

M.K. Gandhi and P.D. Tandon: Correspondence (1945)

During the years before and shortly after Independence the question of *rāṣṭra bhāṣā*, 'national language', was hotly debated. The cause of Sanskritized Khaṛī Bolī in Nagari script was promoted by institutions such as the Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan (H.S.S.; 'Hindi Literature Assembly'), founded in Allahabad in 1910; but an equally determined body of opinion espoused by the Hindustānī Pracār Sabhā (H.P.S.; 'Association for the Promulgation of Hindustani'), favoured Hindustani — with the choice of script a hotly-debated question. Though he had earlier advocated the use of Hindi as the vehicle of Congress politics and was closely associated with the H.S.S., of which he was elected President in 1918, Gandhi (1869–1948) came increasingly to see the value of the widespread currency of Hindustani, and he balanced his support for Hindi with parallel support for the Urdu cause. His insistence that literacy in both scripts should be the norm led him into inevitable conflict with the H.S.S. establishment, particularly its founder-member and President, Purushottamdas Tandon (1882–1962), an Allahabad lawyer and Congress politician who was passionately committed to the Hindi cause.

With the exception of his autobiography (written in his native Gujarati) the vast majority of Gandhi's writings in is English. But in his letters Gandhi increasingly turned to the use of Hindi, even when realising that its use was problematic to correspondents such as Nehru.

In this exchange of letters Gandhi consults Tandon on the anomalous position of being a member of both the H.S.S. and the H.P.S., offering to resign from the former, of which Tandon had been elected President in 1923. Tandon's reply is conciliatory, and maintains that there is no fundamental conflict between the tasks of the two organizations. In his first paragraph he refers to Gandhi's support of Urdu as a 'new development', and although the tone of his letter is deferential to a fault, he manages to show his disapproval of this divergence from the unequivocal support for Hindi, rather than 'the Urdu style of Hindi', as the vehicle for the nationalist movement; in his second main paragraph, Tandon reassures Gandhi that there is no reason why a member of the H.S.S. should not also support the H.P.S.

The correspondence is given in Gopal Prasad Vyas, ed., *Gāndhī hindī darśan* (New Delhi: Dilli Pradeshik Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, n.d.) pp. 226–227.

The views of the two protagonists are given in Ahmad 1941 and are discussed in Peter Brock, 'Gandhi and the Hindi movement' in John L. Hill, ed., *The Congress and Indian nationalism* (London: Curzon Press, forthcoming 1990); some of Gandhi's journalistic writing on the subject is collected in *Our language problem* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965). For the general context see *LCND*.

भाई टंडनजी,

मेरे पास उर्दू खत आते हैं, हिन्दी आते हैं और गुजराती। सब पूछते हैं, मैं कैसे हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन में रह सकता हूँ और हिन्दुस्तानी सभा में भी? वे कहते हैं, सम्मेलन की दृष्टि से हिन्दी ही राष्ट्रभाषा हो सकती है जिसमें नागरी लिपि को ही राष्ट्रीय स्थान दिया जाता है; जब मेरी दृष्टि में नागरी और उर्दू लिपि को स्थान दिया जाता है, जो भाषा न फारसीमयी है न संस्कृतमयी है, जब मैं सम्मेलन की भाषा और नागरी लिपि को पूरा राष्ट्रीय स्थान नहीं देता हूँ तब मुझे सम्मेलन में से हट जाना चाहिए। ऐसी दलील मुझे योग्य लगती है। इस हालत में क्या सम्मेलन से हटना मेरा फर्ज नहीं होता है! ऐसा करने से लोगों की दुविधा न रहेगी और मुझे पता चलेगा कि मैं कहाँ हूँ।

कृपया शीघ्र उत्तर दें। मौन के कारण मैंने ही लिखा है, लेकिन मेरे अक्षर पढ़ने में सबको मुसीबत होती है इसलिए इसे लिखवाकर भेजता हूँ।

आप अच्छे होंगे।

आपका, मो० क० गांधी

१० क्रास्थवेट रोड, इलाहाबाद ८.६.१९५५

१५ पूज्य बापूजी, प्रणाम!

आपका २५ मई का पत्र मुझे मिला। हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन और हिन्दुस्तानी-प्रचार-सभा के कामों में कोई मौलिक विरोध मेरे विचार में नहीं है। आपको स्वयं हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन का सदस्य रहते हुए लगभग २१ वर्ष हुए, इसी बीच आपने हिन्दी-प्रचार का काम राष्ट्रीयता की दृष्टि से किया। वह सब काम गलत था, ऐसा तो आप नहीं मानते होंगे। राष्ट्रीय दृष्टि से हिन्दी-प्रचार बांछनीय है, यह तो आपका सिद्धान्त है ही। आपके नए दृष्टिकोण के अनुसार उर्दू-शिक्षण का भी प्रचार होना चाहिए। यह पहले काम से भिन्न एक नया काम है जिसका पिछले काम से कोई विरोध नहीं है।

सम्मेलन हिन्दी को राष्ट्रभाषा मानता है। उर्दू को वह हिन्दी की एक शैली मानता है जो विशिष्ट जनों में प्रचलित है।

२५ स्वयं वह हिन्दी की साधारण शैली का काम करता है, उर्दू शैली का नहीं। आप हिन्दी के साथ उर्दू को भी चलाते हैं। सम्मेलन उसका तनिक भी विरोध नहीं करता है। किन्तु राष्ट्रीय कामों में अंग्रेजी को हटाने में वह उसकी सहायता का स्वागत करता है। भेद केवल इतना है कि आप दोनों चलाना चाहते हैं। सम्मेलन आरम्भ से केवल हिन्दी चलाता आया है। हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन के सदस्यों को हिन्दुस्तानी प्रचार सभा के सदस्य होने में रोक नहीं है। हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन की ओर से निर्वाचित हिन्दुस्तानी एकेडमी हिन्दी और उर्दू दोनों शैलियाँ और लिपियाँ चलाती है। इस दृष्टि से मेरा निवेदन है कि मुझे इस बात का कोई अवसर नहीं लगता कि आप सम्मेलन छोड़ें। . . .

३५ मुझे जो बात उचित लगी, ऊपर निवेदन किया। किन्तु यदि आप मेरे दृष्टिकोण से सहमत नहीं हैं और आपकी आत्मा यही कहती है कि सम्मेलन से अलग हो जाऊँ तो आपके अलग होने की बात पर बहुत खेद होते हुए भी नतमस्तक हो आपके निर्णय को स्वीकार करूँगा।

हाल में हिन्दी और उर्दू के विषय में एक वक्तव्य मैंने दिया था, उसकी एक प्रतिलिपि सेवा में भेजता हूँ। निवेदन है कि इसे पढ़ लीजिएगा।

विनीत,

पु० दा० टंडन

Gandhi's H is simple and unpretentious; he prefers short sentences and straightforward syntax, and uses loanwords freely. Tandon's H reflects the more formal and literary style of the Sanskritized register, but does not despise PA loans and is far from being pedantic. Both writers' language is heavily influenced by E.

2 *bhāi taṇḍanī*: this informal opening contrasts strongly with Tandon's more reverential 15 *pūjya bāpūjī, pranām!*, the distinction underlining the relative status of the two writers. Cf. the contrast between the two styles of signing off: Gandhi's 13 *āpkā*, Tandon's 38 *vinīt* 'humble [servant]'.

6 *phārsīmayī*: the use of a S suffix with a non-S word is rather unusual.

8 *haṭ jānā cāhie*: 'should clear out' — the colloquial register makes this a deliberately blunt and forceful expression.

10 *maiñ kahāñ hūñ*: a very clear calque from E 'where I am', i.e. where I stand on this matter.

11 *krpayā śighra uttar deñ*: 'kindly reply promptly'. More formal in register than the overall tone, this is a typical letter-writing formula.

11 *maun ke kārañ*: probably a reference to one of Gandhi's regular vows of silence, when he would communicate only in writing.

12 *ise likhvākar bhejtā hūñ*: a perfect example of the word-economy of HU syntax, here using the cj. ptc. of a causative verb.

13 *āp acche hoñge*: an economical way of saying 'I trust you are well', very clipped and unceremonious.

13 *mo.ka.gāñdhī*: note the traditional abbreviation to the first syllable of the name; cf. 38 *pu.dā.taṇḍan*. The usage tends now to be replaced by the practice of transcribing the pronounced value of the English initials, e.g. 'em.ke', 'pī.ḍī', also followed in U.

14 *krāsthveṭ rod*: 'Crossthwaite Road', named after a governor of the United Provinces. Most roads in the 'Civil Lines' areas of Indian towns had English names deriving from provincial England or from the names of British administrators etc.; since Independence these have been largely replaced by Indian names such as 'Mahatma Gandhi Marg'.

17 *āpko... sadasya rahte hue lagbhag 27 varṣ hue*: 'you have been a member for about 27 years': use of *rahnā* rather than *honā* is dicated in such phrases, as meaning 'continuing to be, remaining' rather than 'becoming'.

19 *vah sab kām galat thā, aisā to āp nahīñ māñte hoñge*: 'I'm sure you don't consider all that work to have been wrong?' — a typical HU paratactic construction, the proposition *vah sab kām galat thā* being stated first, then negated in a second clause linked with correlative *aisā*. Cf. the following sentence, in which the postulate comprising the first clause is picked up by the pronoun *yah* in the second.

20 *yah to āpkā siddhānt hai hī*: 'this is after all your principle'.

21 *śikṣaṇ*: 'instruction, teaching' — distinct in sense and gender from the more abstract f. *śikṣā* 'education'.

24 *viśiṣṭ janoñ meñ prācalit*: 'current among certain people'. The intended implication is that U is the language of a minority group, while H enjoys widespread currency among the population at large: something of an over-simplification of the real situation at the time.

25 *svayaṃ vah*: 'it itself' — the reference is to the Sammelan.

26 *calāte haiñ*: 'help advance, support the cause of'.

26 *sammelan uskā tanik bhī virodh nahīñ kartā hai*: 'The Sammelan does not oppose it [Urdu] in the slightest'. Retention of auxiliary *hai* with the negative gives emphasis to the denial.

28 *hindī sāhitya sammelan kī or se nirvācit*: 'elected by the H.S.S.', a pre-modifier to *hindustānī ekeḍamī*. *kī or se* commonly has the sense of 'by, through, under the auspices of'; cf. similar *kī taraf se*.

31 *merā nivedan hai*: 'my submission is', 'I submit'.

- 34 *āpkī ātmā... kaṭī hai*: 'your spirit says' — the usage perhaps reflects the Western concept of 'conscience' rather than the original sense of *ātmā* as 'self, spirit'; cf. the more natural HU expressions with *jī* — *jī cāhnā*, *jī karnā* etc.
- 35 *natmastak ho*: 'with bowed head', i.e. 'humbly'. *ho* is the abs. (532a).
- 35 *nirṇay*: 'judgement' — distinct from *nīscay* 'determination, resolve', though both can translate 'decision'.
- 36 *sevā meḥ*: 'in submission to you, for your consideration'; cf. U *xidmat meḥ*.