

The Morphosyntactic Behavior of ‘Wala’ in Urdu Language

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Abstract:

Among the highly used and colloquial words of Urdu Language, the word ‘wala’ claims a special place as a multifunction morphosyntactic unit. Due to its variety of usage and ability to replace quite different syntactical structures, the word does not nicely fit in the standard word classes and needs particular attention. In this paper, its existence as an affix or a clitic, syntactical behavior and agreement in Urdu is observed. As a result, it may reveal some unique features of one of the commonly used words in Urdu

Keywords: ‘Ism’, اسم فاعل , agent, referee, oblique, nominative, noun phrase, NP, adjective phrase, word class, POS, dialect, syntactical, morphosyntactic, morpheme, affix, inflection, clitic.

1. Introduction:

The language of 60.5 million speakers in Pakistan, India and many other countries, Urdu is classified as an Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Central zone, Western Hindi, Hindustani language [1]. Urdu is a consequence of the mixture of Persian and Arabic, Sanskrit-derived Prakrit and the local dialects, being originated in most likely in the vicinity of Delhi [2]. Hence Urdu borrows its vocabulary from other languages.

The word ‘wala’ has roots in the Hindi Language [3]. This word has more than one meaning when translated in other languages like English and Arabic, where speakers may comprehend it to serve as a modifier to a noun, noun phrase, adjective, adjective phrase or infinitive verb phrase. It carries the essence of the meaning in the phrase it modifies and combines with the phrase to give an extended meaning as a noun phrase or adjective phrase. Often it means as ‘the one’ with some sign or quality contained in the semantics of the phrase, when it succeeds the phrase. For example, ‘اچھا والا’ means ‘the good one’. However,

the former usage does, when the word ‘wala’ succeeds the phrase. Its behavior, agreement and word class categorization vary in different structures. We will focus on this usage of the word in the paper.

It may be argued that ‘wala’ is a morpheme used as a prefix or suffix with other words. However, its character as a bound morpheme and not a complete word may be challenged as we may see later. Its syntactical rules render various possibly ambiguous constructions, and must be seen in detail regarding agreement. The paper also aims to ascertain the applicability and aptness of categorizing ‘wala’ with its morphosyntactic behavior as a POS.

2. Literature Review:

This word is found in majority of the large Urdu dictionaries but rarely does in grammar books and names of some of the best ones are included here. *Muqtadra Qaumi Zaban Darsi Urdu Lughat* [5] treats it as ‘اسم صفت’ or adjective and ‘اسم فاعل’ or noun ‘agent’. When used in precedence to a phrase, ‘wala’ simply shows respect and means ‘high’ as in ‘الاجاہ’ meaning ‘highly esteemed place’ [5]. Prefixation is accepted in other words and does not pose much of a problem for categorization. However, as a suffix, it is mentioned only as ‘اسم فاعل’ or noun agent for example in ‘گھر والا’. Any ambiguity lying in the meaning is not touched. Ismat Javed in the book *Nai Urdu Qawaid* [3] has also sparingly mentioned the word as in the category of ‘صفت نسبتی’ or a type of adjective referring to an association with another word, as in ‘دلی والا’ meaning ‘one (person) from Delhi’. He also states ‘wala’ to be used as an ‘اسم’ (roughly a noun) and ‘اسم فاعل’ (noun ‘agent’) as in ‘رکھوالا’ meaning ‘guard’/ ‘the one who guards’.

Feroz-ul-lughaat [6] has a detailed explanation for the syntax and semantics of phrases that have ‘wala’ at their end. When the word comes after ‘اسم

(roughly a noun) the phrase may carry the meaning of an occupation, a seller or an owner. Another possibility is that the phrase may mean to be an adjective. 'گنجائش' (capacity) may be made an adjective by appending 'wala' as in 'گنجائش والا' (capacious).

Feroz-ul-Lughaat [6] further explains that with an 'اسم' the phrase may show an association like in 'Lahore wala' meaning 'Lahorite'. The last but another important modification is in the infinite verb phrases where 'wala' attaches at the end and also modifies the infinitive 'تا' at the end of the verb to 'نے' as in 'پڑھنے والا' meaning 'the one who studies' derived from 'پڑھنا' meaning 'to study'.

B. Mirium, et al. in their book *A Grammar Writer's Cookbook* [4] shows German 'nominalized adjectives' that have the tendency to form association of nouns with underlying adjectives. In the sentence below:

Die Kleinen lachen
The.M.Pl.Nom little.M.Pl.Nom laugh-P-cont
'The little ones are laughing'

German uses capital letters as in the first two words to show that they are 'nominalized adjectives' that agree in the gender and number. Both also are in nominative case. [4] These are the words derived from adjectives. An association is made referring to the 'ones' that have the quality in the underlying adjective. Here this tendency is in parallel to the association formed in Urdu by the word 'wala'. اچھا والا ('The good one') in Urdu is also a word derived from adjective and agreeing in gender (male), number (singular) and case (nominative).

Now we consider the following:

The first challenge is to test the validity of the notion that 'wala' is a bound morpheme. If this is not true, we have to come up with some example that demonstrates its independence and syntactical structure. We also need to prove if 'wala' is a derivational affix or a clitic.

Secondly, we have seen in the relevant dictionaries and grammar books the apparent word classes that the word 'wala' may fall into. What most of them miss out are the syntactical rules of agreement that the word follows in modern spoken language. Does 'wala' agree in number, case or gender with the adjective or noun it modifies within the 'wala'

containing phrase? (For sample 'wala' containing phrases see Appendix B) If such a phrase acts as an adjective does it agree with the subject it describes or modifies?

The third problem is to confirm that whether the given word classes and POS defined for 'wala' are sufficient to describe its behavior in Urdu language, especially considering the modern colloquial.

3. Methodology:

3.1 Bound Morpheme, Inflection or Clitic

For 'wala' to be a bound morpheme, it has to exist only with another morpheme or compound word. If we show that without exception 'wala' succeeds any phrase that contains more than one word and the phrase can increase in number of words, then 'wala' is affecting the whole syntactical structure. For this we chose the following sentence. Many other sentences of such form can be found.

1. پھولوں والی چادر
2. سفید پھولوں والی چادر
3. لال اور سفید پھولوں والی چادر
4. بڑے بڑے لال اور سفید پھولوں والی چادر

We also delve into the productivity and variety of constructions that 'wala' forms to test it through the parameters defined by Zwicky and Pullum for differentiating inflection and clitics [9], and also Saddock (1991), both mentioned by Aikhevald in 'Typological parameters for the study of clitics, with special reference to Tariana' [10].

3.2 Collection of 'Wala' Word Constructions

The goal was to find out the POS as well as behavior of this word in compounds and its agreement. The first thing was to admit that 'wala' behaves differently in different conditions hence it may not be included in one class of words. So first of all compounds of 'wala' were found and listed from the online dictionary [7]. It was observed that mostly 'wala' comes at the end of words/phrases. The ratio of words beginning with 'wala' is far less than the other one. Hence we know that in spoken Urdu this unit mostly attaches to the end of a phrase and modifies it. All the known POS defined for the word and its constructions were collected from different sources. Only after the results were

consolidated, we could make a judgment whether the existing POS definitions for phrases containing 'wala' are sufficient to describe it.

3.3 Survey to analyze the syntax rules of agreement

The agreement of gender and number for 'wala' constructions was another major question. The word has a plural and feminine form as mentioned in consulted dictionaries. Even attached with words, in a phrase, it agrees with plural and feminine form of words. To prove this an experiment was done. Some phrases containing 'wala' were asked for correctness. These phrases can be found in the Appendix A. The subjects had to either write 'correct' or 'wrong' for sentences containing the words given in the appendix. Mostly people agreed with the agreement of this word. For this experiment native Urdu speaking people from Lahore (who spoke Urdu as their first language) were chosen so that the bias of other regional languages wouldn't affect the results.

4. Results:

4.1 Results for 'wala' as a bound morpheme, inflection or clitic

Consider again the four different increasing phrase constructions all are being modified by the word 'wala'.

1. پھولوں والی چادر
2. سفید پھولوں والی چادر
3. لال اور سفید پھولوں والی چادر
4. بڑے بڑے لال اور سفید پھولوں والی چادر

Here we see that 'بڑے بڑے لال اور سفید پھولوں' is neither a single morpheme, nor a compound word. It is a phrase that is being modified by 'wala' form and 'wala' always occur at the last of such a construction. Hence, 'wala' seems to be a complete and syntactically independent word functioning at the phrase level. It attaches to nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs and adjectives. However, it seems to be bound to a phrase in spoken speech, as it always appears at the end of the phrase and cannot appear in meaningful discourse except by being bound to some other phrase. Hence, it is possibly functioning as a clitic in the sense of being interpreted as meaningless independently, but operating as phrase modifier on the whole. We demonstrate this fact through the parameters

mentioned by Zwicky and Pullum (1983) and Saddock (1991) as shown below:

4.1.1 Parameter A: Selectivity: 'Wala' has a high degree of selection from many word classes with respect to its host. The appendix B at the end shows that nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and also possessive and demonstrative determiners get attached directly to 'wala' without exception or variation. There are some exceptions in epistemic/evidential adverbs like *یقیناً والا (Surely-adv One-M-Sg). Other word classes like quantifiers and case markers also get attached to the 'wala' constructions but not as adjacent to the word.

4.1.2 Parameter B: Arbitrary Gaps: The word has been used in the different semantic categories without exception as shown in the next section (section 5.2). Most of the nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs and demonstrative determiners get attached to 'wala' syntactically and semantically as observed in the words collected from dictionaries. There is no arbitrary gap found in word combinations from the selected word classes, i.e. nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. This may hint at 'wala' being a clitic, rather than a derivational affix or inflection, as supported by the following parameters.

4.1.3 Parameter C: Morphophonological Idiosyncracies: The word 'wala' is always found at the end of the construction, that we may call the 'clitic group'. It has regular forms as shown in tables 1-4 below in section 5.3. No special treatment of phonological variation seems to occur for these forms in different word combinations. A separate research may be taken to prove whether 'wala' always remains unstressed. If proved, this would further strengthen the argument for its existence as a clitic.

4.1.4 Parameter D: Semantic Idiosyncracies: The word almost always creates a meaning with the attached noun, adjective, pronoun, verb, adverb or demonstrative determiner but in proper context. This is because of the association it creates between the modified subject and the attached clitic group. The evidence of the pervasiveness in the regular semantic behaviour is found in the categorization of the 'wala'-containing phrases found in the dictionaries. This is elaborated in the section below. For the similar phrases not found in dictionaries, we have to see if the sense of association they make is properly utilized in discourse. The phrase:

منزل والا ؟

one-M-Sg Storey-F-Sg

makes incomplete sense because it is unclear which storey of the building it is referring to. This is purely a matter of putting words in the right context.

4.1.5 Parameter E: Application of Syntactic

Rules: The word and its clitic group follows many syntactical rules as are discussed in section 5.3. It has gender, number and case agreement, for instance.

4.1.6 Parameter F: Clitic group within clitic

group: This phenomenon does occur for this clitic in Urdu Language. If we cause 'wala' to modify a clitic group already containing 'wala', a complex construction like this will be made: ساتھ والی دوکان والی۔ Along with-adv One-F-Sg Shop-F-Sg One-M-Pl 'The people from the neighboring shop.' Generally, such constructions are not found in discourse, but there is no reason why it may not be accepted. Such constructions follow regular syntactic rules and semantic implications.

Here we note that the adverb ساتھ is taking a feminine singular form of the word 'wala' to form an adjective phrase meaning 'the neighboring'. The phrase is incorporated into a noun phrase which is modified by a plural masculine form of 'wala' to form a noun phrase. Hence it passes the final test for a clitic. All the tests demonstrate that it is definitely closer to being a clitic than a derivational affix or inflection.

4.2 Semantic Roles of 'Wala' Phrase

By analyzing the words collected from dictionaries the word 'wala' transfers the following meanings to the joining phrases. Examples are given in appendix B.

4.2.1 Attributive: This is the case where 'wala' comes after an adjective that is an attribute and the newly formed phrase becomes attributive. E.g. اچھا والا

4.2.2 Time/Place/Manner Association: In this particular category 'wala' joins a word that is referring to some time, place, or manner. The attached word may be a common or proper noun if it is the place association or it may be an adverb if it is the time or manner association. E.g. صبح والا

(Time association), باہر والا (Place association), آہستہ والا (Manner Association).

4.2.3 Possession: when 'wala' joins nouns it also gives the meaning that the subject owns or possesses the object referred to by the noun. For example, آنکھ والا meaning 'the one with the eye', refers to the person who possesses the آنکھ ('eye'). Hence it lies in the category of possession.

4.2.4 Occupation: This is the most interesting behaviour of the 'wala' word. It joins with nouns and gives the meaning of occupation or profession. E.g. برف والا

4.2.5 Agent, Patient, and Instrument: when attached with a verb that shows an action it gives the meaning of agent, patient or instrument for the action. E.g. Patient مرنے والا , Instrument کھولنے والا , Agent مارنے والا .

4.2.6 Demonstration: It attaches to the demonstrative determiners to refer to an object being pointed. E.g. یہ والا

Syntactically, these broad categories of meaning may behave like adjective phrases and noun phrases in normal or oblique cases. All categories except the fourth behave like adjective phrases, but sometimes like noun phrases, while the fourth always behaves like a noun phrase. As an example, this 'agent' category is seen in 'wala' construction as an adjective phrase within a noun phrase:

[[مرنے والے] مریض]
'The expired patients'

However, the words in the inner adjective phrase may be used as a noun phrase in a sentence like:

مرنے والے کا نام اسلم ہے۔

'The name of the expired patient is Aslam.'

An object with a specific quantity may be expressed using a quantifier not directly attached to the word 'wala'. Quantifiers do not get attached independently with it. They precede some noun before it gets attached. It heavily depends on the meaning. Just a numeral or quantifier is not enough to make a clear meaning to be modified by 'wala' as in the possibly faulty constructions:

کچھ والا، تمام والا ؟

4.3 Results for survey to analyze the syntax rules of agreement

The following forms of 'wala' are uniquely identified.

Normal case	Singular	Plural
Male	والا	والے
Female	والی	والیاں

Table 1: Nominative case of 'wala' construction as a noun

Oblique case	Singular	Plural
Male	والے	والوں
Female	والی	والیوں

Table 2: Oblique case of 'wala' construction as a noun

Normal case	Singular	Plural
Male	والا	والے
Female	والی	والی

Table 3: Nominative case of 'wala' construction as an adjective

Oblique case	Singular	Plural
Male	والے	والوں
Female	والی	والی

Table 4: Oblique case of 'wala' construction as an adjective

In addition, the word has a special form when used for calling someone with a special attribute: 'اے دنیا' meaning 'O people of the world!'. Here 'والو' is the plural nominative form of 'wala' in such exclamations. Table 5 gives the number and gender variations for this form:

Normal Case	Singular	Plural
Male	والے	والو
Female	والی	والیو

Table 5: Nominative case of 'wala' construction as used in a vocation

These forms of the word show that it agrees with gender and number with the subject. Moreover, case also exists for the word 'wala' and its forms.

Consider the sentence:

امجد بڑی تقدیر والا ہے۔

For our discussion, we say that 'امجد' is the subject that is being modified by the 'wala' containing phrase 'بڑی تقدیر والا'. 'Wala' may be involved in syntactical rules within this phrase (e.g. agreement of adjective with 'wala') and outside it (e.g. agreement of 'wala' with the subject).

Table 1 in appendix A clearly elaborates that 'wala' agrees with gender of the associated word. The high frequency of 'wrong' in remarks for 'نیلی رنگ' tells that the modification in the adjective preceding the word 'wala' is not valid. It even does not depend on the gender of the adjacent noun eg 'نیلے رنگ والا کپڑا' or 'نیلے رنگ والی کتاب'. Hence we can make a hypothesis that gender agreement comes from the subject of 'wala' phrase to 'wala' and it blocks the preceding adjective 'نیلے' from this agreement only in the case where this adjective is part of a noun phrase preceding 'wala'. We see here that case of a noun phrase preceding 'wala' is oblique. If an adjective precedes 'wala' without the noun phrase, then it does not become oblique, but the gender also passes to that adjective eg 'بڑی والی ٹوپی'. Now here the gender is passed to 'wala' form as well as to the adjective.

Table 2 in appendix A shows some interesting results. The sentences used here are:

1. امجد بڑی تقدیر والا ہے۔
2. امجد بڑا تقدیر والا ہے۔
3. احمد بڑی قسمت والا ہے۔
4. احمد بڑا قسمت والا ہے۔

Here the gender and number of the words 'احمد' and 'امجد' is Masculine, Singular, while 'تقدیر' and 'قسمت' are Feminine, Singular. The experiment resulted almost 50-50. Half of the people agreed with the formation 'بڑی قسمت والا' and half agreed with 'بڑا قسمت والا', so for some people the adjective agrees with 'wala' (that is taking gender from subject) but for others adjective agrees with the word 'قسمت/تقدیر'. It is debatable whether any adjective not directly preceding 'wala' is to be associated with 'wala' or the adjective's parent noun phrase should be associated with 'wala'. There appears to be ambiguity in the expression and two possible trees below can explain the difference in the accepted phrases 'بڑا قسمت والا', 'بڑی قسمت والا'.

In Figure 1, the adjective is taken as outside the 'wala' construction and acting at the top phrase

level. Hence it agrees with 'wala' that succeeds the adjective phrase. It takes the gender, number and case information from 'wala'. Another representation of the same meaning is carried by the second tree in Figure 2 where the adjective is at the bottom phrase level associated with the adjacent noun and forming a noun phrase. Hence, this adjective takes the gender information from this adjacent noun and not from 'wala'.

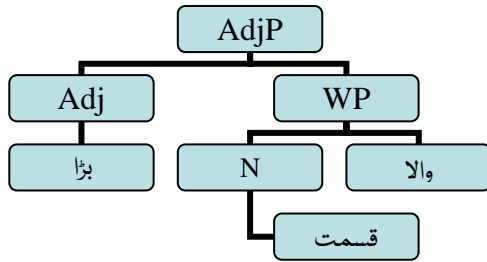


Figure 1: Adjective outside the 'wala' phrase (WP)

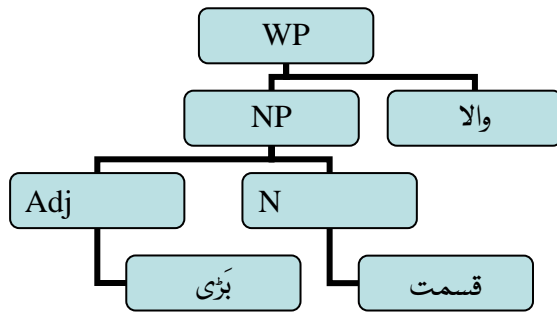


Figure 2: Adjective within the 'wala' phrase (WP)

This divide in people gives hint that there are two special configurations in 'wala' phrases that are different while possibly giving the same nuances of meaning. In one configuration, 'wala' is modifying all the words in the 'wala' phrase, while this is not true in the other configuration. More examples can be found with subtle differences.

5. Discussion:

The following rules may be inferred from the results above for the 'wala' phrase (WP) formation from the clitic 'wala' (W):

1. $WP \rightarrow V_{\text{infinitive}} W$
2. $WP \rightarrow NP W$

3. $WP \rightarrow \text{AdjP} W$

In addition, the results also show the participation of 'wala' phrase in formation of other phrases:

4. $NP \rightarrow WP N$
5. $NP \rightarrow WP$
6. $\text{AdjP} \rightarrow (\text{Adj}) WP$

In general, we may say that the subject of 'wala' influences the number and gender of 'wala' and consequently any adjective that is included in the phrase. Notably, the case of the neighboring word is the oblique case, as in 'پہلوں والی چادر' where 'پہلوں' is the oblique case. Moreover, the tense of verb neighboring 'wala' is infinitive, as in 'پڑھنے والا', the verb 'پڑھنے' is infinitive. Also note that in Urdu and Hindi verbs agree with NPs that do not bear cases other than nominative and are direct arguments

[8]. There is no explicit direct argument of the verb used here. Therefore any subject associated with 'پڑھنے والا' will not agree with the verb used in the 'wala' phrase.

Consider the phrase:

شہزادی والی خوابوں
Princess-F-Sg Of-F-S Dream-M-Pl-Oblique
'The Princess (seen) in Dreams'

Here we are referring to some princess that was seen in dreams before. Note that this construction is different from 'شہزادی کی خوابوں' meaning 'The princess of Dreams' where the princess may not actually be seen in dreams earlier, and any dream of the past is not directly referred. This shows that 'wala' or any of its other forms use a new word class not specified earlier in dictionaries or grammar books. The word here refers to something happened or seen in the past. In this sense it acts like the article 'the' in English as in the phrase above 'The princess (seen) in Dreams'. The phrase that contains 'the' is termed as proper noun, and so may be this phrase 'شہزادی والی خوابوں', but it is not just any proper noun, since 'wala' here carries the gender, number and case information of the word/phrase it refers to. So we may call 'wala' here as the **referee** that agrees with the modified noun it refers to somewhat back in time or space. We give it a new name because the existing word classes do not completely explain its behavior in such structures.

Generally, our experiment shows that people do not accept the word 'wala' as referee in sentences

used for the first time. This confirms with our definition as the sentence which is not referring to any earlier object cannot possibly contain a referee.

Consider another construction,
'بڑا والا' in the sentence

بڑا والا جوتا نکالو
Take out Shoe-M-Sg One-M-Sg-Compar Large-M-Sg-Adj
'Take out the larger shoe'

Here our referee 'wala' contains special information about the comparative degree of the adjective 'larger'. When we say, 'بڑا والا' (meaning 'larger one') we also mean there is a smaller one too, but we are referring to the larger one of the shoes. This information needed explicit mention and the word **referee** is used to express it.

When we form recursively lengthy constructions ending with the word 'wala' some ambiguities may appear if the gender and number match inside and after the construction. In the example,

'بڑے پھولوں والے گلدان',
Large-M-Pl Flower-M-Pl-Oblique Having-M-Pl
Vase-M-Pl
'Vases having Large Flowers'

Or
'Large Vases having Flowers'
there is structural ambiguity as seen below in the two representations:

[[بڑے [پھولوں والے] گلدان]]
[[بڑے پھولوں [والے] گلدان]]

Here we may infer the adjective 'بڑے' to modify either 'پھولوں' or 'گلدان'. The case might be easy if it was 'بڑے پھولوں والا گلدان' because then we are sure of 'پھولوں' and not 'گلدان' being modified by 'بڑے' because 'بڑے' would agree in number with 'پھولوں'. However, if 'گلدان' is in plural, this ambiguity is difficult to get rid of, unless we use a less sound construction 'بڑا پھول والے گلدان?' which would rather not be correct.

6. Conclusion:

The word 'wala' does not have a special semantic word class, but it matches the parameters defined for clitics in the paper by Zwicky and Pullum (1983). Hence 'wala' is a clitic. However, calling it

just another adjective or 'اسم فاعل' does not justify its versatile properties and syntactical significance. It has a wide selection of words classes that it attaches to. It agrees in number, gender and case with the subject it is referring to, and combines to form a variety of noun phrases and adjective phrases. A list of some of them is given in the appendix. It may encode information about number, gender and case, as well as some reference to a past occurrence and comparison to another object. Hence we call it as a **referee** word. 'Wala' and its forms are also sometimes used in different configurations possibly meaning the same. Further research on such differences in syntactical structures having the same semantics and on the possible application of stress on 'wala' may also be carried out.

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Appendix A:

نیلے رنگ والی کتاب		نیلی رنگ والی کتاب		نیلی والی کتاب		نیلی کتاب	
T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F
8	2	1	9	3	7	6	4

Table 1: Questionnaire 1

بڑی تقدیر والا		بڑا تقدیر والا		بڑی قسمت والا		بڑا قسمت والا	
T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F
3	7	5	5	5	5	5	5

Table 2: Questionnaire 2

Appendix B:

Possession	Occupation	Agent/Patient/Instrument
آنکھ والا	گُوڑے والا	پڑھنے والا
باغ والا	ردی والا	بچنے والا
باتھ والا	کام والی	کھولنے والا
کانٹوں والا	پھولوں والا	مرنے والا
پروں والا	برف والا	دینے والا

Attributive	Time Association	Place Association
اچھا والا	صبح والا	باہر والا
اونچا والا	رات والا	اندر والا
مہنگا والا	دیر والا	لاہور والا
تقدیر والا	پرانا والا	چھت والا
عزت والا	نیا والا	زمین والا
عظمت والا	کل والا	
ہمت والا	آج والا	
خاطر والا		
دل والا		Demonstration
رتبے والا		یہ والا
	Manner Association	وہ والا
	آہستہ والا	یہی والا
	فورا والا	وہی والا