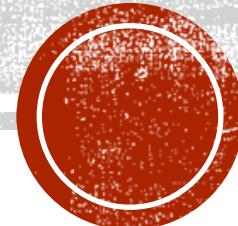AROR UNIVERSITY
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SUKKUR, SINDH

THE HINDI–URDU CONTROVERSY OF 1867

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INTRODUCTION

- The **Hindi–Urdu Controversy of 1867** was a landmark cultural and political conflict in colonial India.

- It exposed the <u>deep linguistic, religious, and communal fissures</u> between Hindus and Muslims.

- It had **far-reaching implications for identity formation**, political mobilization, and ultimately, the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims in South Asia.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Before 1867, **Urdu**, written in the **Perso-Arabic script**, was widely used as the lingua franca of northern India.
  - **lingua franca:** a language that is <u>adopted as a common language</u> between speakers whose <u>native languages are different.</u>

- It served as the official language in many administrative regions under the British Raj.

- **Hindi**, written in the **Devanagari script**, was spoken primarily by the Hindu majority in North India but did not enjoy the same official patronage.

- The decline of Mughal authority and the rise of Hindu socio-political movements created a **linguistic assertion** for Hindi, which culminated in a demand to replace Urdu as the language of administration.

CAUSES OF THE CONTROVERSY

- **Colonial Language Policies**
  - The British promoted vernacular languages to facilitate governance, which sharpened competition between Urdu and Hindi.

- **Religious Identity and Cultural Pride**
  - Muslims associated Urdu with their literary and cultural heritage, while Hindus increasingly identified Hindi with religious and cultural revival.

- **Rise of Hindu Reform Movements**
  - Organizations like the **Arya Samaj** supported the promotion of Hindi as a marker of Hindu identity.

- **Role of Educated Middle Classes**
  - Both Hindu and Muslim elites used language as a tool to assert their socio-political influence.

- **Socio-Political Consciousness**
  - The controversy coincided with the rise of **communal consciousness** and the crystallization of separate Hindu and Muslim identities.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MOVEMENTS

- **Hindu Objective:** To secure recognition of Hindi in Devanagari script as an official language in place of Urdu.

- **Muslim Objective:** To protect the dominance of Urdu as the lingua franca and as the embodiment of Muslim identity in India.

CONSEQUENCES

- **Communalization of Language**
  - The controversy transformed language from a cultural medium into a political symbol of **communal identity**.

- **Strengthening of Muslim Political Thought**
  - Muslims began to feel culturally and politically threatened, a perception that later influenced Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's call for Muslim unity and separate political safeguards.

- **Hindu-Muslim Divide**
  - The controversy deepened communal divisions, becoming a precursor to larger disputes in the 20th century.

- **Impact on Nationalism**
  - Instead of uniting Indians against colonial rule, the controversy fractured nationalist unity along religious lines.

CONCLUSION

- The Hindi–Urdu Controversy of 1867 was not merely about language; it was about **power, identity, and political representation.**

- It was an early manifestation of the tensions that would culminate in the **partition of India in 1947.**

- By politicizing language, the controversy underscored how cultural markers could become rallying points for communal mobilization in colonial India.

- **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Response**

- Sir Syed strongly opposed the replacement of Urdu, viewing it as an existential threat to Muslim cultural and intellectual identity.
  - He famously remarked:
  - "The two communities will not join wholeheartedly in anything. The essential difference in their way of life and thought has made them two distinct nations."

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!

HOPEFULLY, I WILL SEE YOU IN THE NEXT CLASS. UNTIL THEN, TAKE CARE, & HAVE A GREAT DAY!