

Subject	Paper No and Name	Unit No and Name	Chapter No and Name
History	Paper 2: Culture In Modern India	Unit II	Chapter 2: Part 1 Indo-Persian Literature

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Date of Second submission (pl add if any more)		

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Indo-Persian Literature under the Delhi Sultanate

This essay will attempt to highlight the rich and layered history of what has been defined as Indo-Persian literature. We will examine the history of Persian literary writings and subsequent growth of the Hindavi and other vernacular languages and literature in India. However, we also need to move beyond the category of nation and its recently constructed political boundaries and approach literature's own creative landscape both spatially and culturally.

The period between twelfth and nineteenth centuries saw the rise, growth and decline of Indo-Persian literature. The remarkable literary output reflects both the cosmopolitanism as well as the distinct roots of Persian literature in India, making it distinctly Indo-Persian in its composition. The beginning of Persian literature in the Indian subcontinent has traditionally been associated with the rise of Ghaznavid power under Mahmud Ghazna at the northern frontier of India. Lahore emerged as the centre of the Ghaznavid court and literary activities. Abu-al-Faraj Runi and *Mas'ud Sa'd Salman* were the early prominent Persian poets under Ghaznavid patronage.

Mas'ud Sa'd Salman (1046 - 1121 A.D.) was a prolific poet and wrote poetry in Arabic, Persian and Hindavi. Sunil Sharma's magisterial study of *Mas'ud Sa'd Salman* poetic oeuvre reflects the diversity of his writings. These include laudatory *Qasidas* (ode) in honour of the Ghaznavid sultan as well as poignant *Habsiyat* (prison poems) describing his imprisonment.¹ He also experimented with new forms like the Persian *Barahmasahs* (songs of twelve months) and *Shahar- Ashob* poetry about the beauty of the cities and its youth.

¹ Sunil Sharma. *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas'ud Sa'd Salman of Lahore*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002, p76.

Value addition: Interesting Details 1***Habsiyat Poetry***

I am content with this prison and suffering
 And will not disavow my fate.
 Let no dear one think in the world
 Like a snake I am in the throes of the need.
 If the sultan has imprisoned me
 I am not ashamed of his prison.
 Anyone whom a king imprisons
 Feels prouder than the whole world .
 I am in the prison of the king
 Who is the only one deserving of kingship.

Source: Sunil Sharma. *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas'ud Sa'd Salman of Lahore*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002, p76.

Along with the expansion of power under the Delhi sultanate, Persian also gradually spread in northern India particularly in the region around Delhi. The Delhi sultanate was now recognized as culturally unique as *Ajam*, distinct from Arabian culture. Persian emerged as the language of literature and aesthetics of the court and the elite. Some of the important poets who flourished under the Delhi sultanate's patronage were Hasan Nizami, Mu'ayyad Jajarmi and Shahab Mehmara of Badaun, who is remembered as teacher of Amir Khusraw - the celebrated poet of Delhi.

Amir Khusraw and the Evolution of Indo Persian Poetry

The life and writings of Amir Khusraw (1253-1325 A.D) reflects the distinct local and cosmopolitan flavour of medieval Persian literature under the Delhi sultanate. Persian was the language of the court and Hindavi was evolving as the language of the people. Khusraw's writings reflects some of these shifting literary traditions. Khusraw was connected both with the court as well as the popular Sufi culture of the *Chishti silsila* (sufi order) of Nizammuddin Auliya. Thus, Khusraw could successfully bridge the domain of

elite and popular culture. He witnessed the many upheavals in fortune of the Delhi sultans and the culture of Delhi.

Khusraw is remembered for his Ghazals and this had a profound impact on subsequent generations of poets. Khusraw is often credited for creating the *sabk-i hindi* (Indian style) in Persian lyric poetry. The distinct feature of this form is the use of elaborate metaphors marked by abstractness. However, Sunil Sharma shows that this assertion is not quite true as Khusraw's poetry was also shaped by the Persian poets of the period like Sadi, Hasan and Iraqi. Nevertheless, the presence of an Indian ambience and idiom in Khusraw's poetry is self evident. Here is his description of the Indian monsoon.²

Value addition: Interesting Details 2
Khusraw's Ghazal
<p>The clouds pour rain as I part from my beloved, What can I do on a day when I part from my beloved? The clouds and the rain, my beloved and I bid farewell, I weep alone, the cloud alone, my beloved alone.</p> <p>It is spring in the garden and a gentle breeze blows, The black faced nightingale is bereft of the rose-garden. I do not want the blessing of sight from now on, Since the blessing of that vision is taken from me. Your beauty will not endure since you left Khusraw, A rose does not stay in bloom away from its thrones.</p>
<p>Source: Sunil Sharma. <i>Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans</i>. One Word, Oxford, 2005, p41.</p>

Khusraw also wrote prose and historical narratives, folk romances and narrative tales. These documented the life and success of his patrons. The *Miftah al- futuh* (Key to Victories) written in 1291 describes successful campaigns of Jalaluddin Khalji while *Khaza'in al-futuh* (Treasure of Victories) narrated military exploits of Alauddin Khalji. Khusraw wrote the historical narrative poem *Ashiqah* (Beloved) in 1315. It narrated the love of

² Sunil Sharma. *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans*. One Word, Oxford, 2005, p41.

Prince Khizr Khan for Devaldi - the Hindu princess of Gujarat. Under Tughlaqs patronage, Khusraw wrote the historical poem *Tughlaqnamah* in honour of their victory and glory.

Khusrow's literary masterpiece remains *Nuh sipihr* (Nine Heavens) which describes various aspects of courtly life. He also wrote prose works like *I'jaz-i-Khusravi* (Miracle of Khusraw) and *Rasa'il-al-i'jaz* (The Miraculous Treatises). However, the most favoured genre of literary expression was poetry. Sunil Sharma observes that poetry also served as a medium for conferring cultural legitimacy on a court by forging connections with the past. Thus poetic creativity and political legitimacy were deeply connected at the court.

Apart from the court, the Sufi milieu at the *Khanqah* (Sufi hospice) also enriched Khusraw's literary work. The *Chishti silsila* emerged and thrived under the ever increasing popularity of Nizammuddin Auliya and Khusraw was also one of his many devoted disciples. Apart from the religious aspect of Sufism, its literary contributions are also remarkable. The *Tazkira* and *Malfuzat* literature reflects the vitality of the Sufi literary efforts. The growth of *Tazkira* or biographical compendiums of the Sufis became the model for writing similar *Tazkiras* of poets and provide important information about the Indo-Persian literary tradition. They also helped in developing what Marcia Hermansen terms 'memorative tradition' of individuals and their legacy in South Asian context which is also an intensely localized memory.³ Similarly the conversations of Sufi masters were also compiled as *Malfuzat* (table-talk/ discourses) and form part of a very rich and historically important literature. A good example is *Fawaid-ul-Fuad* (Morals for the heart) -the sayings of Nizamuddin Auliya, compiled by Amir Hasan Sijji in 1325.

The Sufis also promoted poetry in vernacular languages to spread their ideas. Thus, there existed a vital relationship between Sufism and literary production during the medieval period. This is also evident in case of Khusraw's poetry, nourished and enriched by Sufi terminology and idioms. Thus, it difficult to demarcate secular from mystical in Khusraw's poetry. Overall, he wrote 1726 Persian ghazals. He also managed to complete four collections of his poetry and one was compiled after his death.

³ Marcia K. Hermansen and Bruce B. Lawrence. Indo-Persian *Tazkiras* as Memorative Communication. In David Gilmartin & Bruce B. Lawrence (ed.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*. New Delhi: India Research Press, 2002, pp149-175.



Amir Khusraw and Nizamuddin Aulia, painting, Deccan, circa 1725.

Source: <http://sacred-songs.blogspot.in/2007/06/amir-khusro.html>

Along with the growth of Persian literature, there was also the evolution of Hindavi- a vernacular language spoken by the commoners. Khusraw also wrote Hindavi poetry and folksongs describing the landscape of Indian culture. Khusraw employed both Persian and Hindavi words in his poetry. He has been hailed as the father of Indo-Persian classical poetics as well as the founder of vernacular Hindavi literature. This in some ways shows the linkages between the cosmopolitan Persian literary culture and its entanglement with the growth of local/ vernacular writings of Hindavi. Sunil Sharma rightly observes that in Khusraw's worldview the three classical languages Arabic, Persian and Turkish complement the host of Indian vernacular languages and each had its specific sphere of usage in enriching literature.⁴ Amir Khusraw passed away in 1325 but left behind a rich legacy for Indo-Persian literature.

⁴ Ibid p 87.

The Persian Cosmopolitanism and Mughal State

With the expansion of Delhi Sultanate new places emerged as centres of patronage and growth of Indo-Persian literature. These included Sind, Multan, Uchch in the Punjab region. Persian was moving out of courtly circles and beginning to shape and borrow from Hindavi words. This dialogue and exchange was particularly promoted by Sufis, itinerant merchants, artists, soldiers etc. A second level of exchange existed between the classical literary heritage of Persian and Sanskrit under political patronage by the state. The translation of Sanskrit texts was actively promoted. These diverse processes led to a gradual Indianization of Persian. The Mughal period witnessed great vibrancy of Persian literary culture. It is important to point that Turkish and Arabic were also important languages. Babur- The founder of the Mughal Dynasty favoured Turkish, similarly Arabic retained its space as language of theology and religion under mughals. However, during the rule of Humayun and Akbar the Iranian impact grew in the Mughal court. Akbar gave generous patronage to Persian poets. The distinguished poets of the Mughal court included mostly Iranians such as Ghazali Mashhadi, Husain Sana'i, Qudsi Mashhadi among many others.

Muzaffar Alam observes that Persian poetry under the Mughals was marked by both innovation and experimentation, rhetorical excellence and grandeur of thought.⁵ He suggests that Persian poetry with its cosmopolitan nature facilitated the Mughal cultural conquest of India as it helped legitimate the Mughal polity and integrate the heterogeneous subjects under Mughal rule. A noticeable shift was that the Mughal state did not follow the orthodox interpretation of governance. Mughal political norms were enriched and defined by the growth and popularity of Persian *Akhlaq* literature. The *Akhlaq* literature's concerns were statecraft, political culture, ethics and philosophy. The salient feature in *Akhlaq* literature is cooperation between the state and its subjects through justice and not by force.⁶

⁵ Muzaffar Alam. The Culture and Politics of Persian in Pre-Colonial Hindustan. In . Sheldon Pollock(ed.),, *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press,2003,p171.

⁶ Muzaffar Alam. *The Languages of Political Islam in India 1200-1800* . New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, p 57-58.

Value addition: Interesting Details 3**Political norms in Akhlaq literature**

Justice in the ideal state is defined as social harmony, and the coordination and balance of the conflicting claims of diverse interest groups that may comprise people of various religions. The ruler, like the good physician, must know the diseases that afflict society, their symptoms and their correct treatment. Since society is composed of groups of diverse interest and individuals of conflicting dispositions, the king must take all possible care for 'adl to work smoothly, to maintain the health of the society and equipoise (I'tidal) within it. This is how the state can be brought together into a single unit.

Source: Muzaffar Alam. *The Languages of Political Islam in India 1200-1800*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, p 57-58.

Persian acquired the status of the language of aesthetics as well as the first language of politics and administration under the Mughal state. Knowledge of Persian now meant enhanced prospects of higher status culturally and greater career prospects. Persian was learnt and spoken by not just Muslims but diverse sections of society particularly the Kayasthas and Khatris who dominated Mughal administrative structures. Some of the important officials included Harkar Das Kambuh and Chandrabhan Brahman who were closely associated with Mughal administration. The scribal culture represents the entanglement and absorption of the Persian language in Mughal society.⁷

Value addition: Interesting Details 4**Advice of Chandrabhan Brahman to his son Khavajah Tej Bhan**

Initially, it is necessary for one to acquire training in akhlaq (the system of norms). It is appropriate to always listen to the advice of elders and act accordingly. By studying the *Akhlaq-i-Nasiri*, *Akhlaq-i-Jalali*, *Gulistan* and *Bostan* one should accumulate one's own capital and gain the virtue of knowledge. When you practice what you have learned, your code of conduct will become firm. The main thing is to be able to draft in a coherent manner, but at the same time good calligraphy also possesses its own virtues and earns you a place in the assembly of those of high stature. O dear

⁷ Muzaffar Alam. *The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan*. In . Sheldon Pollock(ed.) *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003. p164.

son! Try to excel in these skills. And together with this, if you manage to learn accountancy(*siyaq*) and scribal skills(*navisindagi*) that would be even better. For scribes who know accountancy(are rare . A man who knows how to write good prose as well as accountancy is a bright light even among lights. Besides a munshi should be discreet and virtuous .I , who am among the munshis of t his court that is the symbol of the caliphate , even though I am subject to the usual human errors, am still as discreet as an unopened bud, though possessing hundreds of tongues.

Source: Muzaffar Alam. The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan. Sheldon Pollock(ed.) *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press,2003.p164.

Thus, Persian reached greater literary heights and also became the language of administration under Mughal patronage system. However, it is important that our understanding of Persian literary culture should not be restricted within the north Indian centre around mughal court. Recent studies points towards its dissemination in various regions like Maharastra and Bengal particularly in the realm of court and administration. Prachi Deshpande's work shows the relationship between the Persian akhbarat tradition and its influence with Bakhar literature in Maharashtra.⁸ Similarly, Kumkum Chatterjee has explored the impact of Persian in Bengal literary world particularly in the realm of historical writings.⁹ It is not surprising that Persian was also used during the initial period of ascendancy of the British East India Company. However, Persian was removed as the official language in 1830s and then its use began to decline in administration. Even when Persian declined as language of administration in the nineteenth century, it still retained a high literary status and influenced vernacular literature.

⁸ Prachi Deshpande .Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India 1700-1960. New Delhi:Permanent Black 2007.

⁹ Kumkum Chatterjee . The Cultures of History in Early Modern India : Persianization and Mughal Culture in Bengal. New Delhi: Oxford University Press,2009.

Summary

- Linguistic and literary diversity should be appreciated rather than homogenized within the category of National literature.
- India has both Classical and Vernacular literary cultures that influenced each other.
- Persian classical heritage was reformulated within the Indian sub continent and new genres emerged.
- Persian evolved both as a courtly language of administration as well as the literary language of poetry.
- The cultural context of Sufism enriched the growth and popularity of Persian in India.
- Persian cosmopolitanism was embraced by the state as well as the people.
- Amir Khusraw's example and his literary accomplishment show the entangled history of Classical and Vernacular languages. The Indo-Persian literature of India shows diversity of themes as well as both a courtly and popular appeal.

Glossary

Tazkira - Biographical Anthology

Malfuzat- Saying of Sufi saints

Khanqah - Sufi Hospice

Silsila - Sufi Order

Qasida - Ode

Barahmasah - Songs of twelve months

Akhlaq - Practice of virtue

Qawwali - Devotional song

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Suggested Readings.

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Essay Questions

We require a multilingual approach to understand the literary cultures of South Asia. Comment.

Discuss the various factors and aspects that promoted the growth of Persian in the Indian subcontinent.

Amir Khusraw's poetry reflects the cosmopolitanism and the local specificity of the Delhi sultanate. Comment.

Examine the various genres of literary expression within the Indo-Persian literature.

Persian language led to the cultural success of Mughal rule in India. Comment.

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
	Multiple Choice	

Question

Which of these text written by Khusraw is a historical poem?

a) *Rasa'il-al-I'jaz*

b) Ashiqah

c) *I'jaz-i-Khusravi*

Correct Option

b

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

Ashiqah is a historical poem modeled after the Layla and Majnun romance. It was written by Amir Khusraw in 1315. The other two are prose works.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

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Question

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| a)Habsiyat | i)Love poetry |
| b)Ghazal | ii)Prison Poetry |
| c)Qasidas | iii) Panegyric poetry |

Correct Option

a) and ii), b) and i) and c) and iii)

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

There are various genres of poetry in Indo-Persian literature. Ghazal or love poetry is the most popular literary form. Qasidas flourished in the courtly milieu narrating the success and qualities of the patron. The Habsiyat or prison poetry was written by Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

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Question Number	Type of question	LOD
	True/False	

Question

Which of these statements is **false** regarding Amir Khusraw?

- i) He was associated with the Delhi sultanate court.
- ii) He was associated with the Naqshbandi silsila.
- iii) He was a disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya.

Correct Answer / Option(s)

ii

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

While the Naqshbandi silsila was one of the prominent Sufi orders that developed in India, Khusraw was associated with the Chishti silsila. He was the devoted disciple of the Chishti Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya. The association with the Sufi milieu enriched his literary expression.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

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Reviewer's Comment:

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Question

Which of these statements is **false** regarding Persian ?

- i) Persian literary genres remained unchanged in India.
- ii) Vernacular literary traditions influenced Indo Persian Literature.
- iii) Sabk-i- hindi represents a mixture of Indian idiom and Persian poetics

Correct Answer / Option(s)

i)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

While the traditional Persian genres of Ghazal and Qasida continued to dominate the Indian literary scene, over a period of time they were enriched by the influence of existing vernacular poetic traditions of India like doha , prashasti etc. Similarly Indian environment and imagery also entered the poetic landscape of Persian poetry.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question

Is this statement **true** or **false**?
Persian remained a Muslim language in medieval india.

**Correct Answer /
Option(s)**

False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

This statement is false. Not all Muslims spoke Persian and many non Muslims who were associated with court administration and literature were proficient in Persian.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

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Table of Contents

Chapter 3: Indo-Persian Literature

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The Vernacular in the Persian Universe

The rise and fall of Persian in the Indian subcontinent was not an isolated process. As we have seen, political patronage was crucial for the fortunes of Persian but equally critical was the contribution of diverse social and cultural actors like Sufis, merchants, artists, soldiers among others. The domains of the elite and popular culture therefore were not two distinct spheres and connected with each other. This entanglement resulted in the growth of diverse vernacular traditions in north India (Braj, Awadhi, Gujri among others). We will now try and understand how Hindavi language and literature began and acquired prominence in northern India. The literary history of Hindavi has been dominated by colonial constructions of Hindi-Urdu as two distinct linguistic traditions. The narrative of distinct and separate Hindi-Urdu histories does not help much in understanding this complicated and entangled past of these languages.¹⁰As Shamsur Rehman Farooqi has shown, using the word 'early Urdu' to describe the vernacular tradition of northern India is not correct. 'Urdu' as a language name is a later development. We need to move beyond the arbitrary binary of Hindi versus Urdu in order to appreciate their shared past. In the subsequent discussion we will therefore examine the various historical and cultural aspects that shaped Hindavi literary culture.

¹⁰ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi. *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*. New Delhi :Oxford University Press.,2001,p21.

As already pointed out, even during the early days of Persian in India poets were appropriating the dialects of the common people. These words and idioms formed the Hindavi corpus of northern India. The language spoken around Delhi was referred variously as Hindavi, Bhasa or Dehalvi. For long it was assumed that that Hindavi grew and acquired the shape of Urdu in northern India in the region of Delhi and Punjab. However after the initial examples of Hindavi poetry of Amir Khusraw we do not have much evidence of the growth of Hindavi in northern India. This language tradition moved further south with the expansion of the Delhi sultanate initially under Khalji and later the Tughlaq rulers. Muhammad Shah Tughlaq (1300-1351) shifted the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, closer to the Deccan. Subsequently, the Hindavi tradition branched out in Gujarat where it was called Gujri, and further flourished under the Bahmani kingdom as Dakhani. Ali Jawad Zaidi identifies three phases in the growth of Dakhani literature: the first phase lasted till the dismemberment of the Bahmani kingdom around the close of 15th century. It later broke into five parts; of these Dakhani survived at the courts of the Adil Shahis at Bijapur and the Qutub Shahis at Golconda.¹¹

Adil Shah II (1580-1626) wrote the famous *Kitab-e-Nauras* –a treatise on music. This text represents the cultural fusion in literature where these songs glorified not just the Islamic past but also celebrated the divine enjoyment of Krishna worship. Similarly, Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah's poetry was steeped in an intensely Indian colour.¹² Here is his description of the spring festival:



Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah(1580-1611 CE)

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Quli_Qutub_Shah

¹¹ Ali Jawad Zaidi. *A History of Urdu Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993, p39.

¹² Ibid p43.

Value addition: Interesting Details 5**Dakhani Poetry**

O Sweetheart, come let us play Basant, for
 You are the moon and I am like a star.
 Let us , my love, play Basant to splash
 The skies with the red of evening twilight.
 I thirst after your darshan, O royal captor!
 My sweetheart, let us hug ourselves tight.
 I shall not keep you in the eyes but in the heart
 For you are ,dear, my life partner.

Source: Ali Jawad Zaidi. *A History of Urdu Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi , 1993,p43.

Apart from poetic creativity, gains were also made in the realm of prose. Mullah Asadullah Wajhi (1580 -1640) penned his prose masterpiece *Sab Ras* or 'The Tale of Beauty and Heart' in 1635. It successfully incorporates Sanskrit as well as Persian and Arabic vocabulary. This creative phase ended when these states were annexed by the Mughal Empire. In the third phase, the Dakhani element began to decline while it triggered the growth of Urdu literary growth in northern India .After the decline of the Deccan kingdom, the Mughals expanded their control. This resulted in a greater flow of populations and interaction between the north and the south. It is in this context that Mohamamd Vali (1667–1707) introduced his divan(collection of poetry) in Delhi which soon became extremely popular.¹³Vali's writing showed that the evolving vernacular verse writing in Rekhtah (mixed language) was capable of poetic expression in style and content. In the post-Vali literary culture we can identify a new generation of poets who were consciously writing in Rekhtah poetry.

Vernacular literary cultures also thrived at the popular and courtly levels. Stuart McGregor highlights 'four localities as sites of innovation and

¹³ Ibid p 49.

achievements'.¹⁴These included Gwalior, the Braj district, Orchha in Bundelkhand and Benares with its hinterland in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Stuart McGregor shows that from the fourteenth century onwards Brajbhasha became the popular medium of religious and courtly poetry around Agra. Similarly Avadhi prevailed in the region around Lucknow-Allahabad and was also incorporated by the Sufis in their writings. Maulana Daud compiled his Sufi romance *Candayan* in Avadhi in 1375 ,Tulsidas wrote *Ramcharitmanas* in Avadhi and so did Malik Muhamamd Jaisi write his epic poem *Padmavat* in Awadhi in 1540.



An illustrated manuscript of Padmavat, c1750

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padmavat>

Padmavat depicted the fictionalized account of Alauddin Khilji's siege of Chittor in 1303. Thomas de Bruijn has highlighted the dialogism in Avadhi epics.¹⁵ He shows that Tulsidas's epic rendering of the Ramayana was deeply rooted in the Avadhi epic genre created by Sufi poets. Similarly Jayasi's *Padmavat* is located in the Indian context and has inter-textual connections with the Rama story. This period also saw the growth and proliferation in the vernacular writings of Kabir, Surdas, Mirabai and other bhakti poets who used multiple vernacular registers of Avadhi, Braj bhasa, Rajasthani in their Hindavi idiom. Here is Kabir's famous poetry.¹⁶

¹⁴ Stuart McGregor. The Progress of Hindi, Part 1: The Development of a Transregional Idiom. In Sheldon Pollock(ed.), *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*. New Delhi:Oxford University Press, 2003,p914.

¹⁵ Thmas de Bruijn., Dialogism in a Medieval Genre :The Case of Avadhi Epics.In Francesca Orsini(ed.) ,*Before the Divide:Hindi and Urdu Literary Cullture*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.p127.

¹⁶ John Straton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer . *Songs of the Saints of India* .New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2004.

Value addition: Interesting Details 6**Kabir's Poetry**

That Master weaver , whose skill
 Are beyond our knowing,
 Has stretched his warp
 Through the world
 He has fastened his loom
 Between earth and sky,
 Where the shuttle cocks are the sun and moon
 He fills the shuttle with the thread
 Of easy spontaneity
 And weaves and weaves
 An endless pattern
 But now , says kabir, that weaver!
 He breaks apart his loom
 And tangles the thread
 In thread .

Source: John Straton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer .
Songs of the Saints of India .New Delhi Oxford University
 Press, 2004.KG pad 150

This interface between the Persian classical literary culture and the vernacular cultures in India is historically evident. Literary scholars have observed that the various forms of literary expressions within Rekhtah reflect absorptions as well as modifications of forms of Persian legacy within an Indian style of poetry, most notably as seen in the Ghazal tradition .*Ghazal* means conversations with women - its distinct feature is its fragmentary nature. However as Ali Jawaid Zaidi argues, the Ghazal acquired its distinct Indian colour from the Doha tradition of two line units of expression which in Urdu are called *shers* (couplets). Similarly the

qasidah or ode has its roots in the Arabic tradition as a poem written to gain reward from a patron, but also drew elements from the prashahsti panegyric tradition of Sanskrit. The *Barahmasah* as a genre in Persian and Urdu literature has its own roots in the Indian subcontinent describing the changing seasons of the years.¹⁷

Storytelling traditions occupied a pivotal place in south Asia from the time of the *Jataka* and *Panchtantra* tales. It is therefore not surprising that the Persian tradition of storytelling, i.e dastan or qissa proliferated and was also transformed in the Indian context. Frances Pritchett shows that qissa literature inherited its stories from Persian oral narrative traditions, as well as from medieval north Indian folktales. Thus, while *Qissa-e Hatim Ta'i*, was based on an old Arabic tale of Prince Hatim while *Simhasan battisi*, was a reworked version of the Sanskrit *Vikramacarita* which recounts the gallant deeds of Raja Vikram¹⁸ The dialogism of genres resulted in a hybridity of Persian literary forms in south Asia.

Value addition: Interesting Details 7

Qissa or Dastan

Dāstān and *qis.s.ah* in Persian both mean "story," and the narrative genre to which they refer goes back to medieval Iran. At least as early as the ninth century, it was a widely popular form of story-telling: dastan-narrators practiced their art not merely in coffee houses, but in royal palaces as well. They told tales of heroic romance and adventure--stories about gallant princes and their encounters with evil kings, enemy champions, demons, magicians, Jinns, divine emissaries, tricky secret agents called *ayyārs*, and beautiful princesses who might be human or of the *Parī* ("fairy") race. Dastans had no official religious or social purpose within their culture, and therefore no externally prescribed form. They existed for the sheer pleasure of the story-telling experience created by the narrator's artistic authority, they were sustained by the listeners' responsiveness, by the perpetual question, 'Then what happened?' Dastan-narrators drew on the revered national verse epic *Shāh nāmāh* (The Book of Kings) (c1010), and incorporated into its framework folk traditions of all kinds, creating narratives that were swept along by the strong currents of the imagination.

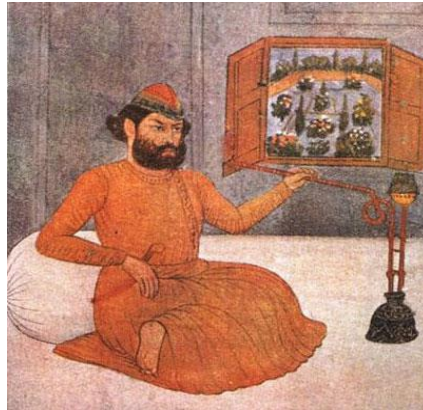
¹⁷ Ali Jawad Zaidi. *A History of Urdu Literature*. New Delhi:Sahitya Akademi, 1993.p13-18.

¹⁸Frances W. Pritchett. *Marvelous Encounters; Folk Romance in Urdu and Hindi*. 1998. New Delhi:Manohar, 1998.

Source: Frances W. Pritchett(ed.), The Romance Tradition In Urdu . Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamza. New York: Columbia University Press. 1991, p 1.

From Rekhtah Poetry to Urdu Language

After Vali many writers took up writing poetry in Rekhtah like Abru , Hatim, Mazim, Mazhar etc. Delhi emerged as the centre of rekhtah poets. This poetic tradition reached new height under the work of Sauda ,Dard and Mir as they represented a major turning point in the history of Urdu literature giving it maturity and sophistication of expression. Mir's ghazals exhibit a preciseness of language that also incorporated different registers of vernaculars now suitably transformed into a powerful Urdu literary language¹⁹



Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810)

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mir_Taqi_Mir

The period saw a proliferation of Mushairas which are a gathering where poets recite their compositions. These gatherings also had their own conventions of appreciation. Literary criticism flourished and reflects the growth and popularity of rekhtah poetry. However this literary success was soon disrupted. Between 1739-1803 Delhi was repeatedly plundered by Persians, Afghans and the Marathas and by rival aspirants for power. Mir voiced the changing times in his poetry.²⁰

¹⁹ C.M.Naim. (ed.) , *Zikr -i-Mir: The autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqi Mir* . New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. p5.

Value addition: Interesting Details 8**Mir's Poetry**

This bowl of a skull speaks of some mighty man;
 And the crumbling ruins tell of a mansion grand
 This world is a lengthy tale - We told a tiny part;
 Now someone else will tell the part that remained

Source: C.M.Naim. (ed.), *Zikr -i-Mir: The autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqi Mir*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. p129.

In such turbulent time, many poets shifted their base to the new prosperous capital of Lucknow in the kingdom of Awadh, where poetry acquired new dimensions in the *shia* culture of Lucknow. This resulted in the growth of Marsiya poetry in particular. *Marsiya* is a poem describing events related to the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Imam Husain at Karbala in Iraq. Marsiya poems generally consist of six-line units, with a rhyming quatrain, and a couplet on a different rhyme. The famous marsiya poets were Anis and Dabir. Some of the other illustrious poets from Awadh were Shaikh Imam Baksh Nasik, Haider Ali Atish, Babar Ali Anis and Salamat Ali Dabir. C.M Naim observes that one remarkable feature of the marsiya writings in Lucknow is the depiction of the indigenous culture and practices. Consequently, Arab heroes of the story are suitably transformed into the gentle folk of Lucknow.²¹

²⁰C.M.Naim. (ed.), *Zikr -i-Mir: The autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqi Mir*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. p129.

²¹ C.M Naim . The Art of Urdu Marsiya in Milton Israel and N.K Wagle (ed.), *Islamic society and culture (Essays in Honour of Prof. Aziz Ahmad)* New Delhi: Manohar Publication 1983. p109.



Mir Babbar Ali Anis(1803-1874)

Source: <http://www.poemhunter.com/mir-babar-ali-anees/biography/>

Meanwhile by 1803, the British occupied Delhi and in the next fifty years Delhi experienced what some have termed the 'Delhi renaissance'. This period saw remarkable achievements in the field of literature and learning. Poetry once again flourished at the Mughal court that served more as a cultural arena than a real political centre during the long twilight of Mughal state and saw parallel resurgence of Urdu poetic production under Zauq, Momin and Mirza Ghalib. Mirza Farhatullah Beg has left a fascinating reconstruction of the literary milieu of the period²²

Value addition: Interesting Details 9

The Last Musha'irah of Delhi:

A *Musha'irah* is held at the aristocratic house between nine and ten at night after dinner and goes on till dawn with a feast of ghazal after ghazal. No formal interval is observed. At Karim-ud-Din's *musha'irah* sleep overtakes the *mehfil* around two or three in the morning. But the poets are instantly wide awake and are ready for the second round the moment a striking ghazal is read. Needless to say no women were present at the old traditional *musha'irahs*. But since women are objects of longing and despair in much of the ghazal poetry their absence made them all the more desired and intriguing.

Nashist, that is the seating arrangement at a *musha'irah* was a ticklish matter and the order in which a poet read his ghazal was observed strictly according to established decorum. The great *ustada* sat in their own groups surrounded by their *shagirds* and I am sure the aura of their poetic fame was distinctly felt by everyone. The

²² Akhtar Qamber(ed.), *The Last Musha'irah of Delhi: A translation into English of Farhatullah Baig's Delhi Ki Akhri Shama'*. New Delhi: Orient Longman 1979.

presiding or host poet was assigned the central seat in a more or less circular seating arrangement. In front of him was placed the shama , symbol of the poetic muse. The *shama* was passed on to the poet whose turn it was to present his ghazal. At Karim-ud-Din 's *musha'irah* great care was taken in seating the poets . Touchy in this matter were the mughal princes and poets from court poets handled the seating order of his party most tactfully so as to give offence to no one.

Source: Akhtar Qamber(ed.) ,*The Last Musha'irah of Delhi: A translation into English of Farhatullah Baig's Delhi Ki Akhri Shama'*. New Delhi: Orient Longman 1979,p20.

Mirza Ghalib and the Changing Fortunes of Indo- Persian Literature

Persian continued to shape the poetic sensibility of many Rekhtah poets. Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan, whose pen-name was Ghalib(1797-1869) represents the important historical conjecture of the declining but yet vibrant Persian literary heritage increasingly taken over by the rekhtah tradition of poetry. Ghalib preferred writing in Persian but is mostly known for his Urdu works . Critics remark that Ghalib expanded the range of themes of the *ghazal* genre and utilized conventional Persian and Urdu poetic devices in new ways Thus from this perspective it seems fair to believe that Ghalib was the last Persian poet of the long Indo-Persian tradition and also the first modern poet of Urdu.²³

²³ Ralph Russell(ed.), *Ghalib : Life Letters and Ghazals*. New Delhi :Ox ford University Press, 2003. p412.



Mirza Assadullah Baig Khan Ghalib(1797-1869)

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirza_Ghalib

Value addition: Interesting Details 10

Ghalib's Urdu Verse

It was her beauty I described , and my words that described it
 And he is now my rival who was once my confidant
 Would that I could have looked out from an even greater height
 Would that I had my dwelling place above the throne of God
 What special wisdom did I have ? What unique skill was mine?

Source: Ralph Russell(ed.) , Ghalib : *Life Letters and Ghazals*. New Delhi :Oxford University Press, 2003. p125.

In 1850 , Ghalib was commissioned to write the history of the Mughal dynasty and gained the courtly patronage . This period of relative prosperity came to an abrupt end with the revolt of 1857. The failure of the revolt and subsequent end of Mughal rule and patronage tradition was trampled over by the colonial masters. While Ghalib was himself quite out of sympathy for the revolt for he knew it was bound to fail. Ghalib wrote prolifically even now and maintained a diary- *Dastanbu*, it narrated the events in Delhi in 1857.He also wrote many letters to his friends with remarkable witticism. These letters forms a crucial source of

information and also reflects the maturity of Urdu prose.²⁴ In one such letter he narrated the life in Delhi after British occupied Delhi.

Value addition: Interesting Details 11

Ghalib's Letter

Many of the wretched people of the city have been driven out and the rest lie here, prisoner of hopes and fear and there is perhaps no balm to soothe the pain of either those within or those without the city. If only those within and those without could have news of each other's lives and deaths. All one can tell with certainty is that everyman wherever he is, is in want. Those within the city who sigh deeply for their fate and those without who rejected by fate and condemned to rove aimlessly their hearts alike carry a full burden of sorrow and their faces alike are pale with the fear of death.

Source: Ralph Russell(ed.), *Ghalib : Life Letters and Ghazals*. New Delhi :Oxford University Press, 2003. p125.

Ghalib also continued his poetic output after 1857 under the patronage of the Nawab of Rampur but these years marked by hardships which gave a melancholic touch to his writings.

Language Reform and Construction of an Urdu Canon

After the decline of the Mughal state in 1857, Urdu poetry continued to thrive at various princely states like Rampur, Bhopal and Hyderabad. However, the impact of colonialism was felt on both language and literature in south Asia. The Fort William College, Calcutta, was established in 1800 as a language training centre for British colonial administrators. This resulted in translation project of Persian and Urdu texts. However in the colonial discourse about 'useful knowledge', prose began to supersede poetry. Similarly colonial linguistic survey and officials like John Gilchrist emphasized standardized and distinct Hindi and Urdu languages rather than their hybrid forms.²⁵ Also by late nineteenth century literary reformists began to insist on distinct, purified and reformed Hindi and Urdu literary heritages.²⁶ The period also witnessed the politicization of language in the form of the Hindi-Urdu controversy. In the transformed colonial discourse about 'useful knowledge', Literature was now appropriated for

²⁴ Ralph Russell(ed.), *Ghalib : Life Letters and Ghazals*. New Delhi :Oxford University Press, 2003. p125.

²⁵ Christopher King. *One Language, Two Scripts: the Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

²⁶ Vasudha Dalmia. *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

its social-functional role and not for its aesthetic value. The Indo-Persian legacy of Urdu literature was defined as decadent. Literature was now meant for the service of the community and therefore had to be suitably reformed. This argument was presented by three important literary critics who all wrote in the post-1857 context.²⁷ These were Altaf Husain Hali, Muhamamd Husain Azad and Shibli Numani. Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rehman Faruqi commenting on the reformism most evident in Azad's *ĀB-E ḤAYĀT* (written in 1880) observe that while this first modern history of Urdu poetry was rich with insights about literary culture but it was also apologetic about the cross cultural influences that went into the making of Urdu poetry and literature.²⁸



MUHAMMAD HUSAIN AZAD (1830–1910)

Source: <http://www.urdustudies.com/auinfo/azadMH.html>

The Ghazal tradition of Indo-Persian poetry came under severe attack from the late nineteenth century onwards. The Ghazal was characterized as unreal, rhetorical, mechanical, sensual, unnatural, erotic and pessimistic. The emphasis was on writing "natural" poetry that was socially beneficial. Instead of the fragmentary nature of the Urdu ghazal, a theme based *nazm* tradition of Urdu poetry was sought to be created. Even this process could not undermine the essentially multilingual heritage of Indo-Persian literature. However, the Hindi-Urdu language controversy and the partition

²⁷ Frances Pritchett. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

²⁸ Frances Pritchett & Shamsur Rehman Faruqi (ed.), *Ab-e-Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

of India meant disruption of Urdu literary culture. Nevertheless, Urdu literature continued to be informed by its essentially cosmopolitan heritage even now. It continues to remain popular through poetry and music. The success and growth of any language and literary culture depends on the community of speakers and as long as that would continue the Indo-Persian legacy will survive.

Summary

- Diverse Vernacular languages and literatures evolved in medieval India and enriched the Persian literary culture.
- Dakhani literature shows the diversity of poetic and early prose works in vernacular .
- Avadhi and Braj literatures reflect the diversity of Hindavi literary culture in north India.
- Literary works proliferated not just at courts but also at religious and cultural arenas .
- Poetry remained the most favoured genre within Indo-Persian literature.
- Mirza Ghalib contributed in the shaping of both Urdu prose and poetry.
- The Hindi-Urdu language politics and literary reformism sought to create two distinct literary histories.
- The Colonial period and its language policy marked a shift from hybridity to standardization.

Glossary

Dastan - Story

Musha'ira - Poetic gathering

Marsiya - Elegy

Rekhta - Mixed Language

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Essay Questions.

Discuss the impact of the vernacular traditions of India in shaping Persian literary culture.

Discuss the role of Dakhani in the evolution of poetic culture in India.

The Urdu literary tradition is a product of a decadent courtly context. Comment.

Would you agree that Ghalib represented the twilight of Persian and rise of modern Urdu poetry?

The Hindi-Urdu language divide is a product of modern language politics. Comment.

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
	Multiple Choice	

Question

Who wrote the Avadhi epic Padmavat?

- a) Malik Muhammad Jayasi
- b) Amir Khusraw
- c) Tulsidas

Correct Option

a

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

Khusraw wrote in Persian and Hindavi. While Tulsidas also wrote Ramacharitmanas in Avadhi. It was Malik Muhammad Jayasi who wrote the famous avadhi epic Padmavat in 1540.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

Question

Identify the illustrious Dakhani literary figure among the following:

- a) *Mas'ud Sa'd Salman*
- b) Vali
- c) Khusraw

Correct Option

b

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

Mas'ud Sa'd Salman was the early Persian poet at the Ghaznavid court in Lahore. Khusraw served the Delhi sultans. It was Vali who wrote in Dakhani.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

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Question

Who wrote the influential Urdu canonical text *Ab-e-Hayat*?

- a) Muhammad Azad
- b) Altaf Husain Hali
- c) Shibli Numani

Correct Option

a

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

While Altaf Husain Hali and Shibli Numani were also involved with language reformism. The most influential scholar was Muhammad Husain Azad who wrote the famous text *Ab-e hayat*.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

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Question Number	Type of question	LOD
	Match the Following	

Question

Match the following

- | | |
|------------|------------------------|
| a)Wajhi | i)Dastanbu |
| b) Ghalib | ii)Sabras |
| c) Khusraw | iii) <i>Nuh sipihr</i> |

Correct Option

a)and ii) , b) and i) , c) and iii)

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

All the three texts are important in Indo-Persian literature. Khusraw wrote the classic *Nuh sipihr* . Wajhi penned the early prose work sabras. Ghalib's diary Dastanbu reflects the growth and maturity of Urdu literature.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

Question

- a) *Mas'ud Sa'd Salman* i) Lucknow
b) Mir Anis ii) Lahore
c) Ghalib iii) Delhi

Correct Option

a)and ii) ,b) and i) and c) and iii).

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

There were various centres of patronage of Indo-Persian Literature. *Mas'ud Sa'd Salman* flourished under the Ghaznavid patronage at Lahore . Ghalib represents the twilight of Delhi based Mughal court While Mir Anis flourished at the Shia court in Lucknow.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:**Question**

- a)Habsiyat i)love poetry
b)Ghazal ii)Prison Poetry
c)Qasidas iii) Panegyric poetry

Correct Option

b) and ii), b) and i) and c) and iii)

Justification/ Feedback for the option a

There are various genres of poetry in Indo-Persian literature. The Ghazal or lyric poetry is the most popular literary form. Qasidas flourished in the courtly milieu narrating the success and qualities of the patron. Habsiyat or prison poetry was written by *Mas'ud Sa'd Salman*.

Justification/ Feedback for the option b

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option c

Type justification here

Justification/ Feedback for the option d

Type justification here

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
	True/False	

Question

Which of these statements is **false** regarding Prose in Urdu ?

- i) There was no growth of prose within the Urdu Literature.
- ii) Sabras is important prose text written in Dakhani.
- iii) Ghalib's letters reflects maturity of Urdu prose.

Correct Answer / Option(s)

i)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

While poetry was the favoured medium of literary expression in pre modern period. There was also development in the field of prose literature. Sabras(1635) was the first major text and subsequently Ghalib made important contribution in the development of Urdu prose through his letters and dairy writings. The late nineteenth century saw the proliferation of Urdu novels.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

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Reviewer's Comment:

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Question

Is this statement **true** or **false**?
Hindi and Urdu were always two distinct languages.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	False
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Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Hindi and Urdu share a closely entangled past. The Hindi-Urdu language divide developed during nineteenth century. When Colonial state policy, native language movement and literary reformist propagated separate language and literary histories .

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

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Reviewer's Comment:

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Question

Is this statement **true** or **false**?
Urdu poetry is product of courtly decadent culture.

**Correct Answer /
Option(s)**

False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

This statement is false. While Urdu poetry thrived on courtly patronage and has distinct tradition of love and erotic poetry. Many poets also expressed mystical and popular ideas in their poetry and also gave description of society and culture like Nazir Akbarabadi.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer**Reviewer's Comment:**