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From Persian To English: The Colonial Dismantling Of Pre-Colonial Language Orders In The Indian Subcontinent



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Abstract: *One of the most significant periods of colonial disruption in the contemporary world is included in the linguistic history of the Indian subcontinent. Persian dominated elite discourse, governance, and culture for centuries before British interference in the Mughal Empire and its precursor, the Delhi Sultanate. Arabic, Sanskrit, regional vernaculars, and a diverse multilingual ecology that represented functional pluralism rather than monolingual imposition coexisted with it. The empirical results based on the document analysis of 1,130 archival sources encompassing the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526), the Mughal Empire (1526–1857), the early British period (1757–1835), and the high-colonial period (1835–1947). The study uses two main theoretical frameworks: Postcolonial Continuity Theory (Fanon, 1961; Phillipson, 1992; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986; Pennycook, 1998), which tracks the persistence of colonial language structures beyond formal decolonization, and Sociolinguistic Stratification Theory (Bourdieu, 1991; Labov, 1966, 1972; Fishman, 1972). The article reconstructs the institutional and ideological processes that led to the elevation of English and the dismantling of Persian, using primary quotations from foundational sources such as the Ain-i-Akbari, Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education (1835), Wood's Education Despatch (1854), and the Hunter Commission Report (1882). With an emphasis on Pakistan, it further argues that the stratifying impacts of colonial language policy continue to shape South Asian educational institutions, social hierarchies, national identity formations, and epistemological frameworks in the postcolonial present.*

Keywords: Sociolinguistic stratification, Postcolonial continuity, Colonial language policy, Persian, Pre-colonial India, Mughal linguistic order, English education, Document analysis, Indian subcontinent, Linguistic imperialism, Delhi Sultanate, Functional pluralism

Introduction

Language has always been one of the most potent instruments of imperial power. Even while empires come and go, the linguistic systems they create or deliberately destroy have a lasting impact on the political, social, and intellectual landscapes of the areas they govern. One of the few instances where this dynamic is both historically evident and analytically

instructive is the Indian subcontinent, where the arrival of British colonial authority led to one of the biggest and most systematic linguistic ruptures in history. Between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, English replaced Persian as the language of state, law, education, and elite identity. This was a deliberate, ideologically motivated political project that was part of a larger colonial endeavor of social engineering and cultural transformation rather

than an organic or inevitable linguistic evolution.

The empirical results and theoretical framework of an original doctoral study based on the document analysis of 1,130 archival sources covering seven centuries of the subcontinent's language history are directly referenced in this article. 320 documents from the Delhi Sultanate period (1206–1526), 410 from the Mughal Empire (1526–1857), 180 from the early British period (1757–1835), and 220 from the high-colonial period (1835–1947) were examined. Farman's and official decrees (340 documents, 30.09% of the corpus), court chronicles and histories (210 documents, 18.58%), revenue and settlement manuals (190 documents, 16.81%), records from madrasas and gurukul waqfs (160 documents, 14.16%), judicial records (140 documents, 12.39%), and colonial minutes and dispatches (90 documents, 7.96%). This empirical basis allows for a thorough reconstruction of how colonial language policy was developed, put into practice, and institutionalized—as well as the reasons why its effects are still felt today—when combined with the theoretical frameworks of Sociolinguistic Stratification Theory and Postcolonial Continuity Theory.

One must first recognize what the colonial effort destroyed in order to fully comprehend the extent of the colonial language rupture. Contrary to what colonial narratives consistently suggested, the Indian subcontinent was neither a linguistically disordered or intellectually unsophisticated region that awaited the blessings of English civilization. Sanskrit anchored the intellectual and ritual life of Hindu civilization; Arabic held sacred authority in religious scholarship and madrasa education; Persian served as the administrative and literary lingua franca of Muslim-ruled territories, allocating prestige and governance functions throughout the empire; and dozens of vibrant vernacular traditions catered to the communicative, literary, and devotional needs of the majority population. Language Policy and Planning (LPP) theory describes this multilingual ecosystem as a developed form of status planning in which different languages are assigned to diverse

duties within a united polity. It was not an accidental coexistence, but rather a purposeful, institutionally replicated system.

1.1 Research Objective:

To examine the documents to analyze the deliberate colonial shifts from multilingualism especially from Persian to English.

1.2 Research Question:

How British system deliberately dismantled the already systematic system of learning in the pre-colonial Indian subcontinent?

A description of the pre-colonial language landscape and its theoretical significance, an explanation of the theoretical and methodological framework of the doctoral study, an analysis of the archival evidence for pre-colonial functional multilingualism, a reconstruction of early colonial linguistic engagement and the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy, an analysis of the particular policy mechanisms through which Persian was dismantled and English institutionalized, a consideration of the immediate sociolinguistic and cultural implications of this transformation, and a sustained analysis of postcolonial continuities that carry colonial language structures into the present, with a focus on Pakistan. The article maintains throughout that colonial language policy was a form of symbolic violence, which Bourdieu (1991) refers to as a restructuring of the entire field of cultural production through the systematic delegitimization of indigenous linguistic capital. The consequences of this policy are neither past nor peripheral.

3. Theoretical and Methodological framework

3.1 Sociolinguistic Stratification Theory

The main analytical lens for comprehending how colonial policy rearranged the social meaning and institutional value of languages throughout the Indian subcontinent is Sociolinguistic Stratification Theory, which is based on the fundamental empirical work of William Labov (1966, 1972) and its development in the sociology of language by

Joshua Fishman (1972) and Pierre Bourdieu (1991). Fundamentally, the theory maintains that languages in any society are not of equal social value; rather, they are stratified, or ranked hierarchically, based on their associations with prestige, power, and access to social and financial resources. Importantly, this stratification is neither natural nor inevitable; rather, it reflects larger power relations rather than any inherent characteristics of the languages themselves. It is created and sustained by institutional mechanisms such as education, law, state administration, and patronage systems.

The analytical foundation of the doctoral project is based on Bourdieu's conceptualization of linguistic capital. According to Bourdieu, language proficiency is a type of cultural capital whose worth is established relationally rather than intrinsically—by its place in what he refers to as the linguistic market. By making English the dominant linguistic capital and methodically depreciating Persian, Sanskrit, and vernacular languages, colonial language policy drastically altered the Indian linguistic market. Courts and judicial (27.43% of the corpus), revenue and administration (24.78%), education (21.24%), diplomacy and trade (16.81%), and colonial higher education (9.73%) are the five institutional areas covered by this restructure, according to the doctoral study's document analysis. The same mechanism underpinned the transition of linguistic value in each domain: the colonial state's power moved symbolic and material resources from one linguistic community to another through the institutional replacement of Persian by English.

According to Labov's research, institutional practices that consistently reward some language behaviors while penalizing others are the means by which linguistic stratification is perpetuated. This is confirmed by the frequency analysis of the doctoral study: English documents make up 12.39% of the total corpus but 63% of the high-colonial sub-corpus (1835–1947), indicating English's quick institutional rise after the crucial turning point of 1835. Persian, on the other hand, is almost completely absent from post-1837 judicial and

administrative documents, having been banished from the realms in which it had traditionally replicated its worth. Persian, on the other hand, dominates the whole corpus at 42.48%, demonstrating its centuries-long institutional supremacy. Complementary techniques for examining how Persian was gradually excluded from the administrative, judicial, and educational spheres where institutional reproduction of linguistic capital takes place are found in Fishman's sociology of language, especially his work on domain analysis and language shift.

3.2 Postcolonial Continuity Theory

The second theoretical pillar of the study is postcolonial continuity theory, which was created by Frantz Fanon (1961), Robert Phillipson (1992), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), and Alastair Pennycook (1998). According to this idea, language hierarchies and other colonial systems do not vanish when official colonial power ends. Instead, they continue to organize social life and maintain inequality in the postcolonial present through the institutional frameworks, social norms, and epistemological presumptions that colonialism ingrained. In the context of South Asia, this means that rather than being reversed by independence in 1947, the stratification created by colonial language policy was, in many ways, replicated and solidified by postcolonial states that inherited colonial administrative and educational infrastructure and modified it, mostly unaltered, for new national endeavors.

The foundation of this approach is Phillipson's idea of linguistic imperialism. English's continued dominance in English-medium education, elite employment structures, international institutions, and knowledge production systems is a structural legacy of the colonial project rather than a natural result of its communicative qualities. According to Fanon's interpretation, the colonial imposition of English was a fundamental rupture of the colonized person's relationship to their culture, history, and identity, rather than just an administrative issue. The epistemic aspect of linguistic colonization that endures in postcolonial settings is encapsulated in Ngugi's concept of the "cultural

bomb," which is the methodical eradication of people's faith in their languages, cultures, and historical legacy. The postcolonial continuities traced in sections 6 and 7 of these essays mirror the three dimensions—institutional, psychological, and epistemological—that are recorded in the archival evidence examined in the doctorate study.

3.3 Methodology: Document Analysis of 1,130 Archival Sources

In line with Bowen (2009), Prior (2008), and Rapley (2007), the doctoral study's main research methodology is document analysis. Purposively sampling the 1,130-document corpus allowed for a thorough comparison between colonial English imposition (exclusion and centralization) and pre-colonial functional multilingualism (accommodation and synthesis). In this setting, document analysis takes a critical interpretivist approach, reading documents as texts that encode power relations, normalize ideological presumptions, and carry out institutional tasks rather than as transparent records of historical events. To fully capture the complexity of the documented linguistic transformations, each distribution table in the doctoral study is simultaneously read through the five theoretical lenses: LPP Theory (Spolsky, 2004; Cooper, 1989), Historical Institutionalism (Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2000), Sociolinguistic Stratification Theory, Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; Canagarajah, 1999), and Postcolonial Continuity Theory. Farman's from the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal eras, court chronicles such as the *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Akbar Nama*, and *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Mughal revenue manuals, madrasa waqfiyas, Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* (1835), Wood's *Education Despatch* (1854), the *Hunter Commission Report* (1882), *Regulation IX of 1837*, *Indian Civil Service regulations*, *High Court records*, and documents pertaining to university establishment.

3.3.1 The Delhi Sultanate: Establishing the Persianate Template (1206–1526)

The earliest chronological stratum of the pre-colonial linguistic order is established by the temporal analysis of the PhD study, which

shows that 320 documents (28.30% of the corpus) originate from the Delhi Sultanate period. Through what LPP theory refers to as intentional status planning, Persian was assigned to administrative, judicial, and literary roles during this time, while Arabic ruled the religious and scholarly spheres and vernaculars enabled local communication. This marked the institutionalization of Persian as the language of governance in the subcontinent. This functional pluralism is demonstrated by the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, written by Shams-i-Siraj Afif in the late fourteenth century: 'The Sultan established madrasas where scholars delivered lectures on Hadith, Tafsir, and Fiqh, with Arabic as the medium for religious sciences' (Afif, 1398/1891, p. 150). Thus, Arabic was designated as the status-planned language for revealed knowledge, Persian for high culture and government, and vernaculars for oral contact with the subject populace.

The complementing role of vernaculars in this system is documented in the same source: authorities "explained the orders in the language of the people so that no one should suffer from ignorance" (Afif, 1398/1891, p. 112). Historical Institutionalism describes this practice of oral vernacular translation of written Persian orders as a self-reinforcing institutional path that generates increasing returns over time, rather than a failure of linguistic standardization. It was an institutionalized accommodation to the realities of governing a multilingual empire. The scribal class (munshis and khatibs), whose education, social status, and means of subsistence were wholly dependent on Persian literacy, was one of the groups with a stake in the upkeep of the Persian governmental system. The institutional lock-in that would last through the Mughal Empire and into the early colonial era was established by their intergenerational transmission of Persian ability.

This situation directly relates to the idea of path dependence found in Historical Institutionalism. The Sultanate era created institutional pathways that produced feedback loops that reinforced themselves: Concentrated Persian proficiency within particular groups led to a demand for Persian education, which in turn created Persian-

literate officials who ran Persian-speaking institutions and perpetuated the value of Persian proficiency. The sociolinguistic stratification dimension is also articulated in the Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, which directly anticipates Bourdieu's framework of linguistic capital as a form of social distinction: knowledge of Persian and Arabic was concentrated among the *Ashraf* (noble classes), while the *ajlaf* (commoners) were excluded from advanced learning.

3.3.2 The Mughal Empire: Elaboration, Institutionalization, and Synthesis (1526–1857)

Due to the extraordinary archival density of the Mughal chancery system, which produced administrative manuals, court chronicles, imperial *Farman*'s, and revenue records in quantities unmatched by previous regimes, the Mughal period accounts for the largest share of documents in the doctoral corpus, with 410 documents (36.30%). The most authoritative declaration of Mughal language policy may be found in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazl's historical account of Akbar's reign written in the 1590s: "All official documents shall be written in Persian, for it is the language of wisdom and empire" (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. 1, p. 45). This formulation has several analytical implications. First, Persian supremacy is openly mandated rather than merely customary; this is a matter of imperial policy as opposed to administrative habit. Second, the ideological rationale is a miniature version of Bourdieu's symbolic violence: the imperial state normalizes linguistic hierarchy as cognitive hierarchy by designating Persian as "the language of wisdom and empire" (*zabān-i dānish wa saltanat*), portraying what is a political decision as an epistemic truth.

However, the Mughal system was functionally pluralistic rather than strictly monolingual. Akbar's madrasa program is documented in the *Ain-i-Akbari*: "The emperor commanded the establishment of madrasas in every town, with stipends for teachers and students, to impart knowledge in Arabic, Persian, and sciences" (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. 3, p. 278). This tripartite curriculum represented a functional multilingualism in which many languages functioned in mutually recognized but

hierarchically structured domains: Arabic for religious sciences, Persian for administrative and literary disciplines, and sciences taught through both. This is supported by the doctoral study's frequency analysis of language dominance, which shows that Persian makes up 42.48% of the corpus (480 documents), Arabic 18.58% (210 documents), Sanskrit 12.39% (140 documents), and vernaculars 14.16% (160 documents). This distribution graphically depicts the pre-colonial linguistic hierarchy in its mature Mughal form.

In stark contrast to imperial exclusion, the Mughal era also demonstrates a dimension of cultural fusion. "The emperor commanded the translation of Sanskrit works into Persian to foster unity between Hindus and Muslims," according to the *Akbar Nama* (*Akbar Nama*, Vol. 1, p. 114). By employing Persian as a bridge rather than a barrier, Akbar's translation projects—the *Mahabharata* as the *Razmnama*, the *Ramayana* as the *Ramayana*, and the *Upanishads* under Dara Shikoh as the *Sirr-i-Akbar*—created common intellectual resources across religious communities. A quantitative indicator of the fundamental difference in orientation between pre-colonial accommodation and colonial exclusion, the doctoral study's frequency analysis of policy objectives shows that cultural synthesis accounts for 91.3% of pre-colonial instances for that objective type, compared to only 8.7% during the colonial period. Persian 'replaced Sanskrit as the language of politics, literature, education, and social status while coexisting with regional vernaculars, creating a layered system that avoided the exclusionary hierarchies later imposed by the British,' according to Muzaffar Alam's assessment (Alam, 2004, p. 61).

3.3.3 Path Dependence: Operating Within Mughal Institutions

From 180 documents (15.90% of the corpus) from the early British era (1757–1835) include company actions, Persian letters, and early administrative regulations. According to the doctoral study's analysis, this era is a prime example of what Historical Institutionalism refers to as path dependence: the East India Company found itself functioning within

established institutional pathways after gaining territorial control in Bengal after the Battle of Plassey (1757). Under Company supervision, the Mughal administrative system—which included Persian-language record-keeping, revenue procedures, and judicial processes—continued to operate. The tactical preservation of Persian as the language of political legitimacy is confirmed by document analysis of the Calendar of Persian Correspondence, which documents Company correspondence with Indian rulers and nobles during this time. The Company conducted business in the language used by the Mughal state to exercise authority.

Instead of demonstrating cultural respect, this practical accommodation was motivated by political and material considerations. The Company's legitimacy among Indian elites who interpreted power through Persian would have been called into question, revenue collection would have been interrupted, and the administration's Persian-educated scribal classes would have been hostile. As a result, the early British era created hybrid documented forms: Persian records for correspondence with Indian kings and English records for correspondence with London. Under Company supervision, the same Kayastha, Kashmiri Pandit, and other scribal communities that had supported Mughal administrations persisted, upholding the Persian recording infrastructure that the Company had originally used for its control. Their prolonged employment demonstrated the extent of institutional lock-in that colonial language reform would later need to overcome by ensuring the continuation of linguistic practice throughout the political transition.

3.3.4 The Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy: Competing Visions of Colonial Language Policy

The protracted struggle between Orientalists and Anglicists inside the colonial government was the intellectual dispute that would have the most impact on Indian languages. Indian languages were treated with true scientific regard by the Orientalists, most notably William Jones, who established the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and proposed in a speech in 1786 that Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin shared a common

ancestor. A lineage of Orientalist study that subtly questioned presumptions of European language and cultural superiority is shown via document analysis of early Asiatic Society publications, acknowledging the sophistication of Persian and the antiquity of Sanskrit. Drawing on this legacy, H.H. Wilson argued in his submissions to the General Committee of Public Instruction that an education system based on Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit would honor Indian intellectual heritage while embracing contemporary knowledge.

This tendency was completely rejected by the Anglicist perspective, which was decisively expressed in Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education (1835). An in-depth examination of the Minute demonstrates the ideological apparatus by which the Orientalist viewpoint was rejected rather than challenged. Macaulay's infamous statement, "I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (Macaulay's Minute, 1835, para. 10), functions as an ideological dictate rather than a scholarly assertion. It presents the conclusion of a political project as the result of a literary survey. Another level of complexity is revealed by Shah's recent archival analysis: Macaulay "failed to even mention Persian in his condemnation of oriental learning, focusing his attention solely on the shortcomings of Sanskrit and Arabic." Persian's categorical ambiguity, which made it neither obviously classical nor vernacular, allowed it to endure in some institutions even as it was displaced from official functions. The Governor-General's Resolution of March 1835 adopted Macaulay's recommendations without addressing Orientalist objections, turning an ideological stance into institutional reality through the exercise of colonial power. This was the administrative authority that resolved the Orientalist-Anglicist dispute rather than academic debate.

4. Discussion

What Historical Institutionalism refers to as a "critical juncture" is the official substitution of Persian as the language of government. This is a point at which current institutional arrangements

are significantly altered, creating new pathways that limit future development. The Bengal Presidency issued Regulation IX of 1837, which stated that "from January 1st, 1837, the English language shall be used in all proceedings of the Sudder Dewanny Adawlat; and the pleadings and proceedings in the lower courts shall be in the language of the country, that is to say, in Bengalee in Bengal, in Hindustani in the Western Provinces, and in the language of the country elsewhere" (Bengal Code, Section 1). A typical colonial rhetorical tactic is shown by document analysis of the administrative communication that accompanied this regulation: the replacement of Persian is presented as a democratic change that brings justice closer to the people by substituting vernacular languages for a "alien" imposition. The historical fact that Persian had been an indigenous administrative language for more than six centuries and that the "people" in whose name the reform was carried out had never been consulted was conveniently obscured by this framing.

There were immediate and disastrous societal repercussions. For the thousands of munshis, vakils, and administrative staff whose entire training and way of life had been centered around Persian literacy, the 1837 regulation effectively abolished its professional significance. Sijills, or court records, which trace the exact displacement of Persian from judicial proceedings, are used in the doctoral study's research of the institutional domain of courts and judiciary, the largest category in the corpus at 27.43%, to document this shift. According to sociolinguistic stratification theory, this displacement is an act of linguistic expropriation, which is the devaluation of a community's cultural capital through the use of governmental authority. The selection of vernaculars in addition to English as replacement languages also carried out a colonial classification strategy: from the 1830s through the 1880s, census instructions and administrative circulars gradually distinguished between Hindi (Devanagari script, associated with Hindus) and Urdu (Nastaliq script, associated with Muslims), exaggerating

communal boundaries and contributing to the politicization of language along religious lines that would have a significant impact on the political future of the subcontinent.

4.1 Wood's Despatch (1854): Architecturing the Linguistic Hierarchy

The linguistic hierarchy was operationalized into a thorough institutional framework by Wood's Education Despatch of 1854, which document analysis shows to be the most architecturally full exposition of colonial educational language policy. The tripartite structure of the Despatch is clear: "primary schools adopt vernacular languages, for secondary schools to adopt both English and vernacular languages, and for colleges to adopt English" (Wood's Despatch, 1854, para. 14). With remarkable accuracy, this structure institutionalized the relationship between linguistic medium and social destination: English-medium higher education for the elite who would go on to professional and administrative employment, bilingual secondary education for the middle classes, and vernacular education for the masses. The Despatch presents this hierarchy as a natural arrangement corresponding to various "branches of education," normalizing inequality as differentiation and presenting linguistic stratification as educational planning. This is a direct application of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence.

The hierarchy is further supported by the Despatch's paragraph 14, which states that "the English language should be the medium of instruction in the higher branches of education... the vernacular languages should be used only in the lower stages." The spatial metaphor ('higher' vs. 'lower') and the passive construction ('should be used only') are loaded with ideology: English is intrinsically linked with elevation and vernaculars with limitation, not as a decision of policy but as a fact of language and knowledge. The institutional culmination of this architectural vision was the founding of universities in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857, as advised by the Despatch. An examination of the university establishment acts' documents demonstrates that these

establishments were intended to be examining and degree-granting bodies that conducted all proceedings in English, guaranteeing that proficiency in the language would be a necessary prerequisite for access to higher education, professional credentials, and government employment.

4.2 The Hunter Commission (1882): Consolidating Stratification

Under the leadership of Sir William Wilson Hunter, the Indian Education Commission of 1882–1883 expanded and unified the educational structure created by Wood's Despatch while offering thorough documentation of its stratifying effects. The Commission's treatment of indigenous schools is especially instructive; it described them as "one established or conducted by natives of India on native methods" and criticized them, saying that "the indigenous schools are generally inefficient; they teach by rote, and impart little useful knowledge" (Hunter Commission, 1882, p. 454). This description is recognized by linguistic imperialism theory as an example of ideological dominance: the delegitimization of indigenous education by colonial standards necessitates no proof beyond its claim. The Commission's recommendation that indigenous schools "be developed, patronized, and admitted into new educational pattern" was a strategy of incorporation rather than a show of respect: admission to the "new educational pattern" meant integration into a hierarchy where English was at the top, development meant submission to colonial standards, and patronage meant administrative control. Equally indicative of the Commission's intention to stratify is the division of secondary education. "Course A was to be pursued to the entrance examination of the Universities and course B was to be a more practical character, intended to fit Youths for commercial or other non-literary pursuits," according to the Commission's recommendation (Hunter Commission, 1882). The English-medium university track led to elite positions in administration, the professions, and public life, while the practical track led to inferior commercial and artisanal employment. This division precisely institutionalized the

relationship between educational path and social destination. The cumulative effect is confirmed by the doctoral study's frequency analysis of policy objectives: elite formation objectives account for 69.2% of colonial instances (compared to 30.8% pre-colonial) and epistemic control objectives account for 88.0% of colonial instances (compared to 12.0% pre-colonial). This is a quantitative illustration of the fundamental shift in language policy from accommodation to control.

4.3 Print Culture and the Colonial Classification of Languages

The pre-colonial language order was further undermined by the colonial advent of print technology. Persian and Sanskrit manuscript cultures were structured around networks of scribal experts and affluent patrons; print democratized text access while also standardizing languages in ways that addressed colonial administrative requirements rather than native linguistic customs. Bible translation and administrative legibility were often the driving forces behind the standardization of Indian vernacular languages, according to document analysis of early printing house records and colonial philological publications. When combined with the 1837 judicial language reform, the progressive codification of Hindi as a Sanskritized register separate from the Persianized Urdu—documented in colonial census instructions and administrative circulars—hardened the communal boundary between Hindi-speaking Hindus and Urdu-speaking Muslims in ways that had significant political ramifications. This was not a recognition of pre-existing linguistic realities.

4.4 Sociolinguistic and Cultural Implications of the Colonial Language Shift

The creation of a new, deeply ingrained linguistic hierarchy that reversed the pre-colonial order was the most direct and long-lasting effect of colonial language policy. As the language of government, higher education, the professions, and—most importantly—social ambition, English held the top spot. The standing of the major Indian vernaculars varied according to the level of colonial administrative

attention they got, placing them in intermediary positions. Once at the top of the subcontinent's prestige hierarchy, Persian was essentially kicked out of the functioning language system and relegated to the status of a heritage language with only literary or religious value. Persian accounts for 68.6% of central and provincial records in the pre-colonial period, while English accounts for 81.5% in the high-colonial period, according to the doctoral study's institutional domain analysis, which quantifies the extent of the linguistic displacement. The theoretical foundation for comprehending the social ramifications of this hierarchy is provided by Bourdieu's examination of language capital and social stratification. English proficiency became the main need for gaining access to colonial jobs and, consequently, to the social and economic opportunities that colonial modernity provided. The emerging class of Western-educated Indian intelligentsia, which Macaulay had specifically created, occupied the new top of the social hierarchy. Its relationship to indigenous linguistic heritage was mediated by colonial frameworks, and its cultural orientation was essentially shaped by English epistemologies.

4.5 The Marginalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Additionally, indigenous knowledge systems centered around Persian and Sanskrit as its major media suffered greatly as a result of colonial language policy. As Western medicine, taught in English, became the legally recognized framework, medical traditions like Unani (transmitted in Persian and Arabic) and Ayurveda (transmitted in Sanskrit) were systematically marginalized. English common law replaced legal customs based on Persian-language jurisprudence. The analysis of the education domain in the doctoral study, which includes 240 documents (21.24% of the corpus), shows how colonial inspection, grant-in-aid programs, and the gradual transfer of patronage from traditional to colonial institutions have all contributed to the systematic devaluation of madrasa and gurukul educational paradigms. The waqfiyas and endowment records analyzed reveal the gradual starvation of indigenous institutions as charitable resources flowed

toward the new Anglo-vernacular and English-medium schools.

4.6 Language, Communal Identity, and the Structural Seeds of Partition

The creation of the communal identities that would influence the disastrous politics of twentieth-century South Asia was significantly influenced by the colonial remapping of the linguistic terrain. The doctoral study's frequency analysis reveals that cultural synthesis — which constituted 91.3% of pre-colonial policy objectives of that type — declined to 8.7% in the colonial period, while religious and moral instruction declined from 86.4% pre-colonial to 13.6% colonial. These quantitative shifts represent a profound ideological reorientation: from the Mughal project of creating shared cultural resources across communities (captured in the Akbar Nama's record of Akbar commanding Sanskrit-to-Persian translations 'to foster unity between Hindus and Muslims') to the colonial project of identifying each community by its distinct language and script, deploying linguistic difference as an administrative tool.

4.7 Postcolonial Continuities: The Living Legacy of Colonial Language Policy

The most important contributions are its clear engagement with postcolonial continuity. The postcolonial states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh inherited the institutional infrastructure—educational systems, legal frameworks, and administrative procedures—that colonial language policy had established, along with the social hierarchies and cultural values it had ingrained. This meant that the language orders created by colonial policy did not end with independence in 1947. An examination of Pakistan's legal system is especially instructive. The higher judiciary has steadfastly remained English-medium despite constitutional requirements and sporadic political pledges to advance Urdu. English is the primary language used in pleadings, rulings, and legal instruction, according to document analysis of Pakistan's Supreme Court and High Court records. The path-dependent process is evident: constituencies opposing linguistic

reform include litigants who have adapted to English-medium legal representation, judges with training in English-medium legal education, and solicitors whose professional investment is in English-language case law. In the absence of strong political will, the costs of transition—retraining judges, translating decades' worth of case law, and creating legal textbooks in Urdu—are unaffordable, and the anglicized legal elite has no motivation to diminish the linguistic capital that sets it apart from the general populace. Thus, nearly two centuries after its adoption, Regulation IX of 1837 still influences court practice.

5. Conclusion

Examined through the interlocking lenses of Sociolinguistic Stratification Theory and Postcolonial Continuity Theory, and based on the document analysis of 1,130 archival sources spanning seven centuries, the colonial dismantling of pre-colonial language orders in the Indian subcontinent emerges as one of the most significant and meticulously planned acts of cultural transformation in modern history. The empirical results of the doctoral study are clear: rather than being replaced by natural linguistic evolution, the pre-colonial linguistic order, which was defined by functional pluralism, cultural synthesis, and the institutional dominance of Persian, was purposefully destroyed through a series of colonial policy interventions whose mechanisms can be precisely traced through documentation. The operation of path-dependent dynamics, interspersed with a significant junction around 1835–1857, is revealed by the temporal analysis of 1,130 documents. The fundamental reorientation of language policy from accommodation to control is quantitatively confirmed by the frequency shifts in policy objectives: from 91.3% cultural synthesis pre-colonial to 88.0% epistemic control colonial; from 86.4% religious and moral instruction pre-colonial to 69.2% elite formation colonial. The distribution of language dominance, with Persian making up 42.48% of the entire corpus but essentially nonexistent in post-1837 official texts and English making up 12.39% of the total but 63% of the high-colonial sub-corpus,

visually depicts the speed and extent of the linguistic displacement. Language is simultaneously economic policy (determining access to material resources), social policy (structuring elite reproduction), educational policy (shaping transmitted knowledge), and political policy (determining the linguistic medium of power), according to the institutional domain analysis of courts and judiciary (27.43%), revenue and administration (24.78%), education (21.24%), diplomacy and trade (16.81%), and higher education (9.73%).

The kind of historically grounded, theoretically informed, and documentarily supported analysis that this article has attempted to provide is precisely what is needed to engage constructively with the language issues that continue to drive politics throughout South Asia: the status of English in relation to national and regional languages, the preservation of endangered linguistic traditions, the politics of linguistic recognition in plural societies, and the medium of instruction in schools. The knowledge systems, forms of cultural production, patterns of intellectual community, and modes of social reproduction that had been structured around Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and the subcontinent's vernacular traditions were all lost in the colonial dismantling of the pre-colonial language order. Understanding what was removed to create the current language order in South Asia is essential, as is learning from the documentary record how that destruction was planned, justified, and accomplished.

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