

Awaz de Kahan:
All India Radio's Urdu Services and the Making and Unmaking of Borders

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In the aftermath of 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, India and Pakistan discontinued all diplomatic relationships. Indira Gandhi, who became Prime Minister of India in January of 1966, inaugurated the All India Radio's Urdu Services in an effort to maintain some sort of contact with the Pakistani people. This radio service aimed to reach audiences in Pakistan, but quickly gained a significant following in North India as well.¹ This presentation offers a close reading of one of this service's most popular programs, *Awaz de Kahan*, named after the song "Awaz de Kahan, Duniya meri jawan hai" from the film, *Anmol Ghadi* and interpreted by the singer and actress Noor Jahan. In this program, the anchor, Abdul Jabbar, played Hindi film songs from pre-Partition days and read excerpts of contemporary letters from Indian and Pakistani listeners. Above all, he encouraged listeners to think of themselves as a community undivided by national borders. *Awaz de Kahan* and other AIR Urdu Services programs, I argue, fostered connections between Indian and Pakistanis and challenged the border-making enterprises that have come to define this period. Whereas Radio Studies literature has emphasized radio's role in fostering national identities, this paper demonstrates how the medium also effectively challenged national projects.

¹ Author interview with Abdul Jabbar March 20, 2010. Abdul Jabbar kind shared copies of several listener letters.