

## PUNJAB'S LINGUISTIC AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: URDU SOURCES ON HISTORY, IDENTITY, AND STATEHOOD IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA (1947–1966)

Muzafar Ahmad Dar<sup>1</sup>, Rubal Sharma<sup>2</sup>, Harpinder Kaur<sup>3</sup>, Amanpreet Singh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda. He can be reached at [zafar.171325@gku.ac.in](mailto:zafar.171325@gku.ac.in)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor in the Guru Kashi Department of Social Sciences, Punjabi University Guru Kashi Campus, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda. He can be reached at [rubalsharma.gkc@gmail.com](mailto:rubalsharma.gkc@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Arts & Social Sciences, Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda. She can be reached at [harpindersidhu44@gmail.com](mailto:harpindersidhu44@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>PhD Scholar in the Department of History, Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda.

### Abstract

The linguistic and political landscape of Punjab in post-colonial India (1947–1966) was shaped by complex historical and identity-related struggles. Following Partition, Punjab experienced demographic shifts that influenced debates over language, governance, and statehood. Urdu and Punjabi languages played central roles in defining identity, with competing narratives regarding their official recognition and cultural significance. The Punjabi Suba movement emerged as a force advocating for a Punjabi-speaking state, intertwining linguistic aspirations with political demands. This paper examines Urdu sources that document these events, analysing perspectives on language policies, identity formation, and state reorganization. Urdu literature and journalism reflected the evolving discourse on Punjab's linguistic struggles, capturing the tensions between cultural heritage and political decisions. By reviewing Urdu narratives, this study highlights the ways in which language shaped Punjab's transformation, revealing its significance in the broader discussions of nationalism and regional identity in post-colonial India.

**Key Words:** Partition, Linguistic Shift, Urdu sources, Statehood, Political Identity, Historical Narratives.

### Introduction:

Language has played a crucial role in shaping the history and identity of Punjab. As a region with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, Punjab's linguistic landscape has been deeply intertwined with its political, social, and religious transformations. The struggle between Punjabi and Urdu, particularly in the post-Partition era (1947–1966), has influenced governance, education, and regional identity, making language a pivotal factor in Punjab's evolution. Historically, Punjabi has been the dominant language of the region, spoken by the majority of the population and deeply rooted in Punjab's cultural and literary traditions. It has been the medium through which folklore, poetry, and religious texts such as Guru Granth Sahib have been preserved. The promotion of Punjabi as an essential component of Sikh identity played a significant role in community mobilization, especially in the demand for a separate linguistic state in India. This led to the Punjabi Suba movement, which ultimately resulted in

the creation of Punjab as a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966 (Kapur, 1967). The movement was not just about language but also about preserving cultural identity against perceived marginalization. This paper analyses how the language shaped the identity and the making of modern Punjab in Post-Colonial India. An attempt has been done to use the vernacular sources of Urdu language to scrutinize the whole debate of language. By examining historical debates, governmental decisions, and cultural narratives, the paper highlights the role of language in shaping Punjab's modern identity and governance.

On the other hand, Urdu gained official prominence in Pakistan after Partition, despite Punjabi being the first language of a large majority. The government's preference for Urdu as the national language led to a gradual decline in the status of Punjabi in formal settings (Kamran, T. 2013). This created tensions among Punjabi speakers, who sought recognition for their mother tongue in education, administration, and cultural discourse. The linguistic divide also contributed to socio-political distinctions, reinforcing identity based on language preference. Writers and intellectuals played a crucial role in advocating for Punjabi, ensuring its survival despite governmental reluctance (Sherani, 1955).

Furthermore, language has shaped Punjab's political history by influencing electoral dynamics, governance, and regional divisions. The linguistic reorganization of Punjab in India, which led to the separation of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, was rooted in debates over linguistic identity (Ejaz, 2009). This restructuring was an attempt to align linguistic boundaries with political governance, marking a significant milestone in Punjab's history. In contemporary times, Punjabi remains a strong cultural force, with vibrant literary traditions and media presence, while Urdu continues to be influential, especially in Pakistan. The historical struggle over linguistic identity in Punjab underscores the broader relationship between language and regional consciousness, demonstrating how language serves as a marker of cultural heritage, political affiliation, and social unity (Ali, 2016).

The linguistic and political landscape of Punjab between 1947 and 1966 was shaped by significant historical events, including Partition, identity movements, and the reorganization of the state. Language played a critical role in defining Punjab's regional identity, with the tension between Punjabi and Urdu influencing governance, education, and cultural preservation. One of the central linguistic debates in this period was the struggle for the recognition of Punjabi. In Pakistan, Urdu was promoted as the national language, while Punjabi, despite being widely spoken, remained marginalized in official discourse. In Indian Punjab, the Punjabi Suba movement emerged as a powerful force advocating for a Punjabi-speaking state. This movement, driven by linguistic identity and Sikh political aspirations, resulted in the creation of Punjab as a separate state in 1966, along with Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

The political themes during this period were heavily intertwined with linguistic aspirations. The post-Partition administration in both India and Pakistan sought to impose linguistic uniformity, often sidelining regional languages. This led to resistance from Punjabi-speaking communities who sought cultural and linguistic preservation. The debates over script—Gurmukhi in India and Shahmukhi in Pakistan—added another dimension to the linguistic struggles. In addition to political movements, literature and journalism played a crucial role in shaping linguistic discourse. Writers in both Urdu and Punjabi engaged in discussions about identity, governance, and the cultural implications of language policies. The intersection of language and statehood highlights the broader socio-political impact of linguistic divisions,

demonstrating how language can be both a tool for unity and a source of regional differentiation.

### **Linguistic Shift After Partition (1947)**

The Partition of India in 1947 triggered one of the largest forced migrations in history, profoundly altering the demographic landscape of Punjab. The division of the province into Indian Punjab and Pakistani Punjab led to massive population displacement, communal violence, and socio-economic disruptions. As millions of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims migrated across newly drawn borders, Punjab experienced significant demographic restructuring that shaped its political, cultural, and linguistic identity in the following decades. Partition resulted in the mass migration of around 10–12 million people, with Punjab witnessing the most intense displacement (Ahmed, 2012). Hindus and Sikhs fled from Pakistani Punjab to Indian Punjab, while Muslims moved in the opposite direction. The violence accompanying Partition further exacerbated demographic shifts, leading to the loss of lives, destruction of property, and psychological trauma for the displaced communities. The migration patterns led to rapid urbanization in Indian Punjab, particularly in cities such as Ludhiana, Amritsar, and Jalandhar, which saw a surge in refugee populations (Butalia, 2000).

The large-scale migration disrupted economic structures in both Indian and Pakistani Punjab. The agricultural sector, which was central to Punjab's economy, faced significant challenges due to labor shortages and loss of farmland. In Pakistan, Muslim migrants settled in regions previously dominated by Hindu and Sikh landowners, leading to a redistribution of agricultural resources (Khan, 2007). In India, Punjabi refugees played a crucial role in revitalizing the economy, with many establishing industries and businesses that transformed Punjab into an economic powerhouse. The demographic shifts influenced Punjab's cultural identity and linguistic politics. Indian Punjab became predominantly Sikh and Hindu, while Pakistani Punjab became overwhelmingly Muslim. These changes shaped religious and linguistic discourse, leading to debates over identity and governance (Jalal, 1995). The Punjabi Suba movement in India sought to create a linguistically distinct Punjabi-speaking state, reflecting the renewed assertion of Punjabi identity in response to demographic transformations.

The migration crisis compelled governments on both sides of the border to develop policies for refugee rehabilitation, urban planning, and economic recovery. Indian Punjab saw the establishment of new townships, while Pakistan restructured landownership and governance to accommodate incoming populations. The administrative adjustments aimed to stabilize the region, but tensions over linguistic and ethnic identities remained prominent. The demographic changes caused by Partition and subsequent migrations continued to influence Punjab's socio-political landscape beyond 1966. The economic resurgence, linguistic reorganization, and political movements reflected the long-term impact of migration. Today, the legacy of Partition remains an integral part of Punjab's historical and cultural memory, shaping contemporary discussions on identity, governance, and development (Talbot, & Singh, 2009).

### **Status of Punjabi and Urdu in post-Partition Punjab**

The Partition of India in 1947 led to significant linguistic, political, and cultural shifts in Punjab, deeply affecting the status of Punjabi and Urdu. While Punjabi was historically the primary language spoken by the majority, post-Partition policies in both India and Pakistan

influenced its role in governance, education, and identity formation. The struggle between Punjabi and Urdu became central to linguistic politics, reflecting broader societal divisions and state-building efforts. After Partition, Pakistan's government promoted Urdu as the official national language despite Punjabi being the first language of a large segment of the population (Kamran, 2013). The decision to elevate Urdu over Punjabi was driven by the desire to create a unifying linguistic identity for the newly formed country. Urdu was associated with administration, intellectual discourse, and national cohesion, whereas Punjabi was primarily used in informal settings and rural communities. This policy led to the marginalization of Punjabi in education and governance, sparking resistance among Punjabi speakers who sought greater recognition for their linguistic heritage (Ibid).

In Indian Punjab, the linguistic debate took a different shape. The Punjabi Suba movement emerged in the 1950s as a demand for a separate Punjabi-speaking state. Sikhs, in particular, championed Punjabi as a crucial part of their identity, advocating for its official status and administrative use. The Indian government initially resisted these demands, fearing that linguistic reorganization could fuel separatism. However, sustained activism led to the formation of Punjab as a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966, while Hindi-speaking regions were carved out to form Haryana and Himachal Pradesh (Kapur, 1967).

The status of Punjabi and Urdu influenced educational policies on both sides of the border. In Pakistan, Urdu was the primary medium of instruction in schools and universities, while Punjabi was largely confined to informal and literary usage. In India, efforts were made to institutionalize Punjabi in education, although English and Hindi remained dominant in official and academic spaces. The literary landscape also reflected these linguistic shifts, with Punjabi literature flourishing in India and Urdu literature continuing to hold prominence in Pakistan (Talbot, & Singh, 2009). The linguistic divide affected political dynamics in both regions. In Pakistan, Punjabi speakers faced challenges in advocating for their linguistic rights, as the state's preference for Urdu often sidelined Punjabi in administration and media. In India, the success of the Punjabi Suba movement reshaped governance structures, ensuring that Punjabi held official status within its designated territory. The debates over script Gurmukhi in Indian Punjab and *Shahmukhi* in Pakistani Punjab added another layer to linguistic identity struggles, further influencing cultural and political narratives (Ibid).

### **Government Policies on Language and Identity Formation**

The period from 1947 to 1966 was pivotal in shaping Punjab's linguistic and political identity through government policies. Following Partition, both Indian and Pakistani Punjab underwent significant demographic and administrative changes that influenced language policies, identity politics, and state reorganization. Government decisions regarding language played a crucial role in defining regional identity, governance structures, and educational frameworks in both countries.

In Pakistan, Urdu was declared the national language despite Punjabi being the mother tongue of the majority. The government aimed to create a linguistic unification under Urdu, viewing it as a neutral, non-regional language that could bind diverse ethnic groups. Punjabi was sidelined in official discourse, education, and media (Khan, 2007). State-sponsored institutions promoted Urdu as the language of governance, while Punjabi remained largely confined to informal settings and rural communities. This policy led to resistance among Punjabi intellectuals and writers who sought recognition for their linguistic heritage. However, efforts

to elevate Punjabi faced challenges due to its lack of institutional support. Despite its widespread use, Punjabi did not receive formal status in government affairs or national education policies, reinforcing the dominance of Urdu in public life ((Kamran, 2013).

In contrast, Indian Punjab witnessed a different linguistic struggle. The Punjabi Suba Movement, led primarily by Sikhs, demanded the creation of a separate Punjabi-speaking state. The Indian government initially resisted this demand, fearing that linguistic divisions could escalate into sectarian and regional separatism (Lamba, 1999). However, sustained activism, protests, and political mobilization ultimately led to the reorganization of Punjab in 1966, establishing it as a state with Punjabi as the official language. During this period, government policies focused on promoting Hindi at the national level, further fueling tensions regarding linguistic identity in Punjab. While Hindi was encouraged for wider communication, Punjabi was recognized within the newly formed state, ensuring its use in education, administration, and cultural preservation. The division of Punjab into Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh reflected the government's approach to linguistic reorganization (Sarhadi, 1970).

Government policies in both India and Pakistan significantly influenced educational institutions. In Pakistan, Urdu was mandated as the primary medium of instruction, limiting Punjabi's role in formal education. In India, efforts were made to institutionalize Punjabi in schools and universities following the creation of Punjabi Suba. Media and literature were also shaped by linguistic policies. In Pakistan, Punjabi-language publishing and journalism faced restrictions, whereas Urdu flourished with state backing. In India, Punjabi literature saw a revival, fostering cultural pride and identity.

### **The Debate Between Urdu and Punjabi**

Following the Partition of India in 1947, Pakistan faced the challenge of creating a unified national identity amidst its diverse linguistic landscape. Urdu was chosen as the official national language, despite the fact that Punjabi was spoken by a majority of the population. The government's decision to promote Urdu over regional languages was driven by political considerations, the need for administrative cohesion, and the influence of pre-Partition elites who had advocated for Urdu as a unifying force. Urdu's elevation as the national language was rooted in the belief that it could serve as a neutral, non-regional medium of communication, avoiding the dominance of any ethnic group (Rahman, 1996) It was already widely used by Muslim intellectuals, poets, and leaders before Partition, further reinforcing its role as a symbol of Islamic identity. However, this decision led to tensions among Punjabi speakers and other linguistic communities, who felt marginalized in governance, education, and cultural representation (Ahmed, 2012).

Government policies reinforced Urdu's supremacy by making it the primary language of instruction in schools and universities, the official language of administration, and the dominant medium in media and literature. As a result, Punjabi and other regional languages were largely confined to informal settings and folk traditions. Intellectuals and activists in Pakistan have since pushed for greater recognition of Punjabi, but official linguistic policies continue to favour Urdu. The debate over Urdu's status remains a critical aspect of Pakistan's national identity discourse, shaping cultural and political narratives even today (Jalal, 1995).

The preservation of Punjabi has been a significant cultural and linguistic concern in both Pakistan and India since Partition in 1947. While Punjabi has historically been the dominant spoken language in the region, its status has fluctuated due to political, social, and

administrative influences. Efforts to sustain and promote Punjabi have been led by writers, activists, cultural organizations, and policy reforms in both countries (Singh, 2015). In Pakistan, Punjabi's status has been challenged by the government's preference for Urdu as the national language. Despite being the first language of a large segment of the population, Punjabi has been largely excluded from official administration and education. However, various movements have emerged to protect and promote Punjabi. Literary organizations, such as the Punjabi Adabi Board, have played a crucial role in advocating for Punjabi literature and cultural heritage. Writers and poets, including Ustad Daman and Najm Hosain Syed, have used their work to emphasize the importance of Punjabi language and identity. Furthermore, grassroots movements and academic initiatives have sought to introduce Punjabi into educational curricula, although resistance from state authorities has made this a slow process (Singh, 2018).

In Indian Punjab, Punjabi has received more institutional support due to the success of the Punjabi Suba Movement, which led to the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966. Efforts to preserve Punjabi include government policies promoting the language in education, media, and administration (Brass, 1974). The establishment of Punjab University, which offers Punjabi language and literature programs, has strengthened academic efforts to sustain Punjabi. Cultural institutions such as the Punjab Arts Council actively work to promote Punjabi music, literature, and theatre (Ibid).

Urdu and Punjabi writers have played a pivotal role in shaping the literary and cultural landscape of Punjab, particularly in the post-Partition era. Their works have explored themes of identity, displacement, resistance, and social justice, reflecting the complex historical and linguistic struggles of the region (Kamran, 2013). Urdu literature in Punjab flourished through poets, novelists, and journalists who captured the essence of Partition, nationalism, and societal transformation. Writers such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Saadat Hasan Manto, and Intizar Hussain depicted the trauma and human cost of Partition in their works. Faiz's poetry combined political activism with lyrical beauty, voicing resistance against authoritarian rule. Manto's stories, such as *Toba Tek Singh*, provided a stark and humane portrayal of the chaos surrounding Partition. Meanwhile, Hussain's literary works reflected nostalgia and the fading cultural memory of pre-Partition Punjab (Jalal, 2015).

Urdu's cultural contribution extended beyond literature to music, cinema, and journalism, where it served as a vehicle for artistic and intellectual expression. Many Urdu writers, poets, and filmmakers continued to shape the discourse on language and identity in Pakistan, reinforcing Urdu's significance in mainstream cultural narratives. Punjabi writers played a crucial role in preserving and promoting Punjab's linguistic heritage (Rahman, 1996). Amrita Pritam, a renowned poet and novelist, was one of the most influential voices in Punjabi literature (Her iconic poem *Aj Akhan Waris Shah Nu* lamented the horrors of Partition, capturing the emotional pain of divided Punjab. Similarly, Shiv Kumar Batalvi, known for his melancholic poetry, explored themes of love, loss, and identity, making Punjabi poetry deeply resonant (Sobti, 2010). Punjabi literature has also been instrumental in advocating for linguistic pride and regional identity, especially through folk traditions and modern literary movements. Writers and scholars worked to elevate Punjabi literature within academic institutions, ensuring its survival and recognition amid competing linguistic influences (Ibid).

### **The Punjabi Suba Movement and Political Struggles**

The demand for a Punjabi-speaking state in India emerged as a significant political and linguistic movement during the mid-20th century. The Punjabi Suba Movement, spearheaded primarily by the Sikh community, sought the recognition of Punjabi as the official language and advocated for the reorganization of Punjab based on linguistic lines. This demand was rooted in concerns over cultural identity, political representation, and administrative governance (Singh, 1967). Following India's independence in 1947, linguistic reorganization became a contentious issue across different states. While Hindi was promoted as the national language, Punjabi-speaking populations in Punjab faced challenges in securing linguistic autonomy. The movement gained momentum in the 1950s, with Sikh leaders and organizations demanding a separate state where Punjabi, written in Gurmukhi script, would be the primary administrative and educational language. The Indian government initially resisted, fearing regional fragmentation and political instability (Ibid). After years of protests, negotiations, and political activism, the demand was finally recognized in 1966, leading to the formation of Punjab as a Punjabi-speaking state, while Hindi-speaking regions were carved out to create Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This reorganization not only reinforced Punjab's linguistic identity but also shaped its political structure and governance. The impact of the movement continues to influence Punjab's educational policies, cultural preservation efforts, and regional discourse (Brass, 2005).

The linguistic and political transformation of Punjab between 1947 and 1966 was significantly shaped by key political figures and organizations that advocated for identity recognition, state reorganization, and language preservation. Leaders and institutions played crucial roles in mobilizing public sentiment, negotiating with central governments, and influencing policy decisions regarding the status of Punjabi and Urdu in governance and education. One of the most influential figures in the Punjabi Suba Movement was Master Tara Singh, a prominent Sikh leader who championed the demand for a separate Punjabi-speaking state in India (Singh, K. (1967). His leadership mobilized Sikh organizations, particularly the Shiromani Akali Dal, to push for linguistic and regional autonomy. His advocacy ultimately contributed to the formation of Punjab as a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966. In Pakistan, political figures such as Fazlul Rahman and Ayub Khan played roles in shaping the national language policy. Ayub Khan's administration reinforced the dominance of Urdu, sidelining Punjabi in official discourse, despite resistance from Punjabi intellectuals and writers (Kamran, 2013). The Shiromani Akali Dal and Punjabi Sabha in India were central to organizing protests and political movements advocating for the Punjabi language and statehood. These organizations worked closely with Sikh religious institutions to ensure linguistic preservation. In Pakistan, literary and cultural organizations such as the Punjabi Adabi Board worked to promote Punjabi literature, resisting state-imposed Urdu dominance (Rahman, 1996).

The governance and state formation of Punjab underwent significant changes between 1947 and 1966, shaped by Partition, linguistic movements, and political restructuring. The division of Punjab between India and Pakistan led to administrative challenges, demographic shifts, and identity struggles that influenced governance policies in both countries. In Pakistan, Punjab became the most influential province, playing a central role in national politics (Kinger, 2005). However, Urdu was promoted as the official language, sidelining Punjabi in governance and education. The state's administrative structure was designed to reinforce national unity, often at the expense of regional linguistic identities. In India, Punjab faced a different challenge. The

Punjabi Suba Movement, led by Sikh political leaders, demanded a separate Punjabi-speaking state (Dua, 1996). The Indian government initially resisted, fearing regional fragmentation. However, sustained activism led to the reorganization of Punjab in 1966, resulting in the creation of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. This restructuring ensured Punjabi's official status in governance and education within its designated territory (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2024).

The linguistic reorganization shaped governance by ensuring Punjabi's official status in education and administration in Indian Punjab. Meanwhile, Pakistan continued policies that reinforced Urdu's dominance, limiting Punjabi's role in governance. These developments influenced future identity politics, cultural preservation efforts, and regional policies. The impact of these governance changes continues to shape Punjab's political and social landscape today (Arora, 1990).

### **State Reorganization and Linguistic Identity (1966)**

The division of Punjab in 1966 was a significant political and administrative restructuring that led to the formation of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This reorganization was primarily driven by linguistic and regional demands, particularly the Punjabi Suba Movement, which sought a separate Punjabi-speaking state (Brass, 1974). After India's independence in 1947, Punjab remained a multilingual state with significant Hindi-speaking and Punjabi-speaking populations (Singh, 1967). The demand for a Punjabi-speaking state gained momentum in the 1950s, with Sikh political leaders advocating for linguistic recognition. The Indian government initially resisted, fearing regional fragmentation. However, sustained protests and political negotiations led to the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966, which officially divided Punjab.

On November 1, 1966, Punjab was reorganized into three separate entities, Punjab: Retained its Punjabi-speaking majority and became a distinct linguistic state. Haryana: Formed as a Hindi-speaking state, separating from Punjab to accommodate linguistic differences. Himachal Pradesh: Certain hilly regions of Punjab were merged into Himachal Pradesh, further restructuring the state boundaries. This division had lasting effects on governance, identity politics, and regional development. Punjab retained its Sikh-majority population, while Haryana and Himachal Pradesh developed distinct administrative and cultural identities (Arora, 1990).

The linguistic reorganization of Punjab in 1966 led to significant changes in language policies in the newly formed states of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. The division was primarily based on linguistic identity, with Punjab designated as a Punjabi-speaking state, Haryana as Hindi-speaking, and Himachal Pradesh incorporating a mix of Hindi and Pahari dialects (Mir, 2010). Following the creation of Punjab as a Punjabi-speaking state, the government implemented policies to promote Punjabi in administration, education, and media. Punjabi, written in Gurmukhi script, was declared the official language, and efforts were made to institutionalize its use in schools and universities. The Punjab government also encouraged Punjabi literature and cultural preservation through state-sponsored initiatives (Aggarwal, 1984).

Haryana, formed as a Hindi-speaking state, adopted Hindi as its official language. The state government emphasized Hindi in governance and education, aligning with national language

policies. However, regional dialects such as Haryanvi continued to be spoken informally, reflecting the linguistic diversity within the state. Himachal Pradesh incorporated Hindi as its official language, but Pahari dialects remained prevalent in rural areas. The state government supported Hindi-medium education while recognizing the cultural significance of local languages. The linguistic policies in these states shaped identity, governance, and education, reinforcing the role of language in regional development (Dua, 1996).

The long-term consequences of Punjabi and Urdu in governance and education have shaped linguistic policies, cultural identity, and socio-political dynamics in South Asia. Punjabi, despite being widely spoken, has often been marginalized in formal governance and education, while Urdu has maintained its status as a national language in Pakistan, influencing administrative and academic frameworks (Mansoor, 2005). In governance, the preference for Urdu in Pakistan has led to the exclusion of Punjabi from official documentation and policymaking, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies. This has contributed to a disconnect between the government and Punjabi-speaking populations, limiting their participation in political discourse (Ayres, 2009). In India, Punjabi enjoys official status in Punjab, but its influence remains largely regional, with Hindi and English dominating national governance (Singh, 2012).

In education, Urdu has been the medium of instruction in many Pakistani institutions, shaping intellectual discourse and literature. However, the dominance of English in higher education has led to a decline in Urdu proficiency among younger generations. Punjabi, on the other hand, has struggled for recognition in formal education, with limited institutional support and resources. The lack of Punjabi-language education has affected literacy rates and cultural preservation.

### **Urdu Literary and Historical Narratives on Punjab's Evolution**

Tahir Kamran's book *پنجابی اور اردو شناخت کا سوال* (*Punjab, Punjabi aur Urdu: Shanakht ka Sawal*) mentions that the question of Punjab, Punjabi, and Urdu identity is deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and political factors. Punjab, an important region of the subcontinent, has always been a centre of diverse languages and cultures. The Punjabi language, native to this land, has been a medium of popular and literary expression for centuries, while Urdu established itself as a lingua franca from the Mughal era to the modern period (Kamran, 2013). The relationship between Urdu and Punjabi is profound and complex. Urdu was declared the national language of Pakistan, whereas Punjabi remained largely limited to colloquial speech and informal writing. This policy impacted Punjabi identity since language is a fundamental component of any nation's cultural and historical identity. Punjabi literature, poetry, and folk traditions reflect the soul of the region, but the promotion of Urdu pushed Punjabi to the background in educational and official spheres. This identity question remains a subject of discussion, and it is essential to maintain a balance between both languages to preserve Punjab's cultural heritage while ensuring the growth of both Urdu and Punjabi (Ibid).

Ejaz M.'s *پنجابی زبان کی تحریک اور اس کے اثرات* (*Punjabi Zaban Ki Tehreek aur Asraat*) explores the historical and socio-political movement surrounding the Punjabi language and its impact on cultural identity, governance, and education. The book provides an in-depth analysis of the linguistic struggles faced by Punjabi speakers, particularly in Pakistan, where Urdu was promoted as the national language, often at the expense of regional languages like Punjabi. The book discusses the efforts made by Punjabi activists to secure official recognition for their

language, highlighting the challenges posed by state policies and societal attitudes. Ejaz examines how Punjabi, despite being widely spoken, has remained marginalized in formal education and governance. He delves into the role of literature, poetry, and media in preserving and promoting Punjabi, emphasizing the contributions of writers and intellectuals who have championed the cause (Ejaz, 2009). Furthermore, *Punjabi Zaban Ki Tehreek aur Asraat* sheds light on the psychological and cultural effects of linguistic suppression, arguing that language plays a crucial role in shaping identity and community cohesion. The book underscores the need for policy reforms to ensure the growth and sustainability of Punjabi in academic and administrative spheres (Ibid).

Hafiz Mahmood Sherani's کشمکش کی پنجابی اور اردو میں اردو اور پنجابی کی کشمکش (*Punjab Mein Urdu Aur Punjabi Ki Kashmakash*) is a seminal work that explores the historical and linguistic tensions between Urdu and Punjabi in the Punjab region. The book delves into the complex relationship between these two languages, analyzing their evolution, competition, and the socio-political factors that influenced their status. Sherani argues that Urdu, despite its widespread use in governance and education, has roots in Punjab, challenging the conventional belief that it originated solely in Delhi (Sherani, 1955). He presents linguistic evidence to support his claim, citing early poets and literary works that exhibit a blend of Persian, Punjabi, and local dialects. His research highlights how Urdu gradually gained prominence, particularly under Mughal rule, while Punjabi remained a spoken language with limited literary development. The book also discusses the impact of colonial policies on language dynamics, noting how British administrators favored Urdu for official purposes, further marginalizing Punjabi. Sherani critically examines the post-Partition era, where Urdu was elevated as Pakistan's national language, leading to debates over Punjabi's role in education and governance (Ibid).

Kapur Singh's پنجابی صوبہ تحریک ایک تاریخی جائزہ (*Punjabi Suba Tehreek: Ek Tareekhi Jaiza*) provides a historical analysis of the Punjabi Suba Movement, a political struggle led by Sikhs demanding a separate Punjabi-speaking state in post-independence India. The book examines the origins, ideological foundations, and key events that shaped the movement, offering insights into its socio-political impact. Singh traces the movement's roots to the partition of India in 1947, which left Sikhs in a precarious position (Kapur, 1967). He discusses how linguistic identity became a central issue, with Sikhs advocating for a distinct Punjabi-speaking state to preserve their cultural and religious heritage. The book highlights the role of Akali Dal leaders, including Master Tara Singh and Fateh Singh, in mobilizing public support and negotiating with the Indian government. The narrative explores the resistance faced by the movement, particularly from the central government, which viewed it as a separatist demand. Singh critically examines the political manoeuvres, protests, and sacrifices made by activists, leading to the eventual formation of Punjab in 1966. He also discusses the division of Punjab, which resulted in the creation of Haryana and the transfer of certain regions to Himachal Pradesh (Kapur, 1967).

Ghazala Ali's زبان، سیاست اور پنجاب کی تشکیل (*Zaban, Siyasat aur Punjab Ki Tashkeel*) offers a compelling analysis of the intricate relationship between language, power dynamics, and the historical shaping of Punjab. The book delves into how linguistic identities were not merely cultural markers but became central to political mobilization and the negotiation of power in the region. Ali meticulously examines the role of various languages, particularly Punjabi, Urdu, and English, in defining and redefining the socio-political landscape of Punjab. She highlights

how language policies, educational reforms, and literary movements were intertwined with broader political agendas, including the demands for separate provinces, the rise of nationalist sentiments, and the eventual partition of India. The book demonstrates that language was not a static entity but a contested terrain where different groups vied for dominance and sought to assert their identities.

A key strength of Ali's work lies in its nuanced exploration of how linguistic differences were often instrumentalized to create political divisions, sometimes overshadowing shared cultural heritage. Conversely, it also shows instances where linguistic commonalities were leveraged to foster unity and collective action. *Zaban, Siyasat aur Punjab Ki Tashkeel* is an invaluable contribution to understanding the complex interplay of language, politics, and historical formation in a region that has witnessed profound transformations, offering insights relevant to broader discussions on identity politics and nation-building in South Asia.

Urdu journalism played a crucial role in shaping political discourse in Punjab between 1947 and 1966. During this period, Urdu newspapers and periodicals became platforms for political debates, ideological movements, and discussions on governance, nationalism, and linguistic identity. After Partition in 1947, Urdu journalism in Punjab reflected the socio-political changes, addressing issues of migration, communal tensions, and the restructuring of governance (Siddiqui, 2014). Newspapers such as *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Imroze* provided critical analyses of government policies, influencing public opinion and political activism. Urdu journalism also played a significant role in debates surrounding the status of Punjabi and Urdu in education and administration, contributing to linguistic politics in Pakistan. The press became a medium for political mobilization, particularly during the early years of Pakistan's formation. Editorials and opinion pieces in Urdu newspapers shaped narratives on democracy, governance, and national identity. The role of Urdu journalism in covering political movements, including the Punjabi language movement, was instrumental in highlighting regional concerns (Naqvi, 1988).

Urdu literature has played a significant role in representing Punjab's linguistic history, capturing the evolution, conflicts, and cultural dynamics of language in the region. Writers and scholars have explored how Punjabi and Urdu have interacted, influenced governance, and shaped identity over time (Hussain, 2025). During the colonial period, Urdu gained prominence as an administrative language, while Punjabi remained a spoken vernacular. Literary works reflected this shift, documenting the socio-political implications of language policies (Javed, 2025). Post-Partition, Urdu was elevated as Pakistan's national language, leading to debates on Punjabi's status in education and governance. Urdu literature has often depicted these tensions, highlighting the struggles of Punjabi speakers and the broader linguistic landscape (Mumtaz, & Bokhari, 2025).

### **Conclusion**

In this paper our focus was on Urdu sources how they documented the events which shaped the identity and formation of the modern state of Punjab between 1947-1966. An attempt has been done to analyse the various perspectives on language policies, identity formation, and state reorganization. Urdu literature and journalism reflected the evolving discourse on Punjab's linguistic struggles, capturing the tensions between cultural heritage and political decisions. By reviewing Urdu narratives, this study highlights the ways in which language

shaped Punjab's transformation, revealing its significance in the broader discussions of nationalism and regional identity in post-colonial India.

The linguistic and political landscape of Punjab between 1947 and 1966 was deeply shaped by the interplay between Urdu and Punjabi, reflecting broader themes of identity, governance, and statehood. The post-colonial era saw significant shifts in language policies, with Urdu being promoted as the national language of Pakistan, while Punjabi struggled for official recognition. This linguistic hierarchy influenced political discourse, education, and cultural identity, leading to debates over representation and regional autonomy. Urdu sources from this period provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of language and statehood in Punjab. They document the tensions between linguistic nationalism and regional identity, highlighting the role of Urdu in shaping governance structures and public discourse. The marginalization of Punjabi in official domains contributed to identity struggles, as communities sought to preserve their linguistic heritage while navigating state-imposed policies. The political movements advocating for Punjabi's recognition, including the Punjabi Suba Movement, underscored the deep-rooted linguistic aspirations of the region. Urdu journalism and literature played a dual role both reinforcing national narratives and providing a platform for linguistic debates. The period witnessed significant intellectual contributions that shaped the discourse on language, identity, and governance.

Contemporary linguistic politics in Punjab is shaped by historical tensions, identity struggles, and evolving state policies. The interplay between Punjabi, Urdu, and English continues to influence governance, education, and cultural representation. Punjabi, despite being the mother tongue of the majority, faces challenges in official and academic domains. In Pakistan, Urdu remains the dominant language in governance and education, often sidelining Punjabi in formal settings. This has led to concerns about linguistic preservation and identity among Punjabi speakers. Efforts to promote Punjabi literature and education have gained momentum, but institutional support remains limited.

In Indian Punjab, Punjabi enjoys official status, yet English and Hindi dominate higher education and administrative affairs. The push for Punjabi-medium education has been met with resistance due to economic and professional considerations, as English proficiency is often linked to better career prospects. The linguistic divide also reflects broader socio-political dynamics, where language becomes a marker of regional and national identity. The rise of digital media has provided a platform for Punjabi voices, fostering discussions on linguistic rights and representation. Activists and scholars continue to advocate for policies that ensure linguistic inclusivity and cultural preservation. The future of Punjab's linguistic politics depends on balancing modernization with heritage, ensuring that Punjabi thrives alongside other languages in governance and education.

**References:**

- Aggarwal, R. C. (1984). *National integration and the teaching of Indian languages*. Concept Publishing Company.
- Ahmed, I. (2012). *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed*. Oxford University Press.
- Ali, G. (2016). *Zaban, Siyasat aur Punjab Ki Tashkeel*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Arora, S. C. (1990). *Turmoil in Punjab Politics*. Mittal Publications.
- Ayres, A. (2009). *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bhardwaj, V., & Sharma, U. (2024). *Revisiting Punjab's Transformative Journey: 1947 to 1966*. European Scientific Journal.
- Brass, P. R. (1974). *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Butalia, U. (2000). *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Penguin Books.
- Dua, H. R. (1996). *Language policy and education in India: Documents, contexts and debates*. Orient Blackswan.
- Ejaz, M. (2009). *Punjabi Zaban Ki Tehreek aur Asraat*. Lahore: Ferozsons.
- Hussain, R. (2025). *Unveiling the Past: The Evolution of Urdu in Punjab Up to the Mid-19th Century*. Punjab Historical Studies.
- Jalal, A. (1995). *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jalal, A. (2015). *Saadat Hasan Manto: The Man and His Works*. Cambridge University Press.
- Javed, S. (2025). *Punjab's Linguistic Landscape: Postcolonial Reading of Literary, Political, and Social Contexts*. IP Indexing.
- Kamran, T. (2013). *Punjab, Punjabi aur Urdu: Shanakht ka Sawal*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.
- Kapur Singh, S. (1967). *Punjabi Suba Movement: Ek Tareekhi Jaiza*. Amritsar: Guru Nanak University Press.
- Khan, Y. (2007). *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. Yale University Press.
- Kinger, M. (2005). *Punjab Politics and Congress (1947–1966)*. Bharti Publications.
- Lamba, K. G. (1999). *The Dynamics of Punjabi Suba Movement*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications.
- Malik, A. (2018). *The Politics of Language in South Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mansoor, S. (2005). *Language Planning in Higher Education: A Case Study of Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- Mir, F. (2010). *The social space of language: Vernacular culture in British colonial Punjab*. University of California Press.
- Mumtaz, M., Bagam, N., & Bokhari, S. M. (2025). *Language and Identity in Urdu Literature*. Sociology & Cultural Research Review.
- Naqvi, H. (1988). *The Role of Urdu Press in Indian Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and Politics in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- Sarhadi, A. S. (1970). *Punjabi Suba: The Story of Struggle*. New Delhi: Raj Publishers.
- Sherani, H. M. (1955). *Punjab mein Urdu aur Punjabi ki Kashmakash*. Lahore: Maktaba Daniyal.

- Siddiqui, S. (2014). *Urdu Journalism: Past, Present, and Future*. Oxford University Press.
- Singh, A. (2015). *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*. Singapore: Himalayan Books.
- Singh, A. (2018). *The Quest Continues: Lost Heritage, The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*. Singapore: Himalayan Books.
- Singh, G. (1991). *Punjabi Identity: Continuity and Change*. Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
- Singh, H. (1985). *The Akali Movement*. Delhi: Macmillan.
- Singh, J. (2012). *Punjabi Identity in a Global Context*. Routledge.
- Sobti, K. (2010). *Amrita Pritam: Life and Works*. Oxford University Press.
- Talbot, I. (1996). *Freedom's Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Partition Experience in North-West India*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Talbot, I., & Singh, G. (2009). *Partition of India and Punjab: A Retrospective Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.