

Badrinarayan Upadhyay 'Premghan': *Hamare deś kī bhāṣā aur akṣar* (1895)

Before the development of a Western-derived narrative tradition in the early twentieth century, the most important medium for the nascent style of modern Hindi prose was polemical journalism; its often disputatious content was well suited to the new writers with their love for the grandiloquent diction characteristic of essay-writers and polemicists the world over. Among the most energetic writers and journal-editors of this class was Premghan (1855–1922), born in Mirzapur (on the Ganges between Benares and Allahabad), an associate of Harishchandra (5). In the spirit of the nineteenth century Hindu revivalist movements, Premghan looked back to the much-admired golden age of Indian culture, not hesitating to find fault with its modern manifestations in his contemporary compatriots. He also looked askance at the British presence, which he regarded as self-seeking and exploitative; and he was at once supportive and critical of the rising star of Congress, a favourite theme in his essays.

Given the circumstances of the time, in which the question of language was becoming increasingly tied up with that of communalism, it was natural for journalists to turn rather incestuously upon their own medium when choosing subjects to write about; and Premghan was typical in his passionate commitment to discussing language and the social and cultural implications of its use. Despite its dated style his Hindi is a delight to read because of its richness of expression and because of the gusto with which the author throws himself body and soul into the chosen issues.

The essay *Hamāre deś kī bhāṣā aur akṣar* argues the case for the use of Hindi in the Nagari script in official contexts. The essay has a double purpose: firstly to act as a pro-Hindi polemic, secondly to stir the author's listless compatriots into action in defence of their own culture and language. His main argument is the unintelligibility of the Perso-Arabic script to the majority of the population, and the problems which would ensue from introducing the use of the Roman script as a compromise between the proponents of Urdu and Hindi respectively.

The first paragraph describes the plight of the North-Western Provinces where British policy promoted the use of Urdu at an official level. Premghan exaggeratedly describes the confusions which arise as a result of the misreading of Perso-Arabic words written in the prevalent shorthand of legal documents, citing some delightful (if rather far-fetched) howlers in support of his argument.

The second paragraph goes further into the context of litigation, contrasting the vernacular submissions of the plaintiffs with the high-flown Urdu of the court officials; he points out how the system can be manipulated to trick the ignorant public, at the same time pulling the wool over the eyes of the naive British adjudicator who is led to approve judgements framed in a flowery language completely beyond his comprehension.

The text is included in P.P. Upadhyay and D.N. Upadhyay, *Premghan sarvasva* vol.2 (Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1950), pp. 51–53. For the background to Premghan's journalistic and literary work see R.S. McGregor, *Hindi literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), pp.87–88.

ब्रिटिश राज्य की निर्मल नीति की प्रभा से भारत वर्ष के प्रायः समस्त प्रदेश और प्रान्तों में प्रादेशिक और प्रान्तिक भाषायें प्रचरित हैं, परन्तु आश्चर्य कि अभागे पश्चिमोत्तर प्रदेश में उर्दू (जो अरबी, पारसी, तुरकी आदि कई भाषाओं की पंचमेल खिचड़ी सी है) और अरबी के अक्षर प्रचरित हैं। यह उर्दू भाषा इन्हीं अरबी अक्षरों में लिखी जाने से अब मानों अरबी पारसी की छोटी बहिन हो गई है। कारण इसका यह है कि अरबी पारसी आदि के शब्दों के अतिरिक्त अन्य भाषाओं के शब्द प्रथम तो उसमें अत्यन्त कठिनता से लिखे जाते, और शुद्ध शुद्ध पढ़े तो कदाचित् जाते ही नहीं; जिसके बीसों उदाहरण नित्य लोगों को मिलते हैं। इसी भाँति अरबी और पारसी के शब्द भी प्रायः हिन्दी शब्द के भ्रम से अशुद्ध और अयथार्थ पढ़े जाते हैं, जैसे आलूबुखारा को "उल्लू बिचारा" और हाजी पुर इटौना को "चाची तो बिटौना" पढ़ा जाता है। निदान अरबी अक्षर और उर्दू भाषा मिल कर इस देश का एक प्रकार सत्यानाश किये डालते हैं। न तो घसीट के अक्षर बड़े बड़े मौलवियों से पढ़े जाते, और न वह भाषा सामान्यों के समझ में आती ! अरबी अक्षरों के कारण वह इतनी कठिन हो गई है कि उसे पारसी कहने में कुछ भी अयथार्थ न होगा। यही कारण है कि क्या ग्रामीण और क्या नागरिक सामान्यजन, जिन्हें विशेष कार्यालयों से सम्बन्ध नहीं है, जब कोई कचहरी के उर्दू लिखे कागज पाते तो वे उसे लिये गाँव गाँव और गली गली घूमते फिरते और चाहे पचास पारसी पढ़ों से पढ़ावें, परन्तु जब तक कोई कचहरी का घसीट अक्षर पढ़ने वाला न मिले, कदापि उसका अर्थ उन्हें नहीं ज्ञात होता। इसके अतिरिक्त अरबी, पारसी आदि भाषाओं के गूढ़ शब्दों के अर्थ समझाने वाले की भी अपेक्षा होती ही है।

न केवल यहीं से इति है, वरंच अभियोगों में प्रायः जो ग्राम्यजन साक्ष्य प्रदानार्थ आते तो वे बोलते तो कुछ और लिखा जाता है कुछ, बिचारा साक्षी तो कहता है कि - "मोरे घरे के नियरे", शरिस्तेदार साहिब लिखेंगे - "मुत्तसिल खानः मुजिहिर"। तब यदि यह इज़हार साक्षी को सुनाया भी जाय, तो वह क्या समझेगा ? फिर न केवल साक्षी मात्र, वरंच बहूतेरे नवीनागत इंग्लिस्थानी साहिब लोग भी यह अबुलफज़ली इबारत नहीं समझ सकते, और न बारम्बार उसका अर्थ ही वाचक से पूँछ सकते ! क्योंकि इसके लिये तो फिर उन्हें अपने शरिस्तेदार साहिब को मौलाना का पद देने, और स्वयम् शिष्य बन कर नित्य उनसे पाठ पढ़ने के अतिरिक्त उन्हें अन्य कार्य का अवसर ही नहीं मिल सकेगा। पुलीस की रिपोर्ट और कैफ़ियत आदि में भी प्रायः उस्ताद अमले लोग ऐसा ही किया करते कि विशुद्ध मर्म स्थल पर कोई अरबी आदि का ऐसा कठिन शब्द ढूँढ़ कर ला घुसेड़ देते कि प्रधान साहिब बहादुर समझी न सके हों, और यदि पूँछें तो अण्ड का बण्ड अर्थ बता उन्हें पछाड़ दिया। यों ही ऐसे ऐसे भी शब्द ढूँढ़ कर समय पर कार्य में ला देते कि जो दो वा तीन प्रकार पर पढ़ा जाता, लिखा तो कुछ और पढ़ दिया कुछ और ! दस्तावेजों के लिखने लिखाने में भी इससे बड़े बड़े असम्भव कार्य सम्भव कर दिये जाते और चार बार भी सुना देने से बिचारे भोले गवहिये और अपढ़ ठग लिये जाते हैं। रजिस्ट्रार साहिब भी सुना कर केवल स्वीकार मात्र पूँछ लेते और "हाँ" सुन कर लेखनी से उन पर अज्ञात छुरी चला देते हैं।

Premghan's language is dominated by the S register which parallels the high PA register forming the butt for his diatribe; the fact that the most effective phrases in the passage are those based on native HU Patterns is thus in keeping with his message but not with his Sanskritized medium. Some archaisms of usage and spelling betray the nineteenth century date of the piece.

1 *br̥ṭiś*: a hyper-Sanskritized spelling with *r̥* for *ri*.

1 *br̥ṭiś rāṅy kī nirmal nīti kī prabhā se*: 'through the radiance of the immaculate polity of British rule'. *prabhā* begins an extravagant alliterative sequence of 'p' sounds typifying Premghan's rhetorical style.

1 *pradeś... prānt*: best translated as 'region' and 'province' respectively — cf. adj. *prādeśik* and *prāntik*. The technical sense of *pradeś* as a 'state' follows the post-Independence re-drawing of the map of India.

2 *pracarit*: 'current, used'. Synonymous *pracalit* is now preferred.

2 *paścimottar pradeś*: North-Western Provinces, modern U.P.

3 *khicari*: (> Anglo-Indian 'kedgerie') 'hotch-potch' — the derogatory sense being further strengthened by adj. *pañcmel* (lit. 'composite of five elements'), 'mixed, miscellaneous', and by the dismissive *ādī kai bhāṣāṅ* 'and several other such languages'.

4 *yah urdū bhāṣā*: the pr. adds a subtle touch of distaste, as though describing some unclean object held gingerly between thumb and forefinger.

5 *kāraṅ iskā yah hai*: the inversion stresses the noun, 'the reason for this is'. Cf. the different emphasis of 13 *yahī kāraṅ hai* 'this is why'.

6 *śuddh śuddh parhe to kadācit jāte hī nahīn*: 'can hardly at all be read really accurately'. The disjunction of *parhe* from *jāte* accommodates the separate but complementary emphases of *to* and *hī* respectively (542b).

8 *hindī śabd ke bhram se*: 'through confusion with a H word'.

9 *ālū bukhārā... ullū bicārā*: the misreading derives from the minimalist representation in the rapid *śikastā* script (used for legal documents etc.) of PA characters. Since the dots are generally omitted in this shorthand, *ḥim*, *ce* and *xe* appear as the undotted *bari he*, nor is *pe* distinct from *be*, etc.

9 *hājī pur itaunā*: presumably referring to the two town names Hajipur (near Patna) and Itaunia (near Lucknow).

9 *cācī to biṭaunā*: a meaningless collocation, 'auntie then little son' (*biṭaunā* being a diminutive of *betā*).

11 *ghasīṭ ke akṣar*: 'scribbled characters': cf. 16 *kachari kā ghasīṭ akṣar* i.e. 'scribbled court shorthand'.

12 *sāmānyoṅ ke samajh meṅ*: though here used as m., *samajh* is normally f., like most nouns deriving from verbs.

13 *kyā grāmīṅ aur kyā nāgarik sāmānyajan*: a comma after *nāgarik* would elucidate the syntax, 'ordinary folk, be they villagers or townspeople'.

16 *pārsī parhoṅ*: the p.obl. of ptc. *parhā* is here used nominally to mean 'one who is literate in P, P-reader': cf. the more regular 16 *parhne vālā*.

19 *na keval yahīn se iti hai*: 'nor does the matter end here'. S *iti*, like Latin *finis*, marks the conclusion of a text or speech, and by extension can mean 'end' more generally.

19 *sākṣya pradānārth*: 'in order to give evidence', *pradān* 'giving' + *arth* 'purpose', in sandhi combination (611).

20 *bolte to kuch aur likhā jāte hai kuch*: 'they say one thing and something different is written down'. Cf. 30 *likhā to kuch aur parh diyā kuch aur* (in which the first *aur* is a cj., the second an adv.).

20 *more ghare ke niyare*: 'near my house'. Pr. *more* (cf. HU *mere*), inflected obl. *ghare*, and ppn. *niyare* (< S. *nikaṭe*) are all Avadhi forms.

- 21 *muttasil khānaḥ mujhir*: P *muttasil-e xānā-e muzhir*, 'adjacent to the abode of the deponent', strikingly distinct in register from the Avadhi. The use of *visarg* (511) to represent the P silent *he* is ingenious, but not a standard transliteration.
- 22 *na keval sākṣī mātra*: a tautological construction, with enclitic *mātra* duplicating the sense of *keval*. Cf. 33 *keval svīkār mātra*.
- 23 *īnglisthānī*: a Sanskritized spelling for P *īnglistānī*. Cf. P *-stān* in 'Pakistan' vs S *-sthān* in 'Rajasthan'.
- 23 *abulfazalī*: grand Mughal terminology as associated with Akbar's great minister Abul Fazl (1551-1602).
- 24 *pūnch sakte*: the tendency for long vowels to be nasalized in pronunciation is shown graphically here.
- 25 *maulānā kā pad dene*: the obl.inf. anticipates ppn. *ke atirikt*.
- 26 *pulīs*: though *-ī-* reflects more closely the E pronunciation, modern standard H has *pulis*. Cf. also colloquial *rapaṭ* for *riporaṭ*.
- 27 *viśuddh marmm sthal par*: 'at the absolutely most vital point'.
- 28 *dhūnrh kar lā ghuseṛ dete*: roughly 'sought out, dredged up and dragged into use' — a wonderfully expressive verbal phrase.
- 28 *pradhān sāhib bahādur. pradhān* is here used nominally as 'the president (of court)'. *bahādur* following a name is a title equivalent to 'the honourable', here with a nice touch of sarcasm.
- 29 *samjhī na sake hoṅ*: the verb stem is the unextended *samajh-*, the final *-ī* being an agglutinated emphatic enclitic: cf. *us/usī* etc.
- 30 *jo do vā tīn prakār par parhā jātā*: 'which can be read in two or three ways'.
- 31 *isse bare bare asambhav kārya sambhav kar diye jāte*: 'in this way, wholly impossible things were made possible' (542a).
- 33 *keval svīkār mātra pūnch lete*: 'would ask for nothing more than confirmation', i.e. would not attempt a full analysis of the evidence.
- 34 *un par ajñāt churī calā dete haiṅ*: 'runs an unknown knife into them', i.e. has no inkling of the harm his judgment may be doing them.