

LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT OF THE AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB

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ABSTRACT

*The Sikh Gurus used **Punjabi**, the spoken language of the people of the Punjab, for dissemination of their Bani (philosophy). However, many Sikh as well as non-Sikh scholars believe that the Holy Book, Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), contains many languages including Sanskrit. But the present study shows that the language used by the Sikh Gurus is an Old Punjabi spoken by the people of the Punjab. Moreover, the comparison of the language used by the Bhagats from far away from Punjab shows that their language was also the Old Punjabi. It also indicates that Old Punjabi was spoken in different parts of India far away from Punjab. The present study further reveals that Panini synthesized **Sanskrit** from the spoken language of the Punjab people, Ancient Punjabi, which was named as **Prakrit** by him. This Prakrit, in fact, is the Ancient Punjabi, which gave birth to Sanskrit. It is a pity that many Sikh scholars believe it otherwise that Punjabi originated from Sanskrit. Present day Punjabi language is the result of continuous development without the aid of any Government during the last 4,000 to 5,000 years, which is a typical example of Indo-Aryan (Indo-European) Languages, which has phonetic and morphological system analogous to that observed in such languages as Greek, Latin, Celtic, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

The Sikh Gurus preferred to use the spoken language of the people of the Punjab for writing their *Bani* rather than the Sanskrit, the language of the Brahmans that was never spoken by the common people. The people of the Punjab are called '*Punjabi*' and their spoken language is also called '*Punjabi*'. The name 'Punjab' was given to this land of five rivers by the Persians, who invaded it and settled there permanently around 1000 CE. Before their invasion this land was called '*Septa Sindhva*' because long time ago seven rivers used to flow on this land. The river Saraswati on the Eastern side dried up and the river Sind with its own tributaries on the Western side, forming the boundary, was not considered as a river of the main fertile land. Consequently, five rivers were left and the land on which these rivers were flowing was named as '*Punjab*' (*Punj* = Five, *Ab* = Water/River) by the Persians [8]. *Punjab* and *Punjabi* are also spelled as *Panjab* and *Panjabi*, respectively.

Since Punjab and Punjabi language is shared by people of Pakistan also, therefore, the following information from Pakistan Forum [3] is worth to know about the past history of the Punjab:

“The intrusion of the Aryans started in waves after waves in about 3000 BC, and continued for about 1000 years - those Aryans were not a single tribe or race but they were comprised of an assortment of tribes from the Central Asia. So in first instance, those Aryans settled in

the upper part of the mighty river; Sindh/Indus' namely, 'Sindh Valley' or 'Indus Valley' - which were then known as 'Saptasindhva' or 'Sapta Sindhus' meaning, land of the seven rivers (i.e. Sutlaj, Bias, Ravi, Chanab, Jehlum, Sindh and the now extinct river Saraswati).

Bode Roy Punjabi quoting Dr Abinas Chandra Das as under; “The land in which the Vedic Aryans lived is called in Rigveda by the name of Saptasindhva or the land of seven rivers, which includes the Indus or Sindhu with its principal tributaries on the west and the Saraswati on the east. The Ganges and the Yamunas have certainly been mentioned once or twice but they have not at all been included in the computation of the seven rivers that gave the country its name”

Bode Roy Punjabi himself writes in his book, '*Saptasindhva*' as under: “ Thus the area now forming Kashmir, the Punjab, the NWFP, Eastern Balochistan and Sind was the area of Aryan Settlement”.

The point I would like to make is that the language spoken by the Punjab people today is the result of continuous development of the language from the time of the arrival of the Aryans (during 3000-1000 BC). When the Aryans of Central Asia came to Punjab they brought their language with them, which had some influence of Persian, because the Aryans, who came to Punjab, had come through Persia (Iran) after settling

there for some time. Their language was dialects of old Indo-Aryan language [2, 4, 6] but the Indian scholars of Sanskrit named it *Apbransh* (vulgar) [5]. This language had the phonetic and morphological system analogous to that observed in such languages as Greek, Latin, Celtic, etc.

Punjabi language has very strong relation with the language of Central Asia. For example, the word 'Darya' (river) of two rivers, namely Amu Darya and Syr Darya in Central Asia, is also used for all the five rivers of the Punjab, e.g. Sutlej Darya, Beas Darya, Ravi Darya, Chenab Darya, and Jhelum Darya. Similarly, in old days other rivers in India were also called as Darya but now are called as 'Nadi' or by other names.

Many Punjabi words resemble very closely with French words also. e. g. 'deux' (*du* -Two), 'trois' (*troi* -three), 'cinq' (*panj* -five), 'sept' (*sat* - seven), 'nauf' (*nao* - nine), 'dix' (*das* - ten); 'savon' (*sabon* - soap, V and B are interchangeable in Punjabi),... 'Que est tu?' (ਕੀ ਏ ਤੂੰ ?) in French is pronounced the same way and has same meaning also (Who are you?) in Punjabi.

Addressing style with respect to elders or in formal talk: e. g. 'tu' (*tu* - you) for informal talk and 'vous' (*tusin* - you) for respectful or formal talk. Use of adjective after noun in the old Punjabi (*Gur Purae ki Bani...* AGGS p 616 and also as *Mata Shri* in TV Ramayan Series, etc. - During Ram time when there was no Sanskrit or Hindi but Ancient Punjabi) was very similar to the grammar of French. Change of verb form with the change of gender and from singular form to plural form is common in both Punjabi and French. Counting system is also same in French and Old Punjabi. For example, the number '80' is pronounced as 'quatre-vingts' (four-twenty), similarly in Old Punjabi '80' is pronounced as 'char-vian' (four-twenty).

Around 400 BC Panini, a Punjabi grammarian synthesized *Sanskrit* or Perfect Language (*Sans* + *Krita* means adorned, cultivated, perfected), from the local spoken language of the Punjab. At the same time he named the spoken language (Old Indo-Aryan Language) of the people of the Punjab as *Prakrit* (means not adorned or arranged, i. e. not Sanskritized) [2, 4, 6].

It is not known what was the name of the language spoken by the Punjab people at the time when Panini synthesized Sanskrit from that spoken language around 400 BC. However, *Prakrit*, so-named by Panini, continued to be spoken by the people of Punjab and underwent many stages of its development. In fact modern Punjabi language spoken by the people of the Punjab (India and Pakistan Punjab) today is the same

language, which was named as *Prakrit* by Panini around 400 BC.

NEW LANGUAGE SYNTHESIZED FROM ANCIENT PUNJABI

The newly synthesized language was adorned to such an extent that it was so difficult that it remained the language of the Brahmins only and the common people continued to speak the original language, so-called *Prakrit*. Pei [4] had mentioned that *Prakrit* flourished between 300 BC and 1200 CE. Therefore, it was the same *Prakrit* of Panini that was named as Punjabi by the Persians on their arrival in the Punjab around 1000 CE. It continued absorbing new words, terminology and phrases from Persian, Arabic, French, English, Greek, etc. and attained the present form. In fact the *Prakrit* should be called *Ancient Punjabi* because it was developed and spoken in the area that is now called Punjab. During the 3rd century BC Buddhist Canon was written in the same language, i.e. Ancient Punjabi (so-called *Prakrit*) that was spoken during that time in the Punjab where Buddhism flourished. Since the Buddhist Canon was known as *Pali Canon*, therefore, its language was also called *Pali* [4]. The *Pali* is in fact *Prakrit* (Ancient Punjabi). *Pali* is Ancient Punjabi word meaning 'in line' (*pal-ਪਾਲ* or series) since the Buddhist canon is in series.

Without going into the history of the languages of the Punjab, many scholars erroneously link the origin of Punjabi from Sanskrit. The comparison of some words of *Punjabi* with *Prakrit* and *Pali* [5] indicates that it was more close to these ancient languages from which Sanskrit was evolved. It means Panini synthesized Sanskrit from ancient Punjabi (named *Prakrit* by him). In other words Punjabi gave birth to Sanskrit. In spite of the fact that all the religious works were translated into Sanskrit, still it did not become the spoken language of the people.

DEVELOPMENT OF ANCIENT PUNJABI

When the ancient Punjabi (*Prakrit*) moved away from Punjab, it underwent great dialectical changes: towards West it became *Lahndhi*, *Sindhi*, *Multani* in the hilly areas of the North it became *Dogri*, towards West and South it became *Haryanvi*, *Rajsthani*, *Marathi*, *Gujrati*, towards East it became *Brij* (Hindi), and so on. However, the language of the Punjab remained **Punjabi**. Nevertheless, the languages of Southern India have originated from source other than Ancient Punjabi (*Prakrit*), and Sanskrit.

It is worth noting that the Vedas were written in Ancient Punjabi (*Prakrit*), the same is true about *Brahmanas*, *Upanishads* and some *Sutra*. All these great religious

works were later translated into Sanskrit from 200 BC onward. This is supported by the fact that Sanskrit was synthesized around 400 BC by Panini and these Great Works were written before 400 BC when there was no Sanskrit [2, 4, 6].

Prof Sahib Singh [9, p 15-16] had reported the development of languages as follows:

"The language of Vedas is different than that of old Sanskrit. The scholars have named that language as '*First Prakrit*'. The language spoken by the people at the time of Asoka, the Great, (273-232 BC) was *Pali*, which was called '*Second Prakrit*'. The Vedic language was modified and was named 'Sanskrit'. Simultaneously, the *Prakrit* languages continued to develop and were named differently in different regions of their developments for example, *Magdhi* in Magad and Bihar, *Shoorsaini* in Uttar Pradesh, *Maharastri* in Maharashtra, etc. These languages are called *Apbransh*. These languages continued to exist up to 11th century."

It is evident that Prof Sahib Singh [9] has also more or less same observation on the development of Ancient Punjabi. However, it is strange that while he was writing about the grammar of languages (including Punjabi and its dialects) of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1], he did not try to trace out the origin or the roots of the Punjabi language, the most extensively used in the AGGS. Although Prof Sahib Singh has done a commendable work on the grammar of *Gurbani*, it would have been more appropriate for him to trace out the grammar of ancient Punjabi, the so-called *Prakrit*, to develop grammar of languages of the AGGS rather than on the grammars of Sanskrit and Hindi. Since Prof Sahib Singh based his Grammar of the language of the AGGS on Sanskrit that is why his rules are not applicable in most of the cases.

LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

Before Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE) the Punjabi language was written in various scripts. The oldest script used most was *Landay* before the arrival of Islam, thereafter, the Persian/Arabic scripts dominated in the Punjab because of the languages of the rulers. Guru Nanak was the first who developed and used Punjabi script in his Bani later Guru Angad modified the alphabet that is now called *Gurmukhi* script or *Gurmukhi Lipi*. The *Gurmukhi* script resembles very much with That of *Takri* (See page 41). Therefore, the language of the AGGS is Punjabi in *Gurmukhi Lipi* having different dialects, like, *Lahndhi*, *Sindhi*, *Multani*, *Gujrati*, *Dogri*, Pre-Sanskrit (*Sehskriti*), a little *Hindi* (that is a modification of *Urdu* - a mixture of Persian and Punjabi), and vocabulary from Persian, Arabic, and other languages. Thus, the Punjabi language, used by the Gurus of the House of Nanak to write their Bani, has its

roots in the old Indo-European languages rather than in Sanskrit, a synthesized language. It is wrong to say that there are many languages in the AGGS. In fact it is basically Punjabi with different dialects of Punjabi and also having vocabulary of many languages as explained above.

It is also wrong to say that Punjabi originated from Sanskrit rather it gave birth to Sanskrit. This statement may appear wild to some linguistics, who are under the influence that Sanskrit gave birth to all Indian languages. The alphabet of *Gurmukhi* script was further improved to pronounce different sounds introduced by the Persians, the Arabs, the English, the French, etc. in the Punjabi language. Similarly, punctuation system and other modern grammar rules have been added in the Punjabi language to make it more acceptable and applicable for communication and expression. Nevertheless, the author feels strongly that more research is needed to trace out the roots of the Punjabi language; to give it its right status in the Indo-European Languages; and to introduce Punjabi equivalents of scientific and technical terms of today.

IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING ANCIENT PUNJABI

The current and modern Punjabi is quite different than that used by Guru Nanak and the other Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, in their Bani. Therefore, it is very important for the Sikhs in general and for the researchers in particular to study seriously the origin of Punjabi language and its dialects, and the ancient Punjabi language, so-named as *Prakrit* by Panini, spoken before Guru Nanak and its development during the Sikh Gurus' period when the Bani was written by them. It has been noticed that translation and/or interpretation of *Gurbani* by one scholar into English and other languages is sometimes quite different than that of others. It is so because of incomplete understanding of old Punjabi of Gurus' period. To interpret *Gurbani* in its real perspective it is very important to understand ancient Punjabi and its grammar of that time.

LANGUAGES OF GURU NANAK AND BHAGATS

Some samples of Bani of Guru Nanak and that of Bhagats' from various places of India, and of Muslim Sufis, which is incorporated in the AGGS, are given as follows to show that it was Punjabi that was spoken from the 12th century to Guru Arjan time (when the AGGS was compiled in 1604) almost throughout India in which the Bani was written by the Sikh Gurus and Bhagats of India.

1. Nanak (1469-1539) Punjab

ਆਖਾ ਜੀਵਾ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਉ ॥

ਆਖਣਿ ਅਉਖਾ ਸਾਚਾ ਨਾਉ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 9.

Describing (knowing/understanding) It (God), I live (enlightened with wisdom);

Forgetting It, I die (fall in illusion).

(But) It is very difficult to describe (Know/understand) the True Name (God).

2. Sheikh Farid (1175-1265 CE) Punjab

ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰ ਅਪਾਰ ਅਗਮ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਤੂ ॥

ਜਿਨਾ ਪਛਾਤਾ ਸਚੁ ਚੁੰਮਾ ਪੈਰ ਮੂੰ ॥੩॥

AGGS, Farid, p 488.

You (God) are Sustainer and Cherisher;

You are infinite, unfathomable and endless

Those who recognize the Ever-Existing Entity - I kiss their feet and face.

ਕਿਆ ਤੂ ਸੋਇਆ ਜਾਗੁ ਇਆਨਾ ॥

ਤੈ ਜੀਵਨੁ ਜਗਿ ਸਚੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਨਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

AGGS, Farid, p 794.

Why are you asleep? Wake up, you innocent being!

Don't believe that life in the world is forever.

3. Dhanna (1415-?) Rajasthan

ਗਿਆਨ ਪ੍ਰਵੇਸੁ ਗੁਰਹਿ ਧਨੁ ਦੀਆ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਮਾਨੁ ਮਨ ਏਕ ਮਏ ॥

ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਮਾਨੀ ਸੁਖੁ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਤਿਪਤਿ ਅਘਾਨੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਭਏ ॥੩॥

AGGS, Dhanna, p 487.

The Guru has given the wealth of spiritual wisdom;

Practicing meditation, the mind becomes one with Him.

Embracing devotional love for the God,

I have come to know peace; satisfied and satiated,

I have been liberated. ||3||

4. Trilochan (1267-1350) Maharashtra

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੇ ਲਛਮੀ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥

ਸਰਪ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥੧॥

AGGS, Trilochan, p 527.

At the very last moment, one who thinks of wealth;

And dies in such thoughts,

Shall be reincarnated over and over again, in the form of serpents.

5. Kabir (1398-1495) Banaras

ਐਸਾ ਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਭਰਮਿ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਕੈਸੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਜਬ ਮੋਹਿਆ ਹੈ ਮਾਇਆ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

AGGS, Kabir, p 92.

You have misled the world so deeply in doubt.

How can people understand You (God),

When they are entranced by Maya (illusion)?

ਜਾਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਾ ਲਾਗੈ ਭਾਉ ॥

ਭਰਮੁ ਭੁਲਾਵਾ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਉਪਜੈ ਸਹਜੁ ਗਿਆਨ ਮਤਿ ਜਾਗੈ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗੈ ॥੩॥

AGGS, Kabir, p 92.

As it pleases God, so people embrace the love for the God,

(Then) doubt and delusion are dispelled from within.

Intuitive peace and poise well up within,

And the intellect is awakened to spiritual wisdom.

By Guru's Grace, the inner being is touched by the God's Love. ||3||

6. Jai Dev (1201-1245) Bengal

ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਗੋਬਿੰਦਿ ਜਪਿ ਨਰ ਸਕਲ ਸਿਧਿ ਪਦੰ ॥

ਜੈਦੇਵ ਆਇਉ ਤਸ ਸਫੁਟੰ ਭਵ ਭੂਤ ਸਰਬ ਗਤੰ ॥੫॥੧॥

AGGS, Jai Dev, p 526

Meditate on the God of the Universe, the God of the Universe, O man;

He is the source of all the spiritual powers of the Siddhas.

Jai Dev has openly come to the God

Since It (God) is the salvation of all in the past, present and future.

A critical analysis of the language of the above verses of Bhagats of Punjab and from places far away from Punjab clearly indicates that their language is very similar to that of Guru Nanak during the 15th century. Moreover, the language of Guru Nanak and that of Bhagats is also very similar to the current Punjabi language spoken by the peoples of Punjab, i. e. India Punjab and Pakistan Punjab.

Sanskrit

Some scholars, who believe that there are many languages in the AGGS, also believe that the following Sloks of Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan are in Sanskrit language. It is a pity that they have failed to recognize that these Sloks have been entitled as *Sehskriti Sloks* but not as *Sanskriti Sloks*. Had these Sloks been of Sanskrit Guru Jee might have entitled them so. Let us examine if the following Sloks are in Sanskrit or in Punjabi:

sl k shsik@l mhl w 1]

Slok Sehskriti Mahla 1

piV@p@sqk sIDAw b@cdM]

isl p] is bgl sm@DM]

miK JI@uibBK@n swrM]...

AGGS, M 1, p 1353.

You (Pundit) study the scriptures, say your prayers and argue too.

You worship stone and sit like a crane.

(Pretending to meditate but intention is to catch a fish).

You speak lies and cover up your falsehood with golden ornamented (sophisticate) wordings.

ਸਲੋਕ ਸਹਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੫

Slok Sehskriti Mahla 5

ਕਤੰ ਚ ਮਾਤਾ ਕਤੰ ਚ ਪਿਤਾ ਕਤੰ ਚ ਬਨਿਤਾ ਬਿਨੋਦ ਸੁਤਹ ॥

ਕਤੰ ਚ ਭ੍ਰਾਤ ਮੀਤ ਹਿਤ ਬੰਧਵ ਕਤੰ ਚ ਮੋਹ ਕੁਟੰਬੁਤੇ ॥

ਨ ਸੰਖੰ ਨ ਚਕ੍ਰੰ ਨ ਗਦਾ ਨ ਸਿਆਮੰ ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 1353.

Where is left mother, where is left father? Where is left the love for wife and son?

Where are left brother, friend, companion and relative?

Where is left the emotional attachment of family?

God has neither conch-shell, nor religious mark, nor paraphernalia, nor blue skin.

Dr Sahib Singh [10] says that the language of these Sloks is *Prakrit*. According to him *Sehskriti* is *pre-Sanskrit*, i.e. *Prakrit form*. On the other hand Giani Harbans Singh [7] says that *Sehskriti* is a mixture of Hindi and Sanskrit.

If according to Dr Sahib Singh the language of *Sehskriti* Sloks is *Prakrit*, the name assigned by Panini to the language that was spoken by the people of Punjab, then *Sehskriti* Sloks are in ancient Punjabi, not in Sanskrit as is apparent from early discussion on *Prakrit*.

However, a careful examination of the language of these stanzas clearly indicates that it resemble very much with the Punjabi language of Guru Nanak and that of Bhagats as discussed previously. The language of these two stanzas is very close to Punjabi language except that a suffix, sounding 'ing', has been added at the end of certain Punjabi words, e, g. ਬਾਦ → ਬਾਦੰ, ਸਮਾਧ → ਸਮਾਧੰ, ਸਾਰ → ਸਾਰੰ, ਕਤ → ਕਤੰ, ਸੰਖ → ਸੰਖੰ, ਚਕ੍ਰ → ਚਕ੍ਰੰ, ਸਿਆਮ → ਸਿਆਮੰ, etc. From this examination it also becomes very clear that Sanskrit was synthesized from ancient Punjabi by add a suffix, '-ing' at the end of the basic Punjabi words in the early development of Sanskrit and later it was made more complicated by modifying the spellings of the basic Punjabi word also.

PUNJABI: A Natural Language

The present day Punjabi has its roots in the Indo-Aryan Languages (Indo-European Languages). One should be proud to speak and own this language. This is so simple and smooth language that everybody in India wants to speak it in spite of the fact that it never got any financial support for its development by any Government during the last 3,000 to 4,000 years. In fact at present a very little is being spent for its development by the Punjab Government and it is almost neglected by the Central Government of India.

Its inherited characteristics of smoothness in flow and pleasing to ears and the easiness to express one's views (philosophy) Ancient Punjabi was accepted as a language to disseminate Buddhism, which was later called *Pali*; then used by the Jainis to spread Jainism in this language, *Pali*; then by Shiekh Farid a Persian Sofi used Old Punjabi to spread his spiritual message; then almost all Bhagats of India used old Punjabi during Bhagati Movement to spread their message; and then by all the Sikh Gurus used Punjabi to spread their Bani (philosophy) to the people of South-east Asia.

This language appears to be easily acceptable and understandable by almost all people of Aryan origin. It is evident from the present trend in the Indian movies that no movie is a hit unless it has a *Bhangra* dance and a Punjabi song and even some Hindi songs are based on the tunes of Punjabi songs with some Punjabi words to make them hit songs. Moreover, the youth belonging to Indian Aryan origin (and particular Sikh youth) of the West will start dancing at the first beat of the drum with a Punjabi song even if they have some problem to understand it properly.

The survival of Punjabi for more than 4,000 years is attributed to its entire natural and innate characteristics described above that make PUNJABI to be called as a NATURAL LANGUAGE

CONCLUSIONS

The present critical analysis of language of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) indicates that it is an Old Punjabi of Bhagats and Sikh Gurus' period between 12th and 17th century. This Old Punjabi is in fact Ancient Punjabi, which was named as *Prakrit* by Panini around 400 BC.

The first stage of synthesizing Sanskrit was *Sehskriti* formed by added suffix 'ing' at the end of the basic Ancient Punjabi words later the spellings of basic Punjabi words were also modified and a new language called 'Sanskrit' was synthesized by Panini of Punjab around 400 BC.

The sacred books of Buddhism and Jainism were written in Pali (in fact Ancient Punjabi - *Prakrit*). Similarly the sacred books of Hinduism were also first written in the Ancient Punjabi (*Prakrit*), which were later translated into Sanskrit.

The Sanskrit never became the spoken language of people of the Punjab or any other part of India. However, in the Punjab the people continued to speak Ancient Punjabi. The Ancient Punjabi continued to develop and absorbs vocabulary of other languages, i. e.

Persian, Arabic, Greek, English, French, etc.

The present day Punjabi has its roots in the Indo-European Languages. One should be proud to speak and own this language.

Its smoothness in flow and pleasing to ears and inherited likeness of this language by the people of Aryan origin is evident from the present trend in the Indian movies that no movie is a hit unless it has a *Bhangra* dance and a Punjabi song and even some Hindi songs are based on the tunes of Punjabi songs with some Punjabi words to make them hit songs.

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MORE ABOUT PUNAJBI LANGUAGE

1. HISTORY OF PUNJABI

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The history of Punjabi dates back to the time before the origin of Sanskrit. There are strong reasons to believe that the Punjabi is a modified or modern version of *Prakrit*. In fact the name '*Prakrit*' (un-adorned) was assigned to the spoken language of the people of the Punjab when Panini grammaticalized the language of the Punjabi people and named it Sanskrit (means adorned). That is the reason that Punjabi of today is very close to the *Prakrit*. On the Indian subcontinent there are several regional languages, and like the Punjabi, each have a script of its own. These scripts are distinctly different from Dava-Nagari, the usual script of Sanskrit.

In the early days, due to the lack of the writing media, very large majority of the population only used the spoken Punjabi language and they never learned to read or write. Their linguistics skills, i.e. vocabulary and grammar, were orally passed from one generation to the next, through their stories, their songs and their dramas (*nataks*). In Punjab, the area of five rivers, there existed a script called *Landay*. The origin of *Landay* script or when it came into being is unknown and the name *Landay* (meaning abbreviated) might have come from the fact that it did not use any diacritics to modify the inherent vowel of the consonants. This script was mainly

used by village traders to keep their account and money lending operation. Perhaps at the same time the Brahmins were using Sanskrit for their religious ceremonies, and for some record keeping. However the Sanskrit was deliberately kept away from the populace by Brahmins.

It is believed that Guru Nanak devised a new script during the 16th century to write his *Bani* and Guru Angad named it *Gurmukhi*, as it came from the mouth of his Guru. *Gurmukhi* script was modeled after the Script of *Landay*.

Notable features for *Gurmukhi* are:

1. This is a syllabic alphabet in which all consonants have an inherent vowel. Diacritics when required can appear above, below, before or after the consonant they belong to, are used to change the inherent vowel.
2. When the vowel appears at the beginning of a syllable, it is written as an independent letter.
3. When certain consonant occur together, a special conjunct symbol is used.

The Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) and other Sikh religious literature were exclusively written in *Gurmukhi* script. For a period of time (hard to pin point the duration) the *Gurmukhi* was exclusively used for Sikh religious writings only, the other literature was considered inappropriate to be written in *Gurmukhi*

script. Later on the other literature was also written in the Gurmukhi script.

Conversely AGGS and Bani were also published in other scripts. During the 11th century, either by pre-Islamic rule migration from the Northwest or soon thereafter, the Persian script was introduced to the area of Punjab. The Islamic rulers, mostly Persian speaking, took control of the Punjab and made the Persian as an official working language. A large number of local population accepted Islam, either by attrition or by force, however they retained their Punjabi language and folklore's. They started writing Punjabi in Persian script.

Now the Punjabi language, perhaps the only language, was written with two separate scripts. The two populace, Moslem and non Moslem, could orally communicate seamlessly but the reading and writing was on strictly on religious bases. I must add here that the large proportion of the population was still illiterate and used only the spoken language. The oral literature was predominantly in the form of folklore, songs and bedtime stories. The written literatures, in Persian script, were the long dissertation like *Heer*, *Soni Mahiwal* and the religious writings of Baba Farid.

Punjabi is very resilient and robust language; it survived the brunt of many invading armies, political upheavals, religious strife, last but not the least an attempted-linguist suppression by Hindi and Urdu for last fifty years or so. The Punjabi did survive it all, but

2. ORIGIN OF PUNAJBI

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Gurnam Singh Mukatsar in his article on page 39 of *Sikh Virsa* of September 2002 explained the evolution of *Pali* from *Prakrit Brahmi* (ਪ੍ਰਾਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੀ), the language of the original inhabitants (ਮੂਲ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ) of India. It is not correct due to the following reason. For example, he says, "Punjabi is the first born daughter of *Pali*, the original language (ਮੂਲ ਬੋਲੀ) of India. However, many words of modern Punjabi are found in

3. GURMUKHI LIPI FOR HINDU RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES

Nisha [1] has recently reported that All-India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Paryag (Allahabad), conferred the honorary degree of Sahitya Mahopadhyaya to Satya Pal Gupta for his valuable research in Hindi literature written in Gurmukhi script.

we may yet loose it if our coming generations do not accept the task of expressing themselves literarily in Punjabi. A language is judged by the richness of its literature. It is not sufficient to just speak and teach our children to speak Punjabi; it is only the first step towards the preservation of Punjabi. A rich and varied literature is essential for any language to survive in shrinking global village we live; there are no exceptions for Punjabi. Our current newspapers do not have any attention grabbing articles, not even cartoons, comic strips, cooking tips or any sections dedicated for children. Also in this age of high literacy and technology it is very important for a language to stay competitive with other languages, in conveying some useful technical information, such as operating manual for appliances.

For Diaspora Punjabis it is very important to, more so for Sikhs as a language of liturgy, pass on our Punjabi linguistic heritage in the real sense to our next generation. There is no simple formula or magic potion, which will work to achieve this goal. One has to grab the attention of the children and feed the message subtly in very small potions.

My request to the parents/grand parents of young children is to get some glitzy storybooks, pictures, cartoons etc. with Punjabi inscription on them and throw them around the house, and see how well it catches their attention, spend a little bit of money and effort. You may surprise your self for its effectiveness. It is a small price to pay for a huge return.

modern German with the same meaning (Abstracts of Sikh Studies, Jan.-March, 1997, p 8-28). It is reasonable that Punjabi words are also present in other European languages, especially, Slavic languages. So if *Pali* evolved only from the languages of the original inhabitants (ਮੂਲ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ) of India, from where did German words enter into Punjabi or vice versa? A more logical explanation of the evolution of *Pali* is that it was a product of the interaction between original inhabitants of India and the Caucasian people, who migrated to India from central Asia. The infusion of the languages of the two groups led to the development of *Pali*.

Hailing from Patiala, he got the opportunity to have access to the vast hidden treasures lying in the archives of Moti Bagh Palace, Patiala, and other palaces in the erstwhile PEPSU. He salvaged a total of 5,000 works of some 500 writers of repute, including the 52 poets of Guru Gobind Singh's Court at Paonta Sahib. These literary geniuses who were in contact with the divine

Guru, had a great influence on the thinking of the people and in their own way made history. Their language was *Braj Bhasha* — which is more akin to Hindi — but the script used was Gurmukhi. Any scholar or researcher who wants to tap this vast storehouse of Hindi literature can enter only through the door of Gurmukhi script. To this genre belong Bhai Santokh Singh's *Suraj Parkash*. Among the other obscure but worthwhile works are *Balmiki Ramayana*, *Tulsi Ramayan*, *Mahabharata*, *Gita*, *Rama*, *Krishna*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, *Yog Vasishtha*, *Gulistan*, *Bostan*, *Hanuman Natak* and *Mudra Rakshas* (a unique historical play in Sanskrit dealing with Kautilya and Chandragupt Maurya).

4. HOW PUNJABI BECAME THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Prabhjot Singh

(Excerpt from <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20030613/edit.htm#6>)

1. Punjabi in the *Gurmukhi* script should be made the provincial language and should be given the place, which has hitherto been enjoyed by Urdu in the educational institutions and official work.
2. Hindi in the *Devanagri* script as a national language should be started from the fourth (primary) class and be a compulsory language thereafter.
3. The result of this would be that in the East Punjab, every child will have to get instructions from the beginning in Punjabi but will have to pass Hindi as a compulsory subject from the fourth (primary) class onwards.
4. For the children whose mother tongue is Hindi will have to begin their education in Hindi but will have to begin Punjabi as a compulsory subject from the fourth (primary) class onwards.

Thus reads the resolution moved by Dr Parkash Kaur, MLA representing the Amritsar denominational constituency reserved for Sikh women in the East Punjab Legislative Assembly at Shimla on March 10, 1949. This was the first ever resolution moved in the then East Punjab State Legislative Assembly to get Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script the status of a provincial or state language.

Dr Parkash Kaur's resolution had followed a gazette notification issued by the Union Government on August 14, 1948, declaring Hindi in Devanagri script as the federal language and recognized 14 other languages, including Punjabi, as regional languages in their own areas of influence.

She presented her resolution over a period of two days,

Among S.P. Gupta's notable works are *Gurmukhi Lipi Main Hindi Sahitya* and *Punjab ka Hindi Sahitya*. That this genre of Gurmukhi literature is very voluminous goes without saying. The manuscripts of the works of the 52 poets alone weighed nine *maunds* (approximately 350 Kg). Not only poets, but also the royalty tried its hand at writing Punjabi poetry. Among such noble writers of poetry were Maharaja Rajinder Singh and Maharaja Narinder Singh of Patiala, and Maharaja Vikram Singh and Kanwar Fateh Singh of Kapurthala.

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March 10 and March 31, 1949. Before she concluded her presentation, Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, the then leader of the House, stood up and made the following statement:

"I assure the honorable members that the government has noted their views and will again welcome the suggestions of those who may like to make these in deciding the question. All these views will be borne in mind at the time of making the decision. I hope that in view of this assurance, Dr Parkash Kaur will not press her resolution and withdraw it."

In view of the assurance by Dr Bhargava and realizing that the point had been driven home and brought on record, she withdrew her resolution. The proposal was later implemented in Punjab in toto.

Her son, Lieut-Col Adish Pal Singh Dhillon, is now settled in Chandigarh. He is in possession of all documents; including her speeches in the Assembly, and the resolution she moved in 1949 to get Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script its due as the official language of Punjab.

After the 1948 Government of India notification on official languages, the Speaker of the East Punjab Legislative Assembly constituted on April 2, 1949, an advisory committee of 36 legislators. According to Dr Upkar Singh Jhabalia, a former Managing Director of the Amritsar Central Cooperative Bank, who wrote a booklet tracing the history of installation of Punjabi as the state language of Punjab, those included in the committee were Ujjal Singh (later elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha), Swaran Singh (a former Union minister), Kapur Singh (who later became Chairman of the East Punjab Legislature Council), Pratap Singh Kairon, Ishar Singh Majhail, Giani Kartar Singh, Gopi Chand Bhargava, Bhim Sen Sachar, Joginder Singh Mann (father of Mr Simranjit Singh Mann) and Dr Parkash Kaur, besides others. There were 14 Sikh and 22 Hindu

members of the committee.

This committee was set up only after Dr Parkash Kaur, realizing the sensitivity of the matter relating to the demand for making Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script as the official provincial language, had decided to seek permission to move a resolution in the Legislative Assembly during the Budget session. Initially, the permission was denied. She, however, requested that her request for resolution might be considered for the Budget session of 1949. The request was granted. Thus the first salvo was fired.

After Dr Parkash Kaur's resolution, the Punjab Government adopted the Sachar Formula, which was based on the recommendations of a four-member committee headed by Mr Bhim Sen Sachar comprising Mr Ujjal Singh, Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava and Giani Kartar Singh.

The basic philosophy of the formula was to divide the state in two parts - Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking. In the Punjabi speaking areas, Punjabi was made compulsory in all boys and girls schools from primary to Matric and Hindi from the last class of primary to Matric. In case of the girl students, learning of Hindi was mandatory until the middle level only.

Similarly, in the Hindi speaking areas, Hindi was made compulsory from primary to Matric and Punjabi from the last class of primary section to Matric. Teaching of Punjabi to girl students was made mandatory till the middle standard.

On February 29, 1956, the Chief Secretary of Punjab issued a circular about the official languages of the state. According to the circular, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepore, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Ropar and Kharar tehsil, excluding Chandigarh, were included in the Punjabi region while Rohtak, Gurgaon, Karnal and Kangra, besides Jagadhri and Naraingarh tehsils of Ambala and Hisar, excluding Sirsa, comprised the Hindi speaking region.

The circular said that Simla, Ambala tehsil, Chandigarh (capital) and Sirsa tehsil in Hisar shall form part of the bilingual region. Instructions were issued that both Punjabi and Hindi should be given their rightful due in their respective regions.

The Regional Language Formula, as approved by a committee headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and comprising

Govind Vallabh Pant, Abulaq Kalam Azad, Master Tara Singh, Hukam Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Gian Singh Rarewala and Giani Kartar Singh was presented before the Lok Sabha on April 3, 1957, which again advocated a division of Punjab into Punjabi and Hindi speaking regions.

To monitor the implementation of the regional official language, it was proposed to constitute regional committees. It declared Punjab as a bilingual state and decided that the Sachar Formula would remain in force.

The bilingual formula was given official recognition in 1960 with the enactment of the State Languages Act, 1960, which categorically stated that Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script and Hindi in the Devnagri script should be the official languages for the Punjabi and Hindi regions, respectively.

Punjab witnessed a long struggle before the reorganization took place in 1966 and it was declared a Punjabi-speaking state on November 1, 1966. It was then left to Mr Lachhman Singh Gill to get the Official Language Act strictly enforced in the state. During his brief tenure as Chief Minister of Punjab, Mr Gill made sure that Punjabi got its rightful due. On December 29, 1967, he got the State Language Act, declaring Punjabi as the only official language of the state passed by both Houses of the state legislature.

Unfortunately, his successors lacked both the conviction and the will to enforce the provisions of the Act. The result was that when the militants started their "social reform movement" at the peak of their struggle in the early 90s, Punjabi again started getting prominence. But this, like Mr Gill's tenure, was short lived. ***And since then Punjabi is continuing to get a raw deal in its own homeland.***

EDITORIAL NOTE

- ***Is it not a pity for the Punjabi People that they cannot enforce the law already enacted?***
- ***The Institute for Understanding Sikhism is grateful to Mr Prabjot Singh for bringing out the history about the fate of Punjabi Language in its own land, the Punjab state, to shake the conscience of the people of the Punjab.***

(Continued on page 28)

(Continued from page 15)

5. URDU, PUNJABI TO BE SECOND LANGUAGES IN DELHI

New Delhi, June 3: The Centre has agreed in principle to give second language status to Urdu and Punjabi in the Capital. "Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani today said the Center has agreed to the proposal by Delhi government to grant second language status to Urdu and Punjabi and now the proposal will be sent to the Law Ministry for clearance," National Commission for Minorities Chairman Tarlochan Singh said. Singh was the member of a delegation, which met Advani today.

Claiming that the decision was a result of persistent efforts of the Commission, Singh said: "NCM had been insisting that since 50 per cent of the population in the National Capital speaks Punjabi, it should be granted the second language status." The delegation included, among others, Delhi BJP MPs V.K. Malhotra, Madan Lal Khurana and various representatives of the Sikh organizations.

Malhotra expressed hope that the government notification would be issued within a fortnight. Pointing out that Center's clearance to the proposal forwarded by Delhi government in 2000 was pending due to some technical "shortcomings", he said Advani had assured them that necessary steps would be taken to rectify it.

<http://cities.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=53773>

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