

*Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and
Community Formation in the
Nineteenth-Century Parsi Theatre*¹

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Introduction

The Parsi theatre was the dominant form of dramatic entertainment in urban India from the 1860s to the 1930s. Named for its Bombay-based pioneers, the Parsi theatre blended certain European practices of stagecraft and commercial organization with Indic, Persian, and English stories, music, and poetry. Through the impact of its touring companies, it had a catalytic effect on the development of modern drama and regional theatre throughout South and Southeast Asia. Moreover, Parsi theatre is widely credited with contributing to popular Indian cinema its genres, aesthetic, and economic base. With Hindi films now the major cultural signifier for the middle classes and the ‘masses’ in South Asia and its diaspora, documentation and evaluation of the Parsi theatre is much needed, especially to connect it convincingly to the cinematic medium that followed.

As a topic for historical research, however, the Parsi theatre presents a number of challenges of conceptualization and methodology. The association with the Parsi community is the first difficulty. The Parsis, followers of the prophet Zarathustra, immigrated from Iran to Gujarat over a thousand years ago. Settling in Bombay in the eighteenth century, prominent families made fortunes as bankers and traders. Social interaction with colonial elites, exposure to

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English-language theatre, and entrepreneurial skill inclined Parsis to organize the first modern theatrical companies in South Asia. Although companies remained under Parsi management well into the twentieth century, actors and actresses were increasingly drawn from the ranks of Muslims, Hindus, Anglo-Indians, and Baghdadi Jews. Professional writers, musicians, painters, and other creative personnel were often non-Parsis. Parsi theatrical performances only occasionally referred to Parsi religion or culture. In terms of audience, the Parsi theatre's appeal extended far beyond the Parsi community in the course of its near-century of development. For all of these reasons, the term 'Parsi theatre' is disputed and subject to conflicting constructions. One group of theatre scholars would replace it with 'Company Natak,' to facilitate comparisons with other professional troupe-based forms. A. A. Nami and other Urdu scholars acknowledge the Parsi role in financing companies but claim the theatre as their own, referring to it as 'Urdu theatre.'

An additional challenge is that source material on the Parsi theatre is spread across a number of languages. Particularly useful are the early newspapers *Rast Goftar*, *Kaiser-i Hind*, *Bombay Telegraph and Courier*, *Bombay Times*, *Bombay Standard*, *Bombay Gazette*, memoirs (Khambata 1914), and anecdotal accounts in Gujarati, Urdu, and English (Patel 1931, Ilahi and Umar 1982/1924, Yusuf Ali 1917). The secondary literature of more recent origin includes important works in Hindi, Gujarati, and Urdu, as well as the occasional article in English (Gupt 1981, Lal 1973, Shastri 1995, Nami 1962–75, Rahmani 1968, Kapur 1995). Much of it, unfortunately, incorporates a substantial degree of communal and linguistic compartmentalization or bias (Hansen 2001). The literature in Urdu favours Muslim playwrights and assimilates non-Muslims to the rubric 'Urdu theatre,' whereas the corresponding body of writing in Gujarati and Hindi ignores the Muslim contribution or subsumes it within the nationalist ideology that equates Hindustan and Hindustani with Hindi and Hindu. One can read about the 'Parsi-Gujarati' theatre, the 'Parsi-Urdu' theatre, and the 'Parsi-Hindi theatre' in literary histories but rarely get a sense of the whole. Moreover, the significant presence of the Parsi theatre in locations such as Calcutta and Madras is absent from the existing scholarship on the Bengali and Tamil stages.

Writing the history of the Parsi theatre therefore demands an effort to cut across the linguistic lines that are now firmly drawn in South Asian literary scholarship. A close examination of the evidence

in the parallel streams of Urdu, Gujarati, and Hindi scholarship is necessary to reveal the memories and amnesia, the voices and the silences, that have hitherto constituted knowledge about the Parsi theatre. Although the Parsi theatre was produced within a cosmopolitan entertainment economy at a time when linguistic and communal identities were fluid and overlapping, contemporary understanding of the phenomenon has arisen under the shadow of the subcontinent's religious and ethnic antagonisms. One of this essay's objectives is to correct the partial accounts of the Parsi theatre that have obscured its polyglot, pluralist nature.

More specifically, this article explores the process by which the Parsi theatre consolidated a theatrical public in the second half of the nineteenth century along certain lines of class, community, and language. During the period beginning from the first Parsi theatrical performances in 1853 to about 1890, amateur Parsi theatre clubs and professional companies in Bombay made use of English, Gujarati, and Urdu (also called Hindustani at that time) for their productions. These productions were, for the most part, based upon scripted plays that followed European conventions of division into acts and scenes. (Such division was considered an essential feature of 'drama,' the new genre introduced from the West.) The textual foundation of these performances, and the fact that play texts were often published by the companies themselves and are preserved in the India Office archives, make it possible to access directly the languages and scripts in which they were printed. Moreover, a common practice of the time was for authors to introduce their printed plays with a prefatory statement. The prefaces (Gujarati, *dibacho*; Urdu, *dibacha*) contain a mine of information about the playwrights' choice of language and relationship to their public. They help in forming a picture of where the early Parsi theatre was located with respect to existing social boundaries, and how it contributed to the renegotiation of those boundaries through the impact of its popular entertainments. At a theoretical level, this evidence enables an interrogation of the notion that the linguistic medium of popular culture is defined by a pre-existing group of speakers who are presumed to constitute its audience or public. Rather, the hypothesis is presented here that the circulation of linguistic forms through popular media itself articulates social boundaries and enables the configuration of linguistic identities.

The Parsi theatre provides a good example of the emergent nature of linguistic identity in the late nineteenth century, particularly the

kinds of fluidities which, although still present in oral culture, have been largely eliminated in the print media of today. The high incidence of multilingualism, the instability of 'standard' or accepted forms of literary language, the divergence between prose and poetry and the perception that they demanded distinct idioms, and the fluctuation in regard to choice of script—all are apparent in the Parsi theatre and its printed literature at this stage. Many of these ambiguities of usage were devalued and minimized as language became a site of political and cultural contestation in the nationalist period. But there were no foregone conclusions at the time, and it is highly likely that the multilingual nature of Parsi theatre performance would have been less troublesome then than now. (Bharatendu Harishchandra's rejection of Parsi theatre, for example, seems to have had nothing to do with its lack of linguistic purity.)

The question of linguistic identities, even in the arena of what is considered 'popular culture,' also cannot be separated from the development of print culture in nineteenth-century Bombay. The print media, especially newspapers in English and Gujarati, played an important mediational role in the establishment of the early Parsi theatre. When Parsi theatrical performances began in 1853, they were accompanied by much fanfare in the press. Playbills, theatre reviews, and letters to the editor were frequently carried in the city's papers, with the explicit intention of attracting an audience and nurturing the theatre in what was called its 'infancy'. This coverage established a bourgeois, public space for theatre, linking it to adjacent discourses of respectability, civic order, and moral reform.

Although it was once assumed that early plays were not published, extant published dramas date from 1865, coinciding with an accelerated period of growth in the Parsi theatre. In the 1870s and 80s, the Grant Road Theatre was supplemented by prestigious, enlarged playhouses such as the Gaiety and Novelty near the Victoria Railway Terminus. Established theatre companies—the Elphinstone, Victoria, and Alfred—left behind their roots in amateur dramatics and became increasingly profitable for their Parsi owners. Staging by professional actor-managers became lavish as scenery, costumes, and musical style were coordinated for spectacular effects. In this time of efflorescence, theatrical companies undertook the regular commissioning of dramas for performance, and the texts of these commissioned plays were published under the company's name in book form.

In these decades, productions in English, Gujarati, and Urdu vied with one another for the rapidly growing urban audience. Although

a contest might have developed between English and the Indian languages, English was quickly sidelined. The central rivalry that emerged was between Gujarati and Urdu, and this is well documented by the body of play texts published between 1865 and 1890. Out of a total of 80 printed plays identified in the British Library and newspaper notices, 35 are in Gujarati, and 45 are in Urdu/Hindustani. However, the 'Urdu' category includes 17 plays published in Urdu language written in the Gujarati script. This sample undoubtedly underrepresents the number of published plays. Nonetheless, of the 80 play texts, 44% were published in Gujarati, 21% in Urdu printed in Gujarati script, and 35% in Urdu in Arabic script.

Collectively these printed play texts, like their counterparts in Bengali or Marathi, addressed new reading publics for dramatic literature. They overlapped with emerging readerships for fiction, popular tracts, and other genres, and also addressed many literate members of the theatre-going public. In order to specify this readership, it is necessary to ask how the Gujarati- and Urdu-language publics were constituted in terms of caste, class, education, and culture. Did they form two distinct communities, and if so, to what extent did they resemble the dominant linguistic clusters that emerged in the twentieth century: high-caste Gujarati-speaking Hindus on the one hand, and Urdu-speaking north Indian Muslims, Kayasths, and Punjabis on the other? For which constituency were the Urdu texts in Gujarati script published? What kind of impact did the reconfiguration of these readerships as discrete groups have on the future course of the theatre, especially its Parsi-ness?

English and the Parsi Theatre

Before turning to the Gujarati/Urdu contest, let us backtrack to examine the decline of English as a language of the Parsi stage. The Indian elites in Bombay, among whom Parsis were pre-eminent, were first attracted to the cultural capital of theatre in a context wherein sociability and mutual hospitality reinforced economic collaboration between European and local mercantile communities. Leading Indians were invited to the English theatre in return for hosting their colleagues at entertainments such as nautch parties. By 1821, Parsis had begun attending the English-language Bombay Theatre (also known as the Theatre on the Green) located in the heart of the Fort

area of south Bombay. Among the box seat holders that year was one Balcrustnath Sunkerset.² When an appeal was launched in 1830 to renovate the theatre, eleven prominent Indians (mostly Parsis) appeared on the list of fifty donors (Mehta 1960: 46–8). Due to financial problems, in 1835 the old theatre was shut down and sold to the Parsi merchant prince, Jamshed Jejeebhoy. Subsequently, a trio of Indian notables—Jejeebhoy, Jagannath Shankarseth, and Framji Cowasji—collected subscriptions and petitioned the Governor of Bombay for a new theatre (Mehta 1960: 107–15). The Grant Road Theatre was opened in 1846 on land donated by Shankarseth with a generous contribution from Jejeebhoy. Indian financial and civic leaders through these acts embraced theatre as an object of cultural philanthropy and demonstrated their status and taste, laying the foundation for much broader participation by the Bombay populace in years to come.

Until 1853 all performances in the Grant Road Theatre were in English. The performers of English theatre included both amateur British actors residing in the cantonment and civil lines and professional touring artists from England, Europe, and America. Indians only sporadically came onstage as supernumeraries (Willmer 1999: 95–6). A major change was ushered in by a visiting drama company from Sangli, Maharashtra. Under the direction of Vishnudas Bhawe, the Hindu Dramatic Corps presented the first public theatrical performance in an Indian language at the Grant Road Theatre on March 9, 1853 (Mehta 1960: 128–9). The main drama was based on the *Ramayana* and was in Marathi. In November of the same year, the Corps presented *Raja Gopichand and Jalandhar* in Hindustani (Gupt 1981: App.1).

In October 1853 the first Parsi theatrical company appeared on the boards with *Rustom Zabooli and Sohrab*, probably in Gujarati (Mehta 1960: 130). Over the next few years, as the popularity of English theatre began to wane, Parsis and Hindu companies performing in Gujarati, Hindustani, and Marathi found favour with the populations living in the Grant Road area, providing an alternative source of revenue to the theatre's leaseholder, Mrs Deacle (Mehta 1960: 123–32). These trends continued through the 1850s and 60s. Full-length plays in Gujarati dominated, accompanied by shorter farces in Hindustani.

² Names cited from English sources are spelled as in the original. Names cited from Indian-language sources are transliterated according to standard conventions. The honourific *ji* commonly suffixed to Parsi proper names is generally dropped.

From their earliest appearances, then, Indian actors challenged the theatrical culture of British Bombay, articulating their presence through Gujarati and Hindustani in place of the English language. The styles of performance owed much more to regional traditions such as Bhavai and Yakshagana than to Western methods (Gupt 1981: App.2, Willmer 1999: 127). Despite these continuities, the spatial, temporal, and economic conditions for performance and spectatorship were beginning to change. The allocation of particular zones of the city for theatrical entertainments, such as the Grant Road area, altered the older fluid geographies of performance. The playhouse with its proscenium stage defined the interior spatial set-up and regulated modes of viewing. The differentiation between leisure and work as ordered parts of a new temporal economy were equally significant. The Grant Road Theatre advertised precise times for ticket sales, seating, starting and finishing the show. New structures of capital that reconfigured the theatre as an economic institution included the introduction of joint stock companies and the marketing of tickets, as opposed to patronage by local elites.

The ambiguities of the intercultural conjunction were also visible in terms of which pre-existing narratives were considered useable for adaptation. Even in its earliest years, the Parsi theatre developed a penchant for producing plays based on Shakespeare. According to the newspapers, Parsi theatre productions of *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Timon of Athens*—all mediated through the Gujarati language—were mounted at the Grant Road Theatre between 1857 and 1859.

Concrete evidence of Indians performing in English appears from the early 1860s. Significantly, the impetus came from a new constituency, the enthusiastic students and ex-students of Elphinstone College. A group called the Students' Amateurs Club is mentioned in *The Bombay Standard* in late 1858. In 1861 a student named Kunvarji Nazir formed the Parsi Elphinstone Dramatic Society, an amateur club where enthusiasts received training from professionals like Hamilton Jacob. They staged a number of English plays at the Grant Road Theatre and earned respect from both Indian and European audiences (Mehta 1960: 178–85). A few professors organized another student group, the Shakespeare Society, which mounted productions in the private confines of the college once or twice a year (Mehta 1960: 188–92). As students of English literature and drama, the Elphinstonians were not surprisingly noted for their English-language productions. The vogue for performing in English was

largely limited to the college, however. The desire to enact Shakespeare in English had given way by the late 1860s to an interest in adapting Shakespeare to Indian languages and environments. The professional company that succeeded the Elphinstone amateur group, the Elphinstone Theatrical Company or Elphinstone Natak Mandali, was primarily performing in Gujarati and Urdu by the early 1870s (Gupt 1981: 133–8).

The choice for Indian languages as opposed to English reflected changing geographies and audiences as well as the hybrid character of the fledgling Parsi theatre. The sole playhouse of the time, the Grant Road Theatre, was situated far north of the Fort within the so-called Native Town. Increasingly it attracted spectators whose knowledge of English and ability to interpret an English play were rather limited. The British audience, never large, began to withdraw because of the distance. Among Parsis in mid-century, knowledge of English was more business-based than literary. University instruction in Bombay began only in the late 1850s and had still affected few Parsis by the 1860s. Lower-class residents from adjoining Girgaum and Kalbadevi filled the pit at the Grant Road Theatre, forcing Mrs Deacle to lower her ticket prices (Mehta 1960: 123–32).

The occasional use of English vocabulary, songs, and cultural references continued without diminishing audience appeal. Indeed, the Parsi theatre perfected the art of projecting Englishness even as it eliminated English as a language. Through its architectural setting, stage construction, management and publicity, the naming of companies after royalty, and countless other public signs, the Parsi theatre capitalized on the allure of English metropolitan culture. Company managers maintained strong ties to the English-reading public, advertising in both English and Gujarati newspapers throughout the nineteenth century. Aligning itself with both the English-educated elite and Gujarati and Urdu speakers of several classes, the theatre advanced its prestige and profitability, while ensuring that its public need not struggle with a foreign tongue.

Gujarati and the Reinvention of the Parsi Past

There was more at stake, however, in the turn toward Gujarati (and Urdu) than the attempt to capture a burgeoning market of spectators. Shortly after Dadabhai Naoroji coined the term *svadeshi* to counter colonial economic policy, Gujarati dramatists utilized the

expression and spoke of the project of constructing a theatre that addressed their own people. In the preface to his first play, *Bejan ane Manijeh* (1869), Kaikhushro Navroji Kabra, the eminent journalist, explained that his goal was to compose *svadeshi* plays for his *deshi* brothers.³ In forging a dramatic literature that bore a special relationship to the indigenous community, he considered the question of narrative sources. Happily, an ‘inexhaustible source’ was found in the histories, legends, learning and poetry of ‘our eastern countries’ (Kabra 1869: Preface, 3–4). Just as the West had its Homer and Shakespeare, so the East had its Kalidasa and Firdausi. With these words, Kabra put forth the objective of creating cultural and historical consciousness, rather than mere pursuit of profit, as the purpose of play-writing.

The definition of community underlying these remarks was a somewhat restricted one. Kabra turned to Firdausi for ‘the memory of our true throne . . . our ancient kings, our true warriors’. The project he defined was that of reinventing the past, of preserving memory (*yaddasht*) in relation to selected narratives. These narratives are those of ‘the ancient kings of the Parsis,’ that is of the kings of Persia, as set forth by the ‘poet of poets’ in his immortal *Shahnama*. By ‘our people’ Kabra thus intended the Parsis as the historical community descended from Firdausi’s heroes. His objective in writing plays was to ‘safeguard Parsi drama’ while reviving Parsi self-awareness and creating solidarity (Kabra 1869: Preface 4–5).

Kabra’s embrace of Firdausi and the Persian past was a continuation of recitational and dramatic traditions among the Parsis. The earliest Parsi theatrical group had performed *Rustom and Sohrab* in several instalments in 1853 and 1854. Subsequently, *Barjor* and *King Afrasiab and Rustom Pehlvan* strengthened the identification between ‘Parsi theatre’ as a new form of cultural expression and the mythohistory of the Persian homeland (*Bombay Times*, Feb. 23, 1857; May 30, 1857). *Shahnama* stories were already circulating as lithographed episodes (*namas*) in Gujarati and Persian. Oral recitations of the *Shahnama* were both a form of entertainment and tool for moral instruction in vernacular schools (Wacha 1920: 86, Dhalla 1975: 26, 309, Gidumal 1892: 38–40). A little-known dramatic form called Gabardi based on the *Shahnama* also predated the Parsi theatre (Gidumal 1892: 41).

³ See Appendix for bibliographies of published Gujarati and Urdu plays cited in this article.

Early Parsi dramatists also resorted to English versions of the *Shahnama*. In justifying his choice of Firdausi, Kabra cited James Atkinson who considered Firdausi the ‘father of Persian poetry’ and Sir William Jones who compared him with ‘the famous Greek poet Homer’ (Kabra 1869: Preface, 4).⁴ In the preface to *Jamshed*, Kabra acknowledged his use of George Rawlinson in creating his women characters (Kabra 1870: Preface, 5).⁵ Edalji Khori, author of *Rustam ane Sohrab* and other dramas, was more explicit about his English sources:

Due to the fact that the playwright unfortunately does not know the Persian language, he has not been able to take direct advantage of the poet Firdausi’s interesting and effective language; and to compose parts of the play he has taken a little necessary help from English translations of *Rustam and Sohrab* by Matthew Arnold, Atkinson, and other gentlemen, and the first chapter of the Gujarati version of the *Barjornama* and the writings of Mansukh, for which we express gratitude (Khori 1870: Preface, 4).⁶

The choice of the *Shahnama* must also be seen in relation to the so-called ‘Hindu theatre’ establishing itself just then in Bombay. The notion of a national theatre for the Hindus had been advanced by Sir William Jones and gained currency with Horace Hayman Wilson’s translations from Sanskrit drama, published as *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* in 1835. Dramatic performances in the Khetvadi area of Bombay were labelled as ‘Hindu drama’ in *The Bombay Times* in 1846 (Gupt 1981: App.2). In the 1850s, various groups from Maharashtra such as the Sangli Hindu Dramatic Corps and the Amerchand Wadi Hindu Dramatic Corps presented plays based on the *Ramayana* and the *Puranas*. Although these performances probably followed the regional folk styles, they were hailed in the English-language press as the ‘national theatre’ of the Hindus and described as a manifestation of the ancient ‘Hindu’ dramatic tradition (Willmer 1999:

⁴ Atkinson (1780–1852) was a member of the Asiatic Society and translated a portion of Firdausi’s *Shahnama*, *Rustam va Suhrab*, under the sanction of the College of Fort William. Jones (1746–94), a prodigious Orientalist, ‘discovered’ and translated Kalidasa’s *Sakuntala* and wrote a grammar of the Persian language.

⁵ Rawlinson (1812–1902) translated Herodotus’ *The Persian Wars* and wrote extensively on the history of ancient Greece, Egypt, and Persia.

⁶ Arnold (1822–88), among his many essays and poems, wrote *Sohrab and Rustum: an episode*. Mancher Kavas Mansukh (1828–1902) transliterated the poems of Firdausi and wrote works of history, philosophy, and fiction (Darukhanawala 1939: 265).

123). Several of these performances were held in the Grant Road Theatre, the venue of the early Parsi theatre. In this environment, the Parsis counterpositioned themselves through their distinctive 'Parsi' corpus of legends.

Through the *Shahnama* plays enacted in Gujarati, the 'Parsi theatre' thus announced itself in the early years as a public representation of a particular community. These shows were not intended to be viewed exclusively by Parsis. Nonetheless, they articulated a celebratory notion of Parsi identity. As Khori wrote in *Rustam ane Sohrab*, 'Our commentary is largely meant for Parsis, and the main reason for this is that this play has the most intimate relation with Parsis. Its matters relate to Parsis. Its writer is a Parsi, its producer is Parsi, and the main audience is Parsi' (Khori 1870: Preface, 3). Other playwrights also addressed themselves to their 'Parsi brethren' or 'Zarathusthi co-religionists' (Framroj 1871: Preface, n.p.). The religious and ethnic boundaries defining the Parsi community were in this way reinscribed with this theatrical reinvention of the past.

This aspect of the initial impetus for Parsi theatre is important to stress because of the tendency to characterize and denigrate the Parsis as a monolithic comprador group marked by anglophilia and assimilation to European cultural traits. The corollary to this stereotype has been a view of the Parsi theatre that emphasizes its derivative and colonial character, particularly its affinity for Shakespeare. The Parsi theatre certainly appropriated many techniques of Victorian stagecraft and fed off the imperial image of the Raj. What is overlooked is that a vocal sector of the community, including many active in the early Parsi theatre, responded to the challenge of modernity by using drama for the revival of vernacular traditions. In engaging with their history, they identified with Iran, Gujarat, and India rather than the West. Demarcation of the community's boundaries by these practitioners served as an instrument for the ideological work of resisting colonial hegemony and upholding cultural distinctiveness.

The point may be expanded by citing some nineteenth-century developments in the formation of Zoroastrian religious identity. Like Hindus and Muslims in this period, Parsis were drawn into the process of reconfiguring their religious heritage as a bulwark against Christian evangelical efforts. The absence of a code of laws comparable to the Hindu *dharmashastras* or the Muslim *shariah* also propelled the Parsis to reclaim their 'authentic' traditions as passed down in

religious books (Dobbin 1970: 149–53). Because of the perceived deficiencies of Parsi priests or *mobeds*, who no longer understood the scriptural languages, the work of textual recovery was undertaken by the laity. Religious reformers like K. R. Cama after studying with Orientalists in Europe established a number of *madrasas* or religious schools and taught the priests philological methods (Dobbin 1972: 64). Gujarati translations of the Avestas began to appear in the eighteenth century, and under Cama's influence many more religious texts were translated into Gujarati (Dhalla 1963: 477–8). The publication of these religious books further stimulated the growth of an educated lay community.

These efforts, motivated by the need to counter the charges of 'irrationalism' propagated in Christian missionary discourse, were matched by attempts to cleanse religious practice of what were viewed as accretions or 'superstitions' from Hinduism and Islam. Syncretistic practices such as offering prayers at temples and shrines, wearing amulets and charms, and consulting healers were declared 'excrescences' by the Parsi Panchayat in the early nineteenth century (Karaka I 1999: 232–3). Gujarati-language media such as folk songs and tales were often used to propagate reformist beliefs, as well as to inculcate new behaviours and attitudes, especially among women. Women were seen as particularly vulnerable to superstitions, and their domestic seclusion and low degree of educational attainment were blamed on the surrounding non-Parsi society (Dhalla 1975: 82). While a standard of female purity or *pativrata* was upheld for Parsi women that was almost identical to its counterpart among Hindus, in popular songs and stories the female heroes of the *Shah-nama* and medieval Persian romances such as Nizami's were upheld as models. The revival of identification with Iran and its epic presented a solution to the uneasy positioning of the Parsis between the Christian colonial power on the one hand and the emerging Hindu nation on the other.

In addition to the *nama* stories and their enactments, the *garbas* and *garbis* or women's songs, and the old *dastans* and *qissas*, Parsi popular culture at mid-century included important genres such as the *khyals* or improvised poems of the Turra-Kalgi factions, playlets and songs from the Gujarati dramatic form *bhavai*, the *lavanis* and ballads in Gujarati and Marathi associated with the *mahlaris* and *tamasha*, as well as *ghazals* in Persian, Urdu, and Gujarati, songs based on *bhakti* poets like Kabir, and *horis*, *thumris*, *tappas* and other secular songs. These genres are all exemplified in the numerous song anthologies

compiled by Parsis and printed in Gujarati in this period.⁷ The content of these volumes suggests a composite oral culture that was now being circulated in print and made accessible to an urban audience. These songs from a variety of languages, published in the Gujarati script, in turn became a resource for the playwrights of the Parsi theatre. Playwrights sometimes commissioned songs for their plays from well-known poets, and their names are mentioned in the extant prefaces. But equally they drew on popular tunes, setting new words to a popular song and borrowing freely from existing material, as is apparent from indications in the play texts. Songs were necessary adjuncts to narratives in creating stage appeal, and the importance of music only grew as the Parsi theatre developed.

The problem for the Parsi theatre, however, was that while music was embraced and song became the theatre's leading vehicle, these arts had to be disassociated from the traditional performers, the *khayalis* and *bhavaiyas* of the streets, and made respectable. The danger otherwise was that the stage would itself be rejected by the emerging middle-class. Drama was therefore harnessed firmly to the agenda of improvement and moral instruction, at least in the prefaces penned by its Parsi exponents. According to playwright Delta, 'rather than the black stamp of immorality that is slapped on the mind of the viewer by the dance of prostitutes, the shows of Mahlaris, and the Bhavai of the folk-players, the blameless amusement of theatre enlarges the mind, gladdens the heart, cools the eyes, and speeds morality.' (Delta 1876: Preface, n.p.) Similarly K. N. Kabra exhorted his spectators to consider the *natakshala*, the playhouse, as equivalent to a *vidyashala* or schoolhouse, only better because 'a man learns more by seeing examples than by oral instruction' (Kabra 1869: Preface, 4). The notion of 'rational amusement' borrowed from English theatrical discourse came into vogue, providing a way for young men from notable Parsi families to sing and dance on the stage and displace their low-class performing brethren.

The Advent of Urdu

The passion for song, poetry, and sweet speech coupled with the quest for high-status art forms predisposed Parsi theatre practi-

⁷ Some examples include *Gayan-e dilchaman* (Bombay: Job Printing Press, 1867); *Manpasand gayan sangrah*, compiled by Pestanji Kavasji (Bombay: Printers Press,

tioners towards acceptance of Urdu as a language of the stage. It is significant that the innovation of performing in Urdu was pioneered by the most highly-educated Parsi attached to the early theatre, Dadabhai Sohrabji Patel, or 'Dadi Patel M.A.,' as he was popularly known. Patel was from a wealthy commercial family that opposed his theatrical activities. He was one of the first Parsis to receive a Master of Arts degree from the University of Bombay. (Incidentally, he was also the elder brother of the famous revolutionary, Madame Bhikaiji Cama.) Dadi Patel became the secretary of the Victoria Theatrical Company in 1869, taking over from K. N. Kabra, and he quickly propelled it in a new direction. He not only commissioned the first Urdu drama, he popularized 'opera' as a new form, introduced 'scientific' stagecraft, professionalized the company by offering full-time salaries, and began the practice of touring even before railway lines were completed to the Deccan. An authoritarian director and charismatic actor, his experiment stimulated the imagination of his spectators and quickly caught on (Patel 1931: 95–131).

Urdu or Hindustani was not the first language of many Bombay residents. In 1864, the first official census recorded that Muslims constituted 20% of the populace vs. 65% Hindus. The Muslims were divided between the mercantile communities (Bohras, Khojas, and Memons), all of whom spoke Gujarati, and industrial workers, artisans and cultivators, who were primarily Konkani speakers. Among the Parsis, who made up 6% of the population, Hindustani may have been employed as a lingua franca in trade, but schooling was in Gujarati and English. In addition, many Parsi boys attended *madrasas* where they studied Persian and Arabic. Acquisition of Persian and the revival of historical ties to Iran could have assisted in fostering feelings for Urdu. As is made clear in the play prefaces, however, knowledge of Urdu was lacking among playwrights, actors, and spectators when the language was first introduced on stage.

The first Urdu play was *Sone ke mol ki Khurshed*, a translation by Behram Fardun Marzban of a Gujarati drama by Edalji Khori. It was commissioned for the Victoria Theatrical Company by Dadi Patel in 1871. In the preface Marzban stated: 'It should be made clear that Hindustani is not the language of your humble servant, nor has he studied its grammar and rules. But to please his friends this humble servant, according to his lights, has tried to copy it in the Hindi

1872); and *Bag-e gul chaman*, compiled by Behram Jamshed 'Leheri' (Bombay: Vartaman Press, 1873).

language, as a result of which there must be errors in the Hindi speech and grammar' (Taj 1 [1969]: 80). By 'Hindi' Marzban was indicating the language of Hind, not today's Sanskritized Hindi. He argued that Hindi or Hindustani was more suitable than Gujarati as a medium for theatre because Parsi Gujarati excluded the other communities (*qaum*), namely the English, the Muslims, and the Hindus. Although Marzban claimed to avoid a decorated style, he acknowledged that he had copied 'choice phrases, pithy sentences, and allusions from famous stories from the Urdu language' and chosen songs and *ghazals* from the works of the *ustads* (Taj 1 [1969]: 80).

Two claims were thus made for the introduction of Urdu. First, it could serve as an overarching language beyond specific communities, thereby extending the audience for Parsi theatre. Second, it connected the theatre to rich narrative and lyric traditions, enhancing its literary stature and pleasurability. What seemed unimportant to the writer was any association that Hindustani/Urdu might have with a specific group of speakers. It was rather its absence of territorial boundaries, its detachment from limiting notions of *qaum*, that recommended it as a theatrical medium.

This play shared with its entire generation of Urdu dramas for the Parsi theatre the peculiarity of being printed in the Gujarati script. On their covers these plays were announced as 'in the Urdu language, in Gujarati letters' (*zaban-i urdu, harf-i gujarati*). The Arabic script only began to be used for printed Urdu plays a decade later. The Gujarati script signals the lack of literacy in Urdu among the public who bought and used these plays. The transmission of Urdu within the orthography of Gujarati, which today would be an appropriation fraught with communal implications, was characteristic of a period when language and script were not rigidly paired. Another instance of the nativization of forms, it was part of an adaptive process that characterized the Parsi theatre as it encountered pre-existing cultural traditions.

The next Urdu translator/playwright, whose *takhallus* was 'Aram,' was also a Parsi and a non-native speaker of Urdu. In his preface to *Jahangir shah aur Gauhar*, he stated: 'I should inform [you] that neither Urdu nor Braj are my own languages, so there is no doubt that many errors must have been unknowingly introduced' (Taj 2 [1969]: 365). Although little is known about Aram, one recent Urdu scholar suggests that he might have hailed from 'the Deccan,' an ambiguous designation that could refer to Gujarat or Maharashtra as well as

regions further south. Aram left three Gujarati prefaces, a good indicator that his readers were literate in Gujarati. From several prefaces by Khori, the Gujarati author whom Aram most often translated, it is learned that even the Elphinstone Company, whose reputation was built on performing English-language plays, had joined the trend toward performance in Hindustani in the early 1870s.

Newspaper reviews of these early plays comment on the audience's surprise at hearing Parsi actors enunciate the words of the Urdu language. The sense is that although Urdu poetry was alien and exotic to both spectators and performers, Dadi Patel displayed his brilliance by successfully rehearsing the cast in a language that was not their own. Through the use of Urdu and the simultaneous rush towards the new fad of 'opera,' an intense rivalry developed between the two leading companies of the early 1870s, the Victoria and the Elphinstone. The Elphinstone's managing director, Kunvarji Nazir, matched Patel's production of *Sone ke mol ki Khurshed* with a new play by Khori, *Nurjahan*, translated into Urdu by Aram. Patel then devised the idea of producing an opera, and he too solicited Aram's aid; *Benazir Badremunir* was produced in 1872. Aram also translated Khori's *Hatim tai*, and Dadi Patel himself starred in the lead to great acclaim. Aram's second opera, *Jahangir shah aur Gauhar*, was published and produced by the Victoria, now under Nazir's direction, in 1874 (Gupt 1981: 104–18). Meanwhile in 1873 the Elphinstone Company mounted a lavish production of the *Indar sabha*, originally written by Agha Hasan Amanat of Lucknow in 1853, now transformed into an opera with special lighting and musical effects (Hansen 1998: 11–12). This was countered by a Victoria Company production of the *Indar sabha* in 1874, and both companies repeated these shows throughout the year.

The adoption of Urdu was thus not merely a gesture of inclusion directed toward non-Parsi spectators. It was part of a larger context of expansion in the musical, poetic, and visual economies of the stage. It coincided with the rise of popular performers like the comic actor Khurshedji Balivala and the female impersonator 'Pesu Avan,' the opening of new theatres in Bombay, and the travels of Parsi companies to Delhi, Calcutta, and the Deccan. Although the choice of Urdu was undoubtedly instrumental to the project of touring as well as audience-building at home in Bombay, the language was also (if not principally) favoured on aesthetic grounds, based upon its advantages in terms of poetry and song.

These early plays in Urdu drew on very different traditions than the Gujarati plays of the same period. Only *Hatim* appears to be a reworking of older materials; the rest are 'original' in the sense of being fabricated anew, albeit from familiar elements. In *Sone ke mol ki Khurshed*, Fateh Shah becomes displeased with his queen of seven years and offers her for sale at a public auction, stipulating that whoever can fill a one-cubic yard pit with gold will get her hand. The merchant Firoz arrives in the 'harbour' of Delhi and eventually wins her. *Nurjahan*, despite the title, is not a Mughal historical drama, but concerns a tyrant, Zalim Singh, who kidnaps two princesses who are eventually rescued by the hero Muhabat Khan. The intercession of jinns and fairies is essential to the plot. The story of *Hatim*, known from *dastans*, is about a princess who poses seven questions that must be answered by a single man. In search of the answers, Hatim encounters various supernatural forces, giving the theatre company an opportunity to display its special stage effects. *Jahangir shah* involves a conflict between two imaginary kings. The memorable scenes are those of Jahangir arriving in a grotto through a tunnel and the witty repartee between the king's cook and a young woman planning an assignation with her lover. The stuff of these dramas can be said to consist of the persecution and rescue of desirable women, the magical interference of supernatural beings, and the struggles of the hero caught between the two, all familiar elements from the universe of Persian and Urdu *dastans*.

Other Parsi playwrights may have followed Aram, writing in 'broken Urdu in Gujarati style' (Taj 4 [1969]: 5, 21). However, the next Urdu playwright of record was Mahmud Miyan 'Raunaq,' a prolific writer for the Victoria Company in the 1870s and 80s. Raunaq was a transitional figure, insofar as he was the first non-Parsi to write dramas for the Parsi theatre. Despite the label 'Banarsi' sometimes attached to his name, the evidence points again to origins in 'the Deccan' (Taj 5 [1969]: 3–8). Raunaq may have been a Gujarati Muslim whose Urdu was inflected by his knowledge of Gujarati, a mediating figure during the shift from Gujarati to Urdu.

Raunaq's self-representation in his sole preface was as a purifier of the Urdu language. Although Raunaq's plays too were printed in Urdu in the Gujarati script, he claimed great concern for the *makhraj* of the Urdu language. *Makhraj* is a term meaning both 'pronunciation' and 'etymology.' Raunaq laid emphasis on the correct printing of the text (*sahi chhapna*) and boasted that he researched each and

every word (*har har lafz ki tahqiq karke*) (Raunaq 1880: Preface, n.p.). These comments evince a measure of self-consciousness in the use of Urdu as a written and spoken medium, marking a step in the definition of linguistic boundaries. Raunaq's stress on the correction of defective speech and writing—which as a pedagogical practice is known as *islah*—possibly identifies him as someone familiar with the training to become a poet in the Urdu tradition.

The next generation of Urdu dramatists, who published plays in the 1880s, were distinct from their forebears in that they hailed from Uttar Pradesh and were Muslims trained in the classical languages to which Urdu was heir. Karimuddin 'Murad' was born in Bareilly and was educated in Arabic and Persian, where he later taught in a local *madrasa*. He was known as 'Maulvi Saheb' even after coming to Bombay and joining the Parsi theatre around 1883 (Taj 7 [1972]: 3–4). Amanullah Khan 'Habab' came from Fatehpur, where he was a court poet in the service of the Nawabs of Rampur and Rewari in the 1870s. He began writing plays for the Parsi theatre in 1881 (Taj 8 [1970]: alif-ye). Hafiz Muhammad Abdullah like Habab was from Fatehpur and was the son of a *zamindar*. His father served as a judge in Mainpur and was hanged for treason following the 1857 rebellion. Abdullah was educated in Arabic and Persian and was a *hafiz-i quran* ('protector of the Quran,' one who has the entire book by heart). His plays date from approximately 1880 (Taj 10 [1971]: 1–3). In terms of formal studies, regional origins, cultural milieu, and class background, these playwrights differed from the pioneers of the 1870s. Their relationships to the Urdu language and its literary antecedents were quite distinct as a result.

How did these men of the north make contact with the Bombay Parsi theatre? Murad was recruited from Bareilly by one Pestanji, who had been sent to Delhi and U.P. to look for *munshis* (professional writers) for Dadabhai Ratan Thunthi's theatrical company. Pestanji tested Murad's talents by having him compose new lyrics to a pre-existing tune, then negotiated his salary, and returned to Bombay with him (Taj 7 [1972]: 3–4). In the case of Habab, he moved to Jabalpur in 1881 and was attracted by the performances of the Original Victoria Theatrical Company, while they were on tour. He offered his services as a poet and writer, and the company owners commissioned his play *Sharar ishq* and performed it. The company published his plays in Bombay, but it is not clear whether he ever visited the city (Taj 8 [1970]: alif-ye). Abdullah first became a dramatist and actor with the Light of India Theatrical Company. In 1882

he founded the Indian Imperial Theatrical Company and became its managing director (Taj 10 [1971]: 3). The patron of this company was the Maharaja of Dholpur, Nihal Singh, and its plays were published in Agra. Abdullah also appears to have been a *munshi* for the Alfred Theatrical Company of Bombay under the ownership of N. R. Ranina, and some of his plays were published by that company in Bombay.

Although the biographical evidence is ambiguous and incomplete, several lines of speculation can be suggested about the nexus between these Urdu writers and the Parsi stage. According to Urdu literary history, Parsi company personnel eagerly sought out northerners, offering them attractive salaries and facilitating their relocation to Bombay. Read another way, it appears that Urdu poets, schoolteachers, and men of letters saw in the Parsi theatre an opportunity to benefit their earnings and approached the companies themselves. Of key significance is that courtly employment, always precarious, became even more so after the events of 1857, and poets and entertainers (actors, musicians, singers) found a welcome source of income in the Parsi companies. After the commencement of tours in the early 1870s, the Parsi theatre's fame spread all over the north and to other parts of the subcontinent. As access to the companies increased, the old scenario of a youth 'running off' to join an itinerant troupe was reinvigorated. Some of the runaways may have been budding Urdu poets and playwrights.

The data also hint at an independent northern theatrical tradition, based in the princely courts. Local rulers replicated the well-known artistic proclivities of the last Nawab of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah, on a smaller scale, organizing events such as the *tafrihi mela* (entertainment fair) at Rampur, putting up their own playhouses, and sponsoring theatrical companies. The originating moment in terms of Urdu dramatic history was, of course, the *Indar sabha*, composed by Agha Hasan Amanat of Lucknow around 1853. It set off a virtual landslide of theatrical performances across Uttar Pradesh, reaching as far as Lahore and Dacca (Hansen 1998). Certainly a practice of writing for theatrical performance in Urdu had been established, although it was not entirely synonymous with 'play writing' as it was evolving in Bombay, a 'play' by definition being divided into acts and scenes. This prior tradition may have provided the source from which playwrights were drawn when Bombay companies started looking for 'genuine' Urdu *munshis*.

The Gujarati script was still used for the Bombay publications of

these Urdu playwrights. Habab's *Sharar ishq* was published in 1881 in Gujarati script. Abdullah's plays commissioned by the Alfred Company were printed in Gujarati script. However, Abdullah's plays written for his U.P.-based Indian Imperial Company were published in Urdu, and three of them contain Urdu prefaces. As the Bombay companies toured and left behind regional companies as offspring, Urdu play publishing spread to a number of cities in north India. By 1890, Parsi theatre plays were being printed in Arabic script from Agra, Meerut, Kanpur, Delhi, and Fatehpur.

The kind of Urdu employed in the dramas continued to be a concern, as evidenced in Habab's preface to *Sharar ishq*.

Now in the service of the discriminating viewers and ardent admirers, it is submitted that every language obtains its charter from the community of speakers (*ahl-i zaban*). In this way, for the purposes of Urdu poetry, the chaste language of Lucknow (*zaban-i fasih-i lakhnau*) or the exalted court language of Delhi (*urdu-i mu'alla dahli ki*) should be followed. Moreover, poetry is a branch of knowledge that should be bound by certain rules: first the firmness of *grammar* [English], second felicitous perception (*khush bini*), third observation of prosody and rhyme. (Taj 8 [1970]: 4)

Here for the first time a relationship between the Urdu language and a community of speakers was articulated. Although the religious identity of the *ahl-i zaban* was not mentioned, the explicit references to Delhi and Lucknow link this community with the Mughal and post-Mughal courts and the flourishing Indo-Muslim civilization of the north. Habab contended that the language of the Parsi theatre should be closer to classical Urdu, following the established rules of grammar and prosody. In a later passage, Habab set out another aspect of his agenda, that of showing the diverse speech registers of women in the harem, miscreants in the bazaar, and men of the court. An attempt at sociological realism through language use, in particular representation of dialects, was to be conjoined with the stress on proper speech.

Abdullah in his prefaces made no particular reference to language but was quite mindful of the correct use of music.

Every composition (*chiz*) in this play has been set to a tune (*dhun*) and rhythm (*tal*) according to the art of music, and a famous and well-known song (*tarz*), often sung to that tune and rhythm, is indicated for it. This is because in the special genre of *opera natak*, that *rag* or *ragini* is used which is suitable to the present circumstances of the speaker, whereas in the tune of ordinary compositions there is definitely a sense of time [appropriateness], otherwise the *actor* [English] is at fault. (Taj 10 [1971]: 14)

Abdullah distinguished between non-theatrical music, that is, the rendering of classical compositions in a salon or court setting, and the music in an ‘opera,’ or musical drama for the Parsi theatre. Both employed fixed melodic patterns or compositions (known variously as *chiz*, *tarz*, *bandish*) conforming to the requirements of a particular modal type (*rag* or *ragini*). The difference to Abdullah is apparently that in an opera the dramatic context and its corresponding mood determine the choice of *rag*, whereas ordinarily the *rag* is decided according to the time of day and other factors such as the preference of the patron. Thus the assignment of *rags* for the songs in an opera is fixed in advance, and is indicated in the text together with a sample melody, a pre-existing tune to which the new words are to be fitted.

The practice of writing the sample tunes into the text did not start with Abdullah, but it is elaborated here in a way that draws attention to the northern milieu with its distinctive Hindustani system of music praxis. Each of Abdullah’s three Urdu prefaces contained this emphasis on musical realization of the text, a feature which must have enhanced the popularity of these plays with the public. One of them makes a rather extraordinary reference to a courtesan composer. In the preface to *Shakuntala*, Abdullah stated: ‘Every composition in this play has been set to the tune and rhythm that has been established by the *chief actress* [English] of the aforementioned company, Bi Amir Jan “Ada,” resident of Banda’ (Abdullah 1887: Preface, 1). This line (absent from the 1890 preface reprinted in the Taj series) hints at an artistic collaboration between the playwright, who it must be remembered was the proprietor of the Indian Imperial Theatrical Company, and the principal actress of the company, apparently a *tawa’if* trained in poetry and music. What is also worth noting is that the title role in *Shakuntala*, the foremost example of ‘Hindu national drama,’ was played by a woman who perhaps was a Muslim. (*Tawa’ifs* in northern India in the late nineteenth century often adopted Muslim names when they joined the profession; the name alone is not a sufficient indicator of the actress’s religion.)

Conclusion

The turn from Gujarati toward Urdu in the Parsi theatre was motivated by a number of complex considerations and did not represent

an attempt to win over any particular group of viewers, for example Muslims. The commercial expansion of the theatre certainly favoured the use of a lingua franca, and Urdu as the cosmopolitan version of Hindustani provided the most obvious choice in mid-nineteenth century. But more importantly, Urdu and the larger Indo-Muslim cultural heritage in which it was embedded were capable of bestowing on the Parsi theatre rich legacies of poetry, music, and narrative. In consort with new technologies of stagecraft, these elements blended eclectically to form a visual and aural culture that favoured romance and spectacle, the mainstays of popular entertainment. By adopting Urdu, the Parsi theatre embraced more than a language or community. It gained an entire vocabulary of pleasure, and one that had the advantage of lacking a territorial boundary.

Urdu had the additional cachet of being a language of prestige, a reputation that was not diminished even after the consolidation of British imperial rule in 1858. Although Parsi Gujarati too was replete with Arabic and Persian vocabulary, Urdu poetic art and public speech were highly esteemed. They required education in the classical languages, a mark of distinction. Anxiety about the high standards demanded by the use of Urdu is present in the prefaces of Parsi playwrights from the earliest texts. The choice of Urdu, and particularly of correct or 'chaste' Urdu, marked playwrights as erudite and bolstered the claims of a popular theatre to bourgeois respectability. Urdu's advantage, in this understanding, was connected to both the desire to co-opt its enduring status as a language and a need to legitimize theatrical practice through the appropriation of valorized literary traditions.

Identities based on caste and community quickened as colonial rule spread over the subcontinent. Some scholars even argue that the British created the epistemologies of 'village,' 'caste,' and 'community.' As the nineteenth century advanced, the opportunities for community identity to play a critical role in political representation increased. The ease with which Parsis, Bohras, Baniyas, and other communities had interacted in a shared commercial and civic world in Bombay was gradually undermined. At the very time that Parsi theatre managers turned to the north to recruit Urdu playwrights, leaders from the Muslim trading communities came under the influence of the ideas of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and began promoting the use of Urdu as the language of the Indian Muslims. Bombay families like that of Badruddin Tyabji shifted from Gujarati to Urdu for daily conversation around 1880 (Dobbin 1972: 233). The Mus-

lims of Bombay were gradually drawn into a nation-wide process of communalization, the outcome of which is all too well-known. Dramas written and performed in Urdu may have later served to strengthen the identity of Muslims as a pan-Indian community, but this was only after the Parsi theatre had gone to the north to retrieve 'chaste Urdu' and brought it back to Bombay again. By then, of course, Urdu had acquired a deeper communal tinge. In the Parsi theatre of the north, Urdu as a language of the stage was eventually countered by a strong movement toward the use of Hindi beginning with the dramas of Betab and Radheshyam in the early twentieth century.

Meanwhile Gujarati playwriting continued in Bombay. Dramatists like the Kabra brothers were active through the 1890s, and their plays were performed by the major Parsi companies in Bombay. The popularity of Gujarati seems to have continued unimpaired by the burgeoning of Urdu-language drama, although its influence waned in the traveling Parsi theatre that moved outside of Bombay. Eventually, the Parsi theatre within Bombay faced a challenge from a distinct Gujarati theatre that sprang from the same roots. Increasingly, Gujarati as a language was claimed by a predominantly Hindu Gujarati-speaking populace, and the locus of intellectual authority on matters of Gujarati language and literature shifted from Bombay to the towns and cities of Gujarat.

Appendix

A. Published Gujarati Plays Cited

All plays were published in Bombay.

'Delta.' 1876. *Romyo ane julyat*. Fort Printing Press. 88 pp. 1 p. Preface, trans. Samira Sheikh.

Framroj, Kharsedji Bamanji. 1871. *Jehanbakhsh ane gulrukhsar*. Alfred Printing Press. 122 pp. 2 pp. Preface, trans. Samira Sheikh.

Kabra, Kaikhushro Navroji. 1869. *Bejan ane manijeh*. Ashkara Press. 105 pp. 8 pp. Preface, trans. Samira Sheikh.

—. 1870. *Jamshed*. Ashkara Press. 129 pp. 8 pp. Preface, trans. Samira Sheikh.

Khori, Edalji Jamshedji. 1870. *Rustam ane sohrab*. Ashkara Press. 116 pp. 7 pp. Preface, trans. Samira Sheikh.

B. Published Urdu Plays Cited

All plays were published in Bombay unless otherwise noted.

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- . 1889. *Ali baba o chahal qazzaq, urf pasandida-e afaq*. Urdu script. Meerut. Reprinted in Imtiaz Ali Taj (ed.), *Urdu ka klasiki adab*, vol. 10 (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1971), 11–86. 2 pp. Preface, trans. Kathryn Hansen.
- . 1910 [1890]. *Shakuntala*. Urdu script. Aligarh. Reprinted in Taj, vol. 10, 205–304. 2 pp. Preface, trans. Kathryn Hansen.
- ‘Aram,’ Nasarvanji Mehrvanji Khansaheb. 1872? *Benazir Badremunir*. Reprinted in Taj (ed.), vol. 3, 15–55, no preface.
- . 1872. *Hatim tai*. Orig. by E. J. Khori. Guj. script. Apakhtyar Press. 96 pp. Transcribed and reprinted in Taj (ed.), vol. 2, 189–341. 1 p. Preface, trans. Kathryn Hansen.
- . 1872. *Nurjahan*. Orig. by E. J. Khori. Guj. script. Apakhtyar Press. 52 pp. Transcribed and reprinted in Taj (ed.), vol. 2, 1–146. 1 p. Preface, trans. Sunil Sharma, Samira Sheikh, Kathryn Hansen.
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- ‘Raunaq,’ Munshi Mahmud Miyan. 1880. *Anjam-i ulfat*. Guj. script. Alliance Printing Press, 42 pp. 1 p. Preface, trans. Sunil Sharma and Kathryn Hansen.

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- vol. 5 1969 *Raunaq ke drame*
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