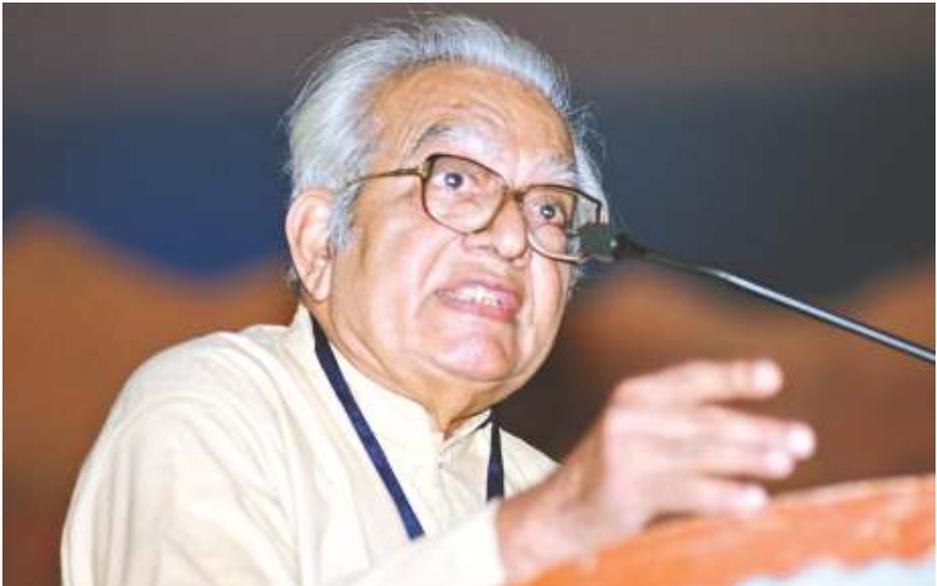


Dr. Motilal Jotwani Ph.D

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The preservation of Sindhi language and culture, encountered several peaks and valleys in India. Soon after partition, inspite of facing financial difficulties, our writers brought out inspiring literature to breathe new life into the depressing atmosphere. The approval of two scripts by the government and non-inclusion of Sindhi in the Constitution witnessed many protests by our writers, which is recorded in history.

*It was only after about 20 years of independence, that the Sindhi language got due recognition from the government. It was expected that after due recognition Sindhi language would prosper but that did not happen. Not only that but our mother tongue started disappearing from our own homes. We reached such a critical point in life that we had to stress upon our children the fact that we are 'Sindhis' and our mother tongue is 'Sindhi'. Why did this happen? What was the reason for this? To discuss this we meet today -
Dr. Motilal Jotwani.*

Jawhrani: Let me begin by asking you about the condition of Sindhi Society and culture in India post partition.

Motilal: The partition was both a boon as well as a curse. That the country was divided, was a great curse. That we came to this vast land of India was in a way, a great boon. There back in Sindh, comparatively much smaller to independent India, we were as if restricted and contained, although we had relationships with India and were also a part of undivided India. Here we have great opportunities and we excel in each and every field.

Jawhrani: But were the conditions, when we arrived, in line with the promises made to us while leaving our mother land?

Motilal: You must realize that in the beginning, there were the basic questions regarding food, clothing and shelter which had to be addressed on top priority basis.

Jawhrani: And because of that, our language, literature, culture took a backseat?

Motilal: What you are saying is true, but here we came into a vast land. Had we been there, we would have been in a different atmosphere altogether. We know what kind of atmosphere is prevailing on the other side of the border. Today, the fact that we are moving along with the whole world, is because we came here to India.

Jawhrani: From which part of Sindh do you hail?

Motilal: I was born in Rohri, Sukkur, and my father worked in Karachi.

Jawhrani: What was your father's occupation?

Motilal: My father was a teacher. He was a renowned teacher in KG Khilnani High School in Karachi - Sindh. There we used to stay in a rented flat belonging to a Muslim.

Jawhrani: Didn't you have your own flat or property in Sindh?

Motilal: We had in Rohiri - Sukkur, but not in Karachi. Our landlord in Karachi was Allah Bux. And on 6th January 1948, when the riots took place, the 'Muhajirs' who had entered Karachi, demanded that all 'Kafirs' should be thrown out. But thanks to our landlord, when they came to our door step, he told them that there was no Kafir there, and those who were staying there, had already left the day before. I learnt my first lesson in Sufism, at that time.

Jawhrani: After leaving Sindh, where did you settle in India? And how did

you start your life afresh?

Motilal: We first arrived at Bombay. My father got a job in Malad. Then we moved to Devlali and from Devlali to Dhulia. Thereafter, my father got an offer of headmaster at Baba Nebraj School in Delhi. My father accepted it and became the headmaster of that school. I was about eleven and a half to twelve years old at the time of partition when we arrived here in India.

Jawhrani: How did you enter this teaching profession?

Motilal: It is usually a trend, that the son follows in his father's footsteps. In the matriculation examination, I stood first in the whole of Delhi state. At that time, there was an offer that after completing matriculation, anyone could do the basic teachers training course. So first I became a primary teacher, then a secondary teacher, and thereafter started teaching at college and then with the grace of God, I became associate professor of Indo-Muslim culture department at the Harvard University in America. I remain deeply connected to the education and literature fields and that too at different levels.

Jawhrani: Since you have been connected to the education field, let us know through what phase is the education in Sindhi language passing now and what were the conditions of the same in the olden days.

Motilal: As mentioned earlier, in those days the basic problems were related to food, clothing and shelter and our Sindhi Culture, Sindhi Literature and Sindhi language could not be given priority.

Jawhrani: Hasn't teaching of Sindhi language in schools also been stopped?

Motilal: After the basic problems of food, clothing and shelter were solved, we started paying attention to other problems faced by our Sindhi society, but by then I think, it was too late.

Jawhrani: Sindh played a major role in the freedom movement. Can you tell us which Sindhi personalities participated in this historic struggle?

Motilal: In those days, there were Congress leaders who participated in the freedom struggle in a big way. Jairamdas, Prof. Ghanshyam and Dr. Choithram were considered as the 'Trimurti' of the freedom struggle in Sindh. But when the Muslim league was formed, even the muslims realized and saw for themselves that their leader, G M Syed was infact a Congress leader, who considered Mahatma

Gandhi as his idol and inspiration, but then he went and joined Jinnah. We can definitely say that Hindus as well as Muslims, both participated in the freedom struggle. In the Muslim league, in the beginning there was Allah Bux, who was the chief minister of Sindh. He also became a martyr. One can write a whole novel on the life of Allah Bux.

Jawhrani: As you have said that Hindus as well as Muslims, both participated in the freedom struggle, but later on there were some differences between the two, was it because of caste and creed?

Motilal: It definitely was because of caste and creed. Jinnah Sahib on the banks of the river Ravi, propagated the two nation theory - that Hindus were different with different culture and Muslims were different with different culture. Hence, the country should be divided on this theory of two nations. It is said that what Jinnah propagated about the two nation theory was actually initiated by G. M. Syed. But the important point to be noted here is that after the partition of the country, it was G. M. Syed who himself proclaimed that he had committed a big mistake.

Jawhrani: Some say that many were murdered because of G. M. Syed, while others deny this. Could you throw some light on this fact?

Motilal: First of all, I can confirm that this did happen, specially during the Idgaah movement in Sukkur. So much so that even our great saint, Bhagat Kanwar Ram also became a martyr during the same Idgaah movement. Even Hassaram Pamnani - the MLA, was murdered in Rohiri. During those times, from 1939-40 to 1945, the circumstances were such that it became very difficult for Hindus to stay there and survive.

Jawhrani: And because of that they had to quit their mother land. Such great sacrifices, and such a huge contribution of Sindh, in the freedom struggle. In spite of all this, when the Constitution of India was being drafted, the Sindhi language was not included in it, although the fact is that many of the members of the Constituent Assembly were Sindhis. Why so?

Motilal: This is true. There was a straightforward method followed by them. They stressed on the fact of regional languages. They said that Sindhi language does not belong to any region and hence cannot be included in the Constitution.

Jawhrani: But for that we were not at fault, we were not given any region or land.

Motilal: This is your point of view. But as per the Constituent Assembly, Sindhis were scattered in different regions and constituencies and did not belong to any one region.

Jawhrani: Did our Sindhi members at that time, raise the question that Sindhi should also be included as a language in the Constitution?

Motilal: The Sindhi members who were there at that time had probably not even thought about it. They had thought that in this new country we will be facing new and truthful leaders. And if our language does not belong to any region, so be it. They were the true followers of Mahatma Gandhi. But later, when they realized that since we will be staying here in India, our language should be included in the constitution, they took steps to have the Sindhi language included in the Constitution.

Jawhrani: Another debate that arose at that time was in the matter of recognition of two scripts. What was the reason behind that?

Motilal: It was the same thing, that since we have come into a big nation, which already had its various rites and rituals, its various scripts, and we were spread all over in different states, like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab etc. where Devnagiri is the accepted script, we should also follow suit. After all, even Punjabi is written in two scripts, Gurmukhi and Devnagiri.

Jawhrani: You mean to say that just as the river after meeting the ocean loses its identity; in the same manner even we had to lose our identity?

Motilal: No, its not like that. The ocean is great by itself. Yet each and every droplet of the vast ocean remembers the river, so its not like what you are saying.

Jawhrani: Here we were completely forgotten, ignored.

Motilal: No, it was not so. Our language was included in the constitution, though it took time. You are aware, that on 10th April 1967, our Sindhi language was included in the constitution.

Jawhrani: To whom would you give this credit?

Motilal: In fact, it is because of us, litterateurs. Amongst those are Gobind Malhi, Kirat Babani, L. H. Ajwani (who prepared the draft). But

behind all this there was lots of politics. Firstly, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sahib introduced this bill, but then said we won't get a majority in the Parliament. Hence he withdrew this bill, and the bill was put forth by Shri Jairamdas, since he had the backing of Smt. Indira Gandhi. It was due to the support of Smt. Indira Gandhi that we were successful. Infact, you can say it was due to the efforts of Shri Jairamdas we succeeded. Also, Shri Ram Jethmalani contributed in a big way, specially, in the matter of Sindhi Script. He said that our script is mainly Arabic. But then the verdict came that both scripts were accepted.

Jawhrani: Recently, the issue of removing the word 'Sindh' from the National Anthem and the issue of 'Sindhu Darshan' was raked up. Are these issues justified?

Motilal: I would call these issues insignificant with no meaning.

Jawhrani: But doesn't this affect our sentiments?

Motilal: If an individual has got any grudge against any caste.... then....

Jawhrani: But here it is not only the individual alone, he is supported by the government.

Motilal: No, its not so, the government is not supporting him. The government said that Sindh denotes not a political but a cultural entity and cannot be deleted. In the national anthem, the word Sindh would remain as India is a multi-cultural nation. Now coming to the second part of the question, regarding 'Sindhu Darshan' in Leh, Ladhak, that did create a little problem, but ultimately that too was also resolved.

Jawhrani: It is seen that the greatest sacrifice has been made by the Sindhi society. It is just a petty matter, but if you go to see, that on the currency notes, the script of all the languages is included, but no Sindhi. In the Republic Day Parade, there is no participation of a Sindhi tableau, All this does create a feeling in our hearts of being considered as outcastes.

Motilal: You mean to say that we don't have all the rights of a 'first citizen'?

Jawhrani: I feel so, but you can elaborate more on this topic.

Motilal: I think we do have all rights of a 'first citizen' but need to safeguard and not be deprived of the same. For this, we must strive for political rights.

Jawhrani: Today, have the Sindhis in the government done justice to their community?

Motilal: Most of them, to some extent, have done fair justice. Take the examples of Shri Ram Jethmalani, then there is leader of the opposition Shri L K. Advani. Everyone in his own way, whether he is a litterateur, an artist or anyone else, has done justice. In fact I feel that all of us are doing justice to our cause. I feel that litterateurs are the masters of the word, masters in writing and the politicians are the masters of action. There is a relationship between words and action. For example, 'Anand Math' was written by a litterateur (Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay), and from that writing was born 'Azad Hind Fauj' (Indian National Army) with the efforts of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Jawhrani: Has such a revolution or awakening come forth due to the writings of our Sindhi writers?

Motilal: It will definitely come. And to some extent it has already happened, consequent to the work of Kirat, Gobind, Uttam, Dadi Popatti and others.

Jawhrani: We are deeply grateful for sharing your experiences and putting forth your views, more so for having traveled from Delhi for this discussion, inspite of your poor health. The youth of the community definitely stand to gain a lot.

Motilal: Thank you, Jawhraniji.