Urdu Vocabulary in T.V. Serial *Ramayana*

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Ramanand Sagar's TV Serial entitled, *Ramayana*, was the long running and the most popular series on TV (*Doordarshan*) in India. The serial ran for about one and a half year on regular basis (January 1987 to July 1988). It enchanted most spectators regardless of ethnicity and class throughout India and even outside India. The serial consists of twenty six video cassettes.

The printed version of this serial, consisted of two volumes, was edited by the author. The total length of the work is one thousand and eighteen pages. The credit for the Hindi transcription of the text goes to Dr. Girish Bakhshi. The work was published in 1992 by the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, Osaka. Currently, it is being used as a pedagogical text in the intermediate Hindi class in the language laboratory, along with the videos.

Since *Ramayana* is considered to be one of the two most important works of the Classical Indian Epic tradition, it is natural to expect the use of highly Sanskritized Hindi in the serial. However, that does not mean that the words of Urdu are totally absent in it. By the term "Urdu" I mean the word borrowed from Perso-Arabic sources. Although one does not find the overwhelming use of the Perso-Arabic vocabulary, nevertheless, such vocabulary is not totally neglected. For instance, Vrihaspati and Vashishta do not hesitate to deliver the following statements, respectively.

dharti par jab bhī koī zālīm prāṇī mātr ko apne caraṇō mē jhukne par mazbūr kar detā hai, to saccā insān uske sāmne jhukne se inkār kar detā hai... (Vṛhaspati, p.10) 'Whenever a tyrant compels the living beings to bow on his feet, the true person refuses to bow to him.'

ek din yeh bahut barā vr̥kṣ vban jāegā aur thake hue *musāfirō* ko apnī śītāl chāyā degā... (Vasiṣṭh, p. 33) 'One day this (young plant) will become a big tree and will provide a soothing shade to the (weary) travellers.'

Similarly, the reversed heroine, Sita, utters the following statement:

mujhe mere pati se *judā* karne ke pāp kā bhīṣaṇ daṇḍ tujhe avāśya milegā... (Śītā, p. 709) 'You will get severe punishment for the sin of separating me from my husband.'

In the above three statements, the *Italic* words are from Urdu. The word *judā* is used on more than one occasion by Sita, as in

śītā aur rām kabhī bhī *judā* nahīṃ hue aur kabhī bhī *judā* nahīṃ hoge-yeh śārīr rahe yā na rahe... (p. 710) 'Whether or not this body remains, Sita and Ram were never separated and will never be separated.'

Similary, another Urdu word uttered by Sita is *yaqīn* as exemplified by the following sentence.

...mere kānō par *yaqīn* nahīṃ hotā. (p. 855) '...I can not trust my ears.'

Although such words can raise eyebrows of the educated audience, but the ordinary audience fail to pay any attention to such words as they find themselves totally immersed in the natural flow of the plot.

The question naturally arises in the mind of any investigator as to why Urdu vocabulary infiltrates the expected highly Sanskritized Hindi. Also, how could High Hindi style reconcile with such an intervention. In order to get the exact picture of the use and the nature of the Urdu word, the first and the foremost task of this investigator was to isolate the Urdu words witnessed in the text and then to analyze their frequency. In what follows, the Urdu words are presented according to the Devanagari alphabetical order. The number shown next to the word indicates its frequency.

agar 23, amānat 1, arz 1, alāwā 1, asar 8, asli 15, āxir 7, āxirī 3, ādat 4, ādmī 3, ān 26, ām 1, āvāz 14, ārām 7, āsān 2, inkār 4, insān 7, insāniyat 1, qadam 6, qanāti 1, qabzā 2, qābul 1, kamzor 3, kamzorī 1, kamān 1, kamī 1, qasam 1, kasar 1, qasāī 1, qābū 1, qāyde 1, kārnāmā 1, kārīgar 1, kārīgarī 1, kinārā 5, qissā 1, kūc 3, qaīd 2, kcśīs 4,

xatm 1, xatrā 3, xatrānāk 1, xabar 3, xyāl 2, xātir 3, xālī 2, xās 1, xud 2, xuśī 5, xūn 3, galat 5, gird 1, gulām 1, ciz 6, cehre 1, jaṅg 1, jagah 7, jamā 2, jald 2, jaldī 47, javān 4, jahāz 5, jān 4, jānvar 1, judā 5, joś 1, jauhar 2, zaxmī 1, zañjir 2, zarā 4, zarūr 3, zaharilā 1, zālīm 1, zikr 1, zindā 1, zindagi 3, zimmedārī 4, zilā 1, zulm 2, zor 11, zoro 1, zyādā 3, takrār 1, tarkas 2, taraf 7, tarah 57, tāqat 7, tamām 1, tamāśā 3, talās 1, tālim 1, tīr 31, taināt 1, taur 1, dam 2, dard 2, darbār 33, darvāze 1, dastāvez 1, dāg 4, dil 7, divār 5, duniyā 1, duśmanī 1, der 8, derī 6, dostī 2, daurān 1, nazar 10, naśe 3, nasl 2, nasīb 1, nādān 1, nādānī 2, nāmonīśān 3, nārāz 1, nīśān 1, nīśānā 28, naubat 1, parde 2, pasand 1, pahredār 4, paidā 10, farq 1, fāydā 2, faislā 2, fauje 1, bagair 3, badal 9, badlā 15, bāqī 8, bāg 2, bāzār 1, bāzī 3, bārīkī 1, bekār 2, beqābū 1, becārī 6, becāre 7, becain 3, bebas 1, bematlab 1, bemaut 1, besahārā 1, behāl 1, makān 2, mazbūt 5, mazbūr 1, majāl 1, madad 2, maśāl 3, mahine 1, māt 3, māf 2, māmūlī 2, mālūm 1, muqāblā 2, murde 2, mufat 1, mulk 1, mulāyam 1, muškīl 1, musāfirō 1, mehnat 1, mehmāndārī 1, maidān 4, morcā 10, mohlat 1, mauqā 2, mauj 1, maut 8, yaqīn 2, yād 93, rasad 1, rāstā 24, rīstā 3, rux 2, rūhānī 1, roz 2, rozmarrā 1, rośnī 4, lācār 1, lās 2, lekin 20, vaqt 4, śarārati 1, śarat 8, śān 11, śābās 1, śām 1, śāyad 6, śikāyat 1, śikār 8, śikārī 1, śor 1, sardiyō 1, sarkār 40, salāh 5, salāhkār 1, savār 4, savārī 1, savāl 1, sāl 3, sikkā 2, sitāro 1, sipāhī 2, sine 2, supurd 1, subah 2, sair 2, hazār 10, had 1, hamlā 1, hameśā 2, har 48, hāl 10, hālat 1, havāle 9, himmat 12, hissā 4, hoś 4

The total number of the words which occurred more than ten times was only seventeen. Out of the set of this seventeen words, two words—*darbār* 'royal court' and *tīr* 'arrow'—registered the rate of more than thirty. Perhaps the main reason for this is the very high number of court and battle scenes in the story.

Without conducting any systematic quantitative analysis of the words by means of a computer, it is difficult to give the *exact* count of the words used in the serial. The random sample revealed that on the average

two hundred and fifty words are used per page. Since the actual text of the serial is 956 pages long. By multiplying 250 by 956, we obtained a total number of 239,000 words used in the entire story. Out of the 239,000 words, the exact number the Urdu vocabulary turned out to be 1,133 which is 0.47% (i.e. $1,133 \div 239,000 \times 100 = 0.47$).

Let us compare this score with the score of Urdu vocabulary in other Hindi literary works. For example, a quantitative analysis of the vocabulary of *Godan* by T. Nara & et. al. shows that the total number of the vocabulary items used in *Godan* is 164,449*. My count of the Urdu vocabulary comes to 7,842 with a margin of slight error. The total percentage of the Urdu words is, thus, 4.7% (i.e., $7,842 \div 164,449 \times 100 = 4.7$). In other word, the frequency of the Urdu words used in *Ramayana* is ten times less than that of *Godan*. The underlying reason for our choice of *Godan* was the availability of the quantitative data. No other special consideration went into our selection of *Godan* as a standard of comparison. Since the common core of Hindi and Urdu is largely shared, the only categories which distinguish the two varieties are primarily nouns and adjectives and rarely conjunctions and postpositions. These four parts of speech constitute about 60% of all the parts of speech found in *Godan*, thus, bringing the score of the Urdu words of the four parts of speech approximately to 8%. If the same method is applied to the score of the four parts of speech in *Ramayana*, the frequency of Urdu words could be raised to about 0.8%. Although the percentage score may not tell the whole story, nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the use of the Urdu words exceed our normal expectation.

An attempt was made to examine the distribution of the Urdu vocabulary according to the each character. However, no significant trend was noticeable. The only exception was the speech of the *sūtradhār* 'the stage manager', the role played by the famous actor, Ashok Kumar. Since the *sūtradhār* does not follow and specific text and interacts constantly with the audience which include both Hindus and non-Hindus, therefore, the trend seems to be in favor of the colloquial variety of

Hindi which naturally leans towards Urdu. Sometimes the Hindi-Urdu synonyms are simultaneously used as a set. For example: *śikṣā aur tālīm* 'education', *senā* and *fauj* 'army', *rūhānī tāqat* and *ādhyātmik śakti* 'spiritual power'.

The comparison of the first volume with the second volume gives us the impression that the Sanskrit vocabulary is slightly more predominant in the second volume than in the first. I would like to hypothesize that the film script writer shifts to the more careful style in the second volume and in that process tends to favor Sanskrit vocabulary over Urdu.

The inclusion of the Urdu/foreign vocabulary in a highly culturally sensitive text such as *Ramayana* can be the subject of debate. One cannot envision of the depiction of Lord Rama in any language other than the indigenous Indic languages such as Sanskrit and Sanskritized Hindi. However, there are number of factors which make the use of the Perso-Arabic words imperative in *Ramayana*. Frequent idioms and famous sayings such as *himmat hārnā* require Urdu on the obligatory basis. In this idiom it is not possible to replace *himmat* with its corresponding Sanskrit word, *sāhas*. Also, Urdu words have become so integral part of any normal conversation, it is impossible to keep them out from a natural informal conversation. Furthermore, the filmi style of Hindi simply could never escape the influence of Urdu. This is particularly true of the film Director Ramanada Sagar's *Ramayana*.

(Note: This paper represents a slightly revised version of the original Hindi version which will appear in a special volume devoted to the memory of Professor R.N. Srivastava.)

* "A List of Words with Their Respective Frequency-Prem Cand's 'Godan'" Prepared by T. Nara, T. Sakata & R.N. Singh; Annual Report on CIIL-ILCAA Joint Research Project 3, A COMPUTER-ASSISTED STUDY OF SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES edited by Tsuyoshi NARA. (Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo 1992)