

Origin of Language in the light of Quran Phases of Its Evolution, and the Languages Spoken in Subcontinent

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This piece of writing throws light on the origin and evolution of languages and provides detailed information about the languages spoken in Subcontinent. This is a commendable effort of the researcher as to collect the required information he had to go through a laborious work. The task was not easy but the way it has been dealt with is appreciable. As far as the origin of language is concerned, 4 theories have been presented, and for the evolution of languages the researcher has given sketches to make the reader understand the gradual progress of languages. The reasoning and argumentation from Quranic verses is a unique effort of this research as it was purely a topic of linguistics, but the researcher has proved that the Holy Quran contains all kinds of knowledge in its contents. We only need to meditate them deeply and as a result we will find ourselves in an endless ocean of knowledge.

Man is eager to learn by nature. It means that it is in the nature of man to find out about all the living things on earth and in the universe. Man wants to know how all these things originated. Language which is the most important human activity has remained a subject of serious meditation by language scholars over the centuries. In an attempt to find out the origin of language, linguists have gone even up to the extent of studying the language of children, primitive societies, the behavior of the higher animals and even the language of those people who are suffering from speech defects. But origin of languages is wrapped in mystery and we are profoundly ignorant about the origin of language. We have to content ourselves with more or less plausible speculations. Because of this ignorance 20th century linguists have refused to discuss the matter, on the ground that it is wastage of time on a subject where we lack evidence. It seems probable that speech arose at the same time as tool-making, and the earliest form of specifically human cooperation.

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Mr. Ehsaan-ul-Haq has given a beautiful lingual analysis in the magazine "Fikr-o-Nazar" with the topic "Linguistics: A Historical Analysis". about the origin and evolution of languages. This analysis is given in the following.

"Language occupies the status of an important phenomenon in human personality. Therefore, man, from the very beginning, is making a serious consideration about the universe around him. Similarly the universe inside a man is also a centre of attention for him. The wonders of this universe are diverse and the mysteries of it are indefinite. Language is also one of these mysteries.

God Says in Quran.

"And there are (Signs) in thy soul, Thou do not consider."(1)

Another saying,

We shall show them our portents on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that it is the Truth.(2)

Language is also one of these signs as described in Quran.

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and difference of your languages and colours. (3)

On another occasion, God says,

"And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, it is the truth, even as (it is true) that ye speak."(4)

Besides humans, the mutual communication in animals also has not reached to the level of language rather it is very defective in comparison to humans. Allah interpreted this communication of humans as utterance as mentioned in Quran.

"He hath created man. He hath taught him utterance."(5)

So philologists and philosophers are busy in exposing the mysteries that are there within human languages for centuries. (6)

Philologists and philosophers raise this question regarding the mysteries of language: what is the origin of human language, how it originated, and how variations are taking place. What is the number of language families? What is the nature of difference between languages of different sects (classes) of society?

Mr. Ehsaan-ul-Haq writes.

“When did man begin to meditate about these (lingual) mysteries? It is obvious that to discover the time of meditation in this field, before the advent of calligraphy or copying book, is difficult. But the first book of this series was written by Panini in 4th century B.C. in view of clear religious purposes. In it, he has skillfully explained the sound system, and grammatical system of Sanskrit. European Scholars discovered this book in 19th century.”

This discovery made the connection of Sanskrit with the European languages known (clear). And a strong movement of Comparative Linguistics rose up. It reached fame and popularity in 19th and 20th century.” (7)

Ehtishaam Hussain writes in “A Brief Sketch of Urdu Linguistics”.

“In 1786, Sir William Jones expressed these thoughts after studying Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German and old Persian. He said that all these languages have some connection with one language. Of these languages the most ancient one is Sanskrit. Since that time there started the study of comparative linguistics. The comparative linguistics and comparative rules got promoted. (8)

The study of Panini’s book reveals that Greeks and Romans were aware of linguistics. But one can find no book of such status as that of Panini. Probably the reason for it was the interest in the philosophy. They looked towards it under philosophical point of view.

Dr. Naif Khurma wrote about language.

“Regarding language, the most important problem raised by Greek scholars, the effects of which did also impress (influence) contemporary literal researches is that whether language is a natural phenomenon or a social sign (indication). Plato’s thought is that language is natural phenomenon, and words and their sounds are such ingredients which can not be separated from their meanings. But the school of thought of Aristotle opined that

language is a reflective (phenomenon) of society, and words and their sounds are such secret terms which have no connection (direct or physical) with their meanings. So, the first school of thought got fame with the name "Tauqeefia" and the other was called Technical or Tawaziah. (9)

Ibn-e-Faris defended the Tauqeefi theory about language in 4th century Hijri and produced the evidence with the verse of Surah Al-Baqra Ch.2, Verse 31.

"And He taught Adam all the names". (10)

It means language (vocabulary) is a gift of God but this theory was opposed by a famous philologist Ibn-e-Janni. He claimed that language is neither a revelation nor a thing settled by God. Rather it is elected and deducted one (means the technical or tawaziah theory). In addition, the meaning of the knowledge mentioned in the verse is the ability to speak and name (ability of naming things.)

Various Theories regarding the Origin of Language.

Linguists have put forward various theories regarding the origin of language/languages. Of these theories the most prominent are following. (11)

- a) Pooh Pooh Theory.
- b) Ding Dong Theory.
- c) Yo-He-Ho Theory.
- d) Gesture Theory.

A brief introduction of above mentioned theories given by different authors is given in the following.

a) Pooh Pooh Theory:-

This theory was pointed out by Max Muller in 19th century. It is also called "Interjection Theory." According to this theory, man articulated (uttered) some sounds in the states of grief, happiness, anger and amazement.

These various sounds assumed the form and shape of language in the following period.

b) Ding Dong Theory:-

Ali Nawaz Jatoi wrote about this theory.

According to this theory it has been concluded that there is a connection (link) between the sounds of language and their meanings. The earliest humans used suitable

sounds as a result of effects of outer atmosphere. These sounds assumed the shape of language. (12)

C) Yo-He-Ho Theory:-

According to the opinions of the experts of this theory when a group of ancient humans performed a task with a joined effort and produced certain sounds such as Hay, Ho, Hon, Han etc.(13)

Lado wrote about linguistics.

Linguistics is the Science that describes and classifies languages. The linguist identifies and describes units and patterns of sound system, the words, and morphemes and the phrases and sentences, that is, the structure of language. (14)

The definition of language according to human nature is that language is a relation of sounds and vocal signs which came into existence along with man. It is such system, and such a process with the help of which the members of one social group can establish a connection (relation) with the members of other group, and can understand each other.(15)

In short, it can be said that the effort that linguistic psychology does to access the origin of human languages does not contain scientific absoluteness and linguistic facts (evidences), yet it produces a vague outline about it. The theories mentioned about the origin of language are partially true but they do not give certain knowledge that how language originated. Any how it is a reality that on the grounds of being old (worn out) of civilization traces whatever is the ancientness of humans, we are to admit that man from the very start had the quality of using gestures and vocal language for the actions of command, inquiry and expression. He adopted social life as being subject to his needs. And language came into being due to social requirements.

The Languages Spoken in Subcontinent

Some people have this point of view that the origin of all languages of world is one language. But this does not seem right as some languages are such different from each other in their structure that any link (connection) between them is out of imagination. Some experts have made divisions about languages that they are divided in four, eight, twelve, twenty six or even more groups. But the division at which the experts on the whole

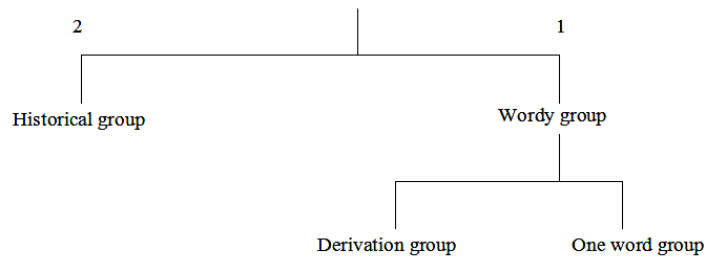
are agreed is that the languages known to this world are classified in two divisions.

- (1) Classification on the basis of characteristics of words, and letters.
- (2) Classification on the basis of historical and racial relations.

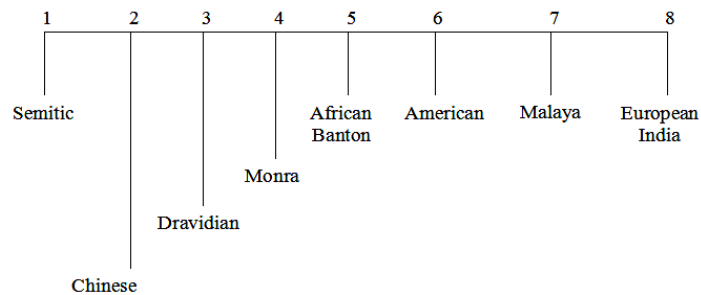
Remember this is the most agreed classification.

The way scholars (experts) have classified the languages of the world is given in the following.

The languages of world according to classification.



Historical Group



Wordy group

a) One word group.

The languages, the foundation words of which do not add variation in their meaning and sense through changes in their shape (form). Such kind of languages are in vogue in China, The eastern countries of India, and the surrounding habitations. All words in these languages are usually free (independent) and there is no usage of suffixes and prefixes with them.

b) Derivatives group

This group is one word or origin from which hundreds of words are derived.

According to the classification of languages of world, the second group is Historical and Racial group.

Historical relations and Racial relations group.

In this group the world languages are divided in eight major groups. Each family clarifies that the speakers of that are members of particular countries or particular tribes. Of these some have been separated but the ancient common factor is still there in their language.

Eight languages constitute this group.

- (i) Semitic
- (ii) Chinese India
- (iii) Dravidian
- (iv) Monra
- (v) African Banton.
- (vi) American
- (vii) Malaya
- (viii) European India.

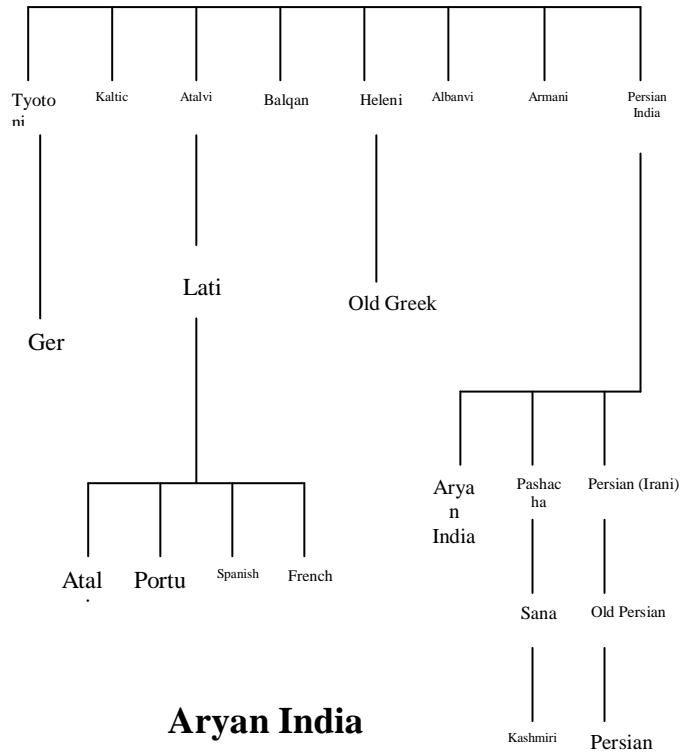
My intent, here, are the languages spoken in the Subcontinent. Thus, for its explanation the connection with European India language is essential which is a branch of Racial and Historical group.

Dr. Syed Mohayuddin Qadri wrote in "Indian Linguistics" in this context.

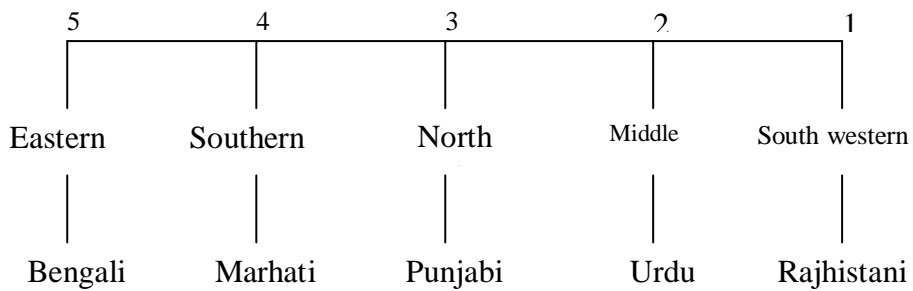
"In comparison to other groups (families) of language, this group (European India languages) is very vast and is spread on a relatively important part of the globe. In our country, India, most languages spoken are of this family". (16)

From the given sketch of European India languages, Persian India group shows the languages spoken in the Subcontinent.

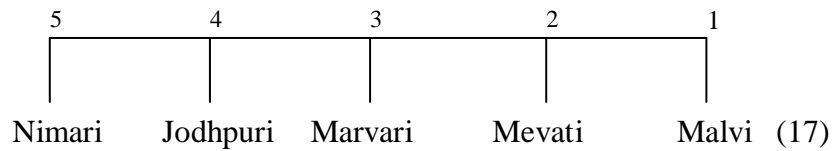
European India



Aryan India



Rajhistani



Ehtishaam Hussain writes in “A Brief Sketch of Urdu Linguistics”

“The History of Irani (Persian) language is very old. But its most ancient (antique) patterns belong to 600 B.C. The most important pattern is that which is in the form of Avesta. This one and Sanskrit have strong resemblance and likeness. This language turned into Persian after going through frequent changes. (18)

Irani was the language of Aryans.

“Where did Arya born”? is a question of dispute among scholars. But majority of them are agreed on this idea that this nation reached various parts of the world after migrating from Central Asia. One group of Aryans travelled to Europe after leaving Central Asia, and there got divided in groups. This is the reason of the resemblance between Greek and Sanskrit. Another group of Aryans settled in Iran and got divided in various tribes. They entered Sub continent from Iran crossing mountain channels and brought their languages along with them. The Aryans in Iran and the new comer Aryans in Subcontinent had the same racial back ground. But when they got separated their languages developed in different ways. Irani got promoted in Iran while Sanskrit in Hindustan (India). The date of Sanskrit is determined 1500 B.C.

After Sanskrit there started an age of Parakrats. The age of it is described 600 B.C. to 1000 A.D. Ehtishaam Hussain writes about these “Parakrats are traced in the books of Buddhism and Jainism, the epitaphs of Ashok, and in some religious poetry that was written in that age. Of these languages the prominent ones are Magdhi Ardhgidhi, Shorsaini, Maharashtri, Nagar, Abnagar, Verachdi and Kaiki. Beside these there comes the name ‘Paali Parakrat’ frequently in history. Infact, Ardhgidhi is the shape that Gautam Budh used, and Ashok used in his epitaphs. It spread through Subcontinent with Buddhism. (19)

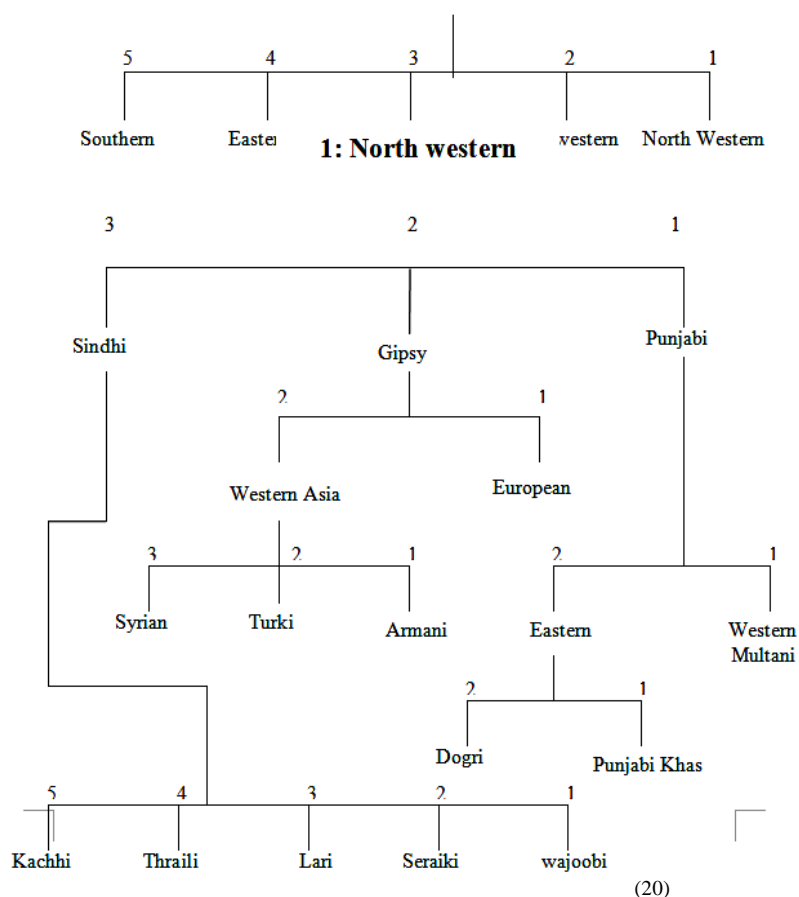
Parakrati period lasted for one century and a quarter in Subcontinent. It went through great variations. The greatest variation is “Up Bhrunsh. Its time is almost from 800 A.D to 1400 A.D Scholars have not regarded it a separate lingual age (period). Rather this third age of central and modern Aryan India is called the age of dialects. It starts nearly 1000 A.D and lasted till the time in which all those languages are included which

came into being after 1000 A.D. Some of these languages remained limited in the form of dialect and few assumed the shape of languages and they are rich of a high class of literature. All these three periods of the evolution of Aryan India are very vast as well as wide. Modern Aryan India is its last period. This last period languages are divided in five or six groups on the grounds of geographical areas.

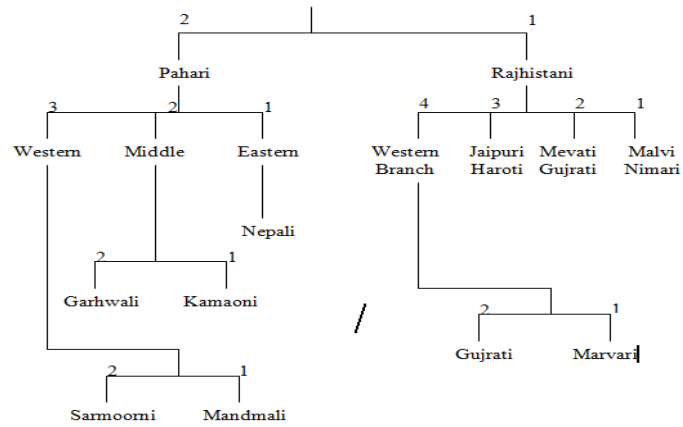
Grierson and Doctor Mohayuddin divided it in five parts but Dr. Swenti Kumar Chattarji divided them in six parts.

Here, I analyse the division in the light of “Indian Linguistics.” by Dr. Mohayuddin Qadri.

Modern Aryan India

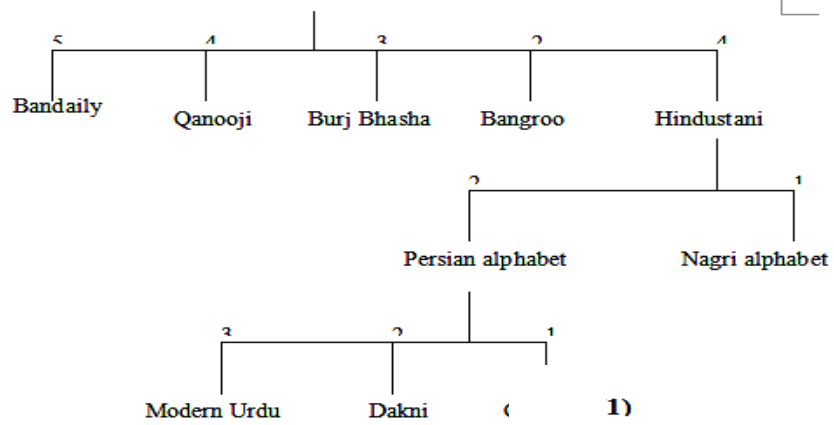


2: South Western Group



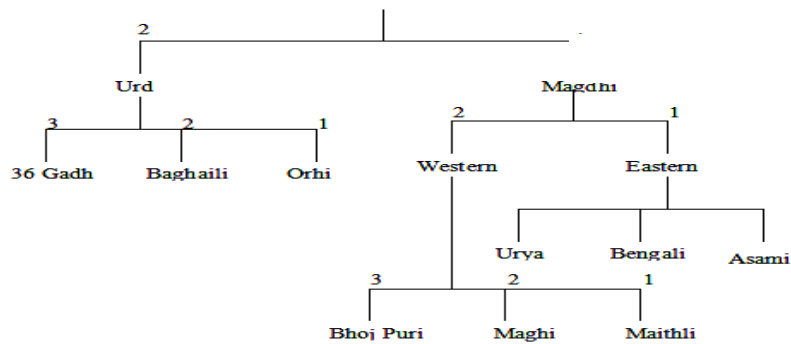
(1) (21)

3: Middle Group

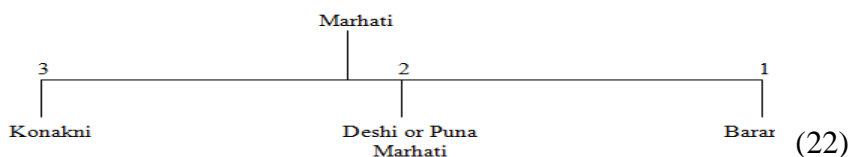


(1)

4: Eastern Group

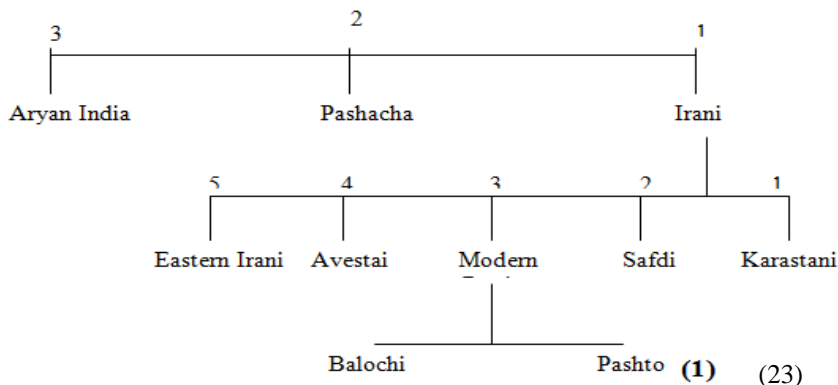


Southern Group

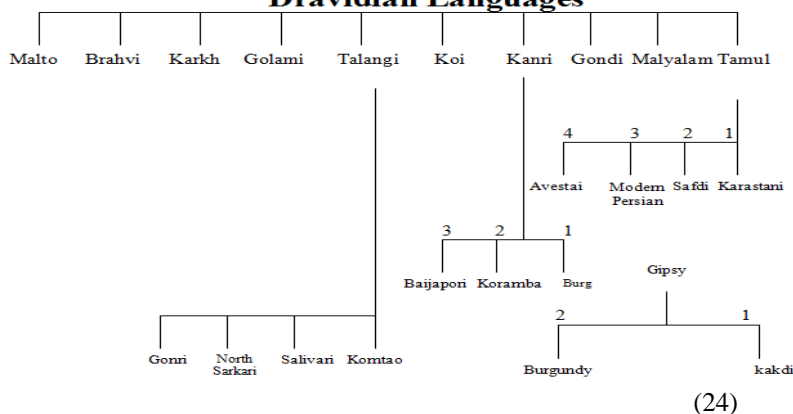


The languages so far discussed are only Aryan India. There are other languages as well that were spoken in Subcontinent but they belong to other language families. For example, in the very north of India and occupied regions of North West Border, the spoken languages belong to 3 groups of Persian India which are introduced through a sketch.

Persian India



Dravidian Languages



Gist of discussion is that there were numerous dialects (languages) spoken in Subcontinent. But when Muslims appeared on the scene of Subcontinent, Aryans were at the peak and Sanskrit was spoken there. "What languages were spoken here before Aryans"? This question has been explained to some extent in "The Old History of Urdu Language" by Ainul Haq Fareed Koti. He writes "Before the arrival of Aryan tribes the languages of Awwal Manda group were in vogue in Subcontinent and later came Dravidian group. The present public languages of North India (Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi etc.) and the forerunner local prakrats sprung from the Manda and in particular Dravidian group that were in vogue before Sanskrit in Subcontinent. (25)

Ehtishaam Hussain in his book "A Brief Sketch of Urdu Linguistics" writes "When Aryans came in Subcontinent there were other nations already settled here e.g. Kolmanda and Dravidian Kolmanda came here and settled in India in 5000 B.C. or earlier. After that Dravidian people reached Subcontinent in 3000 B.C. and settled in Sindh (Indus). They founded the great civilizations of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. This age is described as 2500 B.C. Dravidians declined after the arrival of Aryans and they migrated towards Deccan leaving North India and they are limited there at this time." (26)

Conclusion

In the light of all the discussion above it can be concluded that though linguists have put forward numerous theories to understand the origin of language to some extent but none of the theories is final and absolute one. Each theory seems a plausible speculation as to find the record of that prehistoric time is impossible. Islamic point of view is that language is a gift of God to mankind. Though these theories are lacking, yet they produce a vague outline about the origin of language. The information about the languages spoken in Subcontinent has been conveyed in the form of sketches for the convenience of the reader. These sketches prove the laborious effort made by the researcher. To study this research work is equal to the study of an encyclopaedia about languages as the valuable information is conveyed with economy of words.

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