

SINDHI SAHIT SABHA

Pamphlet No. 5.

SANSKRIT VS : ARABIC

ORTHOGRAPHY

Which should govern "Sindhi"

DHARAMDEV S. JETLY.

JUST A WORD !

This is the fifth pamphlet issued on behalf of the Sindhi Sahit Sabha for public enlightenment, embodying a note submitted by way of dissent, to the sub-committee appointed by Govt. Central Advisory Board for Sindhi Literature by Mr. Dharamdev S. Jetley a Sanskrit Scholar of Karachi. Which of the two orthographical systems (Sanskrit or Arabic) suit our "Sindhi" is the burden of this note which speaks for itself.

This may be read along with our Sindhi Pamphlet No. 3

MANOHARDAS KAUFOMAL

Karachi

Hon: Secretary

21-1-1941

Sindhi Sahit Sabha.

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KARACHI.

MR. DHARAMDEV S. JETLEY'S

NOTE OF DISSENT

1. As a member of the Sub Committee appointed to go into the question of the use of *Airabs* in Sindhi orthography and of the correct mode of pronunciation of Sindhi words, having regard to the original forms from which they are descended, I had signed a joint note with Mr. Dayaram V. Mirchandani, another member of the Sub Committee, which was framed by the latter; but, in signing the same, I had added that I had something more to say in connection with the first question relating to the use of *Airabs*. That note was read over to the members of the Sub Committee, then present, by the Secretary; but the Chairman who wanted to confine the discussion for the occasion to the subject of *Airabs*, and the other members, were of opinion that no real reasons were mentioned therein in support of our view that the orthography in existence since 1905 had a rational background to recommened it.

2. As the Chairman was anxious to submit the report on the first question relating to the use of *Airabs* to

the Board and was decided to conclude the discussion on the subject that very day, I thought it would be unfair to the members then present who held a different view on the subject, if I did not demonstrate to them the *rationale* of the view to which I subscribed and which, I noticed, had not been presented to them till then with a sufficient force. I attempted to do that in the manner which I shall describe hereunder but they were unconvinced. I regret, however, that the *decision of the Chairman to immediately close the subject left me no time to submit my written note* and if, therefore, my argument is not before the Central Board or even before the members of the Sub Committee, its absence, I must point out, is due solely to the *desire of the Chairman to conclude the deliberations immediately.*

3. I do not necessarily want to make a fetish of the fact that Sindhi is derived from Sanskrit and is its eldest daughter. While, happily, there is none who disputes this fact, it must be stated that several factors have contributed to its progressive estrangement from Sanskrit. But while these factors have created what might be described to be mere ripples on the surface, the general framework continues to bear the closest affinity to Sanskrit—an affinity which may not disclose itself to the layman but

which, nevertheless, is a matter of immediate conviction to all those who are fairly familiar with the subject.

4. The vowel-signs are called *Matras* in Sanskrit and that term means "something which restricts or limits". In the present case the vowel-signs restrict the pronunciation of a word and say that it must be pronounced in this way and in no other. They are guides to correct pronunciation. The Arabic word "*Airab*" too, I am told, has the same meaning as the Sanskrit word "*Matra*" and indeed, looking to the use made of the *Airabs*, it could have no other. Our criterion of preferment, therefore, between the two methods relating to the use of *Airabs* in Sindhi which, for convenience's sake and their proximate resemblance, I would call the Sanskrit and Arabic methods, would be ; the function of the two being the same, viz : to serve as a guide to correct pronunciation, which of the two carries out that function more satisfactorily ? My own point is that the Sanskrit method which has been in vogue since 1905 but which seems to have received very frequent preferment even in earlier printed books is the more satisfactory of the two.

(1) (1) (1)

5. My argument is as follows : अ , इ and उ are three vowels which we call the elementals because

out of a combination of these there arise other vowels.

These three are, therefore, the elements of the composi-

(1)

tion of the rest. The long आ is a combination of

अ + अ

(1+1)

two short vowels अ + अ . Long ई (ای) of इ + इ

(1+1)

(ای)

(ا)

long ऊ (اُ) of उ + उ , ए and ओ arise out of a

(1+1)

combination of अ + इ and अ + उ (1+1) . Similarly

with the other vowels. As the difficulty in connection

with the use of *Airabs* arises mainly in the case of

long ई (ای) and ऊ (اُ), I shall confine myself to a dis-

cussion of the relative merits of the two rival views of

this point.

6. I take the word کري . One school would, using

the *Airabs*, write it thus : کري . The other would

write it ; کري giving the under

The first is what might be called the Sanskrit view; the second, the Arabic view. Taking the word as it strikes our ear, we find the long vowel sound اي coming last and the Sanskrit view has clearly the advantage of placing the vowel sign just where the pronunciation would lead us to expect it, i.e. in the end. In the second place, what we have in the end is the full throated, long اي which, as I have already pointed out is a combination of two short vowels $\text{ا} + \text{ي}$ ($\text{इ} + \text{ई}$). None acquainted with the elements of the the subject would for a moment argue that the long اي (ई) is itself a primitive vowel and therefore elemental like the short vowel ا (इ). That would be an offence against the law of parsimony. Now, since the long ई (اي) is a combination of the two short vowels $\text{इ} + \text{ई}$ ($\text{ا} + \text{ي}$), the question arises whether the Arabic method of orthography is a suitable medium in this respect. A glance at the word as it is written by that school: اكرى shows that it fails completely in that respect. The two short vowels ي and—

are kept apart and their synthesis which gave us the higher unity of the long **اي** is made impossible.

Why, I ask, this divorce of those who join together in such happy union? The Sanskrit method has here the decided advantage of showing the combination in a clear and convincing manner : **اكر** . While these two

arguments are in my opinion sufficiently well-grounded to carry my point, the following should, I believe, suffice singly for the purpose. Take the word **اكر** as it is

written by the advocates of the Arabic script. The vowel sign — which is underneath **ا** , spends itself

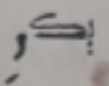
altogether in giving itself up to **ا** . No residue remains to combine the following **ك** which remains apart, wandering in single loneliness. We get alright up-

to **اكر** . But that is not what we need, and no

amount of argument can, to my mind, avail. The

Sanskrit method in keeping **اكر** (اي) together gives

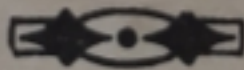
us the long (اي) which is just what is required to

be added to (ي) ,  to give us the requisite sound of the word as spoken.

7. I trust I am not doing any injustice to my friends on the Sub-Committee who held the opposite, that is, the Arabic view, if I say that so far the last argument is concerned they did not attempt to meet it at all during the long period of somewhat over two hours we were deliberating. But they pointed out what to their mind was an insuperable objection to adoption of the Sanskrit method in the case of long ee (اِي) . Their point was that a vowel could not be followed by a vowel. They urged other minor objections, but this was what may be described as their main difficulty (or, was it the main spearhead of their attack ?), in accepting the Sanskrit method and an answer to this would suffice to remove the other difficulties.

8. I fear I fail to see how this difficulty should be found to be insuperable. In the first place, as I have attempted to point out, the *Sanskrit method has a rational background to recommend it*. Even if, as is apparently the

case with the Arabic orthography, a vowel does not follow a vowel in that script, *I fail completely to see why Sindhi should be sought to be tied to the apron strings of Arabic* even when by a happy stroke of singularly good fortune, we have been enabled to invent vowel-signs according more suitably with the genius of Sindhi language. The fact that since 1905 till now the Sanskrit method adopted in the case of long इ (ای) has worked successfully and has been followed by writers of repute would rather show that the difficulty raised is more imaginary than real. But the following answer should suffice for the purpose of my thesis. If, as there can be no doubt, there is a synthesis in the case of long इ (ای) two short vowels combining to give us the long vowel sound—the fact of such synthesis can have one meaning and one only, namely, that the two short vowels must and do follow one another, for without such immediate succession, synthesis, which is combination, would become impossible. The same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, will apply to long ऊ ;



Please
join
our
SINDHI SAHIT SABHA
to right the wrong
done to our
Mother Tongue.
