

Indian Historical Perspectives and Changes in Muslim Writing

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Abstract

This paper explores the idea of Muslim writing and its changes in their writing forms to present their expression in the languages. Therefore, the aims and objectives of the study are to investigate the historical study of India in Urdu Muslim Writing and to understand how Islamic culture came to India and spread across India. Since the Mughals in Hindustan ruled, from the 14th – the 18th century and changed the structure of history, bringing language as well as a culture that impacted language, culture, and society. However, the research questions are (i) What is the history of “Muslim Writing” in India? (ii) How did Urdu literature emerge in India? (iii) What is the role of Urdu literature (particularly, by Muslim writers)? In India, Persian and Urdu became part of literary expression in literature, comprising Eighteenth-century Urdu poetry and nineteenth-century Ghazal. The historians of religion usually neglect eighteenth-century Islam so it needs to bring a part of history to acquaint the knowledge of Persian mystical poetry, Sufi, Sindi, and Urdu. To conclude, in the 18th century, the development of Urdu literature emerged in India with competing other indigenous languages, although India is a multilingual country writer use the Urdu language and it is still sustained. However, the writers write all forms of literature and contribute their writing in Indian literature.

Keywords: Muslim Writing; India; history; literature; Urdu

1 Introduction

By the grace of God, the Muslims of India are, to a large extent, autonomous as regards Islam. They draw guidance from the earliest and most authoritative sources of Islam-the Qur'an and the Sunna and the lives of Islam's earliest representatives. ... Their faith and their life is tied to the radiance of Islam, not to the ephemeral glimmerings of Muslim nations or Arab states ([Zaman, 2002](#), p. 60)

In India, Islam became part of the social-cultural practice in the 7th century AD as it has been for centuries and, at present third largest Muslim population country in the world, after Indonesia and Pakistan. ‘The Musalmans of India, according to the Census of 1911, numbered 66 million, or

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more than the one-fifth population of the empire' ([Shurreef & Herklots, 1999](#)). But at present, it is negotiating to construct Islamic identity on the foundation of a glorious ancient past, and a bleak economic and political future, where the population of Muslims is in the minority. 'Among the Indian Muslims, most of them were converts or descendants of converts' With a similar line, ([Zaman, 2002](#)) writes on the subject of Muslim identity,

Many of the Muslim conquerors and rulers did, after all, originate outside India, as did numerous scholars, saints, and notables. On the other hand, Hindu fundamentalist allegations and colonial constructions of the foreignness of Muslims are also rooted in ways the Muslims of India have viewed themselves, in their definitions of identity ([Zaman, 2002, p. 60](#)).

With the identity context, India has historical records of the spreading Islam from the countries such as Afghans, Mongols, and Turks (600-1800); they developed and rooted Islamic culture in Indian society with cultural interaction as Indo-Persian interchange of culture and trading system. Moreover, the people in the new place, while accepting the Islamic faith also accepted the tradition and culture that make Islam in India unique to Indian Muslims. Therefore, Hindus and other caste people converted to Islam, and Indian society had the impact of Islamic culture Arabs. It is noticed that the number of Islamic followers was increasing during the Mughal emperors, and people converted from other castes, whereas they were equally treated by Islamic law. Moreover, there are changes and challenges for language, academic, and institutional, inclusion with the mainstream and culture of Muslim Indian society in Indian pre-independence to the twenty-first century. 'It is considerable that Muslim kingdoms of the South were outposts of the Faith among the majority Hindu population. As the Muslims were in minority (Moreland 23). Still, they are in a minor population in India, while Muslims challenge multicultural Indian society. 'Sheikh Farooq Abdullah, in an exclusive interview with "India Today," August 18, 1997, asserts, "This whole state was earlier Hinduland. We may not accept it, but it's history, Centuries ago, they converted to Islam because of the caste system in Hinduism"' ([Chitkara, 1998](#)).

Islam and Hinduism mutually influenced each other's a social structure, art, architecture, and religious practices over 1200 years. Between the 11th and 15th centuries, several new methods and technologies in agriculture, irrigation, administration, and arts and crafts were introduced, many of them by the Muslim rulers ([Walsh, 2006](#); [Schimmel, 1976](#)). Fifteenth to the eighteenth century, it is seen that in the Mughal period, Islam impacted Indian society and literature. 'Literature is both a determiner and denominator of culture' ([Kidwai, 2007](#)) '14th-century historian records that Delhi was the largest city in the eastern Islamic world where Lucknow to Delhi it is seen that Urdu poetry was people's choice to read Poetical forms being used by Hali, Iqbal, etc. to bring social-moral revolution. Bailay, Hindustani (1952); Din Mohammed, Hindustani (1933); Nizamuddin Gorekar's Glimpses of Urdu Literature (1961); Shawkat Sabzwari, Dastan-e-Zaban-e-Urdu (1965); Mohammed Sadiq, History of Urdu Literature (1984) and Ziaul Islam, Glimoses of Modern Urdu Literature (1949) ([Schimmel, 1976](#); [Taher, 1991](#)). In Islamic Studies in India: A Survey of Human, Institutional and Documentary Sources (1955), ([Taher, 1991](#)) mentions, that the Turkish language has a contribution to Islamic literature (adopted Arabic script and in the communication process). Basically, the history of Turkish literature has only two periods - (i) Islamic (15th and 17th century), and (ii) modern (19th century came under the western influence). However, with the eruption of a full-fledged secular society and, with it secular literature after 1920 onwards, Urdu become a major collection language for a wealth of Islamic literature, compared to any other Islamic language. The huge translation materials available for almost all major work on Islam in Urdu from Arabic, Persian, and other various languages aided in spreading Urdu (written in Perso - Arabic script). The word 'Urdu' is derived from the Turkish word 'ordu' which is the root of the English word 'Horde' meaning army or crowd. There are various theories about the origin of the name, and the above-mentioned is one. Urdu has also been called Hindustani, Urdu-e-Moalla, etc. As contrasted with Hindi, which drew its inspiration from Sanskrit

Hindu culture, Urdu looked to Persian literature for motifs and forms of the Islamic faith for its enrichment ([Taher, 1991](#)).

“The coming of the Persians and Turks brought a new Islamic influence into Indian writing, affecting not just those who wrote in Urdu but also those who wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, and Kashmiri. The Islamic influence added the Ghazal, a Persian form of love poetry similar to the European sonnet, to the Hindu Bhakti. The Indian Ghazal reached its high point in the Urdu lyric verse of Mir and Ghalib ([Farndon, 2009](#)).”

Historians of religion often overlook the eighteenth century, as most histories of Sufism end with the thirteenth or at best the fifteenth century, categorizing the following period as decadent. However, the eighteenth century saw a flourishing of mystical thought and poetry across Morocco to Islamic India. It also marked the emergence of Persian mystical, Sufi, Sindi, and Urdu poetry, and progressive writing by Indian Muslims, with notable poets such as Mir Ali Shir Qani, Latif, Girhori, Shah Gulshan, and Khan-i Arzu, as noted by ([Schimmel, 1976](#)) in her book *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century Muslim India* (1976).

Shah Inayat, a mystical poet, is mentioned by ([Schimmel, 1976](#)), who was besieged in his Khanqah Jhok and executed in January 1718. His fate inspired many Sufi poets, both Hindus and Muslims, to write touching poetry. By his disciples and friends, the first theological treatises in the Sindhi language were composed in the first half of the 18th century. The *Muqaddamat as-salat*, Preliminary Discourse on Prayer, written by Mian Abu'l-Hasan in 1700, dealt with 130 questions concerning the ritual practices of Islam and is the first major didactic poem in Sindhi. Although the rhyme-scheme is simple, using the device of alif-i-ishba, which produces a rhyming effect, it was the introduction of the Arabic characters in Sindhi for the first time that later became the basis of the standard Sindhi alphabet.

Urdu poetry developed into its most beautiful expression in Delhi. Shah Gulshan and his disciple Muhammad Nasir and Andalib, Mir Dard's father, were prominent members of the group who encouraged the development of Urdu poetry. The language became polished and refined in a short time, able to express the different moods of the population of Delhi and later Lucknow, and eventually, the mood of the whole Muslim population of India. In the first generation after Shah Gulshan and Khan-i Arzu, there were divergent types of poets found in Delhi at almost the same time, including the so-called “ihamists,” who transplanted the ambiguous style of some of the Persian writing artists into Urdu. Despite the breakdown of the Mughal Empire and invasions from Western neighbors, Delhi and the Lower Indus Valley produced an impressive amount of mystical writings and poetry. The printing facilities of the modern age brought about a change in literature, as noted by ([Taher, 1991](#)).

Writers of the modern period opened up European culture to their fellow Arabs and printing facilities brought a complete change. The twentieth century saw a galaxy of secularist writers. The most common outlet for prose writing was literary journalism. Fiction and theater have their roots only in this century in Arabic literature. Similarly, poetry had a style and convention of the classical age till the 1940s. After the 1940s the poets introduced greater structural variety, and Prof. K. A. Fariq's *A History of Arabic Literature* (1978) and Zubaid Ahmad's contribution to *India to Arabic Literature* (1945) ([Taher, 1991](#)).

John Frndon (2007) writes, “Urdu had its association with the urban environment, its prose, poetry, and other literary forms had a more urban look and better standing than the folk literature. It was by the mid-19th century that the novel was introduced to Urdu literature.” He quotes,

When the British arrived, contact with western thought and education, and the arrival of the printing press, had a profound effect on Indian writing. In the nineteenth century, the ports of Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai fostered the development of a new tradition of prose literature-

novels, short stories, and plays - that overwhelmed traditional Indian verse. A few Urdu poets continued to compose it in the old ways (240).

In the 18th century, the development of Urdu literature emerged in India with competing other indigenous languages, which sustained even in twenty-first century. Although India is a multilingual country, the writers use the Urdu language to present India in Urdu Indian literature. Indian Muslim writing and influences of Muslim culture in their writing around the twenty-first century under the contextual framework of identity and historical background of Islamic social-cultural influences on Indian society. However, there is a significant contribution by Muslim religious or historical prominent scholars such as Muhammad Hamidullah's Cultural and Intellectual History of Indian Islam (1954), (Kidwai, 2007) (Daily Wisdom: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, 2010), and Languages of Political Islam in India 1200-1800 (Alam, 2004). At present, they write on the issues of Muslim and Islam history and practice. In other words, these scholars have a common interest in presenting minority groups, particularly the Muslim community within the nation. Also, their writing beautifully engages with the impact of Islam on Indian society. The history of rulers and history of culture, and politics are diversities in India. There are many languages contributing to their history in Indian literature.

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