‘Pak Punjabi’ for the variety of Punjabi they wanted to promote.\(^{40}\)

Hence, one finds that Hameed Nizami, the founding editor of the *Nawa-i Waqt*, known for his aggressive nationalism and right wing views, advocated the teaching of Punjabi to little children. Recounting his personal experience, he said that his own children expressed themselves more fluently in Punjabi than in Urdu whereas he and his wife had always used earlier.\(^{41}\)

---


The effort to teach Punjabi floundered on the rock of culture shame and prejudice. As there are many sources indicating that the Punjabis have some sort of affectionate contempt or culture shame about their language,\textsuperscript{42} there is not need to labour that point. What is relevant here is to relate this culture shame to the teaching of the language here. The first point to note is that this culture shame gives rise to, and is in turn fed by, myths of various kinds. The most common ones are that Punjabi is a dialect not a language; that it is so full of invectives and dirty words that it cannot be used for serious matters; that it is a rustic language and its vocabulary is so limited that it cannot be used for intellectual expression; that it lends itself to jokes and is essentially non-serious and therefore unsuitable for serious matters; and that it has no literature, or at least no modern prose literature, in it etc. etc. Most of these prejudices, as we have seen earlier, were also part of the British attitude towards Punjabi. Whether they were internalised by Punjabi Muslims because of Persianization during Mughal rule; the privileging of English and Urdu during British rule; contact with Urdu speakers; or the fact that Urdu was the language of creative literature and lower level jobs in the Punjab; cannot be determined. What is known is that, at least since the nineteenth century, Punjabi Muslims have held and still hold such prejudiced myths about Punjabi, their mother tongue.

Most Punjabi activists have spent a lot of time and effort to refute these myths. The early articles in Punjabi in the nineteen fifties began these efforts and even today, after nearly half a century, the same arguments and counter-arguments are being exchanged. Sardar Mohammad Khan, writing in 1957, argued that Punjabi cannot be a ‘dialect’ in isolation. It must be the dialect of some language.\textsuperscript{43} But by ‘dialect’ the opponents of Punjabi mean that it has not been standardized. The answer to this is that standardization, which is part of language planning (corpus


planning to be precise), is an activity which needs not only linguistic knowhow but also a definite policy, money and administrative power. It can only be accomplished by powerful agencies, such as governments, which privilege one variety of the language; print its grammar and dictionaries and, above all, use it in the domains of power beginning with schools. So, the fact that there was no standardized norm of Punjabi in the fifties did not mean that there was anything intrinsically deficient about the language. What it meant was that the government had been indifferent to it which brings one back to what the activists advocated all along – begin by teaching Punjabi. The printing of the school texts would be itself begin the process of creating a standard norm.

The other arguments are also part of the non-use of the language in the domains of education, administration, commerce, judiciary and the media. All languages are adequate for the expression of the social reality of the societies in which they are born. However, it is only when they are used in other domains – domains which modernity has brought in – that, their vocabulary expands. To some extent it expands by borrowing from other languages spontaneously but, for the most part, language planners create new terms. This process, called modernization or neologism, is necessary when ‘a language is extended for new functions and topics’ and takes place even in developed, modern societies though not to the extent it occurs in developing ones. But this too is done by powerful language-planning institutions, generally state supported ones. In the case of Punjabi the state did nothing of the kind. Hence, if Punjabi is deficient in modern terms (technical, administrative, philosophical, legal etc.), it is not an inherent limitation but merely lack of language planning. Once again, the fault is that of the state and not that of Punjabi.

The absence of books is also the consequence of lack of state patronage and non-use is any of the domains where books are required. In short, the use (or intent to use) the language comes first. Language planning activities follow as a consequence and the

45. Ibid., 149.
language gets standardized and modernized later. This sequence was not always adequately comprehended either by the supporters or by the opponents of Punjabi. Thus they talked, generally in emotional terms, about the merits and demerits of the language rather than about the role of the state and the modernization of pre-modern languages through language planning.

One myth which is somewhat baffling at first sight is that of the alleged vulgarity of Punjabi. The typical refutation of the charge—a charge levelled again and again and one by no less a person than Mian Tufail Mohammad, the head of the Jama’at-i Islami in 1992—is that all languages have ‘dirty words’. Mian Tufail was condemned by a large number of Punjabi activists, but the fact remains that he said what many Punjabis believe about their language. What requires explanation is that such an absurd myth should exist at all. It probably came to exist, and still exists, because Punjabi is not used in the formal domains—domains of impersonal interaction. The norms of interaction in the formal domains preclude personal, egalitarian, give and take. Thus one does not use the invectives which one uses with one’s companions and friends. Moreover, since the abstract and learned terms used in the domains of formal learning and law are generally borrowed from a foreign language, they do not strike one as earthy and vulgar. Since Punjabi has never been used in these domains, it lacks these words. Thus, when the familiar Punjabi words for the body and its functions are used, they strike the listener as vulgar and unsophisticated. The classical poets of Punjabi solved this problem, like Urdu and English poets, by borrowing words from Persian just as the English poets borrowed from Latin and Greek. For instance Waris Shah, describing the beauty of Heer’s body, said:

\[
Kafoor shana suraen banke, saq husn o sutoon pahar vichhon
\]

[Fair and rounded like swollen water bags were her beautiful buttocks.

46. Sardar Mohammad Khan, 25-30.
Her legs were as if sculptors had carved them out of the mountain (in which Farhad had carved out a canal for his beloved Sheereen i.e., mountain famous for love)].

The term *suraen* for buttocks is from Persian and is also used in classical Urdu poetry. The commonly used terms, both in Punjabi and Urdu, would be considered far too obscene to be used in literature. Similarly Haфиз Barkhudar and Waris Shah both use the term ‘chatii’ (breast, chest) for their heroin’s breasts. The term chati is a neutral term which can be used for men, women, children and animals for the upper, front portion of the anatomy. To express the feminine beauty of this part of the heroin’s body, the poet resorts to metaphorical language. The use of terms from another language, is quite common in Urdu as well as English. In Urdu such terms are borrowed from Arabic and Persian while in English they come from Latin and Greek.

The point, then, is that Punjabi literature resorts to the same stylistic strategies as other literatures of the world when dealing with tabooed areas. The popular impression that Punjabi has no ‘polite’ equivalents of tabooed terms is based on ignorance of Punjabi literature. This ignorance is but inevitable in a country where Punjabi is used only in the informal domains and educated people code-switch increasingly to English when they venture into areas which are even remotely connected with sex. Thus even the Punjabi words for wife and woman are falling into disuse as people prefer to use the circumlocution *bacche* (literally, children), family, and *kar vale* (the people of the household) instead of *run, zanani* and *voti*. To conclude, all the myths about the inadequacy of Punjabi are consequences of its non-use and marginalization by the state. Hence, whether they fully understood the role of power in language planning and use or not, Punjabi activists were right when they insisted that their language should be taught at some levels if it was ever to take its place as a respectable language.

However, lack of understanding of the political dimensions of language policy (and use), also resulted in enabling the Punjabis to believe in some self-congratulatory and ego-boosting myths. One is that the Punjabis are so large hearted and generous that they have accommodated Urdu even by sacrificing their own language.

A variant of this myth is that Punjabis, being truly Islamic and nationalistic, care more for Urdu, which symbolises the Islamic and Pakistani identity, than their own mother tongue. Still another variant is that, being ardent lovers of Urdu, the Punjabis have forgotten their mother tongue in their enthusiasm for Urdu. These myths are wrong because they did not take culture-shame, language-policy, political and economic reasons into account at all. More politically aware Punjabi activists, like Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, argue that the predominantly Punjabi ruling elite gives Urdu more importance than the other indigenous languages of the country in order to keep the country united through the symbolism of one national language; to increase its power base and in order to keep the centre stronger than the periphery. By appearing to sacrifice their own mother tongue the elite can resist the pressure of other ethnic language-based pressure groups to make itself stronger at the expense of the Punjabi-dominated centre. This, indeed, is the consequence of the policy of marginalizing Punjabi. However, it appears to me that many decisions of the ruling elite, as indeed of other human beings, are not so calculated and rational. It is more likely that the low esteem of Punjabi; the idea that it is not suitable for formal domains; is as much part of the Punjabi ruling elite’s world view as it is of other educated Punjabis. To this, perhaps, one may add the conscious feeling that any encouragement of their own mother tongue will embolden the speakers of other indigenous languages to demand more rights and privileges for their languages thus jeopardising the position of Urdu as a national language. In short, the Punjabi elite’s marginalization of Punjabi is not because of generosity or disinterested love of the country but a mixture of culture shame, prejudice against its own language and the desire to keep the centre, and therefore itself, dominant in Pakistan.

**Punjabi-Teaching in Pakistan (1950s and 1960s)**

The University of the Punjab, permitted students to take Punjabi as an optional language in the early fifties. Critics said that there would be no students who would study it. Faqir Ahmad Faqir

agreed but, nothing daunted, suggested that it should be compulsory not optional. This did not, however, come to pass. In 1954, the question of Bengali being accepted as a national language of Pakistan was very much in the air. The greatest opponent of the proposal was Mawlavi Abdul Haq who still insisted that Urdu alone could symbolise the unity of the Pakistani nation. The Punjab Youth League’s secretary, Farooq Qureshi, took this opportunity to demand that they would celebrate a Punjabi Day. This was probably the first time that the fair of Shah Hussain was used in March 1954 to raise the demand of Punjabi being made an official language. The post-graduates’ union of Punjab University decided to hold a discussion on the issue. The Vice Chancellor M. Sharif, who was sympathetic to Punjabi and who, above all, did not want the students to get out of hand presided. Masood Khaddarposh, who was present, relates how the students became so unruly in their enthusiasm that they drowned everybody’s speech in full-throated shouts if someone used a non-Punjabi word in the speech. Khaddarposh says that he went on the stage, congratulated the students on becoming free of the oppression of other languages, and said that a new policy consistent with independence should now be created. Then only would there be people who would deliver speeches without putting in Urdu and English words in them (handwritten report by Masood in my personal collection). Although Masood perceived the students’ exuberance as their desire to discard Urdu and English, such a conclusion is not warranted because the students respond in the same enthusiastic manner to Punjabi mushairas, debates discussions and other cultural events even now. In a mushaira at F.C. College Lahore on 17 February 1998 the students were equally exuberant. It appears that they take Punjabi as part of fun and, since it is a change from the languages they use in the formal domains, they tend to relax and take the whole thing as entertainment. This does not mean, however, that they hold Punjabi in prestige and want to discard other languages.

51. Savera, March 1948: 44.
A concrete step in favour of teaching Punjabi was that in 1961 the Board of Secondary Education accepted it as an optional language in schools from class 6 till 12th (F.A.). In 1962, Abdul Majeed Bhatti and Mohammad Afzal Khan wrote the first book for class 6.\textsuperscript{52} This was, of course, a triumph for the Punjabi activists especially because this was the Ayub Khan era when the centre, being dominated by the military and the higher bureaucracy, was highly intolerant of multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism. Indeed, since West Pakistan was One Unit, the indigenous languages were at the lowest ebb of their fortunes. Ayub Khan’s centrist government looked at language-based assertions of identity with great suspicion. In the case of Punjabi it was felt that the Punjabi activists would join the Sikhs across the border to undermine the two-nation theory on the basis of which Pakistan was made. Thus the Punjabi Majlis, an organization to promote Punjabi, was banned in 1959 while the Punjabi Group of the Writer’s Guild was banned in 1963. Despite these setbacks the sixties saw something of a renaissance of Punjabi literary and cultural life\textsuperscript{53} which need not be repeated. An important development, which bears repetition, is that short stories, plays and poems which were produced during this period laid the foundation for the M.A. in Punjabi which started in the 1970s at the Punjab University.

**The Reaction to Nur Khan’s Education Policy**

Ayub Khan’s government was toppled in March 1969 by students and politicians. In his place came General Yahya Khan who imposed Martial Law while promising elections and transition to democracy. Yahya Khan, like Ayub before him, appointed a commission headed by Air Marshal Nur Khan to propose changes in the education policy. Nur Khan’s emphasis was on the nation and hence he favoured the two national languages, Urdu and Bengali, while ignoring all the other indigenous languages of the country. The reaction to this by the Sindhi and Punjabi activists is given in Rahman.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} Sarwar Sultana, “Sadi Maan Boli”, in *Ganj Darya*, May 1975: 19-27.


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 203.
About 500 Punjabi activists presented a memorandum on behalf of 13 pro-Punjabi organizations to General Yahya Khan on 31 August 1969. Among them were the Punjabi Adabi Sangat, Majlis Shah Hussain, Punjabi Adabi Society, Majlis Mian Mohammad, Majlis-e Bahu, Majlis Waris Shah, Majlis Shah Murad and Raahi Rang, a dramatic group of Lahore. The writers of the document took their stand on social justice possibly because Ayub Khan’s regime had enriched a very narrow elite and, in reaction to that, ideas like socialism, Islamic socialism and social justice were in the air. The document said:

Languages used by different classes of the people are often taken as representatives of their social placing and economic background and aptly reflect the stratification that has taken [place] in our society. If we have to safeguard ourselves against this perpetuation of privileges, which has been rightly marked as a major social problem, we shall have to give these languages of the masses their due in society.

This reference to social stratification was all the more forceful because Nur Khan himself had spoken out against the privileged position of English and that there was a caste-like distinction between Urdu and English medium students. Now the activists of Punjabi argued that there was another caste-like distinction too — between the users of Urdu and those who knew only Punjabi. Indeed, the knowledge of only Punjabi was considered ignorance — so low had the language policies of the past and the present brought down Punjabi. This, said the Punjabi activists, could only be reversed if Punjabi was taught. The practical steps they recommended have been given in book *Language and politics in Pakistan* and it would be repetitive to enumerate them in detail. Suffice it say that they wanted it as a medium of instruction for adults and at the primary level and an optional subject at all others. They also felt that the language should be honoured by introducing it at the highest level in the University.

57. P. Edn, 3, 15-17.
58. Tariq Rahman, 203.
The September 1969 issue of Punjabi Adab also devoted itself to the education policy. Well-known figures — Masood Khaddarpash, Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, Safdar Mir (Zeno), Asif Khan, among others — wrote in favour of Punjabi. It was in the sixties too that the Punjabi language movement came to have a slightly left of the centre image. This image came from the fact that the Communist Party favoured the languages of the common people. According to Safdar Mir, Eric Cyprian, an important member of the party in the 1940s, said it was necessary to use Punjabi to communicate with the people.\footnote{59} Earlier, in the forties too some leftists, such as Mrs Freda Bedi, wife of the Communist leader of Lahore B.P.L. Bedi, addressed ‘rural audiences in Punjabi from a public platform’.\footnote{60} Although Punjabi did not become the preferred language of the Communist Party in Pakistan, leftists did sympathise with it. Thus there were avowed socialists like Major Ishaque, Safdar Mir and Ahmad Rahi in the movement. Moreover the anti-establishment, rebellious themes of Najam Hussain Bhatti’s plays were left-leaning. In any case, supporting any Pakistani language other than Urdu was seen as being leftist by the establishment. The Punjabi activists, however, made Shah Hussain, a sufi saint, their symbol of inspiration. Shah Hussain is said to have rebelled against orthodoxy by having fallen in love with a boy (Madho Lal), drinking wine and dancing and was, therefore, an anti-establishment symbol. Moreover, the Punjabi activists took to celebrating the anniversary of his death in the Mela-e Chiraghan with much fanfare. They also danced on the day much to the disapproval of the puritanical revivalists of the Jama‘at-i-Islami and ordinary, somewhat orthodox, middle class Punjabis. Thus, when 100 Punjabi writers demanded all regional languages as media of instruction on 5 April 1965 at the Mela-e Chiraghan,\footnote{61} the demand must have appeared as part of a conspiracy to undermine the foundations of orthodoxy to many people.

\footnote{59} Interview in Viewpoint, 25 January 1990.
\footnote{61} Pakistan Times, 6 April 1965.
The Department of Punjabi at the Punjab University

The demand for opening the Punjabi department at the Punjab University became stronger. Apart from old champions of Punjabi like Faqir Mohammad Faqir, even people otherwise associated with Urdu like Dr Waheed Qureshi, voiced this demand on 5 August 1969. General Bakhtiar Rana, a member of the Punjabi Adabi League also made the same demand and numerous small organizations lent their voices to it. The Punjabi Adabi Sangat, for instance, gave several statements in the press demanding M.A. in Punjabi.62

Faqir Mohammad Faqir’s role in the establishment of the Master’s Degree at the Punjab university has acquired legendary overtones. Junaid Akram, his biographer, says that he met Alauddin Siddiqui, the Vice Chancellor of the University, and persuaded him not to oppose the idea. Finding the Vice Chancellor willing, he met members of the Academic Council and other decision-making bodies and won their approval.63

Masood Khaddarposh and Punjabi-Teaching

During the seventies and early eighties, a new figure came to invigorate, and even dominate at times, the Punjabi scene. This was the somewhat enigmatic figure of Mohammad Masood who was popularly known as Masood Khaddarposh. Masood was an Indian (and then Pakistan) Civil Service officer, who became a champion of Punjabi language. Even while he was in service he often used Punjabi in conversation. This, however, was hardly unusual. What was somewhat unusual was that he often asked people to give evidence in Punjabi because he felt they would express themselves more clearly in the mother tongue. Even more unusual, and bordering on the eccentric this time, was his insistence that prayers should he said in Punjabi because one should know what one was saying to God.64 This alienated the ulama but, luckily for Masood, the idea was generally ignored and

the religious opposition against him did not become widespread. After his retirement Masood became the convener of the Punjab Forum – an organization for the promotion of Punjabi language.

Apart from writing articles, memoranda, letters to the editor and making speeches from different fora, he also wrote letters to high government officials asking them to take steps to teach Punjabi. Among others, he wrote to the president, the governor, cabinet ministers like Abdus Sattar Niazi and Dr. Mahbub-ul-Haq, and the Chairman of the Literacy Commission to make policies in favour of teaching Punjabi. When the state functionaries did not respond satisfactorily he released his letters, or a summary of his efforts to persuade them, to the press. A typical release of 16 September 1984 states that he went personally to Islamabad to speak to the then Head of the Literacy Commission and “quoted several verses from the Qur’an to make it clear that all education and literacy must be imparted in the mother tongue.”

Masood’s hour of triumph came when on 2 January 1985 he collected some leading figures of the country including Dr. Mubashar Hasan, said to be the architect and theoretician of Z.A. Bhutto’s left-leaning Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP), A.H. Kardar, Fakhar Zaman (PPP Senator and Punjabi writer), Mazhar Ali Khan (editor of Viewpoint) Abdullah Malik (the famous Urdu novelist) and Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana (famous politician) and made them agree to adopt a charter for the ‘restoration of the cultural dignity of the Punjabi-speaking people of Pakistan.’ The teaching of Punjabi was the focus of this charter. The basic thesis was that colonial values had deprived the Punjabis of the use of their language in formal domains. Now, if the lost dignity of the language was to be reclaimed, it was necessary to use it in the administration and the judiciary. But this meant that it should be taught first and this is what the 139 signatories of the charter vowed to bring about.


Efforts to Popularise Punjabi

Between 1980 and 1986 the Punjabi Adabi Board got around a hundred books written in Púnjabi. These books were written by well-known writers on subjects as wide ranging as folk songs (lok geet by Tanwir Bukhari) to fiction, biography, religion and history. There were books on Harappa and other cities and even books on games and women’s problems. The books were not written in only the Lahori dialect (the language of institutions working in Lahore and most Punjabi language activities) but included those in Siraiki, such as Musarrat Kalonchvi’s Vaddian da Adar too. This was in keeping with the policy of the Punjabi Adabi Board, which considers Siraiki only a dialect of Punjabi and not a separate language, and agrees to promote its teaching in this capacity. It is also because of this policy that the Punjabi activists have never opposed the teaching of Siraiki literature.

The demand for teaching Punjabi took three forms in the 1990s. First, there was the old demand that it should be made the medium of instruction at the primary level. Secondly, there was the demand that serious efforts should be made for teaching it in schools where it was an option. Thirdly, that the Master courses should be comprehensive and not propagandist, i.e., they should not exclude the literature of the Sikhs or anti-establishment Pakistanis. Eminent figures like Hanif Ramey, Chief Minister of the Punjab in the PPP government, launched a campaign for introducing Punjabi at the primary level in November 1991 at Pakpattan — for symbolic effect, from the shrine of the sufi saint and first poet of Punjabi, Baba Fariduddin Masood Ganj Shakar. He also announced the creation of yet another organization, Punjab Eka (Punjabi union), to work towards this aim but, like all the other such organizations, its efforts proved futile.

Those who demanded more serious efforts in teaching it pointed out from various fora, including Punjabi publications like Sajjan, Maan Boli etc., that schools did not encourage students to take Punjabi; Punjabi textbooks were not available; teachers were not available and so on. State functionaries, like Zulfiqar Khosa, the Minister of Education of the Punjab in 1990 (the first tenure of

Benazir Bhutto) reiterated the old excuse that, since Punjabi was divided into dialects, it could not be used as a medium of instruction at all.  

In the late nineties the movement for teaching Punjabi became weaker. Either for this reason, or for some other, at least one Punjabi organization adopted angry even chauvinistic tones while advocating the age-old demands about promoting Punjabi. This was *Lok Seva* Pakistan of which Nazeer Kahut, who was at daggers drawn against the *Mohajirs* having lived and observed the militancy of their political party, the Muhajir Qawmi Movement at Karachi, was the leader. In one of his press conferences he said that if ‘Punjabi was not taught at the primary level, Pakistan would break up’ and that Pakistani Punjabi children should be allowed to go to the Indian Punjab to get educated in their mother-tongue.

However, as mentioned earlier, for utilitarian and historical reasons, the Punjabi middle class is not keen to teach Punjabi to its children. A survey carried out by the U.S. Aid on primary education in 1986 revealed that about 65 per cent of the interviews in the Punjab were against the teaching of Punjabi even in the first three classes of school. Even this number might be high because ‘the Siraiki speaking sections wanted it taught and/or used all day’ because language identity is stronger there. It seems that this attitude towards Punjabi has not changed. While talking informally to parents, teachers, and students during the field work for this book, I found that it was only rarely that anybody wanted to study Punjabi or be taught other subjects in it. In a survey of the opinions of students of matriculation (i.e., aged 15 years), very few Punjabi students demanded that Punjabi should be used as a medium of instruction or even be taught as a subject.

Several Punjabi publications, such as the monthly *Ravel*, kept reporting that a movement for teaching Punjabi was going on. A number of enthusiasts did promise books for students and teachers.

---
68. Sajjan, 27 April 1990.
70. Earl Jones, Jamshed Bashir, Nargis Naim and Tanveer Bashir, Case Studies of Primary, Middle, Literacy, and Skill Education (Islamabad: USID, 1986), 38.
were demanded. The *Maan Boli Parhao* movement held workshops (13 October 1991 at Gujjar Khan reported in *Ravel* November 1991). The movement got more momentum in 1994 but nothing substantial came about. Punjabi publications pounced upon every little event — a school’s headmaster starting classes in Punjabi, a teacher reporting success and so on — but no major breakthrough came about.

This account of the failure of the activists of the Punjabi language appears to suggest that a part from chapbooks, serious literature in Punjabi is also read by a number of people though it is not possible to determine their numbers. Thus, while Punjabi is not taught, it is still learned both at the elitist level by language activists and at the popular one by ordinary people who still remain comfortable in the pre-modern worldview of popular texts which they read for pleasure.

71. For details, see the 1991-92 issues of *Ravel*. 