

# Alterations in the Sindhi Readers

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There have been, and there will always be, controversies on important matters; and it is desirable that the protagonists of either sides should thoroughly analyse the problem and advocate their view-point. But no subject has been talked about half so ridiculously as the one concerning the so-called onslaught that Dr. Dasgupta has hurled against the structure of Sindhi language. Criticism has its utility provided it is offered in a spirit of disinterested benevolence. He, who is unwilling to be criticised from a rational view point is shutting out a possibility of his improvement and expansion. There is a possibility of his improvement and expansion. There is a need for criticism which is constructive and bonafide: But a type of criticism which, of late, has menaced the pages of local papers takes its stand on premises that are built on the gospel of prejudice. How can we expect that the man-in-the street should have a calm head on his shoulders, when the so called leaders keep up crying from their house tops that a particular community is in danger of being swallowed up whole-sale by another or that its culture is being threatened with extinction? It is only to combat that 'mass suggestion' which is up in the air and which, unless it is rendered innocuous, is likely to tell adversely on the relationship between the two communities, that I have undertaken to explain to the man-in-the-street the implications of this controversy and the underlined motives that have given birth to this 'sound and fury which signifies nothing.'

On analysing the contentions of the defenders of the Sindhi language into their elements I find that there are the following few points which serve as the foundation of the whole controversy; and these are also the set of objections which have been raised against the alterations which the D. P. I. has made with regard to the manner of writing the Sindhi language. It has been said:—

1. That the proposed alterations are not desirable because:—

(a) They subvert entirely the mode of pronouncing and writing the Sindhi language which has been in vogue and practice for the last 25 years.

(b) They are introduced with the definite intention of arabicising the Sindhi language—a step which the Hindu community having pro-sanskrit, anti-arabic predilections is not going to tolerate and views with indignation and alarm.

2. That languages are not altered during the course of a day by legislation; accordingly, Sindhi language should be left free to develop itself from the sheer force of an inner necessity and its immanent momentum.

3. That assuming for a moment that the changes introduced by the D.P.I. were desirable, it was none of his business to have done all he has done, without the consultation of the members of the Sindhi Text Book Revision Committee.

4. That the D.P.I. in having disregarded the existence of the members of the T.B.R.C. has behaved autocratically, and by having taken a revolutionary step of altering the course of the language, has forfeited every claim to be confirmed in his post as the D. P. I.

I shall endeavour to evaluate the probative force of all

these above-mentioned contentions and if possible expose the fallacies that underlie them: But before that could be done, there are one or two points which I feel called upon to enumerate, for, I consider their statement is essential for the proper appreciation of the full vigour and force of his controversy.

A. No objection has been raised, so far as I know, against the cogency of the alterations that the D.P.I. has introduced: in other words, no opponent has objected against the logical aspect of the question. These changes have, after all, one merit which no one has been so fool-hardy as to dispute—namely that all these changes bring with themselves a principle on which the pronunciations and orthography of the Sindhi language ought and must be based. We do not pronounce the word **Bakiryl** but **Bakri**—we do never stress the consonant **kaf** in the instance quoted. If that is really so why should **kaf** be burdened down with a **zer**? Nor is it common-sense-like to give **zer** below **yay** for it is vowel already, and vowels cannot be stressed because they lack the phonetic value which the consonants possess—their office being already akin to the various **alrabs**.

If a system could be found whereupon to base the writing and the pronunciations of a language, it ought to be adopted forthwith for the sake of convenience. And we should be grateful, we were rational creatures, to any person who could point us a principle the adoption of which would render the reading and writing of the language more systematic and sound. I repeat them, that so far as these changes are concerned, no one has so far succeeded in disputing their merits. Not one of the defenders of the Sindhi language has come forward to show to us illegality of the proposed alterations: if they can do so we are prepared to follow them. Whatever objections have been raised are all directed to discredit the manner in which these changes have been brought into existence. Viewing that side of the question I cannot refrain myself from observing that all these gentlemen are really putting at open door. There is a confusion of thinking on their part as to the precise manner in which languages function and develop.

Here are some remarks that might introduce a little light into the darkened chambers of their brain.

B. Every language is a tool, invented by society with which we can transfer and record our inner experiences for the purpose of communicating them to our fellow-brothers. In its beginnings, every language finds its orientation in the unconscious ideomotor activity of the primitive peoples: with the passage of time it goes on becoming more and more conventional and its development runs parallel and 'paripassu' with the development of the social mind. Its growth invariably follows the laws that control the growth of human mind. So much is the growth of language dependent upon the growth of the mind of the people that one can easily find out the mental level the society has reached by examining the degree to which the conceptual apparatus has been perfected by a particular language. Thus the German language is an 'intellectual' language because Germans are essentially a nation of philosophers and musicians whereas the English language is 'concrete and full-blooded' because the English people are a nation of practical politicians and matter-of-fact people.

Now, when it is said that language grows and is not made all that is meant is the fact that underlying meaning of its concepts is often the creature of accidents rather than intention on the part of legislator. But a language, in addition,



tion to being a mere verbal report has an other function and office to fulfil. It can be written down: in that sense of course it can be acted upon by the conscious will of a legislator. Thus the Turkish language is now being written in the Latin Script though it was generally being written in Arabic. If we allow a language to follow the lines of a capricious chance, or the course of a whimsical vagaries of average mass, we cannot expect it to cure itself of those diseases which infest it in this sphere. If Sindhi language is left to develop of its own accord it is but certain that its errors will remain errors until the doomsday. What guarantee have we that accidental courses of history will so mould the course of our language that it will be saved from polluting menaces of inherent weaknesses. Of course the conceptual-order of any language will develop as time would go on elapsing but it is irrational to expect that its orthography would alter to even a wee-bit perfecter mode than where it stands to day.

Accordingly it is really a service that the D.P.I. has rendered to the cause of Sindhi language when he has rectified errors that have been in existence for the last 25 years. Now the children of Sindhi will find it much more easy to write and pronounce the language correctly and our language will have the merit of being called a 'regular' and 'scientific' language.

C. The question of Sindhi language being arabicised is one which is also a fabrication of a prejudice. In Sindhi affairs are always debated under the halo and light of communal prejudices. If Sindhi language is being written with arabic alphabet or contains more than 75% of arabic words and continues to be Sindhi all the same, let us assure the defenders of the Sindhi language that it will still be Sindhi language when **zor** and **zabr** are given in a mode slightly different from what has been the custom hitherto. How does a mere alteration in the placing of **zor** and **zabr** have the tremendous effect of baptising a language into entirely an other and a totally different one, passes my comprehension and therefore no refutation of it is necessary.

D. Now remains the question as to why D.P.I. had the audacity to propose this benevolent scheme of scribing the Sindhi language without the consultation of the members of the T.B.R. committee: may be, he did so because he was convinced that such a change will not be taken to mean something that is insulting or damaging to the vested interests: or may be, he was convinced that such a trifling affair will not be construed to mean as an act of absolutism on his part. Who would think that a good turn done from a benevolent disposition would be dubbed as pernicious heretical: who knew that the Sindhi gentlemen will make a mountain out of a mole hill and raise storms in the tea-cup? Who could have predicted that this would enrage the leaders of Sindhi culture and language to take up cudgels for a cause which was devoid of substance. Accordingly a rational person on an impartial survey might connive at Dr. Sahib's omissions at having consulted the members of the T.B.R. committee. It is a formal defect which in sense derogates from the merit of the improvements he has introduced in the mode of writing the Sindhi language.

E. One cannot suppress a smile when the partisans in the heat of controversy are wanting, on the score of such a trifling irregularity, that the D.P.I. should not be confirmed. As against this one is compelled to—observe silence—for, the absurd lie has one thing in common with truth, and that is, that both cannot be refuted.

And I would in the end say to my Muslim brothers

"Fault dear brothers is not in the stars but in us that we are underlings". Only if we had a Press of our own all these gentlemen would have kept quiet long ago. But grateful to them for having made us realize the need of Muslim paper and who knows that their tortures may one day wake us up.