**Introduction**

This study is about the founding of an early twentieth century university and the role of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in founding this institution. It also examines the role of the politics of language and formation of religious identities in the creation of Benaras Hindu University, a denominational university. The founding of Aligarh Muslim University provides a point of comparison as it was also a sister university in the same province to cater to the needs of the Muslim community. The principle objective here had been to unveil the factors leading to the establishment of Benaras Hindu University. And within the university how there were debates around the educational curriculum, its development; the proposed medium of instruction; the place given to Hindi in the institution.

In colonial India, the creation of group identities was important for the articulation of political demands. Further, during a period of rapid social transition group identities were often threatened and there was an underlying attempt to protect the cultural integrity of new imagined communities. The formation of nation-states is a modern phenomenon that incorporated people of a region, culture and religion into a new identity. In the case of colonised nations, colonial education sensitised the educated elite of their rights. These elites coalesced into groups and organisations of like minded people bound together through symbols marking their identity. Groups created around linguistic or religious identities emerged that proved fissiparous within the emerging modern state. Ironically politics of language and identity played itself

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out in the creation of a university that was meant to be a liberal institution of higher learning.

Stuart Hall defines identities as the names given to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within narratives.¹ In the modern period it appears that the four most powerful identities have been created around race, class, nationality and sexuality. Groups and communities crystallising around such identities then are able to efficaciously articulate their political demands. According to John Rawls, social identities set men at odds and allow them to be guided by their prejudices.² As we shall see in colonial India Government jobs were highly prized amongst the literate population and language and religion were important poles around which identitarian politics played itself out.

One of the characteristic features of nineteenth century romanticism was the centrality accorded to the linkage between language, blood and religion. Linguistic classification went hand in hand with ethnology and in the words of H. H. Risley, 'language provided the most accurate index' of identity classification. During the period of colonial rule, the relation between the self and the other became very important and there were a number of oppositional pairs like, Aryan/Dravidian, Aryan/Muslims based on language that endowed nationalism with an agenda.³ For one in North India this served as a marker of religious identity. In the case of the Hindi-Urdu controversy it came to be that

Hindi written in Devanagari was the language of the Hindus and Urdu written in the Persian script was that of the Muslims. Language, in its new role was not just an element of culture but the culture.¹

Urdu in the mid-nineteenth century had come to acquire a precarious identity. The educated, irrespective of their religious background, were fluent in Urdu as it was the official language. At that time it had not acquired a religious identity since Hindus (Kayasthas, Kashmiri Brahmins and Khatris) spoke it fluently and the religious leaders of Hindu revivalist movements did not hesitate to speak in Urdu. (Arya Samajists frequently used it as it was the language understood by the Hindus of Panjab).² In Uttar Pradesh the Arya Samaj published two monthly periodicals or Arya Patrika in Urdu.³

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a section of Hindus in the United Provinces switched their lingua franca to Hindi and they identified it with their Hindu identity. They demanded that it be the medium of instruction for primary education, and this would become a medium for the cultural construction of Hindu identity. The newly educated Hindu elite realised the importance of their language and identity, and thus promoted the use of Hindi in courts and government offices. While Hindi was considered at the time as the language of the north region, it had Persian words and was written in Arabic script till the late nineteenth century. Orientalists like John Gilchrist and others

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popularised ‘Hindustani’ and ‘Urdu’ in order to insinuate the notion that they were actually two different languages, one of the Hindus and the other of the Muslims.¹ This controversy around language acquired a political turn when it became a bone of contention between Hindus and Muslims.² The controversy is very important as it explains how the seeds of communalism were sown during the formative stage of Indian nationalism.³

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who was the pioneer of the modern education among Muslims, openly denounced the pro-Hindi agitation on the grounds that: “the adoption of Hindi language would greatly injure educated Mussalmans.” This indicates that he was worried that the educated Muslims would loose government jobs and would also create a wedge between Hindus and the Muslims.⁴ He wrote: “Now I am convinced that the two communities will not be able to co-operate sincerely in any matter. It is only the beginning. In future I envisage opposition and conflict increasing day by day.”⁵ Similarly Bhartendu Harishchandra, Madan Mohan Malaviya and others played a very important role in promoting the course of Hindi. Malaviya promoted the use of the Hindi script in the law courts, and demanded primary education in this language in the

³ Scholars like Ram Gopal, David Lelyveld, R. Zakaria, W. W. Hunter, S. L. Gupta, Salil Mishra, Alok Rai, Amrit Rai, Francesca Orsini, Vasudha Dalmia, Krishna Kumar, John Zavos, Christopher King, Jyotindra Das Gupta, Beni Prasad, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Paul R. Brass, Ram Babu Saxena, Hafez Malik, N. S. Gorekar, Kenneth, W. Jones, Von Jurgen Lutt etc have described in details in their works about this language controversy and growth of communal politics which did not even spare the educational institutions and they became the breeding ground of such ideologies.
North Western Provinces of Agra and Oudh. He went on to prepare a memorandum and organised a deputation to Sir Antony McDonnell under the leadership of the Raja of Ayodhya. The purpose was to demand the need for the acceptance of Hindi as the court language. The battle for linguistic supremacy started taking a religious turn as it was thought that language was important to protect the identity of a religion. Thus we find that in 1900 a memorandum was submitted by a group of Muslims in defence of the Urdu language and Character. Sections of the Muslim elite had not come to terms with their loss of privilege as a ruling class while the ascendant Hindu professional class sought to revive an ancient glory.

The Hindi Sabhas sought to sensitisise Hindus to their culture and the glory of their religion. Through public speeches, debates, pamphlets etc the leaders of the Hindi movement glorified their past and sought to revive it. It attempted at times to imitate the Bengalis, who accepted modern English education; but on the other continued speaking in their mother tongue and kept their culture intact. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya tried to convince the government about the importance of the vernacular language as the medium of primary instruction. What was truly at stake were government jobs and to make them available to the Hindus.

1 Court Character and Primary education in the N-W Province and Oudh: Allahabad: Printed at Indian Press 1897; See also Malaviya, Madan Mohan 1966. Manifesto on Position of Urdu in India. New Delhi: no other publication details.
2 Deeni Talimi Council.1900. A defense of the Urdu Language and Character. Being a reply to the Court Character and Primary Education in N-W Province and Oudh; Liddell’s N-W Province printing works: Allahabad See also, Hamid Ali Khan. The vernacular controversy: An Account and criticism of the Equalization of Nagri and Urdu, as the Character for the Court of the N-W Provinces & Oudh, under the Resolution No. 5885 of Sir A. P. McDonnell, The Lt. Governor, N-W P & Chief Commissioner, Oudh, Dated 18th April 1900. No publication detail but apparently published in 1900.
4 Court Character; Op. cit,
Consequently, they demanded for a change from the Persian to the Nagri script in courts and government offices of N-W Provinces and Oudh as was done in parts of Bihar in 1882.

In the nineteenth century, the colonial administrators and Christian missionaries were involved in promoting a modern educational system in India. Some scholars have referred to these educationalists as ‘enlightened outsiders’. The ‘enlightened outsider’ performed the task of shaping and deciding school curricula. In this view the native population had very little knowledge and skills fit for use and therefore it was important to train them in the modern system. This was possible only if English education was adopted. With the expansion of colonial education, educated Indians stepped into the role of the ‘enlightened outsider’ within the educational system. The system naturally produced a schism in the consciousness of the educated. Some of the new generation of educationalists accepted the forms of the texts produced by the colonial administrators for the school curricula. They became the ‘enlightened outsiders’ to the ‘masses’. Barring exceptions, these ‘enlightened’ Indians did not challenge the forms, content and texts assembled by the colonial administrators as the appropriate curriculum for schools. Education when seen as an instrument of moral and material improvement could not draw its epistemological basis from a deficient culture; and was rooted in the knowledge and culture of the colonizer.

But in the early twentieth century the colonial education system was perceived in certain quarters as an agency of cultural domination. This prompted attempts to define India’s educational needs from within India’s own cultural resources. The

2 ibid; p.13
swadeshi movement demanded the boycott of colonial goods and products. The movement also sought responses to India’s educational problems in broader cultural terms. In North India, revivalists groups succeeded in projecting Hindi as the symbol of a liberated self-identity. The Hindi movement went on to influence and reorganize school curricula as Hindi was increasingly projected as the medium of instruction. The pedagogical agenda of the Hindi movement was to instruct the younger generation through a language rooted in the Sanskrit tradition that was purged of Urdu.¹

This was the period which saw Hindu nationalists’ demanding an official status for Hindi. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was one such nationalist and orthodox Hindu who felt that Hindus were losing touch with their religion, culture and language. Hindi had no place officially, (Urdu or English were official languages) so very few took an interest in learning this language. This distance from Hindi kept Hindus alien from the country’s tradition and culture. But for national development it was necessary to instil patriotism and this was possible only when people would become aware of their rich heritage and the glory of the past. This could be accomplished if modern education was imparted in the vernacular language at the primary level, and Sanskrit was introduced as a compulsory language at higher levels so that the students had a knowledge of their religious texts. The establishment of Benaras Hindu University was one step in this direction. Malaviya insisted on the inclusion of Vedic education in Sanskrit in the proposed university since this would shape the character of students.²

This period of social transition in Northern India was marked by sections of Hindu and Muslim elites advancing the interest of their communities by employing the language question to polarize communities. Religious identities were rendered primary and the attempt was to collapse linguistic identities onto religious ones. Myths of the destiny of the two groups were often paraded. The political leadership of these movements tried to build a sense of consciousness by creating a myth regarding the origin and destiny of their group. They created confidence among its members by instilling pride in their past and this was subsequently deployed for shaping new visions of the future. This process of internal value creation or myth construction is an aspect of national movements under alien rule.1 Three elements in the process of identity creation under such circumstances have been identified:

[1] The invention of myths that attach value and pride to the ‘objective’ markers of a group’s identity. These were clear indicators of religious identity formation.  
[3] The identification of oppressors who are ascribed to have held or hold the advancement of the group under consideration in check.

The Hindu nationalists tend to emphasize one symbol of identity above the others. Indian society was conceived as a multi-ethnic society comprised of several ethnic groups and nationalities moving towards the development of a politically integrated but multi-national state. The relation between the religious groups (Hindu, Muslim); linguistic groups (Hindi users verses users of other languages); was the source of separatist sentiments. Often linguistic differences

1 cf. Emerson: From Empire to Nation pp 206-7; See also, Paul R. Brass 1974. Language, Religion and Politics in North India; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, Mostly Part I, II, & III.
were rendered congruent with religious differences. This conflation of religious and linguistic identities was employed to legitimate a new set of political demands.

This study will examine the relationship of group identity to the agenda of higher education as exemplified in the founding of Benaras Hindu University. The study shall specifically focus upon the role of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in this process.

**Chapter I: Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century Colonial India**

The first chapter discusses the formation of the system of modern education first under the influence of the East India Company and subsequently under the colonial government during the nineteenth century. It traces the sound divide introduced by the colonial educational policy India and its impact on the North Western Province of Agra and Oudh and the commencement of identitarian politics around the question of language and religion.

**Chapter II: Hindu and Muslim Response to Modern Education in the North Western Provinces**

The North Western Provinces had both Hindus and Muslims in substantial numbers. This chapter traces the details of the responses to the changes introduced by the colonial educational policy among the Hindus and the Muslims of the region. The period witnesses the rise of social mobilization along these two axes of identity.
Chapter III: Politics of Language: Emergence of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani in North Western Provinces of Agra and Oudh

Language was the tool and the cultural marker for the community leaders in NWP. The third chapter takes up the demarcation of linguistic boundaries and the manner in which the concerned social groups carried out a distinct linguistic and cultural identity for Hindi. The linguistic identity demarcation under the colonial government later spread to many regions of Northern India were the laboratories for the experiments in social mobilization.

Chapter IV: Politics of Identity and Modernization of Education

The fourth chapter goes on to discuss the politics of the Hindu-Hindi identity and the agenda of modernization of education that drove the Hindu nationalists. The awareness of common identity gives rise to the concept of community. In the guise of nationalism communities were formed to meet the political ends. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had an important role to play as a community leader in the Hindi movement. His involvement with the different religious groups and language associations as an important leader of late nineteenth century is seen through his mass mobilization in the name of religion. Even the Muslims of the region who surpassed their Hindu counterparts in aggressiveness were mobilizing the community in name of Urdu and Islam. This period also saw the rise of Hindu nationalism where Hindi was being popularized as the language of the nation. The Hindu nationalism was entrusted with the task of reconstructing the historicity, and recreating a religion with a well defined genealogy and community.
Chapter V: Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and His Philosophy of Education

The fifth chapter discussed the personality of Pandit Malaviya in brief and also the outstanding features of his philosophy of education. Education for him was a source of social and economic emancipation. He acknowledged the fact that education can only protect women from their present plight. There is description of the central role of Pandit Malaviya in the creation of denominational universities and the establishment of BHU. His wished to have taught art and culture, science and technology simultaneously in the University of his Dreams.

Chapter VI: Pandit Malaviya and the Conceptualization of Benaras Hindu University

Pandit Malaviya believed that an amalgam of science and religion can bring development to any nation. The philosophy of education espoused by Pandit Malaviya was with the sole aim of consolidating the philosophies of the Hindu religion based on the ideals of sanatan dharma. This chapter sees the conceptualization of the University which had a link to Pandit Malaviya's aspirations with Hindi- Hindu movement. Benaras was an obvious choice because firstly, it was an ancient seat of learning and secondly, it was at the centre of the Hindi speaking zone. The proposal of a national university like BHU came under the banners of swadeshi.
Conclusion

BHU was established with the soul aim of providing holistic development to the future builders of the nation. This chapter looks at the subsequent evolution of BHU as a denominational university and compares it with the evolution of AMU.