

Lucknow: Literature and Culture

Syed Ali Hamid*
Retd. Professor of English
Kumaun University Campus, Almora

ABSTRACT

To place Lucknow in today's context, I have attempted to analyse the city's literature and culture in this paper. The paper is divided into three sections: the first gives a brief history of Lucknow up to the end of the nawabi era, focusing on events relevant to this paper; the second discusses music, drama, and poetry, especially the Lucknow School of Urdu poetry, *masnavi*, and *marsiya*; and the third examines Lucknow's culture from a modern perspective. In his well-known work *Guzishta Lakhnau* (*Purana Lakhnau* in Hindi), Abdul Halim Sharar dates the beginning of Lucknow to the period when Lord Ram returned from his *banvas* (exile in the forest) and assumed the throne of Ayodhya. He granted his brother Lakshman this land as a jagir (estate), and Lakshman erected his home on a rise next to the river that had a deep tunnel that was rumoured to go to Sheshnag (located on the track of Amarnath cave in Kashmir). Around this raised area, a tiny settlement called Lakshman Teela—the word "teela" refers to an elevated area—was established. The unique culture of Lucknow, its secularism, refined manners, etiquette and extreme politeness in conversation lingers on albeit in a diluted form, and it is easy to recognize a person from Lucknow by the way he/she speaks, the use of a blend of Hindi, Urdu and the local dialect Awadhi, often called Hindustani language, the use of 'aap' even when addressing children, and the plural 'hum' in place of the singular 'mai'.

Keywords: Lucknow, Abdul Halim Sharar, Lakshman Teela, Bada Imambada, *Guzishta Lakhnau*.

In this paper, I have tried to discuss the literature and culture of Lucknow to put the city in a contemporary perspective. The Paper has been divided into three segments: the first presents a capsuled history of Lucknow till the end of the Nawabi era focusing on events relevant to this Paper; in the second, music, drama, poetry, especially the Lucknow School of Urdu poetry, *masnavi* and *marsiya* have been discussed, while the last section is devoted to an analysis of what constitutes the culture of Lucknow from a contemporary point of view.

Abdul Halim Sharar, in his famous book *Guzishta Lakhnau* (*Purana Lakhnau* in Hindi), traces the origin of Lucknow to the time when Lord Ram returned after his *banvas* (exile in the forest) and became King of Ayodhya. He gave this area as jagir (estate) to his brother Lakshman, who built his abode on a patch of elevated ground near the river with a deep cave, said to have led

* Author: Syed Ali Hamid

Email: syedali.hamid2@gmail.com

Received 15 Dec 2022; Accepted 20 Dec. 2022. Available online: 25 Jan, 2023.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



to *Sheshnag* (located on the track of Amarnath cave in Kashmir). A small town came up around this elevated ground called “*Lakshman Teela*” (teela means elevated ground), and the town came to be known as Lakshmanpur. Later two caste groups, the Bhars and the Pasis came from the Terai region of the Himalayas and settled there, and they, along with the Brahmins and Kayasthas, developed a small town till then known as Lakshmanpur. The current name, Lucknow, was not heard before the time of Emperor Akbar. The first Muslim invader was Syed Salar Masood Ghazi in 1030 AD, followed by Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1202 AD. Later, Shah Peer Mohammad lived at Lakshman Teela, and it came to be known as ‘Shah Peer Mohammad ka Teela’, and the cave was also covered and ceased to exist. Later Aurangzeb built a huge mosque which still exists by the name of ‘Teele Wali Masjid’. During the time of Akbar, Awadh was one of the provinces with Lucknow as its capital, and he appointed Sheikh Abdur Rahim as jagirdar (owner of the estate), who built his abode Panch Mohalla at Lakshman Teela and later a castle nearby known as Machchi Bhawan, so named because of the emblem of two fishes on each of its 26 arches. The architect of this qila or castle was a man named Lakhna; therefore, the new name Lucknow was either an aberration of Lakshmanpur or based on Lakhna’s name (Sharar 12-14). The Sheikhzadas held such sway over Lucknow till 1722 that they had hung a naked sword at the entrance gate of their castle and all visitors had to salute the sword before they were allowed to enter. Sometime around 1708, a Shia Muslim nobleman from Nishapur in Persia (Iran), Mir Mohammad Amin, arrived in India to seek his fortunes. He found favour with the Mughal King Mohammad Shah by taking his side during turbulent times and was rewarded with the governorship of Akbarabad (Agra) in 1720 and given the title of Saadat Khan Burhan-ul- Mulk. He was later shifted to Awadh where he established a dynasty which Sharar calls ‘*Mashriqi tamaddun ka aakhri namuna*’ (subtitle of his book *Guzishta Lucknow*) or ‘The Last Specimen of Eastern Culture’:

The Nawabi period, for which Lucknow is famous far and wide, started on 9 September 1722 when the Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah shifted Saadat Khan from Agra, where he had failed to control the Jats, and appointed him as subedar of Awadh. This transfer proved lucky for Saadat Khan, as he not only successfully consolidated his position in Lucknow against the stiff resistance offered by the Sheikhzadas, but also founded the legendary Awadh dynasty, which lasted till 1856 (Bhatt 12).

After defeating the Sheikhzadas, he went to Ayodhya and, on a massive area of elevated land at a distance from the existing population, constructed his abode, which included dwellings for his army and ammunition, all in the form of huts. This area became famous as ‘Bangla’, which was later renamed Faizabad. Lucknow came into its own when Nawab Asif-ud-daula decided to shift the capital of Awadh from Faizabad to Lucknow due to differences with his mother,

the powerful Bahu Begum. This was a turning point in the history of Awadh, esp. Luck now became the centre of activity and development at the cost of Faizabad. The British persuaded him to leave the job of defending the State to them, which suited the Nawab. He drastically reduced his army and set about to do what he enjoyed most: beautifying the city and increasing the splendour of his Court, which became the centre of the Arts. The Nawab himself wrote poetry in Urdu. Many people from Faizabad and Delhi found better opportunities in Lucknow, and the city expanded, with several new mohallas (wards or localities) coming up in a short time. His fame as a benevolent ruler spread far and wide, and this became more than evident when famine struck in 1784. One of the reasons for constructing the Bada Imambada or Asifi Imambara, in addition to his love for constructing buildings, was to feed the people by providing them employment. This was perhaps the first example of ‘food for work’ as the labourers were given food, which was scarcity because of the famine. These included many noblemen who were in a poor condition because of the famine. The noblemen worked at night so they would not be recognized, and as they were not skilled masons, their shabbily done construction was pulled down the following day and rebuilt. However, during the reign of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last King of Awadh (so named by the British and Ghazi-ud-din Haider in 1819) the most colourful, talented and controversial Nawab of Awadh, that Literature and music flourished in Lucknow. At the beginning of his reign, he brought about reforms in the Army and the system of justice, but his natural bent was towards the Arts. He was not only a poet, but he also danced, wrote and acted in Plays. He built the Qaiserbagh complex, wrote Plays and staged them at an open-air theatre on the Qaiserbagh premises. He also respected Indian culture and participated in Hindu religious festivals. He was especially fond of Raas Leela and wrote Rahas, a dance choreographed and based on the moves of Kathak, something like a group ballet, including a rahas titled Radha Kanhaiya ka Qissa in which he enacted the role of Lord Krishna dancing with the gopis. Such activities of the King brought the Hindus and Muslims together and strengthened the foundation of what is known as Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, which is the hallmark of Lakhnavi culture. This was inimical to the ‘divide and rule’ idea of the British, who converted his virtues into vices and eventually, in February 1856, Awadh was formally annexed by the British, bringing to a logical conclusion what Rosie Llewellyn-Jones endorses as ‘a fatal friendship’ between the Nawabs/Kings of Awadh and the British (5). The King was exiled to Matia Burj in Calcutta, where he spent the rest of his life. On his departure from his beloved Lucknow, he wrote (under the pen-name ‘Akhtar’):

Saare ab shehr se hota hai ye Akhtar rukhsat

Aage bas ab nahi kehne ki hai mujhko fursat
Ho na barbad mere mulk ki ya rab khalqat
Dar-o-deewar pe hasrat se nazar karte hain
Khush raho ahl-e-watan hum to safar karte hain.

Akhtar is bidding farewell to this city
Anything beyond this I'm unable to say
God protect my country from ruin
With longing I look at the walls and doors
Wish you happiness, my compatriots, I embark on a journey.

Thus, the Nawabi period in Awadh, which began in 1722 with the 'Bangla' area in Ayodhya as its capital (later renamed Faizabad), and shifted to Lucknow in 1775, came to an end in 1856. The eight decades after 1775 witnessed the development of a refined and sophisticated culture characterized by '*nafasat*' (exquisiteness), '*nazakat*' (elegance), and extreme politeness which will be discussed in the last segment of this Paper. At the same time, it saw the growth and development of what has often been referred to as the "Lucknow School" of Urdu poetry, in addition to kathak, drama and prose. As far as drama is concerned, inspired by Wajid Ali Shah's Radha Kankaiya ka Qissa, Agha Hasan 'Amanat' wrote Inder Sabha, an opera set in the court of Indra, the king of the gods. It was written in 1853 and is considered as the first complete Urdu Play. Although initially performed at the King's court, the Play became so popular that it was enacted by drama troupes at different places in Lucknow (Sharar 82). The Play consisted of various kinds of poetry: ghazal, thumri (light classical vocal), holi (songs on the Hindu festival Holi), songs, chaubola (quatrain) and chhand (meter in Hindi), as well as dances. A Doctoral thesis by Friedrich Rosen which included the translation of the Play into German was published in 1892, and was favourably received by critics. The Play was made into a film in 1932, one of the earliest talkies after Alam Ara. It was produced by Madan Theatre and had a record 72 songs.

Urdu poetry was largely influenced by Persian poetry and Rekhta, which means a mix (Rekhta means 'scattered' as well as 'mixed') of Persian and Hindi, popularly known as Hindustani language, later the *khariboli* dialect of Delhi. The ghazal was, and remains, the most popular form of Urdu poetry. It consists of thematically independent couplets, numbering usually between five and twelve, called *beit* in Arabic and *sh'er* in Persian and Urdu, united by a strict scheme of *radif* or refrain, *qafia* or rhyme and *bahr* or line-length in which the phonetic length

of syllables is taken into account. The ghazal begins with the *matla*, in which the *qafia* is used in both the lines (misras) of the couplet and the refrain or radif. In subsequent couplets, this scheme of *radif* and *qafia* occurs only in the second line. The last couplet of the ghazal, in which the poet may use his pen-name or takhallus, is known as maqta. Each couplet may deal with a different theme, idea or emotion; the first may be romantic, the next philosophical, sad, mystical and so on. The earliest poets in Lucknow include Nawab Asif-ud-daula himself, who encouraged poetry in his Court, which led to poets from Delhi shift to Lucknow, as the political situation of Delhi then was not favourable to the poets due to the condition of the Mughal Court. His ghazals were by and large focused on love, although one may find couplets on other subjects as well:

Hum ishq ke bandey hain mazhab se nahi waqif
Gar Kaaba hua to kya, butkhana hua to kya
A worshipper of love I am, unaware of religion
It may be the Kaaba, it may be the Temple.

Although great poets of Delhi like Meer Taqi Meer and Mirza Mohd. Rafi Sauda, had shifted to Lucknow by the last quarter of the 18th century, the foundation of what is known as the Lucknow School of Poetry was laid by Imam Baksh 'Nasikh' (1772-1838) and Khwaja Haidar Ali 'Aatish' (1778-1848). Carla Rae Petievich in her doctoral thesis *The Two School Theory of Urdu Literature*, though in disagreement with this classification, writes about the distinguishing features of the Lucknow and Delhi Schools:

Dihalvi poetry (the poetry written in Delhi), considered by critics to be truer to the Persian literary tradition than the poetry of Lucknow, is described as emphasizing mystical concerns, Persian styles of composition, and a straightforward, melancholy poetic diction. Lakhnavi poetry (that written in Lucknow) by contrast, is characterized as sensual, frivolous, abstruse, flashy, even decadent. Reasons posited for Lakhnavi poetry's decadence are the deleterious effects of the city's prosperous, even opulent, economic and social climate during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Delhi's ravaged condition during the same period is likewise considered the cause of Dihalvi poetry's allegedly contrasting, melancholic outlook. (Abstract)

She goes on to argue against this classification the by the Urdu critics of the nineteenth and twentieth century by stating that a poet's poetic choices are made as much by the structural demands of the ghazal as by societal influences; moreover, the styles of the two founder poets of the Lucknow School, Nasikh and Aatish, have been said by these same critics as fundamentally different, to the extent of some calling Aatish a Delhi-style poet. However, despite such arguments, the classification of the Two-School theory has endured. It continues till today, somewhat like the label metaphysical poets stuck to Donne and his contemporaries.

Like drama and music, poetry flourished during the reign of the last king of Awadh, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, who was himself a poet and wrote under the ‘takhallus’ or pen name ‘Akhtar’, sometimes ‘Akhtarpiya’. Sample this sh’er”:

Turab-e-pa-e-haseenan-e-lakhnau hai
Ye khaaksar hai ‘Akhtar’ ko naqsh-e-pa kahiye.

Dust of Lakhnau’s beautiful damsels is this
Call this humble ‘Akhtar’ their footprints.

However, the trailblazers of the Lucknow School of poetry were Nasikh and Aatish, who also differed from each other in the sense that Nasikh focused on excessive refinement and ornamentation of language. In contrast, the poetry of Aatish, in addition, deals with depth of thought and feeling. The couplets of Nasikh given below prove this point:

Darya-e-husn aur bhi do hath badh gaya
Angdai usne nashe mein li jab utha ke hath

Her beauty, like a river, rose several feet
When languidly she yawned and stretched her arms.

Ghair se kheli hai Holi yaar ne
Daala mujh par dida-e-khoon-baar rang.

My love has played Holi with another
Sprinkled on me red colour of pain and tears.

Such play with words and attention to sensuous detail made Urdu critics label his poetry as decadent and, harshly so, indecent. But we must remember that Nasikh wrote at a time when Urdu had become a language, and Awadh was basking in affluence. It was natural for poets to give in to sensual pleasures and focus more on a woman’s external appearance, ornaments and coquetry than on her inner beauty. This gap was filled by his contemporary poet Aatish, who, along with the refinement of language, also presented depth of thought:

Qaid-e-mazhab ki giraftari se chuut jata hai
Ho na diwana to hai aql se insan khali.

Released he is from the stranglehold of religion

Without madness, empty of wisdom is a human being.

Ye aarzu thi tujhe tujhe gul ke ru-ba-ru karte

Hum aur bulbul-e-betab guftagu karte

My desire to place your face next to a rose

And I with the restless nightingale converse.

Another early poet of the Lucknow School was Pandit Daya Shankar ‘Naseem’:

Guzra jahan se mai to sun ke yaar ne kaha

Qissa gaya, fasaad gaya, dard-e-sar gaya.

Hearing the news of my death, remarked my beloved

A story is gone, mischief over, so is that headache.

These poets were followed by a number of famous poets, through the nineteenth and twentieth century, like Amir Minai (whose famous ghazal “Sarakti jaye hai rukh se naqaab ahista ahista” has been sung by Jagjit Singh), Syed Anwar Husain ‘Aarzo’, Syed Jafar Ali Khan ‘Asar’, Munshi Naubat Rai Saxena ‘Nazar’, Anand Narain ‘Mulla’ whose couplet given below is very famous:

Wo kaun hain jinhe tauba se mil gayi fursat

Hamein gunah bhi karne ko zindagi kam hai.

Who are they who have enough time to repent?

For me, this life is too short for committing sins.

More prominent names in the twentieth century are Zakir Husain Qizilbash ‘Saqib’, Bisheshwar Prasad ‘Munawwar’, Brij Narain ‘Chakbast’ and, of course, the romantic-revolutionary Asrar-ul-Haq ‘Majaz’, whose lyrical poem “Ae gham-e-dil kya karun, ae wehshate-dil kya karun” became immensely popular as an expression of pain, injustice and inequality in society and the alienation of the poet. Sample this stanza:

Muflisi aur ye mamazahir hain nazar ke saamne

Saikdon sultan-e-jabir hain nazar ke saamne

Saikdon chengez-o-nadir hain nazar ke saamne

Ae gham-e-dil kya karun, ae wehshet-e-dil kya karun

Poverty stares at such scenes of plenty

So many tyrants are having their way

Hundreds of Chengez and Nadirs flourish

O this sorrow, this despair!

He also wrote on the emancipation of women:

Tere Maathe pe ye aanchal bahot hi khoob hai lekin

Tu is aanchal ko ik parcham bana leti to achcha tha.

This scarf covering your forehead adds to your beauty

But better, had you lifted and raised it high as a flag.

All these poets, and many more, have contributed to the canon of Urdu poetry and added the flavour of the exquisite and unique culture of Lucknow right from the era of the Nawabs till today. Wit, turn of phrase, metaphor, conceit, sensuous imagery and other literary devices were employed by them to achieve that polished and refined language which is the hallmark of the Lucknow poets. At the same time, their poetry is not all 'sound and fury, signifying nothing', but also carries thought and feeling, and at the same time, deals with social issues, especially twentieth-century and contemporary poetry.

Another form of Urdu poetry that became quite popular in Lucknow was *Rekhti* (in contrast to *Rekhta*), poetry written by men in the colloquial speech of women containing body, social and linguistic details specific to women, but obviously as perceived by men. It often talked of female-female erotic love and it was because of erotic details that this kind of poetry was heavily censored and often condemned as indecent. Saadat Yaar Khan '*Rangin*' (1756-1835) is considered to be the originator of *Rekhti* and is said to have coined this term. Others who wrote in this genre were, among others, Insha Allah Khan '*Insha*', Mohsin Khan '*Mohsin*' and Meer Yaar Ali '*Jaan*'. Women during that period addressed their female lovers as '*du-gana*' or '*zanakhi*' and their female rival as '*sihgana*'. They employed pun, wordplay, innuendo, metaphors and nuances to express their sexual desire. It is not only remarkable but also surprising to note that poetry which openly expressed same-sex erotic desire among women,

though not still fully acceptable in Indian society, was written in Lucknow in early nineteenth century. Words/phrases in colloquial use by women like qurbaan gayi, nigoda, bhadvā, anna etc were imitated by these poets:

Tees peruu mein uthi ohii meri jaan gayi
Mat sata mujhee du-gana teri qurbaan gayi.

My pelvis is aching, I'm drained of life
No more mischief du-gana, I love you.
(Rangin)

Hum juun chakor ghash hain aji eik yaar par
Bulbul ki tarah ji nahi dete hazaar par
I am a passionate chakor, who has only one love (chakor is a bird that loves the moon)
Not a bulbul, who is a flirt (bulbul, a bird that is the eastern equivalent of the nightingale)
(Insha)

Khaak gaye ga nigoda sheikh apni bazm mein
Jaanta sur hi nahi bhadvā jo apni taan ka.
How can that rogue Shaikh sing in his feast
That pimp knows neither melody nor beats.
(Mohsin)

Lagi hai aag mohabbat ki dil mein aa ke bujha
Du-gana jaan khuda ka hai ghar jala jaata

I'm burning in the fire of love, come and quench it
Du-gana where are you for God's sake, my house burns.
(Jaan)

Masnavi was another genre that became very popular in Lucknow during the nawabi period. It had its origin in Iran, where the great sufi poet Rumi wrote Masnavi-ye-Ma'navi or "the Spiritual Couplets", an influential work on Sufism written between 1258 and 1273. It presents the Sufi interpretation of Islam. Masnavi is a long poem written in rhyming couplets,

independent internally rhyming lines usually with the rhyme scheme aa bb cc. Among the earliest writers of Masnavi in Awadh is Meer Ghulam Hasan, who was born in Delhi but later shifted to Lucknow in 1775, and wrote his masnavi *Sehr-ul-bayan*. Mirza Mohd. Taqi Khan ‘Havas’ wrote the masnavi *Laila Majnun* in the eighteenth century, but the masnavi came into its own in the nineteenth century when Pandit Daya Shankar ‘Naseem’, a disciple of the poet Aatish wrote his famous *masnavi Gulzar-e-Naseem* in 1838-39. It is based on the Persian story *Gul Bakawali* which is somewhat similar to the medieval romances. It is considered to be a wonderfully crafted long narrative poem in rhyming couplets. The popularity of the *masnavi* reached its peak during the reign of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah when Hakim Tassaduq Husain Khan alias Nawab Mirza’Shauq’ Lakhnavi wrote his trilogy *Fareb-e-Ishq, Bahar-e-Ishq and Zehr-e-Ishq*. He wrote at a time when the refinement of culture and Urdu language was at its peak in Lucknow. Among these, *masnav* is, the most popular was *Zeher-e-Ishq*, in which a beautiful and educated girl falls in love with a poet, who is probably Shauq himself. They meet in clandestine manner, but when the girl’s parents come to know of their affair, they decide to send her to Benaras. The girl, however, meets her lover for one last time, and tells him of her intention to commit suicide before being sent to Benaras the next day. This emotional meeting is described in the colloquial language of women at that time in Lucknow:

Dekh lo aaj humko ji bhar ke
Koi aata nahi hai phir mar ke
Khatm hoti hai zindagani aaj
Khaak mein milti hai jawani aaj

Look at me to your heart’s content
Nobody returns after death
My life is coming to an end
Youth will be mixed with dust.

His simple, colloquial style caught the imagination of the readers, and his masnav is became immensely popular. However, there were voices of the moralists who thought that *Zeher-e-Ishq* would exert a corrupting influence on girls and its publication was subsequently banned by the British government.

Elegaic poetry in Urdu, the *Marsiya*, also became very popular in Lucknow because the Nawabs/Kings were Shia. The *Marsiya* recounts in a pathetic tone the sacrifices of Imam

Husain, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam, and the calamities that overtook him, his family and followers at Kerbala on 10 October 680 AD. The Nawabs observed *Mohurrum* with full piety, and *marsiyas* were recited during the mourning period of *Mohurrum*. The two most prominent poets of *marsiya* were Mirza Salamat Ali ‘*Dabeer*’ ((1803-75) and Meer Babar Ali “Anees”(1803-74) . There was intense rivalry between their followers, who were called ‘Dabeeriyas’ and ‘Aneesiyas’, although the two poets remained on cordial terms with each other. Later, Anees became more popular, and his *marsiyas* are recited in Lucknow even today during *Mohurrum*. Sample this stanza on the martyrdom of Imam Husain:

Barchi aa kar koi pehlu mein lagi jati hai
Maarta hai koi naiza to ghash aa jata hai
Badhte hain zakhm-e-badan zar ghata jata hai
Band aankhen hain sar-e-paak jkuka jaata hai
Gird Zehra-o-Ali girya-kuna phirte hain
Ghul se ghode ke Imam-do-jahan girte hain.

Some javelin strikes the side of his body
When somebody hits with a lance, he feels faint
The wounds are increasing, his strength decreases
His eyes are closed, his pious head is bent
Around him Zehra and Ali are weeping
In the tumult, the Imam of both worlds from his horse falls.

Lucknow's literature, music and performing arts were the product of the unique culture that began with Asif-ud-daula when he shifted the capital of Awadh from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1775 and reached its zenith during the reign of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last king of Awadh. It has often been referred to as Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb or, to put it in a simple manner, Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. The origin of this term is not clear, but perhaps it refers to the Doab (literally, two waters) region of Ganga and Yamuna rivers. However, Hinduism and Islam are diametrically opposed to each other and had it not been for the Bhakti Movement and Sufism, there would have been no meeting point between the two, especially after the early Muslim invasions of Mohammad bin Qasim and Mahmud Ghazni, and the destruction of Nalanda by Bakhtiyar Khilji. Later rulers like Akbar, tried to bring about some kind of rapprochement between the two communities, but the Kingdom of Awadh is the best and most successful example of this effort. The Nawabs of Awadh who were Shia and had come from Iran, never

indulged in communal violence and bloodshed, but tried to bring the two communities together. They gave administrative posts to Hindus and encouraged participation in each other's festivals; at the same time both the communities helped build each other's places of worship, which included Imambaras and Temples. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah played the role of Lord Krishna in "Radha Kanhaiya ka Qissa", a 'rahas' written by him. He also at times dressed himself as a Jogi, with ash smeared all over his body. The Urdu language itself, which has a mixed vocabulary of Persian (some Arabic and Turkish) and Hindi, while its grammar is Hindi although it is written in Persian script, is also a meeting point of Hindu and Muslim cultures.

It would not be out of place to determine whether this Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb is a 'melting pot' or 'salad bowl'. The melting pot metaphor, according to Bruce Thornton, "arose in the eighteenth century, sometimes appearing as the smelting pot or crucible, and it described the fusion of various religious sects, nationalities, and ethnic groups into one distinct people." This was the reason that in 1776, the motto *E pluribus unum* (Latin, 'out of many, one') was adopted by America. In 1782, French immigrant J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur wrote that in America, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." (Thornton) The term became more popular when, in 1908, Israel Zangwill staged his Play *The Melting Pot*. However, this concept was challenged by the concept of 'salad bowl' in which different ethnic groups could co-exist like the ingredients of a salad, bound together by law, while maintaining their separate identities. The term 'cultural pluralism' was first put forward by Horace Kallen in 1915 in his essay "Democracy versus the Melting Pot" while Randolph Bourne called it "Trans-national America." in 1916 in his essay by the same title. This idea gained popularity in America in the mid-twentieth century and later labeled albeit in a new avatar as 'Multiculturalism.' In India, however, the idea of the salad bowl was adopted after Independence and labeled as 'unity in diversity.' How far this has succeeded is a controversial issue, a large number of communal riots and caste conflicts affording testimony to its failure to a considerable extent, and there are voices labeling some groups as 'privileged victims'. However, if there is a model of the 'salad bowl' which has been to a large extent successful, it is the cultural model of Lucknow, which has not witnessed any Hindu-Muslim riot till today, even during the Partition when entire North India was plunged into communal violence and bloodshed.

The elaborate code of behavior of the Lucknow aristocracy is ample proof of the fact that Lucknow 'tehzeeb' is essentially feudal in nature. There were unwritten rules about greeting with respect to rank in society and age. For a gentleman of the same age and rank, or superior

rank, it was the custom to stand up and provide the best seating place to him. But for a person of inferior rank, and even for a domestic help of advanced age, politeness was duly observed. ‘Janab’ and ‘huzoor’ were used to address people of high rank, and ‘pehle aap’ (after you) on which a humorous incident is often narrated about two Nawabs who could not board a train because of ‘pehle aap’, which is part of the accepted code of ‘takalluf’, an untranslatable word, an example of which is of a person, when visiting a friend, is offered something to eat, accepts it only after the host insists a couple of times. Conversation was expected to be pleasant, interlaced with humour, wit and, at times, irony and satire. The art of repartee or what is known in Urdu as *hazir-jawabi* was highly appreciated as a quality of an educated and refined man. Another remarkable feature of Lucknow culture was the use of the religion-neutral *aadaab* (literal meaning etiquette), which was adopted in place of the usual Muslim greeting ‘Assalam waleikum’ which is religious in nature. This was a secular form of address which is still used, by and large, by the people of Lucknow.

The unique culture of Lucknow, its secularism, refined manners, etiquette and extreme politeness in conversation lingers on albeit in a diluted form and it is easy to recognize a person from Lucknow by the way he/she speaks, the use of a blend of Hindi, Urdu and the local dialect Awadhi, often called Hindustani language, the use of ‘aap’ even when addressing children, and the plural ‘hum’ in place of the singular ‘mai’. The dilution marks the shedding of those linguistic structures which stemmed from its feudal background. However, the obsession of the media with Nawabs and everything *nawabi*, ignoring the fact that there are no nawabs, rajas etc seventy-five years after Independence, has thrown up a numbers of pretenders masquerading as nawabs. These caricatures spin yarns and distort history, making Lucknow culture the object of ridicule. Culture is also dynamic and instead of being a victim of nostalgia and misplaced emphasis on a non-existent aristocracy in a democracy, it’s time for the people of Lucknow to move forward by cherishing and preserving the essence of being a Lakhnawi, the contemporariness of the culture of Lucknow.

Works Cited:

- Bhatt, Ravi. *The Life and Times of the Nawabs of Lucknow*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2006. Print.
- Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie. *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.

Petievich, Carla Rae. The Two School Theory of Urdu Literature. <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0097307>. Web.

Sharar. Abdul Haleem. Purana Lakhnau (Guzishta Lakhnau) Tr. into Hindi by Nur Nabi Abbasi. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1971. Print. Originally published serially (1887-1935) in Dil Gudaz, a magazine edited by Sharar himself. I have translated from Hindi to English for this Paper, hence only page numbers have been given.

Thornton, Bruce. "Melting Pots and Salad Bowls" (2012). www.hoover.org/research/melting-pots-and-salad-bowls. Web.

Note: Extracts from Urdu poetry have been taken from the website www.rekhta.org and have been translated by the author.