

Mr. Jethmal's Unholy Campaign Against Dr. Daudpota

(By Mr. Abdur Rehman Bar-at-Law)

1. For some time past, the local press has witnessed a propaganda, which has had the unique feature of being rather one-sided. Mr. Jethmal Parsrani, known to be a Sufi is not entirely unconnected with the propaganda. What is surprising that no one has tried to portray the other side of the picture, perhaps in the mistaken belief that the subject-matter of the propaganda would not be believed by reasonable men. The reason why this has not happened is that mischief-makers, ever keen to seize an opportunity, have turned the occasion to their benefit by adding a communal colour to it. Perhaps the subject—the question of the modifications introduced by the Director of Public Instruction, Dr. Daudpota—is particularly amenable to such colouring; the result is that Dr. Daudpota has become undeservedly the victim of much criticism.

2. I learn that Mr. Jethmal has lately addressed a letter to the President of the Advisory Board for the Control of Sindhi Literature, of which he is a leading member. The letter should have in the ordinary course of things been discussed by this Board on the 22nd. instant. In view of this fact, Mr. Jethmal's overhasty action in releasing it to the press before the discussion certainly excites some surprise. The letter is not warranted on facts: that is a feature of the whole propaganda—this much good in it, then, that credulity itself would use a pinch of salt before swallowing it in toto. It is interesting to notice at this juncture that the question of *alrabs* (diacritical marks) was not moved in consequence of Dr. Daudpota's, but because of an allegation—entirely unfounded—that the Dictionary Committee had adopted these changes in the Sindhi Departmental Readers. At a meeting of the Board when the question came under discussion, Mr. Jethmal insisted upon the appointment of a sub-committee of ten experts—six being members of the Board and four being co-opted. He even went so far as to suggest Mr. I.I. Kazi's name for the chairmanship—Mr. Jethmal's personal friend, whose impartiality and anti-communalism none would like to deny. He also asked the Board to nominate Messrs. D. V. Mirchandani and Dharmvir Jethley as two of the co-opted members. It is always difficult to understand the mind of a man, but the fact remains that this would mean a postponement of the issue and perhaps ample time would be available to give a further fillip to the propaganda—in popular nomenclature to "enlighten" the public. Subsequently, Mr. Jethmal and his nominees have been conspicuous by their absence at most of the sub-committee's meetings and even when they have been present theirs has been the role of an obstructor. In this way, they have attempted to bring about a stalemate—and while this legally appointed sub-committee has come to no decision on the point, the public is being unhappily more and more "enlightened" by or on account of Mr. Jethmal.

3. The charges against Dr. Daudpota perhaps have Mr. Jethmal's blessings "to be fruitful and multiply," for in the beginning he was accused of only tampering with the

purity of the Sindhi language and of undermining Hindu culture. This in itself was not a negligible matter, but it has grown out of all proportions. The following are the main charges alleged in Mr. Jethmal's letter (referred to above) with the correct viewpoint:—

(i) It is alleged that Dr. Daudpota tore up certain instructions—a strange and serious charge, especially when made against a person of responsibility and position of Dr. Daudpota. This charge has been made nearly 12 months after an uproar occurred in the press against the mistakes in the Departmental Readers: an uproar strengthened by the opinion of the redoubtable and learned Mr. Nagrani. Government unofficially asked the D.P.I. to look into the matter and he then corrected the proofs of the second edition, which was assuredly no part of his duty. Here he came across some mistakes, which for the safety of Sindhi literature he corrected, not realizing that small causes oftentimes have great results. The mistakes were of a purely orthographical nature—e.g. the word *chatun* (parrot) was printed as *chatwun* with the *pe* over the *waw* and the word *bakri* (goat) was printed as *bakryi* with the *ze* under the *ye*. Corrections were necessarily made. Besides this certain Arabic words, which have been bodily transplanted into Sindhi—as happens with all languages—were incorrectly moved, e.g. *khayalu* (thought) was spelt as *khiyalu*, *adami* as *adimi*, etc. Naturally these were corrected but not a single Arabic word was substituted for a pure Sindhi word. Was this Arabization or Daudpotization of the Sindhi language?

Moreover, the type used by the contractors in the first edition of the Readers was indistinct and unshapely and Dr. Daudpota persuaded them to use new and better type. Accordingly this was done, but as this type did not possess the elements or parts, of which the letters are comprised, the column containing the broken parts was left out. Nor was this the only reason for so doing: there was also an important psychological reason. Modern educational psychology teaches that children should always be taught to write whole letters and not their parts. Any person conversant with the Montessori and Kindergarten methods should have this much knowledge. It has thus felt that the column was unnecessary. Consequently, the instructions printed on the covers of the Primer, which related to this column, were rendered superfluous. Furthermore, these instructions are hardly used by teachers—when one realizes that the teachers who handle the infant classes are specially trained men, the entire redundancy of these instructions becomes quite clear. Mr. K.L. Hingorani, for 35 years a member of the Education Department, fully concurred with Dr. Daudpota in this matter. Or is it suggested that Dr. Daudpota's critics are men more qualified than Mr. Hingorani? Was this the destruction of the Sindhi language? Was this the undermining of Hindu culture?

(ii) It has been alleged that the D.P.I. has introduced Arabic diacritical marks. But this is not so. They have been there ever the Arabic script was adopted in 1833 for the writing of Sindhi. The so-called pact between Hindus and Muslims of 1879, as embodied in Shiri's Sindhi-English Dictionary, exultingly instanced by Mr. Jethmal in his articles contributed to the Hindu, bears witness to the correct use of these diacritical marks. The old Departmental Readers, which were compiled by notable Hindu scholars like Diwan Nandiram and Diwan Udham, followed the Arabic system of *alrabs*, and in fact they could not have done otherwise as the whole orthography is Arabic. It was in 1905, when the D.P.I. Pooná, Mr. Covernton, formed a Vernacular Text Books Revision Committee for the compilation of the present series of the Departmental Readers in Sindhi, Gujarati and Marathi, that some departure was

made from the established rules of orthography in the case of the Sindhi Readers. Diwan Premchand, the then Principal of the Training College for Men, Hyderabad, whose knowledge of Sindhi needs no comment here, was selected to represent Sind on the above Committee, and he, of his own accord, without consulting anyone, altered the positions of the pesh and zer before the vowels waw and ye respectively. This aberration brought about by one Hindu gentleman, was perpetuated in all the future editions of the Readers, which were published in Bombay and Poona, without anyone caring to look to their accuracy. Why is it that no one of the ilk of Mr. Jethmal then rose to protest against such flagrant changes? Or is love of the Sindhi language the peculiar province of Mr. Jethmal? Other reasons could be suggested to explain Mr. Jethmal's sudden zeal, but delicacy forbids their mention.

(iii) Again it is urged that fantastic blocks have been introduced. This again is not so. Only a few blocks have been replaced by commonplace ones and a few others newly introduced, so that children by looking at the illustration could know by themselves the sound-value of the letter they represent. For instance, the letter ya was represented by *yaqut* (diamond), which could not be illustrated by a picture; hence the word *yako* (the ace of cards) was substituted. Similarly the sound bay was represented by a four-lettered Turkish word *bayraqa*, which no urban or rural child can know, because they are familiar with either *jhandi* or *jhandl*, but not *bayraqa*. Hence the simple word *barra* (Eng. bat) was substituted, as it is a common object. In these changes, too, Dr. Daudpota was guided by Mr. Hingorani and Mr. Bherumal, the latter having had a direct hand in the preparation of the Readers in 1905. One cannot understand how these slight changes strike at the root of Hindu culture and how Dr. Daudpota has sought to propagate "his narrow ideas through fantastic pictures."

(iv) To the fourth charge no reply is needed, as it is absolutely fictitious—the charge that pages after pages have been torn out from or introduced into the Readers. Those that run may read.

4. Let it be borne in mind that D.P.I. is not bound to consult the Text Book Committee for such slight changes, which were necessitated by the Hindu agitation in the press. A new edition had to be published within shortest possible period, as the first edition had been exhausted, and as there was no time to call a meeting of the Text Book Committee. Here also it may be noted that Mr. Jethmal has resiled from his original position, because in the articles that he and his friends have contributed to the "Sansar Samachar" they have all along mentioned the Vernacular Text Books Revision Committee of 1905, which ceased to exist since then, and not the Text Book Committee, which is nominated by the D.P.I. every three years. It would hardly be an exaggeration to suggest that even if this Committee had recommended these changes, Mr. Jethmal's attitude would have been much the same, because the love of the language which he possesses and which apparently necessitates an anti-Daudpota attitude, would have been just as strong. Let us also remember that the Text Book Committee is a purely advisory committee and has nothing to do with the preparation or revision of the Departmental Readers and that there are standing orders of the Government that the D.P.I. can make verbal changes without consulting it. In the past, such changes have often been made by the Principal of the Training College for Men, who is generally responsible for preparing the press copies, without reference either to the D.P.I. or the Text Book Committee. What a comparison is suggested to the mind! When an individual

like Mr. Premchand made such revolutionary changes, not a little finger was raised, but now while Dr. Daudpota whose name is well-known amongst the Orientalists and who has recently been awarded the distinction of Shams-ul-Ulema by the Government of India in recognition of his contributions to Arabic, Persian and Sindhi, introduces a few wholesome variations, there is such a hue and cry! Reluctantly we are led to the conclusion that Mr. Jethmal is actuated only by personal feelings, which he has borne since the publication by Professor Gurbuxani of the first volume of the *Shah-jo-Risalo*.

5. Mr. Jethmal in his appeal to the Hindu community, published in the "Sind Observer" of the 15th. instant, says: "Dr. Daudpota is already known to have done his best to destroy the very foundation of the Sindhi language, Sindhi literature and Sindhi culture and has propagated his fantastic theories in the Sindhi Text Books studied in the colleges, as opposed to the unity teaching by the great poets of Sind. He definitely has written 'Anyone who is in the Muslim religion, however uncivilized and ignorant he may be, must have character etc.' How far this is from the truth, let the reader judge for himself. So far as we know Dr. Daudpota has edited only two Sindhi works, viz. Shah Karim's couplets along with his principal table-talks and the *Abyat-i-Sindhi* of Khawaja Muhammad Zaman of Lawari with the commentary of Shaikh Abdur Rahim Girori. In the introduction to Shah Karim's poetical works while discussing his literary attainments, Dr. Daudpota says, "Although Shah Karim had received no regular education, he had learnt a good deal by associating with the great spiritual leaders of his time, such as Makhdum Nuh and others, and in spite of his comparative illiteracy he used to expound the spiritual mysteries in such a way that even learned scholars would be aghast with wonder." In connection with this, he says that even today one can meet in the country many ignorant Muslims, who on account of their frequent intercourse with learned men and spiritual guides can dilate upon occult experiences in such a way that one would imagine them to be very learned, and that it is through the blessings of Islam that both character and politeness are found among them in abundance. The impartial reader will discover, after a reference to the context, that the statement of Mr. Jethmal is diametrically opposite to what Dr. Daudpota has said and is simply designed to excite the Hindu public against him. We should like to ask any sensible man to read this paragraph in Shah Karim's Kalam and say with God overhead whether Dr. Daudpota by expression of his views has struck at the root of Sindhi literature and culture. He has not decried any religion, but has simply stated a fact which can be verified by personal observation. Let any one read the lines, which Mr. Jethmal has deliberately mistranslated, and find out for himself whether they bear the sinister construction, which Mr. Jethmal with all his mystic and theosophic lore has deigned to impart to them.

6. The *Abyat-i-Sindhi* was published last year: Mr. Jethmal's scholarship perhaps was not of the type which would appreciate it. Suffice it to say that he wrote and had got written by others several diatribes against it. As a matter of fact there was nothing offensive in it. The familiar Biblical saying about the beam in one's own eye and the mote in another's hardly needs repetition. The crime of which Dr. Daudpota was undoubtedly guilty was that he therein laid down the definition of a true Sufi and also the principle that a Muslim mystic can be correctly interpreted by those Muslim scholars who have made a close study of Islamic mysticism. Evidently this gave umbrage to Mr. Jethmal.