READING CULTURE: THE MARGINALISATION OF BHOJPURI

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I

Literature, in the ordinary sense of the term, refers to creative expression in a written medium. Such a definition of literature does not hold either in the case of Bhikhari Thakur's works[1] or for Bhojpuri literature to which it belongs. Bhojpuri is one of the forty-nine mother tongues subsumed under Hindi (Census data, 2001).[2] The literary canon of Hindi comprises texts from the oral[3] as well as the written traditions of these languages and operates in a dense multi-lingual context. The case of Hindi is a particularly compelling one for a definition of what constitutes literature. Of the large number of languages and their traditions covered under Hindi, only some, like Braj, Awadhi and Maithili, have a written literary tradition that is not of recent origin, along with an oral tradition that runs parallel to it. The rest of the languages have vibrant oral traditions, which may or may not have been transcribed. Some, like Bhojpuri have, apart from oral and transcribed literature, a written literary canon[4] of recent origin and a nascent corpus of criticism written in Bhojpuri and Hindi. It is to the modern period of Bhojpuri literature that Bhikhari Thakur's works belong. Most critics apply to Bhojpuri literature, the scheme of periodisation followed in Hindi literature: some, like Manager Pandey whose views have been given below, offer an alternative scheme.

Questions raised tentatively during the early years of the publication of *Sarasvati*[5] about the relationship of the '*boli*s' (or dialects) with the newly standardised Hindi under which they were submerged, have of late, mutated into a call for an independent consideration of their literary context, as in the case of Bhojpuri. Manager Pandey calls attention to how the fact of Kabir's mother tongue–Banarasi boli, that is, Bhojpuri—has been systematically and consistently eclipsed in Hindi criticism: "*The uncertainty of Hindi writers and critics about the*

language of Kabir is extremely peculiar. The disparity lies in the fact that on the one hand Kabir's language is described as a medley, while on the other, as saintly. Kabir was illiterate. He lived in the company of saints. He travelled a lot. That is why his poetry shows the influence of many dialects. On the other hand, his poetry has been the folk-poetry of the entire North India. It spread across the lives of people through the voices of various languages. The dialect which adopted it influenced it instinctively. In this process also, Kabir's poetry assimilated the influences of many dialects. *However, in spite of all this, he has his own language in which he has written poetry. He has clearly stated, 'My language is eastern'. Which means that, Kabir's poetry is Bhojpuri poetry. It is not as if Shyam Sunder Das and Ramchandra Shukla did not know the name and form of Bhojpuri, they called it Bihari or Purbi dialect and passed on their uncertainty to the readers and confused them. If the history of Bhojpuri literature is to be written following the mode of history of Hindi literature, then 'Ritikal' is to be introduced into it, which does not exist in Bhojpuri poetry. Bhojpuri poetry is primarily folk-poetry, it does not have formalistic poetry associated with the courtly culture. The tradition of devotional poetry in Bhojpuri is found till the19th century and from within it modern poetry develops.*"[6]

One only needs to take a look at a book by Shyamsundar Das,[7] *Hindi Bhasha ka Vikas* (1924) to realise the merit of Manager Pandey's argument. The use of the term 'Bihari' for Bhojpuri by Shyamsundar Das is not justified, given the fact that he was from Banaras and the local language of Banaras is a variation of Bhojpuri. However, he misleadingly confines Bhojpuri to Bihar. This is of critical importance as it is related to the obfuscation of the fact that, in all probability, Banarasi boli, a variation of Bhojpuri, would have been Kabir's mother tongue. It is on this ground that Kabir is claimed as the first poet of Bhojpuri. Manager Pandey's argument lays bare the contradictions inherent in the literary sphere of Hindi: it calls for a revision that needs to stress Hindi's multifocality.

A complex relationship exists between the oral and written traditions in the Hindi literary sphere. Hindi's claim to represent the forty-nine mother tongues rests fundamentally on a dynamic interface between the oral and the written traditions. In order to fully appreciate this point, one has to remember that 'literary texts' circulate orally, as Tulsidas' epic *Ramcharitmanas* does, outside Awadhi-speaking areas, and that the dohas of the unlettered Kabir were committed to script in different regions of the north, after he had passed away. Kabir's dohas continue to circulate orally, having become a part and parcel of everyday life, with little concern for

whether they are authentic or not, as long as they are apt in a particular context. Bhikhari Thakur's familiarity with Kabir and Tulsi, his understanding of the concepts of '*nirgun*' and '*sagun*', grew out of a dynamic interaction between these oral and written traditions. It is in this larger multilingual literary context of Hindi that Bhojpuri literature and Bhikhari Thakur's works are located. The emergence of 'literature' such as that of Bhojpuri, apart from urging us to reconsider categories of 'literature', 'literacy', 'oral' and 'written', must also be seen as part of a larger democratic process in which all the mother tongues have become legitimate 'areas' of study in their own right instead of serving as 'catchment' areas for languages under which they are subsumed.

Having briefly mapped the relationship between Hindi and Bhojpuri along the written–oral/oral–written continuum, and the literary field in which Bhojpuri and its literature are located, I will now discuss the demise of the Kaithi script and the creation of 'illiteracy' in Bihar.

II

Little would Bhikhari Thakur have known that his was among the last generations to use the Kaithi script in which he had taught himself to write. This knowledge and resource was soon to be made redundant by the concerted efforts that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century to promote Khadi Boli Hindi in the Devanagari script.[8] While few will doubt the wisdom of, and the need for a standardised script/scripts and a language for use in the larger public domain, the promotion of Hindi in Devanagari at the cost of the local traditions of literacy was to have grave consequences for not just Bhojpuri, but perhaps all the mother tongues, the 'bolis', subsumed under Hindi, which used scripts that were different from it.[9] The complex web of factors that fixed script to language—Persian for Urdu and Nagari for Hindi—and led eventually to Hindus identifying with 'Hindi' and Muslims with 'Urdu', has received attention for reasons other than its impact on literacy, which is the focus of the present analysis.

The likes of Bhikhari Thakur and others who lay outside the pale of institutional structures may not even have been counted among the 'literates': Bhikhari Thakur could read and write but was a school drop-out. Census figures then, as even now, do not give us data for those who can read but not write, a skill which, at least some seem to have, in the largely oral tradition of the 'bolis' of the Hindi region. Numerical ability by itself, an important form of literacy in rural areas even today, is of no value in census data unless it is backed by

alphabetical reading and writing skills.

While these are yardsticks that can be refined for a more accurate reflection of 'literacy', the damage caused by the loss of the Kaithi script to the Hindi region and Bihar, in particular, has never been factored in the assessment of its educational development or rather, the lack of it.

Coupled with the irretrievable loss of script is the fact that Hindi, and not the mother tongues or 'bolis', was made the medium of instruction even at the primary level and remains so even today. Consequently, the Hindi region has lagged behind in terms of educational development, one of the major indexes of development.

It appears that the campaign for promotion of Nagari was not confined to UP and Bihar alone. The 'Modhi' script in use in Maharashtra was also pitted against Nagari/Devnagari and found wanting. The January 1914 issue of the journal *Saraswati,* under the editorial column "Vividh-Vishay" carries an article "Modhi Banaam Devanagari Lipi":[10] what emerges from this article is a homogenising agenda that seems to have gone hand in hand with the promotion of Devanagari. It may be recalled that the editor of *Saraswati* at this time was Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (1903-20), whose writings were instrumental in the standardisation of Hindi and the shaping of its literary canon. The article mentioned above begins by drawing a parallel between the situation in Bihar and Maharashtra on account of their scripts: "Just as Kaithi is prevalent in the courts of Bihar, so also in some areas of Maharashtra, the Modhi script is prevalent."[11] It is worth noting that Kaithi, the cursive form of Nagari, is recognised here as the script prevalent in Bihar and a problem for Nagari. This article provides yet another instance of how Nagari was being promoted at the cost of scripts prevalent in the local traditions of literacy. It predicts the demise of Modhi, thus: "For sometime now, the ills of the Modhi script have become unbearable for people of the Bombay province. They would like to wipe it off ("*uda dena chahate hai*") and bring in Baalbodh/Devanagari in its place."[12] Modhi was eventually 'wiped off' and in its place ("*uski jagah*") Devanagari was brought in.

A similar fate awaited Kaithi in Bihar. About Kaithi, Christopher R. King observes, "In the long run the Kaithi script lost out to Nagari but the outcome long remained in doubt. The pool of symbols from which the Hindi-speaking elite was to draw included some that proved unacceptable….Despite its derivation from the Nagari, Kaithi merited no more consideration than the Persian script…some symbols are rejected, not only because of their associations with the

opposing group, but also because of their inadequacy to embody the master symbol of the elite. Both Kaithi and Braj Bhasha, for different reasons, proved unacceptable to the Hindi-speaking elite."[13]

The discussion that follows has a special focus on Bihar and the rural milieu that facilitated Bhikhari Thakur's acquisition of the Kaithi script outside of institutional spaces. Kaithi continued to be in use in Bihar for much longer than in neighbouring UP whose literacy rate does not seem to have been as adversely impacted as that of Bihar. What has gone unnoticed in debates on the promotion of Hindi in Devanagari in which the 'Hindi–Urdu' conflict took centre-stage, is the fact that the complete neglect of the mother tongues in the Hindi region[14] may not only have impeded the growth of literacy but that the move to displace the mother tongues along with the script where it existed, made existing resources of literacy redundant.

Shortly after Independence, Hindi in Devanagari was adopted as the official language, through the Bihar Official Languages Act, 1950; in UP, it was adopted in 1951. Urdu figured in the Eighth Schedule[15], but like Hindi it was the language of the elite in Bihar and UP. Whether Hindu or Muslim, the Bhojpuri-speaking peasants living in villages were equally at a distance from Hindustani and its Hindi and Urdu variants,[16] respectively. This distance also meant that the vocabulary of Bhojpuri was never divided along the Hindi–Urdu axis.[17] It is interesting to note that even as Hindustani began to split into 'Urdu' and 'Hindi',[18] the '*ghazal*' form[19] that was to gain wide acceptance among Bhojpuri composers and poets, made its entry in Bhojpuri literature through the works of Teg Ali Teg,[20] towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Hindi was made the official language of Bihar but it was not the mother tongue of any major language group, unlike in most other states. None of the mother tongues became a medium of instruction even though informally, these languages remained in use in the classroom in rural areas.[21] Bihar was thus negatively impacted in terms of both language and script. This double displacement of language and script proved such a body blow for Bihar's literacy that it has yet to recover from the damaging consequences of this policy. It continues to lag behind the rest of the states in terms of literacy: the 2011 Census shows the highest literacy rate for a state (Kerala) to be at 94 per cent while Bihar has the lowest at just 63.82 per cent, against the national average of 74 per cent.[22] In 1951, when the average literacy rate was 18.33 per cent, the literacy rate in Bihar stood at 13.49 per cent.[23]

While this may not be the sole factor responsible for Bihar's

educational backwardness, can Bihar's abysmal literacy figures be delinked from the fact that its existing resources for literacy, like that of the mother tongues and the widely used Kaithi that was used to write them, were displaced and the script wiped out in the course of the nationalist movement that promoted Hindi in Devanagari in the region?

A study of George A. Grierson's writings suggest that in Bihar, the prevalent local script Kaithi, rather than Devanagari—of which Kaithi was a variant—could well have continued to be used to write the mother tongues Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili, rather than Khadi Boli Hindi. He noted in the dedication to *A Handbook to the Kaithi Character*[24] (1881) that Sir Ashley Eden, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, "by first introducing Kayathi as the sole official character of our law-courts, has done more for Bihar than a decade of legislation."[25] Grierson made this observation not just as an administrator but also as a trained linguist. His observations in the 'Preface' go beyond his brief as an administrator and show his concern over the imposition of Hindi in Bihar. He points out how alien Hindi was to most Biharis and writes, "The numerous gross grammatical blunders in documents, most of which are written by fairly educated men, may surprise those who do not know that book Hindi, and *a fortiori* court-Hindi, is a foreign language to all who use it in Bihar. The native language of every Bihari (excepting those born and bred in the large towns) is as different from Hindi as French is from Italian; and the little they ever knew of that language has been learnt after several years of painful training in the Government higher schools, and most of that little forgotten before they had any occasion to use it. I think a perusal of the documents herewith presented will appear to be a sufficient answer to those who oppose the substitution of one of the Bihar languages for Hindi as a court-language, on the ground that the latter is already in possession, and should not, be disturbed except for very strong reason. Unless the ungrammatical jargon of these petitions be called Hindi or Urdu, Hindi is no more in possession than Norman-French was in possession as the language of England, at a time when the lawyers spoke what they called Norman-French at the law courts. The matter, no doubt, is different in the North-West Provinces, west of Banaras; for there Hindi may fairly claim to be the vernacular of the country ; but it is not, never was, and can never be, the vernacular of Bihar. History and the laws of philology alike decided against it and experience has shown how Norman-French never became the vernacular of England."[26]

The number of 'those born and bred in the large towns' would

have been insignificant, considering that Bihar was overwhelmingly rural. Less than 7 per cent of the population lived in urban areas, according to the Census of Bihar, 1951. Hindi, it is clear from this account, was not a language familiar to most Biharis then. A stronger case was never again to be made for 'the Bihar languages' and the 'kayathi' script, which was used to write all its languages. Yet Grierson's statement rings with irony for he failed to see the contradictions of colonial rule, the nationalist tide it engendered and the impact, in turn, of these on an uninterrupted and organic development of the Indian languages, which, caught in the vortex of change, would not follow the pattern he so passionately outlined.

The 'Kayathi/kaithi' script was so prevalent that it was available even in remote, rural areas like that of Kutubpur, Bhikhari Thakur's village. The literate among the population may have been at least marginally more than what the census figures suggest because there existed informal channels through which literacy could circulate. Bhikhari Thakur's education is a case in point. He tells us in his brief autobiography that he was a school dropout, having gone to school for just a year. It was only later that he taught himself to read and write. He asked a 'baniya' boy by the name of Bhagwan to teach him. Soon he was able to write using the kaithi script. A sample of his handwriting in Kaithi is appended to the *Bhikhari Thakur Rachanavali*.[27]

As a self-taught person who valued literacy, Bhikhari Thakur seems to have been particularly sensitive to the waning away of a familiar mould in which indigenous literacy had been cast. The refrain of "*Rama gati dehu sumati*" lies scattered in his writing. This line is a prayer that had to be written in Kaithi as a part of an initiation rite with which every Hindu child began his/her education.[28] Addressed to the deity Rama, it translates as "Rama! Grant a good mind and progress." Such was his love of learning that he even records the festival of 'Chauth Chanda',[29] which used to fall on the same day as the better known festival 'Ganesh Chaturthi'. Ganesh, famous as the scribe of *Mahabharat* and the God of learning, was worshipped on this day. Annually, on this occasion, the pathshala-guru was honoured with gifts of cash and kind as he went from house to house in a merry procession with his young students singing and beating their '*thali*s'(plates) to announce their arrival.[30] James Hagen Ray, in his study of colonial education in Patna district and social change (1811-1951) observes of this system, "Pathshala education was not uniform, nor was it organized by an outside governmental authority, but rather….it arose in each case out of local needs which often

came from only a few families in a locale. The term pathshala as used by Buchanan was actually a general category that included a variety of 'schools' reflecting the skills of particular gurus and the needs of students. A common feature in this category of education was the use of vernacular languages. The scripts taught rarely included Sanskrit, but rather the emphasis was on the vernacular scripts of Nagari and its short-hand form, Kaithi…."[31]

In parts of what is now UP, Kaithi was made obsolete in 1900 when a resolution for the adoption of Nagari as the official provincial script of NWP&O was issued by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Antony Macdonnell. He issued this resolution without heeding the advice of his Board of Revenue for the inclusion of Kaithi. In this case, it was the colonial administration that brought in an 'only Nagari' policy, inducing obsolescence in an existing resource. This was the culmination of an administrative policy whose damaging effects had been noted as early as 1884 in the *Education Commission: Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee*: "Kaithi was the popular character not of Behar only, but likewise of Oudh and the North-Western Provinces. Now, in devising their system of popular Elementary schools, the authorities of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh had entirely discarded the Kaithi and adopted the Devanagari…What was less generally known was this, that it was the complete expulsion of Kaithi from the village records (Patwari papers*) that led to the weaking of the Indigenous schools* of those parts, and the easy substitution… of the Hulkabundi [Government] schools in their place."[32]

But this "weaking of the Indigenous schools" was of little consequence to the promoters of Devnagari for Hindi, who continued their campaign in the twentieth century. This agenda too, like the one against Modhi discussed earlier, is clearly visible in the columns of *Saraswati*. In the February 1918 issue of *Saraswati,* for instance, a clear anti-Kaithi stance and an unease with its popularity in Bihar emerges in the following protest against the absence of Nagari on a one-rupee currency note issued in 1917: "We fail to understand why the government refuses to accommodate this script [nagari] on currency notes. This Kaithi script—how popular is this script, one wonders. In Bihar, is Nagari also not prevalent? What harm could possibly come, if in its place, Nagari were to be substituted. …Arabic and Persian have come to us with coins from the time of the Mughals. Let those be: let Devanagari be brought into the space being occupied by some script less widely in circulation (*alp-prachalit*)."[33] What is interesting here is the positioning of Devanagari, not as a rival of the 'Persian–Arabic script—identified as an inheritance from

the Mughal past—but as its equal in the present. Kaithi was rejected, as King points out, because it was inadequate "to embody the master symbol of the elite".[34] John Beames, the first British administrator to identify Bhojpuri (1868) had described Kaithi, as "strikingly similar to the Gujarati character, so much so that a work printed in that language can be read by a native of Chumparun."[35] The obvious point to note here is that Kaithi is today a dead script; but it could have survived—like the Gujarati it resembles and the Nagari whose cursive form it was—and facilitated the growth of literacy in the Hindi region.

Notes

1. All references to Bhikhari Thakur's works are from Nagendra Prasad Singh ed. *Bhikhari Thakur Rachanavali*, Patna: Bihar Rashtra Bhasha Parishad, 2005. Henceforth, this text, in which all his works have been collected, will be referred to as the *Rachnavali*.
2. For further details, see http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/ Census_Data_ Online/ Language/ Statement1.aspx
3. For instance, Shyam Manohar Pandey's transcription of a single performance in Bhojpuri by a Kewat or boatman of the epic narrative Lorikayan is published under the title, *Hindi Oral Epic: Lorikayan* (Allahabad: Sahitya Bhavan, 1987).
4. Bhojpuri literature, carries distinct marks of orality and the performative, even when written down. A good example of such a form is Bhikhari Thakur's play *Bidesia*. Prose, verse and song combine with music to create spirited dialogues: *Bidesia* has more than 70 songs in different genres, apart from several verses in the *doha*, *chaupai* and *chubola* forms. The term 'folk' is used to describe such theatre in English literary criticism. Perhaps a more apt word for this theatre would be '*lok*'-drama/theatre. 'Lok' is an indigenous word from the *Natyashastra* in which the terms used to describe the two streams of classical and 'folk' theatre are '*natyadharmi'* and '*lokdharmi'*. Some of the meanings of the word 'lok' are "society, people…mankind" (*Bhargava Dictionary: Hindi-Angrezi*, Banaras: 1946, p. 967). The word 'lok', carries connotations of the domain of the common people and is better equipped, in the Indian context, than the word 'folk' to carry suggestions of the democratic impulse that constitutes 'folk' theatre. Interestingly, both 'lok' and 'theatre' are etymologically related to the act of 'seeing'.
5. This monthly journal, started in January 1900, was published by the Indian Press, Allahabad. The early volumes, right through the first two decades of the twentieth century, under the editorship of Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (1903-1920), bear witness to the promotion of Hindi as a cultural project that involved the construction of a literary corpus in Khadi Boli Hindi in the Nagari script. A Bhojpuri poem by Heera Dom also finds representation in a 1914 issue: a few years later, this poem was to be recalled as an instance of Hindi's inclusive agenda whereby it had "even included a poem in the 'rustic' ('gawaru') Bhojpuri" (Sarasvati, February 1918, p. 99.) The translated line is as follows: "*Usne to gawaru bhojpuri boli tak mein likhi gayi kavita ka prakashan kiya hai.*"
6. Manager Pandey, "Truth Fears No Test" in *Indian Literature,* Vol. 195, No. 1,

January–February 2000 (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, p. 17, translated by Anjla Upadhyay. The italics are mine. Manager Pandey's argument that Bhojpuri was never a court language and hence a different set of literary parameters has to be applied to it, needs to be noted. Udai Narain Tiwari in *The Origin and Development of Bhojpuri,* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1960), was the first to argue on linguistic grounds about the embeddedness of Bhojpuri in the language of the authorised versions of Kabir's dohas.

7. Shyamsundar Das (1875-1945), one of the founding members of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha (1893), and its leading activist, was also mentor to Ramchandra Shukla (1884-1941), whose *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihaas* (1929) is the first systematic history of Hindi literature. Shyamsundar Das uses Grierson's term 'Bihari' for the three languages of Bihar—Bhojpuri, Maithili and Magahi—and writes, "The Bihari language has three *bolis*—Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri." This is a translation of the following line: "*Bihari bhasha mein Maithili, Magahi aur Bhojpuri teen boliyan hain*", in *Hindi Bhasha ka Vikas* (Allahabad: 1924, rpt. Rachana Prakashan, 1971), p. 22. The classificatory categories of 'Inner', 'Outer' and 'Mediate', for which he uses corresponding terms such as 'antarang', 'bahirang' and 'madhyavarti', respectively, are also based on Grierson's classification of the Indo-Aryan languages. However, Grierson's use of the term 'Bihari', for purposes of classification as a trained linguist, is to be differentiated from the hegemonising thrust of the promotion of Hindi, which prompts the amnesia that Shyamsundar Das and others, in using the term 'Bihari', are being charged with by Manager Pandey as quoted in the main text.
8. The Nagari Pracharini Sabha founded in 1893 in Banaras and the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan founded in 1910 in Allahabad were the two voluntary organisations instrumental in propagating the use of Khadi Boli Hindi in the Devanagari script.
9. This would include scripts like Mahajani more prevalent in the western parts of the Hindi region. The vast area covered by the Hindi region stretches from Bihar through UP and Haryana to Rajasthan and includes Madhya Pradesh to the south. The question of script, as we will see, spilled over into other regions like the then Bombay Province, the present day Maharashtra.
10. "Sarasvati", January 1914, p. 55.
11. Ibid. The following lines have been translated, "*Bihar ki kacheheriyoan mein jaise kaithi lipi ka prachar hai waise hi Bambai prant mein kahin kahin modhi lipi ka prachaar hai.*"
12. Ibid. The following lines have been translated, "*Modhi ki buraiyan ab kuch din se Bambai prant waloan ko asahya ho gayee hain. Wei uski jagah baalboodh arthat devnagari lipi ko dekar use uda dena chahate hain.*"
13. Christopher R. King, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India,* New Delhi: OUP, 1999, pp. 65 and 69.
14. The vast area covered by Hindi stretches from Bihar through Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to Rajasthan and includes Madhya Pradesh to its south .The question of script, as already discussed, spilled over into other regions like that of Maharashtra, the then Bombay Presidency.
15. Urdu was among the fourteen languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
16. In Rahi Masoom Raza's *Adha Gaon* the Bhojpuri speaking Muslim residents of Gangauli village express their distance from the speech of Lucknow i.e. Urdu. The difference between Hindi and Bhojpuri can be gauged from Bhikhari

Thakur's strained use of Hindi and his obvious ease with his mother tongue Bhojpuri whose sweetness he compares with '*gur*' or jaggery.

17. It is worth noting that not only does Bhikhari Thakur draw freely upon words rooted in Persian-Urdu but that in the play *Beti-Viyog* (*The Daughter's Lament*) in *Bhikhari Thakur Rachanavali* (Patna: Bihar Rashtra Bhasha Parishad, 2005) p. 73, he underlines the values of "*ekbaal, izzat, yakeen, ehbaat*" (well-being, dignity/ respect, trust, a woman's good fortune) in the exposition scene: this consists of a direct address to the audience to remind them about "*pinda-daan*" in Gaya (ancestral rites performed in Gaya by Hindus) and the significance of "*sindhora*", the wooden container for the vermilion used in Hindu marriages in Bihar and other parts of north India. The juxtaposition of Hindu rituals and an Urdu vocabulary makes the passage memorable. While he may have consciously, as a playwright, drawn upon an Urdu vocabulary as a substitute for the collocation of 'Hindu-Musalmaan', used as a common mode of address to an audience of different religious persuasions, these words would most certainly have been familiar to all as simply 'Bhojpuri' words, having been assimilated into its vocabulary.
18. For a detailed account, see 1) Christopher R. King, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India,* New Delhi: OUP, 1994, rpt.1999, 2) Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism,* New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001, rpt. 2007, and 3) Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi,* Delhi: OUP, 1984.
19. The '*ghazal*' is a classical poetic form that consists of rhyming couplets and a refrain, all of which share the same metre. It has its origins in the Arabic panegyric '*quasida*' from the pre-Islamic sixth century. Its theme is usually the pain caused by loss or separation in love.
20. Teg Ali Teg was from Banaras. His well-known work, *Badmashdarpan,* was published in 1895.
21. Udai Narain Tiwari reports in *The Origin and Development of Bhojpuri,* (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 1960, rpt. 2001, p. xxvii), that "The oral explanation of difficult portions in Hindi and Urdu is frequently made in class in Bhojpuri when teachers and students both are Bhojpuri speakers." Even today it is not unusual for communication to take place in Bhojpuri in schools in rural areas.
22. http://mospi.nic.in/Mospi_New/upload/man_and_women/Chapter%203.pdf
23. Gov.bih.nic.in/Profile/CensusStats-03.htm and infochangeindia.org/education/statistics/literacy-rates-in-india-1951-2001.html
24. George A. Grierson, *A Handbook to the Kaithi Character,* Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1881.
25. Ibid., p. iv.
26. Ibid., pp. v-vi.
27. *Rachanavali*, p. 325.
28. This explanation has been given to me by many people of the earlier generation who received their primary education in village *pathshala*s. The corresponding institution for Muslims was the village '*maktab*'.
29. James Ray Hagen in his study of colonial education in the Patna district between 1811- 1951 writes about this festival: " The most important occasion, the gifts from which could sustain the guru [teacher] and his family for several months, was the fourth day of the light half of the moon in the month of Bhadan (August-September) when Ganesh the god of wisdom, was worshipped

by students" (Indigenous Society, the Political Economy, and Colonial Education in Patna District: A History of Social Change from 1811 To 1951 in Gangetic North India. *University of Virginia* Ph.D 1981), p. 260. Bhikhari Thakur's Chauth Chanda composition is a rare account of primary education as it existed before colonial education disrupted it. Hagan evaluates the effects of colonial education as negative mainly because it displaced the indigenous cultural meaning of education.(Ibid.), p. 459.

30. I got these details from my mother Prema Prasad (retired Principal, Maharani Usharani Girls High School, Dumraon), who was born in 1941. She received her primary education in the Kalyanpur village pathshala, near Bihiya. Till at least the 1940s, this system seems to have served the village community.
31. James Hagan Ray, "Indigenous Society, the Political Economy, and Colonial Education in Patna District: A History of Social Change from 1811 to 1951 in Gangetic North India."(Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1981, pp. 260-262).
32. This is an extract from the *Report* as quoted in Christopher R. King, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India"* (Delhi: OUP,1994),pp., 83-84. King explains the different policies followed by the government in different regions as being dictated by administrative needs. In Oudh, landlords continued to appoint *patwaris who* wrote in Kaithi. *Patwaris* in Bihar too, carried on using Kaithi: in Bihar the government did not need *patwari* papers as land revenue was governed by the Permanent Settlement. The italics are mine to draw attention to long-term consequences, in the form of low literacy rates in the Hindi region. For further details on the issue of promotion of Hindi in Devanagari, see Christopher R. King, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India*, pp. 126-164.
33. This is a translation of an excerpt from an article, "Ek Rupaye ke Note se Devanagari ka Bahishkar" (The Ouster of Devanagari from the One Rupee Note) in the editorial column, "Vividh-Vishay" in Saras*vati,* February 1918, p. 99.
34. Christopher R. King, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India.* New Delhi: OUP, 1999, p. 69.
35. John Beames, "Notes on the Bhojpuri Dialect of Hindi spoken in Western Behar" in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* Vol. III, 1868, p. 483. Beams was the then magistrate of Champaran.