URDU IN SRI LANKA:
SOCIO-LINGUISTICS OF A MINORITY LANGUAGE

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It may be said with confidence that Urdu occupies only a peripheral place in the linguistic map of Sri Lanka. However, its role as a cultural component is far greater than its limited use would suggest. The aim of this essay is to indicate the range and scope of Urdu in Sri Lanka and make an attempt to assess its social and cultural role.

THE "NEGLIGIBILITY" OF URDU IN SRI LANKA

The "negligibility" of Urdu in Sri Lanka has been the outcome of a variety of factors. One of these is the traditional view of the Muslim diaspora from Arabia to Sri Lanka, according to which the Arabs (Muslims) left Arabia owing to the high-handed acts of the Caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân (ca. ninth century CE) and they settled in various parts of Asia including parts of India and Malacca and at eight landing stages in Sri Lanka. This traditional view implies not only a perception of Arab ancestry, directly or through India, but also an attachment (bred-in-the-bone, as it were) to the Arabic language. Arabic, however, is no longer a tongue accessible to the generality of the Muslims of Sri Lanka except for a reading knowledge of the Holy Qur'ân and other accented Arabic texts. Nonetheless, the mental slant towards Arabic militiates against the folk acceptance of Urdu in Sri Lanka.

Further, most of the Muslims cannot read the Perso-Arabic script in which Urdu is written, some of them confuse it with Arabic script. On the other hand, the Dewanagiri script, used for Hindi, is known to many non-Muslims because of the wide knowledge of Sanskrit among the Hindu population of Sri Lanka as well as in academic circles. There is, also, the spin-off from Sanskrit suties into Hindi language and literature both academically and in everyday life.
However, the major impediment (or negative factor) for the acquisition of knowledge of Urdu by the Muslims of Sri Lanka, it appears, is that Urdu and Tamil (the native-language of the Muslims of Sri Lanka) belong to different linguistic families. Tamil is a Dravidian tongue, perhaps the most elaborate and articulate in its family. The transition from Tamil to Urdu is not easy as is say, from Dutch to German or from Italian to French.

There are some superficial similarities between Tamil and Urdu, though. The post-positions (after verbs) are roughly of the same function as those in Urdu. These post-positions are grammatically termed in Tamil as "differences." These may be looked upon as case-endings, too. Another similarity is that the finite verb in both languages comes at the end of a sentence. The Tamil finite verb, however, is agglutinative. As the following illustrative example, shows;

\[
\begin{align*}
(Nhaan) & \text{ irukkirain} & \text{(I) am.} \\
(Nhii) & \text{ irukkirayaay} & \text{(You) are} \\
(Avan) & \text{ irukkiraan} & \text{(He) is} \\
(Avalh) & \text{ irukkiraalh} & \text{(She) is} \\
(Aithu) & \text{ irukkirithu} & \text{(It) is} \\
(Nhaangdh) & \text{ Irukkiloam} & \text{(We) are} \\
(Nhiingalh) & \text{ irukkiiriikalh} & \text{(You) are} \\
(AvarM) & \text{ IrukimarM}) & \text{(They) are}^{10}
\end{align*}
\]

Consequently, the unattached finite verbs of Urdu such as \textit{hai, hain}, appear unusual and perhaps outlandish to the speaker of Tamil. While spelling reform has taken place to a limited extent, in Tamil, romanization is completely out of the question. Equally, efforts to romanize or "phoneticize" Urdu have been for primary reading purposes or academic uses only, and have never got off the ground either in its homeland or in Sri Lanka.

Another drawback of the efforts at Urdu acclimatization in Sri Lanka has been the almost total inaccessibility of the works of creative writers in Urdu, even in translation. For instance, Premchand (who is understood to have written in Urdu before switching to Hindi) is far widely known in Sri Lanka than say, Saadat Hasan Manto. Works on Islam by Urdu writers are translated into Tamil, largely by way of English translations.

It was, and is still, rare to find Urdu books for sale in the general bookshops of Colombo (the metropolis of Sri Lanka) and other provincial towns or even in the bookshops dealing with Islamic books. This is true of Urdu periodicals too. This inaccessibility of Urdu has been compounded by the fact that \textit{madrasahs} (schools for training of 'ulamā') teach in Arabic.
and Tamil only, unlike some of their counterparts in south India which use Urdu also.\(^6\) The median moulavi (that is, one who has completed a course at a madrasah) in Sri Lanka does not and in most cases cannot handle Urdu.

**THE POSITIVE ROLE OF URDU IN SRI LANKA**

The above negative factors notwithstanding, Urdu in Sri Lanka is not without influence either in sectional circles or in the generality of the population.

In the first place, there are tiny (even microscopic) groups within the Muslims of Sri Lanka who are remarkably conversant with Urdu for the simple reason that they came from Urdu-speaking districts of the Indian subcontinent and perhaps still have contacts with those areas. The Memons are Hanafi Sunnis from western India (mainly Kathiawar) and have been established in Sri Lanka since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nearly all of them are business men, specializing mainly in textiles and the garment industry.\(^7\) The Memons speak a form of dialect generally termed Memoni which has affinities with Sindhi and Gujarati, with an admixture of local words.\(^8\) Nearly all Memons are conversant with Urdu, it being their "cultured" tongue. The part of Colombo's Pettah (the bazaar area), where Memons most frequently do business, is the only public place in Sri Lanka where most Urdu-speakers are met with. Another two communities which are conversant with Urdu are the Boarahs and the Khojas.\(^9\)

The Dawoodi Borah community in Sri Lanka are of the Shi'ah Isma'ili Tayyibi faith.\(^10\) They are about three thousand in number.\(^11\) Traditionally a trading community, nearly all of them are engaged in business, which is facilitated by their contacts in India where members of their community live. In Sri Lanka, some of the largest trading and export firms are Borah-owned. They are concentrated mostly in Colombo and in a few provincial towns. Though their main language appears to be Gujarati or a version of it, they are at home in Urdu. The spiritual activities of the Boarahs are directed by their Dā'i al-Muṭlaq, who is based in Bombay.

The other Shi'ah groups in Sri Lanka are the Khojahs, of the Nizarian persuasion (Eastern Isma'ilis), whose spiritual affairs are directed by the Agha Khan. They are a very small community, generally considered to be less than seventy individuals. Though sparse in numbers, they have extensive trading connections, especially in the spices and general merchandise. They appear to be conversant with Urdu.

As has been indicated, the language of the Muslims of Sri Lanka
(except for small communities whose presence in Sri Lanka is of a hundred years duration and which have been noticed above) is Tamil. And yet, the Tamil spoken by the Muslims of Sri Lanka has a large number of Urdu words. Technically, since Urdu is a syncretic language, most Urdu words are derived from Arabic, Persian or Turkish languages. None-the-less, for the purposes of this paper, they maybe treated as Urdu words—as immediate derivatives. Though found in the Tamil of the Muslims throughout the country, these words are pervasive in the spoken Tamil of the Muslims of Colombo.22

These words were absorbed by the Muslim traders who come into contact with the Urdu-speaking groups in the bazaar and then transferred by osmosis to the generality of the Muslims of Colombo. These Urdu loan-words may be roughly or schematically classified as follows.23 (Appendix B)

a. Technical or related to art:

(i) music, e.g. sitār, sarōd, shehnāī.
(ii) Yunānī medicine.
(iii) jewellary e.g., nāqaṣ, aṣl, naqī.
(iv) horses/horsemanship.
(v) food/cuisine.
(vi) trade.

b. Names of Muslims (males and females)
e.g., Shīrīn, Rōshan, Shafraz.
c. Words in everyday use
e.g., bandobast, tayyār, sīfāris.
d. Operative words (Urdu substantive with Tamil verb-forms)
e.g., sirās "seithai".24

Noun formations (Tamil substantives with Urdu nouns) e.g. "thadi" wāllah.25

e. Pejorative use of some of the above words.

Some of the oldest Urdu loan-words seem to be works used in traditional Yunānī medicine. They easily acquired the status of words of art, whether used in North India, or Kerala, or Sri Lanka. Certainly, these terms were used by medical men and patients alike just as English medical terms are used today. A set of terms which seem to have gone out of use were terms regarding horses, horse-breeding from the Proto-Urdu and Urdu-
speaking centres of the Indian subcontinent, such as the western area border-
ing Sind. As climate of Sri Lanka is unsuitable for horse-breeding; these areas traditionally supplied horses to Sri Lanka for the use of Kings or for their cavalry.26 Indeed, the import of horses to Sri Lanka, goes back two thousand years or more. The Mahavamsa, the fifth century (CE) chronicle of Sri Lanka speaks of an extraordinary incident in the political history of Sri Lanka which underlines the great importance of horse-flesh.

Two Damilas, Sesa and Guttika, sons of a freighter who brought horses hither, defeated the king Suntana at the head of a great army and reigned both (together) for twenty-two years.27

This event took place in the first century BCE.

Some of the Urdu loan-words concerning food-items are old while the others are new borrowings connected with Mogul food and such items as ‘badam phir’ (sweetmeat), ‘samosaah’ (fried meat pie), ‘keenu’ (meat filling). The Urdu borrowings found in trade and commerce in Sri Lanka are espe-
cially connected with the textile trade and articles of women’s wear such as kamiz, shalwar and ghararah.

During recent years, Urdu words have been used in the naming of children both boys and girls. The same tendency was there forty or so years ago but on a very limited scale. Many Muslim men bear the name of Shahid after the scholar, Mawlawi Shahid Nur’mani. Political events in the Indian sub-continent have fostered the use of names such as Jinnaah (in reality a Sadihi word), Liaqat Ali, Ganaanfar Ali, Phiroz Shah, Meen-ul-Haq, Dhudu Baksh. Older men bear such titular names as Baig, Pasha, Khan. Feminine names of Urdu (in fact, Perso-Arabic-Turko names) are profuse. Such names as Roohan, Jehan Ara, Shirin, Yasmin, Gul Badan, Nasrin, Pervin, Jamiesa, Jezila Sheermila, Shakila are frequently met with. Some authorities say that these names are chosen for their liquid sounds rather than as an appreciation of their innate content.

There are some Urdu words which have entered the general vocabu-
larv of the Muslims. Some of them have specific “bound” meanings. For instance, the term my nauder refers only to a Muslim who has passed the final examination of a madrasah in Sri Lanka or elsewhere. Other terms have acquired a general meaning. And because these equivalents in Tamil are frequently long-winded, are also used by the daily Pvas. Examples are and its two variants and are used in the sense of “to implement” and “regularly used”, respectively. It is true that these words, through their sound effect, give an immediacy lost in their Tamil equivalents, for instance puyar and bandobast.
Urdu borrowings are generally used as substantives. If they are used operationally (as verb or verb-forms) they need an auxiliary verb in Tamil. For *sifarz* is "recommendation". But the verb "to recommend" is not *saifras-than* (as in native Tamil words but *sariz with seithan* (a Tamil verb form for "he did"). Of course, the auxiliary will vary, according to circumstances, in Person and Tense.

Another, somewhat limited usage, is the employment of an Urdu and Tamil word in tandem. A frequent instance is words added to *wâllah* (doer) e.g., *karathai (cart) wallah (karathai wallah = cart man = carter). A very frequent instance is *thadi wallah = bearded man. Wallah is never used as adjective phrase in front of Tamil substantives.

Some Urdu words, perhaps because some of their users do not know their precise meanings, have become pejorative in use either by themselves or in use with auxiliaries or both. For instance, the term *dosth* in Urdu is used correctly as "friend" but when used before *muari* (in Tamil "way" (or "method")) is pejorative meaning to "wheedle", "flatter" or "cheat". Another Urdu word *ghanâ* (music) is treated pejoratively in Sri Lankan Muslim use meaning "a recital by unqualified amateurs". *Toppi-wâllah* does not mean a seller of hats but a "confidence trickster" or "cheat".

This tendency to use Urdu borrowing pejoratively is being thwarted by two factors. One is that after Independence, Sri Lanka had limited the use of English as medium of instruction. The indigenous languages, Sinhala and Tamil are now the medium of instruction in schools and universities. Since the rate of literacy in Sri Lanka is very high, most Muslims are replacing their stock of Urdu words with Tamil equivalents, as written communications are in the indigenous languages rather than in English. The other factor is the introduction of Urdu lessons in a few *madrâsahs* in Sri Lanka. This, if at all, merely dents the surface of non-awareness of Urdu among the Muslims of Sri Lanka but it is a step in the right direction.

**ROLE OF URDU IN THE OUTER WORLD OF SRI LANKA**

Urdu is known in the outer worlds of Sri Lanka to a limited extent, among a narrow band of non-Muslims (and also Muslims in those fields). These fields are pre-eminently those of Hindusthani (Indian) music and Yunâni medicine.

Traditionally, the Eastern musical systems of Sri Lanka have been based on the Indian model. While the Tamils (Hindus) of Sri Lanka had taken up Carnatic music associated with the Tamil and Telegu parts of south
India, the Sinhalese have been attracted by the North-Indian version—the Hindusthani music system. Hindusthani music has manifest Muslim background and gharānahs such as the Lucknow version, are Urdu-based. The work of (primary phase) Urdu musicologists and scholars such as Amīr Khusraw and others are important in this regard. Hindusthani music is the classical music of the Sinhalese. The Sinhala service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (the State-run sound broadcasting system) has always regularly broadcast, Hindusthani music programmes by Sri Lankan musicians and "canned" broadcasts from the Indian subcontinent. These, of course, include both vocal and instrumental.

Music has formed part of the school syllabus in Sri Lanka, and after Independence in 1948, greater encouragement was given to Hindusthani (and Carnatic) music as opposed to Western classical music. Music is one subject of aesthetic studies, the other two being painting and dancing; every school child should take one of these three subjects. There are special courses for music teachers. The university degrees are awarded in these subjects. There are school inspectors for music, as well. (Appendix A)

The state encouragement for Hindusthani music has disseminated a knowledge of Urdu worlds both among music practitioners as well as the aesthetically-inclined public. Such Urdu words as gharānah, khayāl, ghazal and gajrā are in common use. This familiarity is reinforced by several factors, such as scholarships to Bhakande University. This gives a more immediate experience of Urdu environment and Urdu words. Frequently, the grading of singers of Hindusthani music as well as instrumentalists on the state-broadcasting system is done by visiting professors of music of universities of the "Urdu-belt" in India. The state broadcasting system also puts on the air, programmes introducing Muslim and non-Muslim master musicians of Hindusthani music, as well as lessons and appreciative features.

Indian (and Pakistani) film music, which uses a staple of Urdu words has been popular in Sri Lanka since the very inception of the film industry. Such Urdu words as 'ishq, bālam, payār, mahabbat are known to most people of Sri Lanka. Urdu Film titles whether consisting of one word like bārsāt, hādāl, milān, zināt and jūgnā' or of phrases such as āi milān kī bēlā have also contributed to this awareness. There were also some Sri Lankan Muslim music directors and singers, conversant with Urdu who have contributed to the awareness of Urdu.

The other field in which Urdu was to play a not insignificant role was the modern Yūnānī medicine in Sri Lanka. Traditional Yūnānī medicine in Sri Lanka had passed from generation to generation by way of actual practice and hence theoretical knowledge and Urdu linguistics were not pivotal.
However, in the early years of the twentieth century, under the spur of national aspirations, there was in Sri Lanka an intense desire to institutionalize the traditional medical systems of Sri Lanka which were Ayurveda, The Siddhā and the Yūnānī systems. As a rule, but not exclusively, the Ayurveda is used by the Sinhalese. The Siddhā by the Tamils and the Yūnānī by the Muslims.

The Government established a Committee on Indigenous Systems of Medicine which reported on December 1927. As a result, The Government established in Colombo, in 1929, a College of Indigenous Medicine with facilities for the teaching of Ayurveda, Siddhā and Yūnānī systems. It was directed by a Board of Indigenous Medicine comprising representatives of the three systems and other interested and qualified persons. Since the basic organs of Yūnānī medicine as practised in the Indian subcontinent (which were material for study in Sri Lanka) were in Urdu, a knowledge of Urdu was inculcated among students of Yūnānī medicine.

MODE OF TRANSFERENCE OF URDU TERMS

There are particular differences in the mode and consequence of the transfer of Urdu terms. There are two modes to be noticed, the Muslim mode and the Non-Muslim mode.

In the case of the Muslims' use (the Muslim mode), the terms are used by the special groups in their correct, specified sense (for instance, technical textile terms by the clothiers and garment merchants). These terms are later picked up by the general body of Muslims who adopt three procedures.

a. Use the term correctly, as a term of art.
b. Generalise and use the terms metaphorically.
c. Use the term pejoratively. This may not always happen.

As regards b and c, some of these terms may drop out of use and be replaced by native Tamil words. There is no control over these procedures because these words are not written down in Urdu; and often writers avoid using them in written Tamil.

In the use of the Urdu words by non-Muslims of Sri Lanka (the non-Muslim mode), the procedures are simpler. The professionals, for instance musicologists and singers, use the Urdu terms specifically as words of art; and so do the general public. The Sinhala language, itself a tongue derived from Sanskrit, prefers to keep its borrowings to Sanskrit.
while many Muslims use the terms *manzil, mahal* (for palaces and mansions), the Sinhales use *maligawa*, a Sinhalese term derived from Sanskrit. Sanskritic *rājah* is preferred to *nawwāb*. *Wāllah* is totally avoided in favour of *karaya* ('doer ultimately derived from the Sanskritic root, *kru*).

Thus, while the place of Urdu in Sri Lanka is not insignificant, its role is more osmotic than integral.

**APPENDIX A**

Syllabus for Urdu in the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level)  
i.e. Pre University class in Sri Lanka

Subject No. 52; URDU

Question Paper I (duration 3. hours).
1. Unseen Urdu texts for translation into English.
2. Translation of two (out of several) passages in English into Urdu.
3. Writing simple essays in Urdu.

Question Paper II (duration 3 hours) 
Translation from texts (prescribed), taking into consideration the subject-matter, style of writing, literary background and other special features.

Prescribed texts.

- *Nazir Ahmād; Tawbat al-Nāṣāḥ* (chapters 1–5).
- Premchand; *Varidat*.


**APPENDIX B**

Some Urdu (Arabo-Perso-Turkish) Words in Current Use in Sri Lanka

Those in limited use are marked with asterisk*. 
1. *Asal (real).
2. *Naql (copy)
3. *Dost (friend)
4. *Kismet (fate)
5. *Sarkar (government)
6. *Janab (Mr, Sir).
7. *Faisal (Settlement)
8. *Bada (big, great)
9. *Chota (small)
10. Mowlavi (theologian)
11. *Nuqshon (damaged)
12. Jil mal (fraudulent)
13. *Mullah (theologian)
14. Sahib (a notable)
15. *Maidan (open area)
16. *Sitar (musical instrument)
17. *Sarod (musical instrument)
18. *Tabla (musical instrument)
19. *Hukum (authority)
20. *Memon (tradesman)
21. *Dil (heart, happiness)
22. Khazana (treasury)
23. Kacheri (government office)
24. *Wakil (attorney, agent)
25. *Zaroor (ready)
26. *Zeenat (beauty, chic)
27. *Mulqat (meeting)
28. *Khushi (joy)
29. Javan (young man, stalwart)
30. *Moulah Islam (new convert to Islam)
31. *Ashiq (affectio n, merriment)
32. Zindabad (long live)
33. *Ghust39 (going from place to place on Da’wat)
34. Mahal (palace)
35. *Jaaga (staying place, residence)
36. *Maqoam (residence)
37. Wakalaat (advocacy, support)
38. Bahadur (hero)
39. Pahilwan (wrestler, champion)
40. Nishan (wishful thinking)
41. Sepy (soldier)
42. Gazal (mode of music)
43. Gajra (mode of music)
44. Pasand (beauty)
45. Roti (unleaved bread)
46. Kheema (mince-meat)
47. Masaala (curry powder)
48. Keban (skewered meat)
49. Tayyar (ready)
50. * Ghori (altercation)
51. Ghusti' (wrestling)
52. * Jugal band (two musical instruments played together)
53. Musthif (preparation)
54. Ziyyaram (tomb of saint)
55. Bazaar (business place, office)
56. * Thakkadi (curried mutton and flour balls)
57. Attar (perfume)
58. * Thana (police station)
59. Inaam (free, gratis)
60. Jumera40 (Thursday night especially for religious rites)
61. * Achcha (All right)
62. * Teek hai (All right)
63. Nawab (king)
64. Kadathasi (paper)
65. Wala (doer etc)
66. Tamasha (entertainment)
67. Shalwar (woman's shawl, veil)
68. Kamiz (woman's shirt, blouse)
69. Gharara (woman's trousers)
70. Samaa (discussion)
71. Bastan (walking stick)
72. Pir (religious leader)
73. **Shaykh** (religious leader)
74. **Payagambar** (used to denote Muhammad (peace be on him))
75. **Farsi** (Persian language)
76. * **Ismet-Inoune** (as name)
77. **Yunani** (medical system)
78. **Khandoori** (religious feast)
79. **Rustam** (as name)
80. * **Jeeni** (horse saddle)
81. * **Anjuman** (association)
82. **Nahas** (exquisite craftsmanship)
83. **Taj** (crown)
84. * **Gulistan** (rose-garden)
85. **Maher bani** (thanks)
86. * **Marhanaha** (Encore, encore)
87. **Soorma** (powder for eye lids)
88. * **Jabar dast** (preparations)
89. * **Qabool** (acceptance)
90. * **Lalla** (princess)
91. **Beta** (boy)
92. **Beti** (girl)
93. **Asaami** (man)
94. * **Gharana** (musical tradition)
95. **Ruju** (proof)
96. **Amul** (implementation)
97. **Daap** (registor)
98. **Kavin** (bill of marriage)
99. **Maamul** (ordinary circumstances)
100. * **Darajat** (spiritual status)
101. * **Urs** (celebration of a saint’s birth)
102. * **Surat** (beauty)
103. **Khuda Bakshi** (as name)
104. **Khan** (name)
105. **Baig** (name)
106. **Dilshan** (name)
107. **Shiraz** (name)
108. **Shirin** (name)
Shurwardi (name)
Dil pazir (name)
Jinnah (name)
Faizal (name)
Firoze (name)
Sithy (name)
Iqbal (name)
Jazil (name)
Jezim (name)
Jamshed (name)
Laiboon (name)
Darvesh (name)
Pervin (name)
Beebis (name)
Begum (name)
Hyder (name)
Wazir (name)
Dastagir (name)
Nargis (name)
Surayya (name)
Firdous (name)
Šahriyar (name)
Gulam (name)
Tippu (name)
Javed (name)
Qurshid (name)
Yasmin (name)
Iskander (name)
Masthan (name)
Zulfi (name)
Azad (name)
Nishtar (name)
Ruksana (name)
Kidwai (name)
Kalaf (name)
Mumtaz (name)
145. Auranaga seb (name)
146. Shah Jehan (name)
147. Humayun (name)
148. Dilwar (name)
149. Kizar (name)
150. Ferial (name)
151. Noor Jehan (name)
152. Gama (name)
153. Jan (name)
154. Chacha (uncle)
155. Chahi (aunt)
156. Kaka (elder brother)
157. Nana (elder brother)
158. Kidchchadi (wheat pudding)
159. Mal (things)
160. Hookah (smoking pipe)
161. Badmash (criminal)
162. Shabash (well done)
163. Padshah (emperor)
164. Jawab (reply)
165. Masala (riddle)
166. Kumashatha (clerk)
167. Mohalla (precinct of town)
168. Sanja (China moss, agar agar)
169. Baluchi (man from Baluchistan or Afghanistan)
170. Waappa (father. Šāfi‘ite)
171. Atha (father. Ḥanafite).

Note: (a) Words within brackets are the meanings as used in Sri Lanka, which may be congruent or asymptotic to the original Urdu meaning.
(b) Some of these words maybe mimic-words, i.e. their etymology may be derived from other languages, as well; eg. sanja perhaps of a Chinese origin. But folk memory in Sri Lanka assigns these an Urdu origin.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Sri Lanka was called Ceylon till 1972 when it became a republic. According to the Census of 1981, the Buddhists form 69.31%; the Hindus, 14.46%; the Muslims 7.40%; and Christians (all denominations) 7.40% of the total population of Sri Lanka of 14,988,000 (Statistical Pocket Book for Sri Lanka for 1982. [Colombo, Department of Census and Statistics] p. 12.). The ethnic composition is Sinhalese (mainly Buddhist), Tamils (mainly Hindus), Muslims (Islam). Some Sinhalese and some Tamils are Christians. The indigenous languages are Sinhala and Tamil. For ethnic groups, see. N.D. Wijesekera, *The People of Ceylon* (Colombo, 1949). For Muslims, see. M.M.M. Mahroof and M. Azeez, (compilers) *An Ethnological Survey of the Muslims of Sri Lanka* [ESMSL.] (Colombo, Sir Razik Farzad Foundation, 1986).


4. Ibid.

5. Traditionally, Brahmin boys are taught Sanskrit and the Vedas in temple schools (vedagama schools) sponsored by such organizations as the Sri Lanka Shiva Brahmin Association.

6. Sanskrit studies have formed part of the Ceylon University since its inception (*The Calendar, University of Ceylon, Sessions 1955–56*) [Ceylon University Press] passim. Hindi was made an academic subject and a Department created for it when Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Universities were established (Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara University Act (Act no. 45 of 1958).


10. The orthography of the transliteration here is based on that of Uwise “Languages”, *ESMSL*, p. 152.

11. For instance, the Urdu auxiliary verb *hota* sounds rather like a four-letter (pejorative) word in Tamil.

12. In Tamil, Romanization of the script is out of the question. Some spelling reform, for instance, the standardization of the letters of ‘ee’ sounds, have taken place mainly for convenience in type-writing and type-setting.

13. The International Phonetic Spelling as adapted for Oriental languages has had indifferent success. The “imitated” pronunciation adopted by language teaching systems such as Hugo’s language series is more convenient. Stewart Bailey’s book on Urdu in the “Teach Yourself” series adopted an introductory romanization (more a pronunciation) guide, adapted from Firth’s rather cumbersome version. That seems to have been used in Triton’s *Teach Yourself Arabic* as well as in Miss Martin’s work on Marathi. There is another romanized code in the recent Teach Yourself series, *Colloquial Arabic* (more properly, Cairene Arabic).

On the other hand, Hindi magazines such as Aj Kal were available. The only Urdu periodical that is regularly available in Sri Lanka is Yakeen (English-Urdu periodical).

M.M.M. Mahroof (a) "Madrasah Education in Sri Lanka; Towards a Historical Taxonomy", in MEQ vol. 4, no. 2 (Winter 1987), pp. 57 et seq; (b) "A Millennium of Madrasa Education in Sri Lanka", in Journal Muslim World League (JMWL), (Makkah, Saudi Arabia), vol. 19, no. 11/12 (July/August 1988), pp. 28 seq; (c) "Islamic Foundations of Sri Lankan Muslim education", in Hamdard Islamicus (Karachi, Pakistan) vol. XIV, no. 3 (Autumn 1991), pp. 5 seq.

Chap. I, (ESMSL), by M. Azeez.

Most Memons are fluent in Gujerathi which uses a modified Devanagari script without the upper ligature (of Sanskrit). Memons are generally conversant with Sinhala which along with Urdu (and Hindi) have a common ancestor in indo-Aryan.

As for note 17.


Sheik I. Jafferjee, a leader of the Borah community, in a discussion with the present writer in 1986 when the present writer was a senior official of the Department of Muslim religious and Cultural Affairs of the Government of Sri Lanka.


Appendix B.

For the use of these caustives, see, Caldwell, A Comparative Grammar, passim.

Thadi wallah has a slight pejorative tinge. The usual Tamil phrase is thadi karan ("beard possessor").

Those horses were Arab, imported through Sind and brought to Sri Lanka by ship.


One such madrasah is in Colombo. Feature programme in Muslim Service of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, 15th November 1991.

Auditioning of Sri Lankan singers and instrumentalists of Hindusthani music has been carried out by scholars and musicologists of north India such as Professor Ratnejanker of Bhaktande University.

Amir Khuraw is known among Sri Lankan musicologists and intellectuals. Books such as Swami Govind Tirtha's Nectar of Grace (Hyderabad, 1949) have helped in this regard. The Nectar of Grace is a translation and interpretation of the poems of Omar Khayyam.

Hindusthani music is the sastriyu sangit (classical music) of the Sinhala-speaking intellectuals. The Muslim programme of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation broadcasts a weekly programme in Urdu.

These courses are offered by the Department of Aesthetic Studies of the University of Kelaniya (at its branch in Colombo). The intellectual background is Sanskrit, branching into Hindi and then branching into Urdu. Hindi is easy reading for anyone conversant with Sanskrit script. cf. Arthur A. MacDonnell, A Sanskrit Grammar for Students (Oxford, third edition, 1955), pp. 6–9. The descent from classical Sanskrit folk-tales such as Katha chaupiy sagara to Hindi short stories, is no great difficulty. cf. Berriedale Keith, Classical Sanskrit Literature (Calcutta, 1947). See also. G. Bhattacharya Shastir, An Introduction to Classical Sanskrit (Calcutta 1943).

Classical Hindusthani music performed by indigenous musicians is also significant in the "Rupavahini" (the television services of the Government). Also, Urdu singers from the Indian sub-continent perform in Sri Lanka.

The presentation of the (golden oldies of Urdu film songs such as those of Kundan Lal Saigal, Amor Bhai, used to take place in the Sinhala programme of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation on thursday nights, and regularly takes place on Sinhala Commercial Service of the Corporation.

The most recent exemplar was the late al-Haj Mohideen Beig, who performed a repertoire
of Urdu songs and Urdu baiths. He was also a leading singer of songs in Sinhala and Tamil languages.


37. Another reason was that post-graduate studies could be followed in the centres of Yunani medicine in the Indian sub-continent, where Urdu was the medium of education as well as the common tongue. See, Appendix B.


39. This word is not used in Tamil or the language of the Sri Lankan Muslims. It is used only the "Tablighi sect" in their special terminology.

40. This too is used in the Tablighi circle, A lay person will not understand this term unless he is familiar with it.

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