THE CONTESTED SPACE OF THE VERNACULAR: URDU LITERARY CULTURE IN COLONIAL PUNJAB, 1849-1910

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

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by

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Submitted

in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the



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JULY 2026

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July 14, 2026

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It was sometime in September, when the two brothers parted. One climbing onto the bullock cart with his wife and children in tow, the other so upset with him that he did not step out of his home to say goodbye. The older brother quietly handed the keys to his portion of the house to an old servant, as the children and grandchildren on both sides shed uncontrollable tears. My great grandfather Hakeem Syed Hamid Ali, in his strong, determined way, only spoke a few words to rest his side of the argument: "Kya wahan khuda alag aur yahan alag hai?" ("Is God different there from the God here?"). It was 1947, and his resentment at his older brother Syed Shahid Ali's decision to migrate to Lahore, in the freshly carved Pakistan, never really left him. Though they later reunited at the insistence of their children once before they died, my great-grandfather stood by his word- all land belongs to God, and the land of one's ancestors must never be abandoned. It must be preserved, it must flourish once again, new migrants must be given shelter and settled in its homes. His idea of inhabiting and belonging to the land endure to this day.

Between the years of his brother's migration in 1947, and his death in 1961, many letters were exchanged between the two brothers. Long letters in prosaic Urdu, with stories spilling from one letter into another were received eagerly on either side. Urdu remained the language of their *adab*- a language of composite vocabulary, demanding a command over not just the grammar and Persianate references, but also the rules of decorum embedded in the cultural milieu. Unani *hikmat* (or the knowledge and practice of Unani medicine) also used the language extensively. Books, letters, *nuskhas* (prescriptions or formulae), diary entries about the clinic, and medicinal knowledge were all conveyed in its versatile idiom. Letter writing particularly, demanded fluency of language, knowledge and narration. It is this aspect of the language that persisted hundreds of miles across borders, in the urban cultures of both Lahore and Delhi. It is a fascination with this connection of urban culture, the Urdu language, and community identity, that my research study was born of.

A topic as wide-ranging as mine demanded much trust in my ideas and ability to pull it off, so the greatest share of my gratitude goes to the faculty members who accepted me into the PhD programme at HSS, IITD. To my supervisor Dr. Stuti Khanna, my sincere thanks for the unwavering support, incredible levels of patience, and faith in this research. She gave direction and meaning to my thoughts; her perseverance in helping me shape them into strong arguments has brought them to this point of culmination. Thanks are also due to the other members of my SRC, Prof Angelie Multani, Prof Simona Sawhney, and Prof Anisur Rahman. I feel most fortunate to have had their steady

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My heart is heavy with a profound sadness when I thank my dear uncle, Late Dr. Mehmood Fayyaz. From engaging conversations about Persian and Urdu literature, obtaining reading materials for me, to going through the more difficult Urdu critical

material with me in early 2024, before he passed away suddenly in June that year. He leaves behind a void in my life none can fill- a friend, father-figure, mentor, fellow poetry enthusiast, and academician, who sympathized with me and supported me since my childhood. My father Syed Abrar Ali's love of Urdu, his *zauq* for poetry, and his insistence that this treasure must not be lost to the coming generations, has been an inspiring force in my work. I was most fortunate to have been born to parents who were avid students of literature and Urdu poetry, and to have later married my husband Atir, who is neither. Convinced of my capabilities, Atir nudged me into applying for PhD in the first place. His frequent reminders for my deadlines, his support with technical tasks, and honest opinions on my pursuits made me grateful for this balance in my life. Thanks also to my siblings for all the humor and emotional support they fill my life with, my dear children Aalima and Afeef for keeping me grounded, and to my parents-in-law, who kept pushing me to persevere and not give up.

I dedicate my labors to the memory of my late mother Samia, the strongest, kindest, and most fiercely intelligent woman I have known. I dedicate it also to the memory of the two brothers who are now in their final resting places, on either side of the border. They would all be so proud of me today, I'm sure.

To the few who understood my struggles and empathized, I am grateful for the well-timed encouragement. To those who did not, I am grateful I did not let their words put me down. Perseverance doesn't come easy to anyone. Pushing into the darkness takes a bit of everything- your body, your mind, your soul. But what I have achieved today is far greater than the sum of what I endured. And for that, I am grateful to my Creator.

Ayesha Abrar

ABSTRACT

Beginning with the accession of Punjab to the colonial empire in 1849 and the imposition of Urdu as an official language, this study traces the subsequent shaping of an Urdu literary culture through urban institutions, reformist enterprises, and literary production over a period of roughly six decades until 1910. Through the lens of biographical, journalistic, statistical, literary writings, and archival texts, I have examined the construction of a vernacular public that negotiated modernity at a crucial period in colonial Indian history. This study interrogates the ways in which colonial urban identity crystallized around an 'official language', and articulated ideas of modernity.

This thesis develops two important ideas. The first is the key role of colonial policies in producing an Urdu ecosystem to facilitate governance, thereby also producing new socio-economic hierarchies. The reformist organizations and print materials studied indicate the contours of a self-conscious public. I locate this public in relation to the crucial role played by the urban space, its institutions and instruments, in shaping its identity. This relationship between the colonial urban and literary modernity of Urdu informs the second intervention of my study, namely, the significance of this period to the Urdu literary tradition. This study highlights the post-1857 generation of Urdu poets, publicists, and literary figures of colonial Punjab as an intermediate generation, falling between the pre-1857 poets and the modernists (the Progressive Writers of the 1930s). The evolution of Urdu poets and their poetics during this period is studied closely to understand the shaping of Urdu as a modern literary language.

सारांश

औपनिवेशिक साम्राज्य में 1849 में पंजाब के विलय और उर्दू को आधिकारिक भाषा के रूप में लागू किए जाने से आरम्भ करते हुए, मैं इस अध्ययन में लगभग छह दशकों (1910 तक) की अवधि में शहरी संस्थाओं, सुधारवादी प्रयासों और साहित्यिक सृजन के माध्यम से उर्दू की एक साहित्यिक संस्कृति के क्रमिक निर्माण का अन्वेषण करती हूँ। जीवनियाँ, पत्रकारिता-संबंधी लेखन, सांख्यिकीय अभिलेख, साहित्यिक रचनाएँ और अभिलेखीय दस्तावेज़ों की दृष्टि से मैंने उस 'देशज सार्वजनिकता' (vernacular public) के निर्माण का विश्लेषण किया है, जिसने औपनिवेशिक भारत के इतिहास के एक निर्णायक दौर में आधुनिकता के साथ संवाद और समायोजन किया। इस अध्ययन में मैं यह पड़ताल करती हूँ कि किस प्रकार औपनिवेशिक शहरी पहचान एक 'आधिकारिक भाषा' के इर्द-गिर्द आकार ग्रहण करती गई और उसने आधुनिकता के विचारों को अभिव्यक्त किया।

इस शोध-प्रबंध में मैं दो महत्वपूर्ण विचारों को विकसित करती हूँ। पहला, शासन को सुगम बनाने के लिए औपनिवेशिक नीतियों की उस केंद्रीय भूमिका का विश्लेषण है, जिसने एक उर्दू पारिस्थितिकी (Urdu ecosystem) का निर्माण किया और इसके साथ-साथ नई सामाजिक-आर्थिक श्रेणियों को भी जन्म दिया। जिन सुधारवादी संगठनों और मुद्रित सामग्रियों का मैंने अध्ययन किया है, वे एक आत्मसचेत सार्वजनिकता की रूपरेखा को उजागर करते हैं। मैं इस सार्वजनिकता को शहरी परिदृश्य, उसकी संस्थाओं और उपकरणों की निर्णायक भूमिका के संदर्भ में स्थापित करती हूँ, जिन्होंने उसकी पहचान को गढ़ने में योगदान दिया। औपनिवेशिक शहरी जीवन और उर्दू की साहित्यिक आधुनिकता के बीच यही संबंध मेरे अध्ययन के दूसरे हस्तक्षेप का आधार बनता है—अर्थात् उर्दू की साहित्यिक परंपरा के लिए इस कालखंड का महत्व।

इस अध्ययन में मैं 1857 के बाद की पीढ़ी के उर्दू कवियों, जनमत-निर्माताओं और औपनिवेशिक पंजाब के साहित्यिक व्यक्तित्वों को एक मध्यवर्ती पीढ़ी के रूप में रेखांकित करती हूँ, जो 1857 से पूर्व के कवियों और आधुनिकतावादियों (1930 के दशक के प्रगतिशील लेखक) के बीच स्थित थी। इस अवधि में उर्दू कवियों और उनकी काव्य-प्रवृत्तियों के विकास का मैंने निकटता से अध्ययन किया है, ताकि यह समझा जा सके कि उर्दू किस प्रकार एक आधुनिक साहित्यिक भाषा के रूप में आकार ग्रहण करती गई।

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Note on Translations and Illustrations Used

All Urdu texts, terms, and phrases have been transliterated into italicized Roman script, followed by their English translations in parentheses, only in the first instance. Subsequent usage of the same terms is given in transliterated italics. The translations are mine unless otherwise mentioned.

The digitized images used in Chapter 3 are from the open access resources of Endangered Archives Programme, British Library; Digital Library, University of Missouri; and Rekhta.org.

Introduction

> This (European) knowledge will teach the natives of India the marvelous results of the employment of labor and capital, rouse them to emulate us in the development of the vast resources of their country, guide them in their efforts, and gradually, but certainly, confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the healthy increase of wealth and commerce; and, at the same time, secure to us a larger and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufactures and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labor.[1]

In 1854 Sir Charles Wood, then President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, issued a policy document to the Governor General of India, Lord Dalhousie, regarding the establishment of a Department of Public Instruction in British India. This document, better known as 'Wood's Despatch', proposed a policy promoting a defined structure for education in India. Wood recommended the use of Indian vernacular languages for instruction at primary levels, a combination of English and vernaculars at the secondary level, and specifically the English language at the level of higher education. The latter, would, in his opinion, facilitate the creation of an English-speaking class of Indians who could then serve the Company well as administrative employees. Under Wood's proposal, the establishment of educational institutions across regions was

[1] Sir Charles Wood, *The Despatch of 1854, on "General Education in India"* (Strand, 1854), 6.

recommended, along with the Grants-in-Aid system to promote funding of institutions on the regional level.[2]

Wood's policy was remarkable for another aspect apart from the broad range of measures he suggested. His proposed policy of utilizing vernacular languages to introduce 'modern' knowledge at the primary level of education was aimed at reaching out to an unprecedented number of Indian subjects. The logic was simple- to prepare a class of colonized civil and administrative workforce, the government must reach out to the masses in their regional languages. This was, in a way, a social project that would diversify and promote 'modern' education in the native languages, while benefitting the colonial government at the same time. The spread of 'European knowledge' would promote the best utilization of resources for a capitalist economy. The latter half of the statement quoted above sheds light also upon the advantages such an education would bear for the British government in India as well as for the British nation. The steady supply of cheap raw material and labor would hold immense benefits for the British economy, and the colonial government must ensure that through its policy decisions in India. This and other similar interventions by British thinkers, administrators, and officials bore a lasting impact upon the fashioning of public education in India, and also the future of Indian languages.[3] Due to policy measures like these, by the end of the

[2] The Grants-in-Aid system initiated with the Wood's Despatch sought to financially assist educational institutions to promote Western education in India. The institutions that came under the purview of this system were obliged to follow government injunctions and submit to inspections by officials.

[3] The other significant moment in the history of British policies on Indian languages and education, was the now infamous Lord Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) that, among other measures, sought to establish the supposed unchallenged supremacy of British literature in the modern nation. This idea definitively placed language policy as a relevant tool in the context of the 'mission of civilizing' India as a colony. Macaulay, along with other

nineteenth century the regional and trans-regional vernacular languages like Bengali, Urdu, Tamil and Marathi came to hold significance as classical and administrative languages like Persian, Sanskrit and Arabic. [45] On the flip side, however, government policies and their implementation altered the dynamics of usage of language in a complex society like India. In addition to the introduction and popularizing of English education, the promotion of certain regional languages boosted their circulation through formal instruction, print technology and other means.

In the linguistic hierarchy designed by British thinkers like Thomas B. Macaulay and Charles Wood, English would be the language of privilege, reserving the highest administrative posts for the few. In this scheme, the vernacular languages on the other hand were placed precariously -- they were devalued but their significance to governance and administration could not be ruled out. Hence in the course of the nineteenth century,

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British utilitarian thinkers like James Mill developed a discourse that justified English education as a means to promote the spiritual and material well-being of the colonial public of India. For further reading on this, see Eric Stokes' *English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959).

[4] The trajectory of Bengali as a vernacular during the colonial rule, in particular, shares remarkable similarities with the trajectory of Urdu in the nineteenth century. Like Urdu, the Bengali language, apart from being a widely-used colloquial tongue of Bengal, also developed into an urban vernacular that suited requirements of governance and administration in the region. Apart from the colonial government's thrust towards creating a new prosaic Bengali to suit its 'civilizing mission', this development of a modern idiom in Bengali also became a medium of self-expression for the urban intelligentsia. Like the role served by Urdu in Punjab, Bengali also became a language of literate and literary publics that actively participated in the print culture during the nineteenth century. During the course of this study, these similarities will surface in discussions at several instances, while also establishing the crucial difference between the trajectories of the two vernaculars i.e. the strong regional identity that is a part of Bengali public consciousness. The trans-regional locations of Urdu in the nineteenth century resulted in a different dynamic of linguistic identity for its public. The lack of regional association and the sense of displacement prevalent among migrant Urdu publics in Punjab, resulted in a sense of dis-location as well as cosmopolitanism that is unique even for an Indian vernacular. A detailed discussion of this binary is presented in chapter 1.

[5] For a nuanced discussion of the trajectory of British colonial officials' interest in Indian languages and how it evolved from the seventeenth century onwards, see Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

there was a concerted effort by the colonial government to standardize them, promote them as languages of instruction and literacy, and endorse robust print cultures. This process of 'vernacularization', as scholar Hans Harder terms it, sought to emulate English as a model of a modern literary language. Simultaneously this implied that the vernaculars as 'regional' languages were not by themselves capable of 'sustaining' the discourse of modernity.[6] The process of vernacularization entailed an invested pursuit of understanding these languages, and shaping them into 'modern' idioms through various measures. It is important to note that this understanding of the 'vernacular' was concerned with languages that were defined by region. They were placed in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the classical Indian languages like Sanskrit and Persian which were treated as cosmopolitan. This emphasis on region in turn later created avenues for articulating regionally defined social and political identities.

Making these languages the medium of instruction at primary levels, and by designating them as official languages, the colonial government effected changes in the composition of vernacular publics. For example, the promotion of languages that were crucial to governance in regions such as Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, gave these languages impetus and boosted their circulation. It drew British officers, Indian elites and middle classes to the print culture of these languages. The vernacular modernity of these languages was, so to say, driven by colonial policy measures regarding administration,

[6]Pritipuspa Mishra, *Language and the Making of Modern India: Nationalism and the Vernacular in Colonial Odisha* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 8.

education, medium of instruction, and institutional reforms.[7] However, these measures set in motion processes that later went on to alter social communication, hierarchies and literary formations, going much beyond the limits of colonial power. The present study concerns itself with such a case, that of the imposition of Urdu as the official vernacular of the British government in the Punjab Province.

It is in the middle of the nineteenth century, rather late in the trajectory of colonial expansion in the Indian subcontinent, that the British Empire annexed the Punjab Province in 1849. A strategic region economically and politically, Punjab was formerly the seat of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire. A vast region in size, its location served as a buffer from invaders from Central Asia, as well as a key trading post for travelers from the north-West via land. The land being fertile, the demographic of the province was diverse in cultural, religious, and social orientations.[8] Upon accession to the Crown, the government made the obvious yet baffling decision to impose Urdu or 'Hindostanee' as the official language in the region. Obvious because for the second half

[7] Vernacular modernity as a concept in the study of colonial linguistic cultures identifies the nineteenth century as a defining moment in the history of modern Indian vernaculars such as Bengali, Urdu, Marathi, and Tamil. The introduction of English education in 1835 re-adjusted the significance of languages for Indians especially those seeking social mobility in urban centers. The 'official vernaculars' in these regions came to be modelled as 'modern' languages as they aspired to the "semblance of coherence and unity" which the English language symbolized in the narrative of colonial policy. This phrase is used by Amit Chaudhuri in his seminal essay "Modernity and the Vernacular" in *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (Picador, 2001), where he also establishes the crucial link between the rise of the middle classes and of modern vernaculars. Chaudhuri gives the example of the evolution of Bengali as a modern vernacular owing directly to the fact that it became a 'respectable' and primary medium of expression among the middle classes. The bourgeois consciousness was thus responsible for re-shaping the vernaculars from their 'feudal-religious' to 'secular' nature. The shaping of a 'modernity' for the Urdu public likewise, I argue in this dissertation, was a process closely related colonial city-building and the urban culture that evolved with it. It was determined by a middle-class intelligentsia in pursuit of social mobility and navigating modernity within the conditions of a colonial urban space.

[8] For a detailed account of economic and political significance of the region of Punjab during the nineteenth century, see Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (OUP, 1963). Singh details the important historical events of Ranjit Singh's reign, in addition to the hierarchies of class and profession prevalent at the time.

of the nineteenth century, Urdu was a widely used trans-regional language with exceptional circulation across the north Indian belt and a considerable public in the Deccan. In 1835, it had replaced Persian as the East India Company's choice of official language for lower courts and provincial administration, along with English for higher administration. It was baffling to the Punjabi demographic because by far, Persian was the more popular language among the elite, the urban, and even the rural literate communities in Punjab. It had been the court language for centuries, it was the language of official administration, law, and also the medium of instruction. The Punjabi language on the other hand was the widely spoken dialect of everyday usage, commonly spoken in the privacy of homes. Urdu was neither. It was relatively new to the region and in itself a nebulous vernacular that changed with usage from region to region. The Persian-inflected 'standard' Urdu that the British sought to use in governing Punjab was a convenient choice from the perspective of the larger control of the subcontinent. Punjab was a relevant addition to the Empire because it consolidated the span of the entire region and helmed the peak of colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent. The Urdu proposed for usage in Punjab had been in use in university teaching and lithographic printing from the first decade of the century.[9] But as far as cultural and social popularity of the vernacular Urdu in Punjab was concerned, it was a language in process. For one, it was an exception to the definition of the vernacular as specific to a region because it was variously used across a vast belt of North India, in addition to the Deccan. Its

[9] The establishment of Fort William College in 1800 established Urdu, along with other major vernaculars like Bangla, as languages of reckoning. Printing, publishing, and education used Urdu for its versatility.

geographical domain overlapped with other, more 'regional' vernaculars like Bangla, making it a distinctive language even within the colonial hierarchy of languages. Nevertheless, it was a language that had to be re-fashioned, 'modernized', and brought into currency through a system crafted for the purpose. Its malleability as a language, and the modern technology available in a cosmopolitan region like urban Punjab, facilitated its shaping as an 'official language'.

This project however shaped the linguistic and cultural 'publics' of Punjab in the decades that followed the annexation, so much so that urban Punjabi centers like Lahore, Amritsar and Ludhiana became major print centers of Urdu literary and journalistic publishing. This boost to Urdu even came at the cost of driving the public circulation of other languages like Punjabi, and Pashto to the peripheries. What impact did these expanding and shrinking linguistic publics have on the Urdu language itself, and vice-versa? How did the distinctive Urdu public negotiate modernity? As the primary location of cultural activity and institutions of higher education, what role did the colonial urban space play in the formation of Urdu literary culture in colonial Punjab? And finally, as a trans-regional vernacular, how did the context of colonial Punjab shape the future of Urdu as an Indian vernacular? The very print culture that was meant to produce literature to standardize the 'taught language', itself contained multilingual discourses. In popular magazines and journals like *Arya Musafir* it became common practice to use Nastaliq, Devnagri, and the Roman font simultaneously, visually representing the influence of other linguistic cultures on the Urdu audience.

This dissertation attempts to locate Urdu against the backdrop of colonial urban culture of Punjab and the public it shaped. I argue that urban spaces and their administration by the British colonial government shaped cultures of literacy and literariness, which subsequently played a key role in their 'modernization' in the following decades. I here draw from studies that shed light on the significance of colonial literary cultures in shaping the vernacular languages of India (Anindita Ghosh's book *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society, 1778-1905* (2006) is one such important study). I also draw from Farina Mir's work *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (2010) where she examines colonial Punjabi literary traditions that thrived despite the colonial government's neglect of the Punjabi language. Mir's work discusses the resilience of the Punjabi language in the face of state endorsement of Urdu during this historical period. She demonstrates through an intensive study of the *qissa* tradition in Punjabi, how colonial dominance was limited in the cultural sphere, and how Punjabi narrative traditions thrived despite the official neglect they suffered due to the patronage and promotion of Urdu in its lieu. While agreeing with Mir about the relative autonomy of the Punjabi literary formation, the present study holds up the deeper embedding of Urdu in the colonial context under the same circumstances. I highlight in this study that Urdu (in its role as an official language in Punjab) shared with the Punjabi language the "low threshold of belonging" in the diverse demographic of urban populations. [10] In the case

[10] Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (University of California Press, 2010), 120.

of Punjabi, the pre-colonial legacy of the language sustained a literary tradition that transcended religious, ethnic, class and economic boundaries. Mir's narrative travels across rural and urban folk traditions. For a trans-regional literary language like Urdu, on the other hand, the diversity within the linguistic public was defined by a characteristic sense of dislocation or lack of location. The extent of circulation of Urdu overlapped with other regional languages, and its literary sphere specifically was severely affected by the uprooting of the courtly tradition in the post-1857 era. The migration and displacement of poets and entrepreneurs from Delhi was followed by the colonial officials' endeavors to sever the new poetry from its pre-colonial heritage. This disruption of a regional and cultural continuity in the Urdu tradition was the defining characteristic in its re-shaping in Punjab. This is not to dismiss the affiliation of Urdu with the Rekhta tradition of North India and the Deccan. Rather, what this study endeavors to emphasize is the specificity of colonial Punjab as a location in the period under study. As a language that migrated to a new locale, just as some of its literary practitioners migrated in search of opportunities, Urdu adapted to the needs of a composite public characterized by migrants, socially mobile classes and colonial audiences. In the process of reforming the language for its renewed colonial identity, a severing of its precolonial legacy was attempted. In this process of recreating tradition, both the language and its public transcended limits of religion and social hierarchies. A detailed comparison of the trajectory of the two vernaculars is made in the course of this study to highlight how colonial policies determined the future of vernacular languages in different ways. The composition of the Urdu public in Punjab enabled the language to articulate a vision of

modernity not specific to religious or regional identity. Unlike the other concurrent movements such as the Delhi College and the Aligarh Movement, the literary and social movements in Punjab opened up the Urdu print public to diverse interests, shaping the character of the language as a modern vernacular in the later decades. The various factors that facilitated the government's administrative and cultural agenda of using the vernacular for effective governance, also became the very factors around which a discursive Urdu public crystallized in Punjab.

Through the analysis of social and cultural texts, this study interrogates the ways in which the institutionalized linguistic community (i.e. the urban educated middle-class intelligentsia that was not always native to Punjab) was 'modern'. The simultaneous non-formal practices of social engagement in the process of printing and dissemination of texts supplements this study. Print no doubt transformed audience communities, promoting a culture of cosmopolitanism.[11] At the same time, print also became a repository of specific socio-political and literary interests.[12] To examine the Urdu public

[11] Elizabeth Eisenstein's work *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early- Modern Europe* (1979) as a foundational text in print culture studies, established key ideas about the influence of print upon modern culture and thought. In addition to the impact of print technology on political and intellectual revolutions in Europe, Eisenstein pointed out that print reformed human communication and gave birth to 'urban' practices of debate and social reform. In her usage of the term, urbanity is closely associated to cosmopolitanism, becoming a defining feature of print publics. She establishes that these print publics, though distant from each other physically, and more individualistic than live audiences, were better connected to distant events and people, forging larger collective identities than before. (132) This fact has an important bearing on the current study because it challenges the colonial standardizing tendency to treat vernacular languages as exclusive entities. As will be discussed in the case of the Urdu public of Punjab, Urdu print audiences engaged with urban audiences that were not only cosmopolitan, i.e. they belonged to diverse regional identities, but they were also multilingual and multicultural.

[12] I focus specifically on the effect of language policy on the public and how identity formation was driven by policy decisions. The influence of the 'standardizing' measures by the British surely shaped the fortunes of Urdu as a modern language even until the next century. Policy decisions and print technology expanded the circulation of Urdu exponentially in Punjab and beyond, and gave it currency in a wide region. But it also provided a crucial medium for smaller communities, whether religious or social, to articulate and establish contesting visions of

of Punjab for the transformation it effected upon the Urdu cultural and literary tradition, this dissertation addresses their specific concerns as colonial publics on the micro level.

There is another important motivation behind this dissertation, which is to plug a gap in the study of the Urdu literary tradition of the years after 1857, when important literary figures were displaced geographically and culturally. They were forced to flee Delhi and seek patronage in colonial Punjab, then a new center of opportunities for re-building their literary fortunes. However, the circumstances of literary production occasioned by the new milieu remain under-studied.[13] The literary historiography of Urdu often pays due homage to Muhammad Husain Azad and Altaf Husain Hali as the founders of Urdu prose and the modern '*nazm*' (prose-style rhymed verse) respectively, but few studies have enquired deeper into the circumstances that shaped their literary endeavors. It is necessary to locate this moment in the Urdu literary tradition in its socio-political context- the context of colonial Punjab, its urban demographic, and conditions it produced for the native intelligentsia. Colonial interventions such as the Anjuman-e-Punjab and the series of '*mushairah*s' (gatherings for poetic performances) organized in 1874-75, serve as important historical markers. But what is more relevant and therefore studied here in depth, is the range of causes that went into the partial success and eventual collapse of the Anjuman's project of 'modernizing' Urdu, and the subsequent

modernity. Historian Elizabeth Eisenstein's seminal work *The Printing Press as An Agent of Change* (1979) provides a broad perspective on the impact of print on Western civilization and how the dissemination of information through print revolutionized knowledge systems.

[13] I here take into consideration the literary histories of Urdu written in English, namely Mohammad Sadiq's sprawling *A History of Urdu Literature* (1984), Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (2001), Ralph Russell's *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History* (1992), and Thomas Grahame Bailey's *A History of Urdu Literature* (2008). These narratives are discussed in detail in chapter 1.

ramifications of this historical encounter. The forces that shaped the literary and political lives of the Punjabi Urdu literati positioned them uniquely. It is important to locate these literary figures equally as subjects of a colonial enterprise, as well as reformers and pioneers working within a well-established tradition. Poets such as Muhammad Husain Azad, Altaf Husain Hali, and entrepreneurs/publicists such as Shaikh Abdul Qadir and Munshi Mahboob Alam are some of the key figures in this study.

The thought and writings of these poets and publicist figures asserts a consciousness of a literary tradition that was being pronounced as outdated and decadent.[14] And yet, their carefully negotiated positions as employees/collaborators/subjects of the colonial government is also visible in their political stances. The present study delves into the biographical narratives of these literary figures to study the Urdu poet's transformation over these decades. From the generation of post-1857 migrant poets, I trace the growth of the poet into a self-consciously modern figure capable of critical thought. Allama Muhammad Iqbal who rose to fame three decades later in Lahore shaped the trajectory of Urdu poetry definitively. The tradition of courtly poetry of the previous century would not serve the new social reality of a colonial city, was apparent to the British players as well as the native literati. The following century saw the rise of the Progressive Writers' Movement

[14] Among the foremost critics of 'irrelevant' themes in Urdu poetry was Sir Sayyad Ahmed Khan, whom Azad often consulted in matters of poetic themes and style. G W Leitner's inaugural speech at the Anjuman-e-Punjab *mushairah* in 1874 also referred to "fetters" of romance and decadence that Urdu must be "freed" from. A most interesting edition of Azad's *nazm* was edited by Agha Muhammad Baqir in 1938 (published by Sheikh Mubarak Ali Tajir Press in Lahore), where Baqir announces Azad's poetry as 'free' from the 'fetters of love and beauty'. Azad's poetry is perhaps remembered foremost for its apparent rejection of the Persianized courtly idiom and themes, and not for the subtle contradictory references to that tradition and the lifeworld it represented for him.

that addressed nationalist concerns in innovative style and themes in poetry. However, it is in the intermediate generation of poets in Punjab, I argue, that is located the key to understanding the transformation of literary language and themes.

The deluge of reformist-spirited associations and voluntary organizations of the second half of the nineteenth century influenced literary writing and philosophy. It celebrated the rejection of the pre-1857 courtly style, and was heavily influenced by European literary Romanticism. The courtly poetic tradition that had crystallized around the Mughal seat in Delhi during the early nineteenth century, however, was not so easy to reject. It was a cultural tradition that relied on networks of '*ustaads*' (guides or tutors) and '*shaagirds*' (pupil or apprentice) who shared a complex hierarchical relationship. The '*islaah*' (correction) of poetry by an *ustaad* was essential for a younger poet to work his way up the hierarchy, and hence allegiance to the tradition was an important part of existence in the literary circles. Careers were wrought in performances of poetry in the presence of *ustaads* and elites. What the colonial masters were proposing by way of refashioning the idiom and poetic style was therefore a significant cultural transformation for the writing and performance of Urdu poetry. The poets of the Lahore literati had to tread a fine line that could neither abandon a tradition from which they derived value as poets, nor could risk upsetting the British officials and their policies that were replacing traditional patrons through land reforms and economic measures. The struggles that went into the 'modernizing' of Urdu under colonial patronage thus

entailed political and cultural negotiations, sometimes termed as 'partnerships',[15] at other times revealing clear imbalances of power and influence. This generation's encounter with colonial policy and scholars/officials served as the defining factor for their ideas of literary and social modernity for the Urdu public. In fact, these poets often envisioned the Urdu public not just as a linguistic one, but as a *qaum*, a community subsequently imagined as a national community.

The deeper tensions and struggles that marked individual encounters with colonial modernity present an important perspective on the social hierarchies of the time. Class hierarchies were altered with the fall of the Sikh Empire, replaced by new means of social mobility. The way the Urdu public and its printed and non-printed texts were produced and consumed, altered social interaction in unique ways. The urban public of Punjab negotiated print culture on its own terms, engaging with religion, social reform and questions of literary production from the vantage point of Indian social realities. What happens to the 'rational' 'enlightened' subject of modernity in this context then? The colonial public was not a mere receptor of western modernity, via colonial law, European literature, and colonial administrative policy. My enquiry studies the limits of the meaning and social reality of modernity for the Urdu public of Punjab. The class of intellectuals and poets on the one hand, and 'publicists' and reformer figures on the other,

[15] The term is used by Jeffrey M. Diamond in his nuanced study of Azad's journey as a scholar patronized by the British government in Lahore. For a detailed discussion of the subject see Jeffrey M. Diamond, "The Orientalist-Literati Relationship in the Northwest: G.W. Leitner, Muhammad Hussain Azad and the Rhetoric of Neo-Orientalism in Colonial Lahore". *South Asia Research*, 31, no.1 (2011): 25-43; and "Lahore: A cultural and Literary 'New' Delhi for North India after 1857," in *Exploring South Asian Urbanity,* eds. Urvi Mukhopadhyay and Suchandra Ghosh (Routledge, 2022), 255-278.

constituted two significant aspects of the influence of colonization in Punjab. While the former shaped literary production and critical thought vis a vis colonial subjecthood, the latter mobilized political and cultural forces to mediate that identity. Print definitively crystallized ideologies, if not individual identities. These public figures were defined as much by their social and economic status as by their role in public fora. Their public persona was shaped by their oratory, participation in social platforms, and also by their presence in the print media of the time.

Social Contestation and the Question of Language in Colonial Punjab

The promotion of Urdu in Punjab by designating it as the official language of governance was effected through an ecosystem constructed by the British government, along with the 'native' intelligentsia and the larger public. I term it an 'ecosystem' because it encompassed not just policy decisions that made Urdu essential for navigating administrative and legal systems; it set in motion wide-ranging initiatives that involved educational institutions, public spaces, social spaces and centers of reform that fashioned an idiom specific to the colonizer's vision of modernity for its subjects. And yet this project subverted expectations by creating self-reflexive discourses in print and in cultural spaces to challenge the dominance of a single official idiom. The 'partnerships' forged between the British scholars/officials and the Indian intelligentsia and elites may be called a collaboration but may also be termed a contestation. Whether it is in the economic sphere where the government controlled most of the production (agricultural

and non-agricultural) through their control of the landed elites, or the socio-cultural interventions such as the Anjuman-e-Punjab, a complex synergy marks these colonizer-colonized relationships. The landed elites were maintained as loyal supporters of colonial aspirations in rural Punjab, while the upwardly mobile and the lower rungs of society were 'administered' through different projects of 'modernity'. The public was crucial to maintaining the empire, as it had always been, and this status quo required the cooperation, appropriation, and legitimization of different communities depending upon their position on the social and economic ladder. The upheaval caused by overturning of the social order of the Sikh Empire, and the new roles of different communities set in motion a re-adjustment of hierarchies. By making Urdu the language of administration and the 'modernizing' projects, the language transformed into a social force at the hands of the colonial government. It became the fulcrum upon which the wheel of vernacular modernity turned. Despite the persevering presence of competing linguistic identities in both the rural and the urban spaces, the presence of Urdu pervaded city life in particular. Be it the vocabulary of urban planning, or the school curricula, or the documentation of court proceedings, or the accounts of cultural life in urban Punjab, Urdu became the language of choice, and this choice was made for the masses by the government. The influence of language policy and promotion of vernacular Urdu was most conspicuous in the institutionalized spaces in urban Punjab- the consolidation of an Urdu public was the centerpiece of the Empire's vision of vernacular modernity for the natives.

The colonizers' perception of language, especially that of the 'vernaculars', and their strategic leveraging for better control of Indian societies has been a key point of discussion in studies of colonial societies.[16] The vernacular languages specifically gained centerstage during the nineteenth century, because despite the limitations of conceptual categories available to the Empire for gauging Indian social matrices, the vernacular languages were a crucial point of entry to reach out to a wider audience. Sample for instance another quote from the same Wood's Despatch mentioned at the beginning of this introduction:

> …as the importance of the vernacular languages becomes more appreciated, the vernacular literatures of India will be gradually enriched by translations of European books, or by the original compositions of men whose minds have been imbued with the spirit of European advancement, so that European knowledge may gradually be placed in this manner within the reach of all classes of the people. We look, therefore, to the English language and to the vernacular languages of India together, as the media for the diffusion of European knowledge, and it is our desire to see them cultivated together in all schools in India of a sufficiently high class to maintain a schoolmaster possessing the requisite qualifications.[17]

[16] C.A. Bayly's *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (1996) and Bernard S. Cohn's *Colonialism and It's Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (1996) are two prominent works that have theorized the role of information gathering and management of knowledge systems in colonial control of Indian society. Bayly's study taps into the gathering and circulation of information within colonial societies to construct an 'intelligence system' that would effectively facilitate their capture and management of resources. Bayly suggests that this complex system of surveillance and codifying of information was geared towards the British colonial government's desire to formulate a rhetoric of legitimacy for its imperialistic occupation of the subcontinent. Bernard Cohn's study likewise highlights the relationship between knowledge and the consolidation of power by colonial governments. This process Cohn argues was facilitated by the 'officializing' of their power- the colonial project was as much an economic and political project as it was an epistemological one. Native knowledge systems were navigated through native languages in order to know the colonial public better and to control them better. Cohn suggests different 'investigative modalities' that the British employed in India to gather knowledge and codify it.

[17] Sir Charles Wood*, The Despatch of 1854, on "General Education in India,"* 10.

Wood here echoes the discourse of European enlightenment and its diffusion among the Indian masses as a responsibility of the colonial government. In order to administer this education to them, works in English and their translations were equally crucial. This leads logically to the question of how a vernacular language like Urdu whose literary output then was largely focused on romance narrations and metaphysical poetic traditions, would come to articulate the Western scientific and rational discourses that colonial modernity demanded of it.

A concomitant phenomenon that needs interrogation is the rise in popularity of print technology, vernacular prose, and resultant widespread circulation of translations and original scientific, philosophical, and literary texts. A crucial point that C. A. Bayly raises about the nineteenth century 'modernization' of vernaculars is- what were the causes of the significant delay in the boom in printing and publishing, when the British East India Company had already arrived in India two centuries earlier, and print technology had reached Indian shores a century before? He suggests that the answer might lie in the ordering of the information system in India as a whole. Factors like entrepreneurship and commerce, and later religious reform movements that produced voluminous prose literature, realized the full power of printing in the nineteenth century.[18] It is more fruitful for the present study, however, to understand the boost given by the colonizers to vernacular education and print culture in general, as a phenomenon in conjunction with ideas of modernity within the Urdu tradition. The discourse of

[18] C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 238.

literary modernity revolved around the idea of a 'break with the past', though in practice the break was actually embedded in a continuity.[19] Scholar Jennifer Dubrow suggests that literary modernity in South Asian languages followed from a general response to Macaulay's (and the Western colonial) criticism of South Asian literatures, leading to a general 'rejection of tradition' by vernacular writers. Literary practices and traditions were re-imagined and carried elements of both- resistance and reconciliation.[20]

While modern literature was being produced in the new idiom, it was also re-writing the language in different ways. The shift in patronage from the court and elite classes to an administering government in Punjab, organized into 'offices' and 'departments', was a tectonic shift. The employment of scholars, littérateurs, poets as re-creators of Urdu language in the mold of a 'modern vernacular' entailed the creation of new student bodies, speaking communities, readerships, and socio-literary sites for engaging in that discourse. In other words, the colonizers intended the creation of a class of potential employees who could effectively assist in the running of the colonial enterprise, and beyond that, attempt to design a new 'enlightened' subjectivity for the stakeholders in the ecosystem.

Despite the central role of missionary, administrative, and popular/commercial print media in this enterprise, the present study engages importantly with other formations where this public discourse was located. Non-print platforms of engagement

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[19] Jennifer Dubrow, *Cosmopolitan Dreams: The Making of Modern Urdu Literary Culture in Colonial South Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2018), 4.

[20] Chapter 4 of this dissertation studies this aspect of Urdu literary modernity with historical and textual examples.

such as social gatherings and public meetings organized by voluntary associations and government institutions facilitated the production of a modern discourse. The urban spaces as produced by colonial authorities for this purpose, indicate that the creation of an urban literary culture was necessary for this refashioning of Urdu. The mobility of populations towards the city, the social mobility made possible through government employment, and the rise of the mercantile class as patrons and participants of literary associations demonstrates that rather than print, the key player here was circulation. This study perspectivizes the mobility of populations and social roles under the new regime, to explore how these new platforms enabled and expanded the Urdu public sphere. The public here encompasses not just Urdu speakers or readers but participants in allied institutions in all possible ways, either as members or subscribers or authors of tracts, as an entire range of associational relationships sprang up in the Urdu milieu.

Imagining Urdu Modernity: Literacy and the Literary in Colonial Urban Punjab

For the purposes of this study, the impact of colonialism on Indian culture is interpreted through the rubric of language. Clifford Geertz's definition of culture states that culture is an 'ordered system of symbols and meanings', and these form the basis of social interaction.[21] In other words, culture encodes symbols and meanings to assist a society in making sense of the world. It is important to view the colonial Urdu public across North India from such a cultural perspective. While Urdu was at the center of the colonial

[21] Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), 144.

project in Punjab, it was also a language that bore much prior and contemporary significance to social and religious identity. As a language that carried a literary identification with the traditions of Delhi and Dakkani schools of poetry, and a socio-religious identification with reform movements like the Aligarh Movement, the appropriation of Urdu by the colonial government in its administrative and educational project in Punjab represents a new direction. In the trajectory of Urdu's evolution, the Punjab chapter marks a period of transformation that was as much part of its development as a modern Indian language, as it was an example of colonial cultural intervention. This intervention altered 'literate' practices- practices of teaching, learning, reading and writing Urdu.

Whether it was pedagogical materials, or the journalistic idiom and aesthetic style, or the literary innovations, the institutional locations of patronage to the Urdu literary corpus were closely associated with urban spaces. The erstwhile 'centers' of literary practice as well as the centers of socio-literary engagement were centered upon specific urban locations and social life-worlds. Prominent spaces of public congregation in Lahore such as the Assembly Hall of the Brahmo Samaj, the Anjuman-e-Punjab and its allied institutions like the Free Public Library and Reading Room, defined notions of being an urban public and of civic responsibility. Concomitant to these locales were the literary formations. Ranging from diverse genres of prose like religious tracts/debates, instruction manuals for school children, didactic writings addressed to women, the rise of '*mazmun nawisi*' or creative prose, writing engaged with urban idiomatic styles and

themes. This evolution of literary form is examined in this study through the institutions and practices around which they are located. Unlike the trajectory of languages like Bangla that went through a process of streamlining to fit it into the mold of a respectable middle class *bhadralok* idiom,[22] the scope of Urdu on the other hand, expanded in terms of idiom, style, and diction. It journeyed from court poetry to political and religious prose within the span of a century.

The question of class formation is central to imagining contestation in the colonial urban world. As a new social formation, the 'middle-class' that crystallized in urban Punjab later in the nineteenth century was an emergent class that navigated the colonial urban experience on its own terms. The ecosystem generated and run by the colonial government gave birth to new class associations through avenues like educational institutions, public voluntary associations, and the culture of literacy. Bernard Cohn highlights the precedent to this process in modern British society. "The universities and public schools in Victorian Great Britain were the factories in which the old aristocracy was associated with the new middle class, and new governing classes for the empire were produced. These models were exported to India and the other colonies to produce loyal governing elites."[23] In Punjab, a unique composition of social associations brought together the middle class, migrant professionals and the elite/ '*raees*' class of an erstwhile feudal society. Literary production, and the production of language itself in the process,

[22] For a detailed study of the case of Bengali language in nineteenth century Bengal, see Anindita Ghosh's *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society, 1778-1905* (OUP, 2006).
[23] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

became one of the functional modalities that would allow governance to reach deeper into society to assess and govern its people. After all, in the quest for invading the terrain of political, cultural and social knowledge systems in the colonized society, language was the first port of entry.

For the governed, Urdu as a language, or rather idiom, was practiced and lived in multiple iterations. Vernacular modernity was very different for the Urdu public in Punjab from say, that of its European counterpart publics. In the cosmopolitan world of colonial Lahore for example, the diverse interests of class, religion, and social identity were brought into contact and that is where the question of representation and poetics becomes crucial. Urdu literary modernity was very specific to its context and could not and did not follow the trajectory of western notions of literary modernity. As a site of contestation in itself, Urdu was fast appropriated by social groups not just to identify with the wider Urdu public sphere of North India, but also to carve out a recognizable identity for separate communities within the larger imagined Urdu public. In the post 1857 climate, language and literature could no longer merely imagine a modern future, they also had to envision a future for the community. It had to create spaces for dissent, negotiate tradition and modernity, and in this role the colonial city poet held a unique position. Unlike his predecessors, the new poet had to fashion an urban middle class identity for himself, a necessity 'of the times' as Azad reiterates at various points. He was part of a teeming middle class of the city, seeking a livelihood mostly in the teaching and administrative professions, at the same time balancing the burden of his role as a poet 'of

the society', a role defined by a sense of duty to the community which he often refers to in his writing. The middle-class literati is an important subject of my study because it was a composite population group that straddled the pre-1857 world familiar to migrants from Delhi and other towns of the Awadh region, with the new economic reality of Punjab.

In colonial Punjab, Urdu clearly acquired the character of a language of literacy and literary value. It had always been an urban language in the sense of belonging to the court, its literary practice being primarily located in urban centers of power and cultural activity. In colonial Punjab however, this position was constructed in opposition to the colloquial vernaculars of which Punjabi was the largest spoken language, followed by Hindustani, then Kashmiri, Pashto, and Pahari.[24] In the process of promoting Urdu as an official language, it was simultaneously constructed as a language of rationality, governance and modern values. More than moral values as in the case of Bengali,[25] the case of Urdu demonstrates a mobilization of language to create an urban educated class as an administrative and commercial workforce, divorcing the language at the literary level also from its past. This linguistic project opened up colloquial Urdu to urban dialects and vocabularies, reflecting a colonial public's concerns and aspirations. The process, in

[24] *The Gazetteer of the Lahore District 1893-94*, (Punjab Government, Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1894), 83.
[25] Anindita Ghosh in her book *Power in Print* makes a case for the standardization of Bengali in Nineteenth century through the flourishing print culture, as a movement that carved out an elitist language of the 'Bhadralok' or middle class educated Bengali community in opposition to 'chhottolok' or the non-privileged classes like women, lower classes, and Muslims.

other words, sought to purge Urdu of its Persianate literary influence so as to make it amenable to the concerns of a colonized-governed public.

Along with the systems of economic and cultural exchange, Urdu was also the carrier of a distinctive cultural heritage. It was the cultivated language, a progenitor of Persian that had hitherto been the language of administration, the court, and literacy. But in order to become the language of colonial governance and modern sensibility among the governed, it had to shed that lexical and idiomatic inheritance. In a way this process was not a progression from colloquial vernacularity towards enlightened civilization through standardizing the language (as in the case of Bengali). Rather what the colonial government engineered was a kind of 'modernizing' of the language for its specific ends- Urdu, it believed, was the lingua franca of a large swathe of North India and the Deccan, and therefore it had to facilitate governance in the rapidly expanding empire. The problem with Persianized courtly Urdu were the cultural values that it embodied. It was a classical poetic idiom that, though it had a history of a narrative tradition, yet lacked in vocabulary the vigor and 'directness' necessary in the phrasing of laws for instance.[26] The need for creating a counter linguistic culture was thus addressed through policy measures and institutions developed specifically for this purpose. Ranging from education policy, medium of instruction, and the introduction of Urdu textbooks, to

[26] Urdu narrative traditions date back to the sixteenth century when the *dastan* and *qissa* traditions were popular in oral storytelling. M. Asaduddin, in his essay "First Urdu Novel: Contesting Claims and Disclaimers" (2001) traces the similarity between these forms with the medieval romance genres in that they employed cyclical narratives and tales of heroism. The nineteenth century saw the publication of these narratives as 'novels' for the first time, with the initiative taken by Munshi Naval Kishore, the prolific publisher form Lucknow, who hired 'dastan-gohs' or professional narrators to compile *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, which was then published periodically by the Naval Kishore Press between 1881-1905.

institutional avenues of engagement with social and literary reform, the colonial government effectively developed modern Urdu through a complex system of active intervention.

Social Communication, Prose, and the Limits of Print

By the time Punjab came under the political control of the British government, Urdu print and publishing elsewhere in the subcontinent was in a nascent stage. Journalistic publishing in lithography began circulation in around the 1820s. *Mirat-ul Akhbar* (1821) and *Jam-e-Jahan Numa* (1822) in Calcutta, and *Agra Akhbar* (1831) in Akbarabad, are among the earliest newspapers and journals printed in the Persian script and Urdu language in India. Persian, Arabic, and Urdu were popular languages for publication and scholars like Vinay Dharwadker have linked the simultaneous rise of prose in many vernacular languages to the rise of print. The major center of printing literary materials like translations was the Serampore Press foundry that printed more than two lakh texts in over 40 languages between 1800 and 1840.[27] The rise of prose, the expansion of subjects and styles and discursive forms in literature printed in the subcontinent drastically altered literary production in nineteenth century.

Punjab under colonial rule saw a distinctive trajectory of literary production and publication in Urdu. Interestingly, the government was the biggest consumer of Urdu

[27] Vinay Dharwadker, "Print Culture and Literary Markets in Colonial India," in *Language Machines: Technologies of Literary and Cultural Production*, eds. Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass and Nancy J. Vickers (Routledge, 1997), 111.

print materials. The Department of Public Instruction in Lahore commissioned the writing and publishing of textbooks in Urdu, and Muhammad Husain Azad's *Qisas-ul-Hind* (1869) and *Urdu ki Pehli Kitaab* (1866) are among the best-known examples of this literature. The 1860s were the prime period for the government-sponsored publishing industry, giving a boost to Urdu print by the 1880s by the time the reformist movements gained strength in the province. Sisir Kumar Das in his *A History of Indian literature 1800-1910: Western Impact, Indian Response* (1991), identifies three stages of vernacular publishing in the nineteenth century in India. The first stage comprises the production of pedagogical materials for formal education in prose. The second stage is that of the religious and social reformist materials. And finally, the rise of journalism in vernaculars comes in at a later stage, with printing of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and 'punch' magazines. The three stages listed by Das are fairly accurate for cosmopolitan and urban languages like Bengali and Urdu. We see the colonial government's initiatives for introducing Urdu at the primary level through the commissioning of grammars, primers, and textbooks. The rise of reformist organizations, and their use of Urdu print for producing social and religious literature follows, and eventually Urdu journalism and publishing industry evolved to an unprecedented scale by the end of the nineteenth century. In addition to these print materials of a sophisticated nature however, the impact of this evolution upon the poetics of Urdu literature is an important point of study in this dissertation. The colonial officials directly intervened in the literary realm through literary associations, organization of literary meetings and *mushairah*s, and the publication of literary materials. The Anjuman-e-Punjab as a government initiative

sought to promote 'modern poetry' in Urdu in the most direct sense by suggesting pre-decided themes and instructing participants to use a direct prose-like idiom. This was a radical move- not only in transforming the way poetry was written and performed but also fundamentally transforming the ethos of an older courtly tradition into a modern practice of writing 'natural poetry'. The poetics and philosophy of poetry-writing altered the poet's role from a courtly practice embedded in a tradition of tutelage under the *ustaads*, to becoming a public figure confronting modern philosophical concerns such as the role of art, the poet as a representative figure in society, and the need for self-fashioning. The literary philosophy and poetics of an age are not divorced from social and cultural phenomena. Print being a major harbinger of change shaped the literary imagination and propelled it towards a new role in society. It was therefore, a major index of literary modernity in the realm of Urdu poetics and philosophical debate.

The evolution of the Urdu public in colonial Punjab was a process that disrupted colonial expectations in both the public realm and the literary realm. The vision of the colonial government for popularizing Urdu in the province was not simply a question of imposing an official language in a new region. It was a process of producing a new public that converged around an urban culture of modern social and literary practices. The *mushairah*s organized by the Anjuman in 1874-75 are an example of how a new model of practicing and performing poetry in the public realm was initiated, and resulted in a complex response. A theme-based *mushairah*, with the aim of 'producing' new poetry was an unusual practice not only for the poets of the time, but also for the audiences. The

performance of Persian and Urdu poetry had until that point been practiced in a different cultural ethos. A prescribed theme and the new format of sharing poetry in the absence of the hierarchy of elites and *ustaad*s did not go down well with many of the literati, as will be discussed in chapter 4 of this study. The idea of transforming a poetic tradition in so radical a manner as to alter its themes, styles, manner of performance, and poetics in one sweeping dictation of terms could not and did not have the expected results. As was seen in the responses to the poetry that emerged from the Anjuman and its literary circle, modern Urdu poetry could not replicate the European Romantic poetry simply by replicating the themes and directness of idiom because the practitioners of Urdu poetry adhered to specific rules of form and performance.[28] As this study will explore in the following chapters, the reforms in poetry and public engagement with poets were not as straightforward as were expected by the organizers of the Anjuman-e-Punjab *mushairah*s. The proposed 'modern' themes were disruptive of traditional form, style, and also of the dynamics shared by poets and audiences. Likewise, the rise of prose in journals, particularly those published by missionary and religious presses, facilitated not just a reconsideration of religion along the lines of 'scientific' and 'rational' thinking, but also a

[28] C M Naim, in the essay "Poet- Audience Interaction at Urdu Musha'irahs" in his book *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C.M. Naim* (2004) analyses the dynamics at play within the *mushairah*. He describes the eighteenth century *mushairah* as a strictly regulated artistic space, where the order of performances was governed by seniority and fame of the poets involved. A significant point here is the absence of non-poets and non-participants in the competition, meaning that only those with knowledge of the tradition, hierarchy, and rules of participation were allowed to be present. The arena-like setting, the location of the private residence or court, and the responsibilities of the host of the *mushairah* determined the social and economic composition of the literary interaction. Specialized knowledge and training were pre-requisites for practicing poetry as an art. This fact sharpens the contrast of these *mushairah* with the ones organized in Lahore in the late nineteenth century. The setting of the proscenium, public participation, and dissolution of hierarchical relationships between poets and their tutors implied a breakdown of the tradition, at the same time democratizing the space. The literary public, thus, changed fundamentally in its composition and in the practice of performance.

re-examination of faith through the multi-religious lens of the Punjabi audience. As shown in my study, the reading and participating public of Urdu engaged in multilingual debates on issues ranging from comparative religion to civic issues in colonial cities, "The ineluctable and uncontainable hybridity of this print culture, without precedent in the West or elsewhere, ensured that it did not and could not replicate in India the conditions, processes, and outcomes of the Enlightenment, print capitalism, or romantic nationalism of Europe."[29] The middle class literati of Colonial Punjab, this dissertation will argue, did not simply end up being the 'collaborator' class that the British administrators saw as 'comprador intelligentsia' that would facilitate British interests in the province. Rather, it mediated modernity on its own terms through commentary, debate ('*manazara*'), and reinvention of traditions.

The social groups that constituted the Urdu public and their specific socio-political interests as colonial publics established how print transformed audience communities, promoting a culture of cosmopolitanism, as Elizabeth Eisenstein emphasized. But print also became a repository of specific socio-political and literary interests. Lahore for instance, in the pre-colonial time, as well as the time when print was not as prolific, was still a culture of cosmopolitanism because of its strategic location. Pre-print formations such as communal culture and oral narrative repertoires across Punjab addressed trans-regional concerns. What nineteenth century print initiated in colonial Punjab however, (and Urdu was the urban language that fulfilled this purpose within print and without)

[29] Dharwadker, "Print Culture and Literary Markets in Colonial India," 114.

was a simultaneous restoration of interests in the urban public culture as a means of negotiating and asserting community interests. Pre-print channels and platforms of social association comprised of locations such as the marketplace, socio-literary gatherings, festivals and fairs. As centers of social engagement of different kinds between religious and class communities, venues such as saints' shrines, marriage processions, riverside gatherings were also sites of information sharing. However, the nineteenth century phenomenon of introduction of Urdu as an official language initiated new formats and thereby attracted new publics to the city, that were distinctively urban. The birth of a class of educated, professional middle class among others, engaged with print publics and pre-print forms of association, to articulate specific community interests, as well as profound literary transformations. Vivek Bhandari in his essay "Print and the Emergence of Multiple Publics in Nineteenth- Century Punjab" terms this a distinctive 'urban environment'. The 'cosmopolitan attitude' enabled by the wide reach of print made the city a center for a class who were professionally connected to the culture of print. Printing press owners and booksellers formed a class of merchants who facilitated a new culture of mass communication. In European print cultures of the nineteenth century, particularly in France and England, the newspaper and the novel (forms that sometimes overlapped in their function) were distinctly modern phenomena. Serialization, publishing at frequent intervals, and circulating information through print played a significant part in the national imaginary. By comparison, the culture of voluntary associations provides an equally important lens for understanding how social associations indirectly forged through the print industry imagined the community. The

administrator imagined the native public, the poet imagined modernity, the religious scholar imagined faith and more. The present study engages with these smaller avenues of social communication and relationships.

Socio-Literary Spaces and the Colonial Establishment: Contours of the Urdu Public

The term public is key to the present study, which uses it in a specific sense. As Michael Warner in the seminal and lucid work "Publics and Counterpublics" explains, 'publics' can include an array of communities. The term could refer to a social totality (as in 'public space'), to a real time audience (such as the audience in an auditorium or cinema hall) or to a transient public that comes into existence "only in relation to texts and their circulation".[30] These categories however, (and Warner admits as much) are not very sharply defined- publics that come into existence in relation to texts for example, could simultaneously be live audiences as well as larger abstract audiences. In addition, publics are 'self-organized', i.e. they operate from the position of sovereignty and not through any external authority that governs their actions. The publics of texts in particular are both imagined, i.e. not empirically definable or knowable, but also not completely imaginary i.e. they are actual people. When I refer to a 'vernacular public' such as the Urdu public of a definitive period and region, it entails a community that is defined by a discourse, not just *of* the Urdu language but also located *in* the language. In other words,

[30] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics" *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 50.

this Urdu public is not merely defined by their usage of the language but it also relies on what Warner calls 'pre-existing forms and channels of circulation', i.e. means of social communication that the ecosystem mobilized by the British officials utilized well. The Urdu public that this study identifies and engages with comprises a community identifiable by a shared discourse. Urdu was not a widely spoken or widely read or written language in pre-colonial Punjab. Its status as an 'official vernacular' lent it to new usages particularly in the urban society, as a language of social, economic, and later, political mobility. The print public of Urdu, though more definable due to the circulation data available for journals, newspapers, and schoolbooks, was also much more expansive because of the nature of circulation. Through print, this public was connected to and communicating with a vast Urdu belt of the subcontinent. The public outside the purview of print however, though not enumerable as accurately, comprised a specific community that shared the language in everyday life. Social interaction, economic exchange, cultural engagement, and literary platforms mobilized a new kind of Urdu public in the years following the implementation of the language in governance. As limitless as a governed public of a region like the Punjab province might appear, the Urdu discourse circulating by the last decade of the nineteenth century was fairly specific in its imagined audience. The colonial government after all, was monitoring and controlling the education system, public services examinations, and important institutions such as the public library and the Anjuman-e-Punjab in Lahore. The Urdu language was by and large an acquired language for these communities, meant for use in the public sphere. In addition, as a language community bound by interests of not just livelihood and social mobility, this

community became a self-conscious body that responded concretely to the national and communal issues raging in the country by the turn of the nineteenth century.

From the literary point of view, the Urdu public of colonial Punjab holds significance at another level. Literary production in Punjab was shaped by administrative needs only to a certain extent. The premise of the Anjuman-e-Punjab *mushairah*s for example, was to produce a 'moral' and 'instructive' literature including poetry and prose, for school textbooks. This demand of the education system rose because the literature being produced before the nineteenth century was certainly not sufficient for moral instruction in a colonial modern society. However, beyond the invention of the new *nazm* and its idiom, the impact of literary practices being promoted at this time was more profound, gradual, and longer lasting. The conditions of literary production and stakeholders of this system were beyond the control of the British government. Not only were the conditions of literary figures and poets drastically altered under the new patronage system and social conditions enabled by colonial policy, the very refashioning of Urdu literature in this post-1857 era had significant consequences. The litterateurs and their publics were thrown into unprecedented circumstances due to factors like dislocation/ migration, proliferation of print, and the rapid changes in economic, political and social systems. The 'partnerships' shared by colonial and Indian figures was by no means amicable and perfect. The power struggles and tensions underlying these conditions of literary production and market forces had complex bearing on the literature of this time. The literary public had diverse reactions from poets, general readers, or

socio-literary figures. The 'modern' literature in Urdu was debated, rejected, applauded, and critiqued by the new 'public' that came into existence as a result of print technology as well as relationships forged in the socio-literary fora.

Unlike its counterparts like Bengali which created binaries of standard bourgeois and vulgar language, Urdu sought to shed its associations with courtly standard idiom and form. It sought to create the language in a mold of Western modernity by promoting prose, directness of language, and 'bhasha' idiom. It was a conscious crafting of a middle-class language, distinct from the courtly idiom that catered to very different social values, and was owned by a very different 'public'. The creation of a national or communal identity thus did not only mean the production of that ideal in literature or print, but also understanding anew the language that articulates that ideal. Languages create publics and publics reciprocally produce language. Official status of a language is a piece of legislation and eventually it merely sets in motion a series of power hierarchies, which then re-produce the language. It involves players like administrators, literary figures, social reformers, the mercantile classes, and other socially mobile classes that inhabit a cosmopolitan urban center.[31] The intelligentsia and the public in general were as much participants in the creation of the new Urdu idiom and discourse as colonizers and their policies. Anindita Ghosh calls this process 'cultural mediation' of the vernacular.

[31] For a detailed discussion of the role of colonial 'native intelligentsia' in shaping linguistic hierarchies, see Veena Naregal, *Language, Politics and Elites in the Public Sphere: Western India Under Colonialism* (Permanent Black, 2001).

Commercially successful newspapers, missionary press magazines, books, were all part of this burgeoning literate and non-literate public.

This consciousness of being a public is rooted in not just the imagined communities created through print, such as journals, editorials, newspapers, and textbooks, but also through the public *sphere*. In defining a sense of the 'Urdu public' as used in this study, I engage with the Habermasian conception of the public sphere (used in the context of eighteenth-century France).[32] The public sphere as a concept emerged in the eighteenth century, as a 'middle space' between the control of authority on the one hand and the civil society on the other. It became a discursive space that enabled critical opinions to be articulated by the civil society. It must however be understood in close connection with the context of capitalism- the notion of private ownership altered the position of the individual vis-à-vis the state, and hence also the legal status of individuals, citizens, and the emergence of individual rights. The institutions of the public sphere in French society of the time such as salons, cafes, and periodicals in print culture became largely a bourgeois space. In the modern sense, these spaces comprising the public sphere were where rational debate, argumentation, consensus, and freedom to articulate opinions were located, creating these institutions as important avenues for the modern

[32] Jurgen Habermas theorized the bourgeois public sphere, the evolution of democracy and intellectual public in France in his landmark work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989). Habermas argues that the social changes that accompanied modern capitalism, the feudal system was replaced by a self-reflexive bourgeois 'public sphere' that became the new center of authority. Instead of traditional feudal power hierarchy, the public sphere of print mass media, coffeehouse and salon culture enabled a critical discursive space. Though this public sphere was initially largely a repository of middle-class bourgeois social classes and their interests, it was nevertheless a harbinger of participatory democratic values. See J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (MIT Press, 1989).

democracy. In the context of the colonial public in India, the public sphere effected a re-classification of social codes and hierarchies. Especially the conceptions of rights and obligations that were not strictly coded in the previous regimes, now came under the purview of modern 'universally recognized' rights and powers.[33] The encoding of these rights and duties as 'law' meant that individuals became defined by identities in relation to each other. Especially in the context of Punjab, the land reforms entailed enumeration and data collection regarding the positions of landlords, tenants, occupants, and other similar categories. The notion of 'public' brought together exclusive communities, forcing them to acknowledge and forge associations with each other, be it religious, social, class-based, or profession-based communities. In the context of Punjab specifically, the demographic was comprised of 'multiple publics'.[34] The re-creation of the Urdu language gave birth to such a composite public that on the one hand employed the language in institutional and administrative spaces, but on the other hand also employed it in the social spaces of debate and social intercourse.

By the 'Urdu public sphere' I here denote the shared spaces made available to the urban community through institutional facilitation and administrative interventions. Spaces such as assembly halls, university grounds, and most importantly, the Anjumans came into existence in Punjab during the latter half of the nineteenth century. They

[33] For a detailed discussion of the colonial public spheres in legal terms, see Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public" in *Civil Society, Public Sphere, and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions* eds. Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld (Sage Publications, 2005), 130-157.
[34] Vivek Bhandari, "Print and the Emergence of Multiple Publics in Nineteenth-Century Punjab" in *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* eds. Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist,
And Eleanor F. Shevlin (University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 280.

enabled social interaction, albeit with its own power dynamics. Public speeches and public debate brought Urdu prose to the socio-literary sphere, creating a sense of linguistic community within an urban demographic. Notions of *jadeediyat* (newness or modernity) in public discourse was supplemented by a consciousness of belonging to a community that was diverse in religious beliefs, caste and class positions, as well as urban in its orientation. To grasp this public and the limits of its 'sphere', this study will examine in chapter 4 what the notions of 'new' were drawn up against and what was it that it was breaking away from. It will engage with this query not just in terms of literary practice but also cultural practices.

Conceptualizing the colonial public sphere of Urdu will serve this study in broadening the conception of linguistic modernity. The construction of a modern city and its institutions reflects in the social relationships of its inhabitants, in turn shaping their self-perception as a community. While shared civic spaces re-aligned ideas of private and public, they also opened avenues of open interaction in unprecedented ways. Places like assembly halls, libraries, and printing presses brought members of diverse communities together in social and economic relationships. Not only were these physical spaces promoting wider interaction, print and faster means of communication were enabling a sense of being a 'public' across a broad region. In a way, the space of literacy shaped a new way of being a community, and vice-versa. This is a crucial aspect in the study of Urdu modernity in that it facilitated new modes of literary representation of a public, beyond the realm of traditional modes like court poetry and prose correspondences.

Writings in public, for a public, and as a public shaped the literary modernity of Urdu definitively.

Chapter Overview and Research Query Statement

Using the four conceptual frameworks discussed above, namely social-linguistic contestation, literacy, print culture, and the notion of the Urdu public, this study will examine the colonial production of the Urdu public and the Urdu language as a trans-regional 'modern' vernacular in colonial Punjab. This process is crucial not only to the critical conception of Urdu modernity, but also expands the study of the limits of colonial production of Indian linguistic publics. The primary research query of this study is- what impact did its designation as an official vernacular in colonial Punjab bear out on the literary modernity of Urdu? The examination of the context of colonial Punjab will enable a study of Urdu modernity outside specific religious discourses, and outside the discourse of colonial appropriation through vernacularization. For instance, academic studies of colonial Urdu modernity have emphasized its centrality to the Aligarh movement, Deoband Movement, and Muslim modernity in particular.[35] Likewise, the discourse of literary reforms in Urdu is centered upon the colonial conception of English literary practices as the standard of modernity. Departing from these narratives, this

[35] For specific works in the area, see David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton University Press, 1978); Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton University Press, 1982); and Margrit Pernau, *Emotions and Modernity in Colonial India: From Balance to Fervor* (OUP, 2019).

study seeks to locate Urdu against the backdrop of colonial Punjab as an alternative and key site in terms of its composite literary public, and the critical discourse yielded by its negotiation of literary modernity. By employing literary, historical, and cultural texts, I scrutinize specific conditions of service and resistance to colonial designs by the Urdu intelligentsia. These texts shaped notions of collective identity in relation to colonial governance, and also as communities in themselves, capable of voicing anticolonial sentiments. In addition, this study will also interrogate the role of the colonial urban space in the development of Urdu as a vernacular during the period under consideration. With this line of thought, I argue in line with the work of scholars like Rama Sundari Mantena on Telugu nationalism, Pritipuspa Mishra on Odiya, and most relevantly, Farina Mir on the Punjabi literary formation. Mantena has emphasized the need to question 'regional consciousness' as leading to a natural progression towards nationalism, pointing out their focus on social and political upliftment over the stress upon 'past traditions' of shared language.[36] Mishra has likewise highlighted that Odia language movements harnessed the role of the vernacular as sites of representation (in a process she terms a 'sublimation of language') to establish a definition of community on the basis of shared land, and not shared language.[37] Both the scholars question the presumed 'indigeneity' and 'powerlessness' of a vernacular which paradoxically granted them power in the narrative of regional linguistic nationalisms. Farina Mir's scholarship brings to fore the case of the 'Punjabi literary formation' that functioned at a relative

[36] Rama Sundari Mantena, "Vernacular Publics and Political Modernity: Language and Progress in Colonial South India," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 5 (SEPTEMBER 2013): 1691, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24494224
[37] Mishra, *Language and the Making of Modern India*, 7.

distance from colonial influence because the colonial government bestowed its favor instead, upon Urdu by designating it the official language. This facilitated the thriving of Punjabi's 'pre-colonial legacy' and prevented its complete incorporation into colonial epistemology.[38] The Punjabi literary culture in this sense operates outside the pale of linguistic nationalism and regional identity politics. The case of Urdu, I emphasize deviates further from the narrative because Urdu identity prior to colonial interventions, was not region-specific. Further, in colonial Punjab, it transfigured into an urban identity more than a Punjabi or North Indian configuration. Rather than a politics of powerlessness, its power rested in its social and political currency as an official language. This study engages with Urdu nationalism in this context, interrogating how as an Indian vernacular under colonial patronage, it negotiated its pre-colonial past, colonial present, and identity within the nationalist discourse of the time.

My study encompasses five decades of the development of Urdu in Punjab, beginning with 1849 and ending with 1910 which I take as a pivotal marker of the end of this period for several reasons. Punjab was annexed in March 1849 by the British East India Company, and five years of debate and discussion over the best suited official language followed. Though Urdu was in official use in administrative and legal offices of the empire since 1835 when it replaced Persian, the fact remained that it was a relatively new language in Punjab. At this time, Punjab did not have an existing Urdu culture in print or otherwise. The following decades therefore saw the implementation of

[38] Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*, 15.

institutional measures, resulting in Punjab becoming a hub of Urdu print and literary production by the 1890s. Two major outcomes of this period sum up the impact of colonial policy on Urdu- one, the emergence of a formidable urban Urdu public that leveraged the refashioned language for social and political change, and second, the defining moments in the literary modernity of Urdu were shaped by the post-1857 Punjabi literati. This generation of poets, publicists, and reformers forged a transformation of literary Urdu that later resulted in the 'modernist' moment in the history of the language. The maturing of Urdu press, literary thought and poetics by the turn of the century also entailed a 'modernity' that was in conflict with the colonial government. My study concludes with the period when the Indian Press Act (1910) tightened the noose around journalistic vigilance, causing financial strain on vernacular printing presses who were heavily fined for 'anti-government' publications. 1910 was also the year when Muhammad Husain Azad passed away, a symbolic end of his generation of poets, to be replaced by a later generation, led by the stalwart Muhammad Iqbal, whose poetics were far removed from the apologetic Orientalism of the nineteenth century thinkers. Two decades later followed the Progressive Writer's Movement with its anti-imperialistic, leftist literary interventions. Hence, I take 1910 as a turning point when Urdu print, literature, and poetics came into its own, and matured into a formidable anticolonial playing field for both the literati and the Urdu public.

This dissertation is divided into 5 chapters. Chapter one foregrounds the significance of colonial language policy in Punjab in the early years following its annexation. In the first

chapter I highlight the primary debates regarding vernacular languages in the colonial scheme of governance, establishing the triadic model of English, official language, and vernacular language(s) used across the subcontinent by the nineteenth century. I have also examined the various effects of this policy including the administrative idiom, diction and the politics of scripts used for lithographic printing. Through instances from official correspondences and historical texts, I have argued that the basis for introducing Urdu as the official language was initially to fulfil administrative requirements and serve British interest. I also illustrate how Punjabi as a colloquial language competed with Urdu in specific non-official contexts, producing a multi-lingual public sphere.

The second chapter focuses on the colonial urban context that was a key determiner of the usage of Urdu as an official language. This chapter examines the relationship between the colonial city and language, and the different iterations of urban identity. I delve in detail into the demographic, social hierarchies in Punjab to examine the diverse elements that defined experiences in the colonial city. Examples of the rural/urban binary in language preference emphasize the spatiality of language in colonial cities. I examine the growth of the Urdu public through the institutions and conditions of urban life. The policy changes implemented in the 1860s, and relevant institutions and organizations emerging in the 1870s, resulted in several major centers of literary and cultural activity (such as Lahore, Ludhiana and Amritsar) emerging by the 1880s in Punjab.

The third chapter deals with the specific case of the Urdu language as employed in religious discourses in print and social contexts. I explore the formation of voluntary associations as an impulse of colonial societies to reform religious and social lives of communities. These associations were a key marker of the Punjabi Urdu public- they were culturally cosmopolitan, and 'modern' in their organization. Through examples of historical materials available regarding the composition, functioning, and undertakings of associations like the Anjuman e Himayat e Islam, the Singh Sabhas, and the Arya Samaj, the role of Urdu print materials as public discourse is analyzed. This chapter argues that religious reformism in Punjab produced a body of literature that represented competing linguistic and social interests, challenging 'vernacularization' as a homogenizing force that defined languages like Urdu. The study of reform movements will also reveal critical conceptions of modern themes like faith, social progress, and rational thought, examining a public discourse that questioned and challenged accepted notions of modernity. Through the example of a magazine *Nur-e-Afshan* which was published by the American Presbyterian Mission in Ludhiana, I shed light upon this critical public discourse in print. I also examine secular fora such as the Anjuman-e-Punjab to highlight the 'colonization' of Urdu in literary and social terms. This chapter examines through this range of examples, how the spirit of reformism, religious and otherwise, enabled social engagement of the Urdu public through print and associational formations. It is in this process that the literate practices, the urban public sphere, and the visuality of textual symbols shaped the critical consciousness of this public. They re-

imagined the yardsticks of religious and social modernity in a multilingual society forging a cosmopolitan imagined public or *qaum*.

The fourth chapter addresses exclusively the economic and cultural conditions that shaped Urdu literary production in this historical context. I here critically examine the Urdu literary sphere of colonial Punjab through the colonizer-colonized partnerships and 'modern' literary practices shaped by the agenda of Anjuman-e-Punjab. The shaping of *jadeed* poetry is located against the backdrop of the colonial city, its cultural themes studied for their conception of modernity. I also examine the economy of this literary sphere, the new patronage system and the role of the entrepreneurial class in this economy. I argue that mobility facilitated a modern reconstruction of literary spaces. The spirit of voluntary associationism bore an indelible impact on the urban literary world-locations like clubs, educational institutions and bazaar industries attracted suburban, rural, and regional migrants. This chapter also emphasizes the new generation poet-figure and entrepreneur 'publicist' figures who negotiated factors like professional employment, pension, and the struggle with traditional roles.

Chapter five serves as a complementary chapter to the previous one, in that it takes the study of the refashioning of the Urdu literary world further, to focus on the literary practices of the Punjab poets. Beginning with Azad's trajectory as a poet, through translated examples of poetic works, I study the conflict apparent in his work that depicts his struggles with new poetry. Through biographical materials I trace his negotiation of conditions of employment, life in the city, and his persona in public to determine how

the colonial urban space shaped the Urdu poet. I also trace Altaf Hussain Hali's journey from Lahore to his association with the Aligarh Movement, both ideologically and aesthetically. The individual poetics of these poets lead to a comprehensive understanding of their vision of the future, of the Urdu literary tradition, and of the *qaum*. Finally, this chapter examines Allama Muhammad Iqbal as a city poet, and a successor to the tradition. Through his literary and biographical works, I explore the philosophical and political role taken on by the Urdu poet in the context of the early twentieth century, as nationalist struggle gained momentum. Iqbal's work will demonstrate how conception of the *qaum* and anticolonial thought voiced resistance within the vernacular literary tradition of Urdu.

This chapter thus assesses literary reformation through categories of modernist aesthetics, highlighting the role of 'location and vocation' in framing the new poetics. As figures of acquiescence and resistance at the same time, I consider Azad's generation as complex figures who negotiated colonial maneuvering of Indian epistemologies and influenced the following generation of poets, namely the Progressive Writers and nationalist poets in a definitive way. Through Iqbal's example, this study traces a trajectory of evolution, where the colonial context and spaces fashioned the Urdu poet and poetics.

Language is a realm that is intimate, and that constructs a people's past and their present for them, and in it they envision their future. It is the bearer of their literary heritage and cultural practices. In colonial India, it became the primary site for imagining

modernity because linguistic identity and literary discourse encoded 'modern' values shaped for a society of colonized Indians. This is the way colonial forms of knowledge, and the methods of acquiring them, envisioned support for colonial power. This dissertation endeavors to trace the Punjab chapter in the history of Urdu 'modernity', to examine how it re-created the language and literary tradition to facilitate colonial governance, but also how it also subverted expectations by innovating and re-interpreting modernity for its own context.