CHAPTER 4

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Taken together, all the varied religious, cultural and literary developments and innovations that were a consequence of Islam’s contact with Hinduism echoed the Mughal concern for ensuring ‘justice’ and ‘peace’ for all. In terms of their theory of social equi-poise (i’tidal) and non-sectarian approach to matters of faith, these made political sense, even as they diverged from orthodox Islam. In these attempts at social stability, language played no small role. Persian became a crucial vehicle for the mode and idiom of politics that Mughal rule attempted to propagate. Persian enjoyed status of court language and by the Mughal time it was widely spoken by majority of Indians. The present chapter thus taken to examine the growth and achievements of Persian as prominent language and along side also analyses literary activities in regional languages during Mughas period.

Persian

The Mughals, who took over from about mid sixteenth century, showed unprecedented interest in patronizing Persian literary culture during their rule. Mughal India has been particularly noted for its extraordinary achievements in poetry and wide range of prose writings in Persian. In terms of sheer profusion and variety of themes, this literary output probably exceeded that produced under every other Muslim dynasty. The Mughals were Chaghatay Turks by origin, and we know that, unlike them, Turkey rulers outside Iran – such as the Ottomans in Asia Minor and the Uzbeks in Central Asia – were not quite so enthusiastic about Persian. Indeed, in India too, Persian did not occupy such a
position of dominance in the courts of the early Mughals. Babur’s Babur-Nama, the story of his exploits in Turkish, and Turkish poetry, enjoyed a considerable audience at his son Humayun’s court even after Humayun’s return from Iran.¹

In matters of language, the Mughals had no other choice, and that they simply inherited a legacy and continued with it. In some measure, this conjecture seems plausible. Persian had established itself in a large part of north India as the language of the Mughal elite.² The famous line of Hafiz of Shiraz (d. 1398) – ‘All the Indian parrots will turn to crunching sugar with this Persian candy which goes to Bengal’³ – was testimony of a receptive audience for Persian poetry in north India. However, subsequently, there seems to have been a setback to the literature of the language here. There is hardly a notable Persian writer to be found in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries,⁴ even while Hindavi texts such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi’s Padmavat represent the best expression of Muslim sufī ideas at this time. Persian does not appear to be very strong under the Afghans either. Most of the Afghans, Babur tells us, could not speak Persian. Hindavi was recognized as a semi-official language by the Sur sultans (1540-55), and their chancellery scripts even bore transcriptions in the Devanagari script. The practice is said to have been introduced by the Lodis.⁵ For the extraordinary rise of Persian under the Mughals, the explanation may then be sought more in a convergence of factors within the Mughal regime than within the indo-Persian heritage of preceding Muslim regimes.
Humayun accompanied a large number of Iranians on his return from Iran, where he had taken refuge following his defeat against the Afghans in 1540. They assisted him in reconquering Hindustan in 1555. Later, in the 1560s, Akbar needed Iranian help to, and encouraged them to join his imperial service to overcome the difficulties he faced from ambitious Chaghatay nobles. Before Humayun, the Iranians had helped Babur in 1511, during his fight against the Uzbeks, following the destruction of Timurid power in Heart. All of this Iranian help to the Mughals contributed to the expansion of the frontiers of Persian in Mughal India.

Then there is Akbar’s unusual interest in promoting social, cultural and intellectual contacts with Iran. The emperor’s success on this account was far from superficial. A very large number of Persian writers and poets came into India, many of them in search of better fortune, others fleeing religious and political persecution in the sectarian Safavid regime. Akbar’s India earned the distinction of being termed the place of refuge and the abode of peace (dar al-aman) where the wise and the learned would receive encouragement. Migration to India at that time promised material comforts and honoured positions, Iran under the Safavids having turned Shiite, in a very narrow sense of the term. In Mughal India, on the other hand, the space for accommodating opposition and conflict was widening, subsequent to the Mughal policy of sulh-i-kull (peace with all). Growing numbers of nonconformist and dissident Iranians thus found a natural refuge in India. As an ambitious ruler in obvious competition with the Iranian shah, Akbar tried to exploit this situation, extending the frontiers of his authority, at least symbolically, over the Safavid
domain. Its intention was to neutralize the awe that the Iranian shah exercised over the Mughal household because of the Iranian help to Babur and Humayun.

The extent to which Iranian scholars in Akbar’s court served as his agents in extending his influence within Iran is a moot question. His invitation to such people landed many of them in trouble; some of those he choose to invite in person, and who were among the noted nonconformists, faced drastic punishment and several were even executed by the shah. However, the Mughal emperor’s desire to bring ‘the exalted [Iranian] community close to him spiritually and materially’ prepared the ground for many of them to make India their second home. Iranian talents in the arts, it began to seem, could flourish more in Mughal India than at home. As a consequence, Mughal India drew close to Iran culturally, and Persian attained its status as the first language of the Mughal king and his court.

Among the first literary works in the reign of Akbar – a time when he was consolidating Mughal power in India – was the preparation of a Persian translation of his grandfather’s Babur Nama. Ironically, the translator was ‘Abd al-Rahim Khan, Khan-i-Khanan, the son of Bairam Khan, who had been a poet in Turkish. But it was not just Babur’s memoir that was rendered into Persian; the emperor also desired that the sources of the new court history recording Mughal achievements be compiled in Persian. Then, a work by Humayun’s sister, Gulbadan Begum, titled Humayun-Nama, was written in Persian, even though Turkish was the native tongue of the princess and of her husband and Khizr Khwaja Khan. (Antoinette Beveridge, who translated Gulbadan’s work into English, suspects that the book was originally composed in Turkish).
Similar was the case of two other accounts of Humayun’s time, *Tazkira-i Humayun wa Akbar* and *Tazkirat al-Waqi’at*: both were meant to serve as sources for Abu’l Fazl’s *Akbar-Nama*; it was well known that their authors, Bayazid Bayat and Jauhar Aftabchi, respectively, could manage little beyond a ‘shaky and rustic’ spoken Persian. Jauhar, in fact, got the language of his account revised and improved by the noted writer and lexicographer Ilahdad Faizi Sirhindi before presenting it to the emperor.\(^\text{13}\)

Akbar had no formal education. Important books were therefore read out to him regularly, in assembly hall. His library consisted, indeed, of hundreds of prose books and poetical works in Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Greek and Kashmiri, but the books that the emperor heard repeatedly were all in Persian.\(^\text{14}\) Akbar, according to one report, could also compose verses in Persian and Hindi; but Mughal sources generally record only his Persian couplets, and we have to wade through these to find the few Hindi verses that are attributed to him. We also know that only Persian poets had the privilege of enjoying extensive royal patronage at Akbar’s court.

Among the Muslim rulers of north India, Akbar was probably the first to institute the formal position of *malik al-shu’ara* (poet laureate) at a royal court. To be awarded to a Persian poet only, this position continued until Shahjahan’s time (1628-58). The *malik al-shu’ara’*, during these Mughal years, were ghazali Marshhadi, Husain Sana’i, Talib Amuli, Kalim Kashani and Qudsi Mashhadi all Iranians; Abu’l Faiz ‘Faizi’ (1547-95) was the sole exception. Only nine out of the fifty nine rated in Akbar’s court as the best among the thousand poets in Persian who had completed a *diwan* or written a *masnawi*, were identified as non-Iranian.\(^\text{15}\) Again, a large number of other Persian poets
and writers, 81 according to Nizam al-din Bakhshi and 168 according to Badauni, received the patronage of the emperor or his nobles.¹⁶ Over a 100 poets and 31 scholars were associated with the establishment of ‘Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan alone.¹⁷

Persian thus emerged as the language of the king, the royal household and the high Mughal elite. Akbar’s son and successor Jahangir (1605-27) was not particularly accomplished in Turkish, but he cultivated his own style in Persian and wrote his memoirs in elegant prose. He was also a good critic of Persian poetry and composed several verses and ghazals.¹⁸ It was for him that Jayasi’s Padmavat was translated into Persian, though the work was recognized only as an Indian fable (afsana-i Hindi) and not as one on Islamic mysticism in Hindi.¹⁹ The formal abolition of the institution of malik al-shu’ara’ only slightly affected the supreme status of Persian. Indeed, late seventeenth-century northern India witnessed the emergence of numerous native poets of high standard in Persian, including the great Mirza ‘Abd al-Qadir Bedil (d. 1720) and Nasir ‘Ali Sirhindi.

**Persian as a Official Language of the Mughal Empire**

Persian was adopted official language. At court and in offices the entire work was done in Persian. Raja Todar Mal was accredited to make Persian compulsory for official work. If one wanted service in revenue department then Persian learning was most. Large number of khatri and Kayasthas opted for Persian and many of them even excelled Muslim. Hindus had already begun to learn Persian in Sikandar Lodi’s time, and Badauni, even mentions a specific Brahman as an Arabic and Persian teacher at his time.²⁰ Akbar’s enlightened
policy and the introduction of ‘secular’ themes in the syllabi at middle levels ‘stimulated a wide application to Persian studies’. Hindus – Kayasthas and Khatris in particular – joined madrasas in large numbers to acquire excellence in Persian language and literature, which now promised a good career in the imperial service.\(^{21}\)

From the middle of the seventeenth century, the departments of accountancy (siyaq), draftsmanship (insha’), and the office of revenue minister (diwan) were mostly filled by Hindu munshis and muharrirs. Harkaran Das Kambuh of Multan is the first known Hindu munshi whose writings were taken as models by later munshis.\(^{22}\) Chandra Bhan ‘Brahman’ and Bhimsen were other influential members of this group. Chandra Bhan was rated second only to Abul’l Fazl. He also wrote poetry of high merit.\(^{23}\) There followed a large number of other Kayastha and Khatri munshis, including the well known Madho Ram, Sujan Rai, Malikzadah, Bhupat Rai, Khushhal Chand, Anand Ram ‘Mukhlis’, Bindraban ‘Khwushgu’, and a motley crew which make substantive contributions to Indian Persian language and literature. Selections and specimens of their writings formed part of the syllabi of Persian studies at madrasas. Certain areas hitherto unexplored or neglected found skilled investigators, chiefly among Kayasthas and Khatris. They produced excellent works, in the eighteenth century, in the philological sciences. The *Mir’at al-Istilah* of Anand Ram ‘Mukhlis’, the *Bahar-i ‘Ajam* of Tek Chand ‘Bahar’, and the *Mustalahat al-shu’ara’* of siyalkoti Mal ‘Warasta’ are among the most exhaustive lexicons compiled in India. These Persian grammars and commentaries on idioms, phrases, and poetic proverbs show their authors’ keen
interest, admirable research, and unprecedented engagement in the development of Persian in India.24

The masters of the Iranian classics Persian thus found an increasingly appreciative audience even among the middle order literati in big and small towns, as well as among village-based revenue officials and other hereditary functionaries and intermediaries. All Mughal government papers, from imperial orders (farmans) to bonds and acceptance letters (muchalka, tamassuk qabuliayt) that a village intermediary (chaudhuri) wrote, were in Persian.25 Likewise, there was no bookseller in the bazaars and streets of Agra, Delhi and Lahore who did not sell anthologies of Persian poetry. Madrasa pupils were in general familiar with the Persian classics.26 Persian, then, had practically become the first language in Mughal India. Its users appropriated and used Perso-Islamic expressions such as Bismillah (in the name of Allah), lab-bagur (at the door of the grave), and bajahannam rasid (damned in hell) just as much as their Iranian and non-Iranian Muslim counterparts did. They would also now look for, and appreciate, Persian renderings of local texts and traditions. Lest they be forgotten, the religious scriptures were rendered in full into Persian by various Hindu translators.27

If, on the one hand, the prospects of a good career and direct access to the ancient scriptures now available in Persian provided incentives for learning Persian to Hindus, on the other, this language acquired a kind of religious sanctity among Muslims. Jamal al-din Inju, author of Farhang-i Jahangiri, the first comprehensive Persian lexicon, dwells at length on the point that Persian, together with Arabic, is the language of Islam. The Prophet of Islam, he reports
from various sources, knew and spoke Persian. The prophets, according to Inju, spoke highly of the merits of the people of Pars; he cites verses from the Qur'an in appreciation of the people of Pars for their bravery and courage in fighting for a noble cause. Faith (imān), according to Inju, is integral to their (the people of Pars' character, to the point that they would have acquired the true faith even if it were far from them up in the sky.²⁸ Inju began to compile the Farhang at Akbar's instance, and, since it was completed after the emperor's death, it was dedicated to his son Jahangir.²⁹

The work's message was possibly intended to be communicated to Indian converts, whose native language was largely some form of Hindavi. There was certainly a wide application of Persian studies among the shūrāfa' - Muslim landed magnates, revenue-free landholders in the rural areas and those who had a daily allowance (a'imma, wazifa) in towns, and petty officials. Even ordinary literate Muslims-soldiers, for instance-were now expected to read simple Persian.³⁰

Learning, knowledge and high culture began to be associated with Persian at many levels of Mughal society. Command over good Persian was a matter of pride, and deficiency in elegant expression in Persian meant cultural failure.

In general, Persian was held to be the only effective language in which to express cultural accomplishment, and it came to be recognized as the language of politics in nearly the whole of the subcontinent.³¹ This status received nourishment from the Mughal power which sustained it, and the Mughal belief in Persian as the most functional, pragmatic and accomplished vehicle of communication remained unshaken among north Indian populations.
long after the demise of the Mughal empire. The long association of the Mughals, and of their supporters and successors, with Persian in the fields of political and military management created a memory of the language as an instrument of conquest. Persian facilitated Mughal triumph. The intrinsic strengths of the language, combined with the emperor's decision supporting it, prepared the grounds for forging links between the court and remote villages.

Again, Persian was valorized because its poetry had integrated many elements from pre-Islamic Persia. It had already served as an important vehicle of liberalism in the medieval Muslim world—as illustrated by the verses of Amir Khusrau and Hasan Sijzi Dihlawi. These factors helped significantly in encouraging and promoting conditions that would accommodate diverse religious and cultural traditions. Among the Persian books which Akbar had read aloud to him every night was the *Masnavi* of Jalal al-Din Rumi. The emperor’s non-sectarianism could have been inspired by Rumi’s verses, such as the following:

\[
\begin{align*}
Tu & \text{ bara-i wasl kardan amdi} \\
Na & \text{ bara-i fasl kardan amdi} \\
Hindiyan & \text{ ra istilah-i Hind madh} \\
Sindiyan & \text{ ra istilah-i Sind madh.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Thou hast come to unite, 
not to separate. 
The people of Hind worship in the idiom of Hindi 
The people of Sind do so in their own.)

This feature of Persian poetry was not diluted even when Aurangzeb tried to associate the Mughal state with Sunni orthodoxy. Nasir ‘Ali Sirhindi, a major poet of his time, echoed ‘Urfi’s message with real enthusiasm.

\[
\begin{align*}
Nist & \text{ ghair az yak sanam dar parda-i dair-o-haram} \\
kai & \text{ shawad atish du rang az ikhtilaf-i sang-ha.}
\end{align*}
\]
(In the temple or in the Ka’ba, the image is the same behind the veil. With a change of flints, does the colour of fire change?)

In fact, at other times, neither mosque nor temple seem illumined by divine beauty: the heart (dil) of the true lover is its abode. The message was therefore, at times, that man should aspire to the high place that lovers occupy.

Another poet, Talib Amuli, called for transcending the differences in attitude that emerge because of people's names.

\[Na\ \text{malamat-gar-i kufr am na ta’assub-kash-i din}\]
\[Khanda-ha\ \text{bar jadl-i Shaikh-o Barhaman daram}\]

(I do not condemn infidelity, I am not a bigoted believer, I laugh at both, the Shaikh and the Brahman.)

In all these varied ways Persian made a plea for conquest and dominance without staining the victor's apparel with the blood of the vanquished.

\[Zakhm-ha\ \text{bardashtim o-fath ha kardim lek}\]
\[Hargiz\ \text{as khun-i kas-i rangin nashud daman-i ma}\]

(We have suffered wounds, we have scored victories, but our skirts were never stained with anyone's blood.)

The desire to build an empire in which both Shaikh and Brahman might live with minimal conflict also necessitated the generation of information about diverse local traditions. Akbar's historian Abu'l Fazl is not content in his Akbar-Nama with a mere description of the heroic achievements of his master; he concludes his account with what he calls the A’in (institutes) of Akbar. Of particular note here is the third book of the A’in, which contains a survey of the land, the revenues, and the peoples or the castes in control thereof. Above all, the fourth book 'Treats of the social conditions and literary activity especially
in philosophy and law, of the Hindus, who form the bulk of the population, and in whose political advancement the emperor saw the guarantee of the stability of his realm.\(^{37}\) As we have noted earlier, in order to make the major local texts accessible and thus to dispel the ignorance about local traditions, Akbar took special care to render Indian scriptures into Persian. The translations of these religious texts were followed in Akbar's own time, and later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by Persian renderings of a large number of texts on 'Hindu' religion, law, ethics, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, romance, moral fables and music.\(^{38}\)

Fig. 8. Leaf from the *Farhang-i-Jahangari* (Persian dictionary) of Jamal ud-Din Husayn Inju, 1607-8
Persian thus promoted the conditions in which the Mughals could build a class of allies out of heterogeneous social and religious groups. While this class cherished universalist human values and visions, the emperor was seen, in the words of the noted Braj poet Keshav Das, as *duhu din ko sahib* (the master of both religions), possessing the attributes of the Hindu god Vishnu. Din, in this atmosphere, assumed a new meaning: the king could blend Hindu social practices and Rajput court rituals with Islam at the Mughal court. These practices ranged from applying *tika* (the vermilion mark) on the foreheads of political subordinates, to *tuladan* (the royal weighing ceremony) and *jharoka darshan* (the early morning appearance of the emperor on the palace balcony), to the public worship of the sun by Akbar-and this entailing prostration facing the east before a sacrificial fire and the recitation of the sun's names in Sanskrit. The influence of the illuminationist philosophy of Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul apart order to highlight their affinity with the Rajputs—in whose legends fire and light had special position—that Abu’l Fazl emphasized the legendary origins from light of the Mughals themselves. Mughals married Rajput princesses and allowed them to observe their rituals, ceremoniously, in their palaces. Such alliances entailing cross practices were reciprocated by local Hindu culture in Rajputana and within Rajput society. Rajputs often considered the Mughals as a sub-category of their own *jati*. The Mughal emperor, in their traditions, held high rank and was esteemed sufficiently to be equated with Ram, the Kshatriya cultural hero and exemplary Hindu king. The Rajputs identified themselves with the house of the Mughal to the extent that they believe it should be defended in the same way as their own families and royal houses.
Arabic

Arabic has been the language of Islam from its very beginnings, and a vast number of works on theology and jurisprudence have been written in Arabic from the time Muslims first arrived on the subcontinent. *Hadith* literature – the sayings of the Prophet and traditions of his life – flourished, and India has remained a thriving centre for *hadith* studies. The same was true for Sufi works, and for the Arabic grammars used by the students at madrasas. The Arabic textbooks were often rhyming, and the students had to learn them by rote. The great works of al-Ghazali (died 1111), and the introduction to Sufi ethics, *Adab al-muridin*, by Abu Najib as-Suhrawardi (died 1165), were in circulation at the time. During the course of the fifteenth century, the writings of the great theosophist Ibn ‘Arabi (died 1240), especially the *Ishfus al-hikam*, ‘Ring stones of words of wisdom’ achieved great popularity in India. The most important sufi work written in Mughal India was ‘The Five Jewels’ by Muhammad ghauth Gwaliari, a Sufi primarily associated with Humayun. His complex work, which weaves together elements such as astrology, *kabbalah* and name invocations, had a great influence on popular Islam in India. There are still copies in existence today, in both Arabic and Persian.

Less influential albeit far more remarkable was the *Sawati al-ilham* by Akbar’s poet laureate Fayzi (died 1595). This commentary on the Qur’an is an immensely difficult work, because it is written in Arabic entirely without dots, which are normally essential to differentiate most of the consonants, which otherwise look exactly the same. If they are omitted, many verb forms cannot be distinguished, giving rise to innumerable possible misreadings of the text. Fayzi’s commentary was dismissed as an ‘utterly irrelevant work’. However,
his purpose was to demonstrate his absolute mastery of the Arabic language, and, as he pointed out, the declaration of faith, *la ilaha illa' illah Muhammad-dar-rasul Allah*, also consists of nothing but undotted letters. Bada‘uni countered that Fayzi must have written the commentary whilst in a state of ritual impurity, and thereby committed a grave sin.\(^4\)

Despite Akbar’s attempts to limit the scope of the language of the Qur’an, theologians continued to compose works in Arabic. In fact, the important *hadith* collection of ‘Ali al-Muttaqi from Burhanpur, titled *Kanz al-\(\text{ummal}\)*, which remained in circulation for centuries, was firmly rooted in the Mughal tradition. A letter sent by Ahmad Sirhindi to the Mughal nobles was also partly written in Arabic. Furthermore, the writings of his contemporary ‘Abdu’ll hazz Dihlawi (died 1642) were written partly in Arabic and partly in Persian. Great works in Arabic started to appear once more in Aurangzeb’s time, when the ruler began taking an interest in reviving traditional Islamic education, which was neither mystical nor syncretistic in orientation. The writings of Mulla Jiwan (died 1717) are relevant in this connection. Jiwan and the ruler read together Ghazzali’s groundbreaking work, *Ihya’ \(\text{ulum ad’din, ‘Revivification of the Sciences of Religion’}*. His contemporary Muhibullah Bihari (died 1707), the Chief Qadi, was a distinguished writer in Arabic, whose *Musallam ath-thubut* (Chronogram AH 1109 = 1697) is considered to be one of the most important of the later textbooks of *usul al-\(\text{fiqh, the ‘laws of jurisprudence’, whilst his sullam al-‘ulum ‘Scientific Manual’, is regarded as the best work on logic ever written in India. Also noteworthy is the great collection of legal precedents, Fatawa-\(\text{yi’alamgiri, which was compiled for Aurangzeb, and which provides an important insight into Muslim law at the end of the seventeenth century. Many new Arabic commentaries on the Qur’an,}*)
and works on Qur’anic recitation, appeared in Aurangzeb’s time, also Arabic prayer books, as well as an index to the Qur’an, *Nujum al-furqan* (1691).46

**Sanskrit-Hindi**

In addition to their perennially strong interest in the Turkish language, the Mughal household took an increasing interest in Hindi and other languages of India. After the first Hindi epics, for example *Lor Chanda*, by Maulana Da’ud, had been composed in the fourteenth century, the famous epic *Padmavat* was composed by Malik Muhammad Ja’isi, in Babur’s time. Akbar not only loved Persian poetry but also enjoyed Hindi songs, such as the ones sung by Sufis at the mausoleum of Mu’inuddin Chishti in Ajmer. He is supposed to have been able to speak some Hindi, and Jahangir once commented that a certain Lal Kalawant had taught him everything he knew about Hindi. Historical sources refer to a number of Hindi poets who composed for the Mughal rulers, and Bada’uni relates that Burhanuddin, a Mahdawi from Kalpi, recited his beautiful mystical Hindi poetry in Chunar in 1559.

A year later, Surdas *mahakavi*, ‘the great poet’, paid a visit to Akbar, and whole families of Hindi poets prided themselves on being under the patronage of the Mughal ruler. One of these poets was proud of the fact that his grandfather had been under the patronage of Akbar, his father under Jahangir’s, and he himself under Shah Jahan’s patronage. The latter also had a distinguished poet laureate, *mahakaviray*, by the name of Sundardas, who wrote in Hindi, and was on a par with his colleagues who composed in Persian.47

The most famous Hindi poet from the time of Akbar and Jahangir was Tulsi Das (died 1623).48 He was very close to the great personages at court.
such as Raja Man Singh and Abdur Rahim *khan-i-khanan* the latter was his
good friend. *Khan-i-khanan* is known to this day as the author of some
especially beautiful and tender Hindi poems which are still highly regarded.
Abdur Rahim a literary genius of many languages patronized not only Persian
poets but also was synthetic to numerous Hindu poets, who sang verses in his
praise. Akbar's youngest son, Prince Danyal, loved Hindi poetry, and
composed a few verses himself in that language. There was also a Muslim
poetess. Taj, who is said to have composed Hindi poems. A number of amirs in
the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries professed to love the Hindi language,
among them the Sufi poet Khub Muhammed Chishti, who lived in Gujarat in
Akbar's time, and was the author of a number of important writings in Gujarati
and Hindi.

The interest in Hindi poetry lasted throughout the time of Shah Jahan. One
poet, Maniram Kavi, sang to commemorate the newly constructed capital city
of Shahjahanabad (Delhi). When another Hindi poet, Pandit Rasagangadhar,
was named as Shah Jahan's *mahakavirlay*, poet laureate, he received his weight
in silver.

Since Hindus played an important role as astrologers, a number of works
on astrological themes were written in Hindi.

There was already a long-standing interest in Sanskrit writings - the
*Amrtakunda* had long ago been translated into Arabic as *Bahr al-hayat*, 'Sea of
Life'. However, it was during Akbar's time that the holy language of the
Hindus came in for special attention from the government, and a number of
original works in Sanskrit were produced by Hindu and Jain authors at the
court. A Jain scholar. Samayasmidarjee appeared in Lahore in 1592 to present
his Sanskrit work to Akbar, and received in recognition the title _upadhyaya_. Birbal, whose _nom de plume_ Brahman, was an entertainer who was elevated to the status of _raja_ at Akbar’s court, and honoured with the title _kaviraj_. He became a member of the emperor’s innermost circle, the _nauratari_, the ‘nine jewels’.

There are numerous instances of Jain poets who wrote in praise of Akbar – one of them did so in no fewer than 128 Sanskrit verses! A generation later, Rudra Kavi sang his songs of praise in Sanskrit for the _khan-i-khanam_ ‘Abdu’r Rahim, as well as for Akbar’s son Danyal and Jahangir’s son Khurram, who later became Shah Jahan. He too was later honoured with poems of praise in Sanskrit composed by a Pandit from Benares, primarily in the hope of convincing the emperor to repeal the pilgrimage tax, which had always been a bone of contention with Hindus.

Astronomical, astrological, and medical works were composed in Sanskrit. Akbar received instruction in Hindu legal problems from Sanskrit scholars. The finance minister, Todar Mai, compiled an entire encyclopaedia on Sanskrit, its literature and cultural role.

As time went on, there was increasing awareness of the necessity for a better knowledge of the grammar of the different languages spoken in the empire. In the mid-seventeenth century, an attempt was made to produce a grammar and a handbook of Turkish, and then a Sanskrit grammar was written under Aurangzeb. A Persian-Arabic Sanskrit Dictionary had already been produced in 1643, during the time of Shah Jahan, by a certain Vadangaraya, which concentrated on astronomical terminology.
The *Amrtakunda* was translated quite early into Bengali, and there was another translation in the possession of the followers of the great Sufi Muhammad Ghauth Gwaliari. A certain Nizam Panipati, assisted by two Pandits, completed an abridged translation of the *Yoga vasishta*, which he dedicated to the crown prince Salim Jahangir.

Various translations of collections of Sanskrit fairy tales, which were translated in the sixteenth century, have long since reached the West from the Islamic world, for instance the *Pancatantra* and the *Hitopadesa*. The former appeared as *Mufarih al-qulub*, ‘The Heart’s electuary’, and was dedicated to Humayun. The *Tutinama*, ‘The Chronicle of the Parrot’, became known in India in its Persian version, after Zia’uddin Nakhshabi (died 1350) had recited it in this language. This collection was especially popular in Akbar’s time, as can be seen from manuscripts illustrated with miniatures. It was also well received in Turkey and Europe. This was also the case with the fables of the *Panchatantra* which had been translated into Arabic as early as the end of the eighth century, under the title *Kalila wa Dimna*. At Akbar’s instigation, Abu’l Fazl translated it into Persian under the title *Ayu-i-Danish*, as an earlier version, *Anwar-i suhayli*, ‘The Lights of Canopus’ which had been completed at the court of Husayn Bayqara of Heart, was too complicated for Akbar. There are many illustrated versions of this work in the Islamic world.

Akbar had still more translation projects in mind. First of all, he wanted that Muslims should get acquainted with the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*, so he had that translated, under the title *Razmnama*. Bada’uni, worked in that project.
Bada’uni at his own learnt Sanskrit and he became a great scholar and translated many Sanskrit work into Persian. The translation of Valmiki’s *Ramayana* elicited yet more protests from Bada’uni. The *Ramayana* was illustrated in the *khan-i-khanan*’s studio, and then presented to Akbar.\textsuperscript{52}

These translations from the Sanskrit in fact inspired Akbar’s artists to produce their finest works – the Hindu painters must certainly have enjoyed portraying the colourful legends of their own tradition as finely as possibly. The wonderful scene from the *harivamsa*, of Krishna raising Mount Govardhan, is an inspired portrayal of the Indian legend, and the artists have managed to capture the ineffable religious mood inspired by this miracle.\textsuperscript{53}

**Turkish**

At the time when Babur laid the foundation for the rule of the ‘House of Timur’ in India by his victory at Panipat in 1526, the use of Turkic terms was widespread.

Many Turkish words designating family relationships, such as *apa*, ‘elder sister’, *ata*, ‘father’, *koka*, ‘foster brother’, *yanga*, ‘sister-in-law’, also *beg, bey*, ‘master / mister’, and *khan*, ‘Sir’, and words derived from them, including the feminine forms *begum, khanum*, are still in use today. First names are often also Turkish, including Babur, meaning ‘tiger’, and that of the founder of the line, Timur, from *temur*, ‘Iron’, and also conjunctions such as *tanriberdi*, ‘God given’, or good omens such as’ *qutlugh*, ‘fortunate’.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Iranian ruler, Shah Isma’il, a Safawid, and the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, Qansuh al-Ghauri, both composed poetry in Turkish, as did the Uzbek Shaybanids, who took over the
Timurid Central Asian empire. Turkish verses have even been attributed to the spouse of Shaybani Khan, Mughal Khanum.\textsuperscript{54}

In his *Risala-i ‘aruz*, the 'Treatise on Prosody', Babur employed the most varied types of Turkish poetical forms as well as those of classical Persian, thus providing the modern reader with an overview of Turkish verse forms, such as *tarkhani, qoshuq*, and the much loved *ticyugh*. Babur was the author of a discourse on the Hanafi legal system (which is used by all Turkic peoples), and even dared to compose his own version of the *Risala-yi walidiyya*, a theological work by the great Central Asian Naqshbandi master ‘Ubaydullah Ahrar (died 1490), in 243 lines of simple Turkish verse. He worked on this project in November 1529, in the hope of finding favour with God, so that he would be granted a full recovery from a stomach complaint.

Babur's son Humayun wrote in Persian; another son, Kamran Mirza (who was finally blinded and banished to Mecca because of his incessant political intrigues, and who died there in 1557), was an excellent poet in Turkish, and even his foster brothers were said to be poetically gifted. Kamran was married to the daughter of the Arghun prince, Husayn of Sind. Turkish was spoken at the Arghun court in Thatta, Sind, for the Arghuns originated from the Central Asian region of Afghanistan, as did the Tarkhans who succeeded them in Sind. A few anthologies were compiled at their court of the works of Fakhri Harawi, who wrote about poetic princes (*Raudat as-salatin*) and female poets (*Jawahir al-aja’ib*). These anthologies demonstrate the popularity of Chaghatai in Sind during the early Mughal period. The Turkish language was particularly popular among the army, which was mostly made up of men from Turkish families. The military leader Bairam Khan composed an
excellent Diwan in Turkish and Persian, 'and his verses are on every tongue', as Bada'uni remarked. It was Bairam's son, the khankhtanan 'Abdu’r Rahim, who translated an early Turkish translation of Babur's, memoirs into Persian. He also composed a few rather modest Turkish poems of his own.

Abu'l Fazl reported that Humayun spoke Turkish to one of his servants, and this was corroborated by his valet. The language of their ancestors was kept alive at court, although interest in Turkish waned somewhat under Akbar.

Although Akbar entrusted his son Murad to the Jesuits so that he could learn some Portuguese, he encouraged his grandson Khusrau to pursue Indian studies, whilst Khurram, who later became Shah Jahan, studied Turkish under Tatar Khan. During the reign of Shah Jahan, a close friend of his who was in Iraq buying horses was able to make himself understood in Turkish with the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV.

Regional Languages

Marathi

The Marathi language took its roots about the ninth century of the Christian era, while the earliest inscription in Marathi proper goes back to the tenth century. But the earliest writers whose works are extant in more or less authentic forms belong to the second half of the thirteenth century century. A very early work, the Chaturvargachintamani in four parts, prescribes 2000 rites and practices necessary for a Hindu householder, peasant and landlord. It is hardly necessary here to describe the revolt against formal religion by the great bhaktas and saints of Maharashtra, beginning with the great Jnaneshvara of Pandharpur (who died about 1200), whose cardinal doctrine was that there are no ranks or classes before God and all are equal in His view. He was followed
by a number of other saints who sang the praises of God in the Marathi language, such as Namdev, Tukaram, Eknath, Ramdas and others whose names are household words in Maharashtra and whose teachings transcended the barriers of race and geography.

Perhaps the most interesting trend in the Marathi language was the introduction of Arabic and Persian words, a phenomenon which was strangely accelerated with the assumption of sovereign power by Shivaji in 1674. This movement had been at work even during the Nizam Shahi rule, especially after Malik 'Ambar, whose regulations constituted the model of the Maratha revenue system.

**Kashmiri**

Fourteenth century poetess Lalla Ded originated the Kashmiri language. Habba Khatun, a village girl and the wife of an exiled ruler of Kashmir, is often taken to begin with the lyrics or love-verses in Kashmiri literature. Habba Khatun's compositions retain their popularity in the loss of the valley. On the other hand, Rupa Bhavani (d. 1720) composed devotional verses in the Bhakti tradition.

**Punjabi**

The 13th century saint Shaikh Farid Sufi verses flourished in Punjabi language and literature by the Guru Nanak (d. 1539). The Adi Granth (1603-04) compilation by Guru Arjan in which the verses of the Guru as well as Shaikh Farid and other monotheists (those being of languages other than Punjabi) was an important landmark in the history of the Punjabi language. The janamsakhis religious loss of Bhai Gurdas continued to enrich Punjabi, so also the Dasam Granth of Guru Gobind Singh (d. 1708), though this is only partly
Bulhe Shah (1680-1757), was the great poet. His sufic verse could speak up in the stain of Kabir, against the uselessness of ritual and religious hypocrisy. The romance of Hir and Ranjah composed by Damodar (c. 1600) presented the secular element in Punjabi, but then given it most popular version by Warsi Shah (c. 1760).

**Bengali**

The importance of Bengali language can be seen well before the sixteenth century. Brindavandas Chaitanyamangal (d. 1540). Chaitanya Charitamrita (c. 1595) is a very nice biography of Krishndas Kaviraj relating to Vaishnav faith. The Chaitanya cult take the much interest in Bengali called Brajbuli based on Krishna and Radha loves. Govinddas Kaviraj was a notable master of Bengali language of this last.

*Mukundaram* Chakarvalis’s great narrative poem Chandimangal followed the Shaivite tradition in Bengal for Bengali literature. About 1649, Dharmamangal dedicated to the deity Dharma is an autobiographical poem composed by Rupram. Rameshwar Bhattacharya Shivasan Kirtan (1710) is a remarkable poem in which Shiva and Gauri appears not as a god and goddess but as a poor peasant and the wife of a poor man.

*Mansimha* and Vidyasundar historical and erotic romance poetry respectively is a great work of Bharat Chandra Ray (d. 1760). Persian and Hindi words and idioms used by him than his precursors.

**Gujarati**

Bhalan (d. 1554) a writer who by his translation Kadambari, emphasized allegiance to classical Sanskrit and composed devotional songs (garabis) on Krishna and his amours. Mira bai contemporary to Balahan was
the authoress of devotional songs in Gujarati, Rajasthani and Braj. Nasri Mehta and Akho (d. 1656) works in Gujarati are some value and so are those of Prem Nand who was considered the greatest poet of Gujarati in the 17th century.65

Oriya

Another important language related to Bengali came in the light was Oriya. For the continuation of the tradition of Puranic Kavya (poems narrating legends) and a growth of Bhakti poetry. Balram Das Ramayana in c. 1500, Jaganatha Das Bhagavarta Purana, Ram Chandra Patnaik Harvali flourished in Orissa. Vrajanath Badjina Samarataranga a poem about war and chivalry with the Oriya-Maratha a conflict emphasized the importance of the context.66

Assamese

Vaishnavite Bhakti poetry by Sharharadeva (d. 1568) and buranjis or historical chronicles of Sino-Tibetan played important role form later half of the seventeenth century for the development of Assamese language. Alongwith the translation of Mahabharata and Ramayana some of the Puranas67; the works on astronomy, arithmetic, treatment of elephants and horses completed into Assamese language.

Sindhi

Sindhi, the language spoken in the lower Indus region, was one of the richest of all the Indian languages, with a centuries-old oral tradition of ballads, legends, proverbs and riddles. In Sindhi, as in other new Indian languages, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a poem on the theme of love and longing is of Muslim origins, or whether it was an expression of Hindu bhakti-mysticism, since the love of God and the longing of the soul (which was
portrayed as feminine) were expressed in almost exactly the same terms in Sufi and Islamic poetry.

Throughout Humayun's years of wandering in Sind, during which his son Akbar was born in Umarkot; a *qtidi* in Sehwan, on the Indus, was composing short mystical verses. Qadi Qadan, as he was called, is thought to have been a Mahdawi who had arrived in Sind from Gujarat around 1500.68

Even though the *khan-i-khanan* 'Abdu'r Rahim was very interested in mystical poetry, he probably had little familiarity with the verses of Qadi Qadan when he besieged Sehwan in 1590. However, Sindhi balladeers apparently went to the court of Akbar, who liked to listen to their words of wisdom. Mir Ma'sum, an educated Sindhi who was a friend of the *khan-i-khanan*, was not only a good storyteller and calligrapher (who wrote the inscription on the entrance gate at Fatehpur Sikri), but was also a doctor, whom Akbar sent as his ambassador to the Persian court.69

After Sind had been annexed to the Mughal empire in 1591, the province continued its isolated existence under a number of governors, whose activities are documented in a series of somewhat critical Persian chronicles from the seventeenth century.70

Innumerable Persian works were produced in Sind during the course of the seventeenth century, with many new adaptations of traditional material - for instance, the familiar Qur'anic tale of Yusuf and Zulaykha fused with traditional Sindhi love stories.

Poetry in the vernacular gradually increased in importance. Shair 'Abdu'l Karim of Bulrri71 composed some charming *dohas*, in which he appears to have adapted themes from popular tradition with allusions to the
famous lovers of the Indus Valley and the Punjab. This process was developed beautifully in the work of his great grandson Shah ‘Abdu’l Latif of Bhit (1689-1752).

These were terrible times for Sind and for the entire Mughal empire, for after the death of Aurangzeb, in fact during the last rears of his life, the empire was collapsing, and both Delhi and the provinces were raven by internecine fighting amongst the various factions.

Urdu

During the last phase of the Mughal period the Urdu literature developed. The Mughal court and armies used to bring mixture dialects including Punjabi called Urdu (language of the camp and bazaar). It is borrowed from Persian language. It acquired a definite form, content and style; it agained the position of a literary language and could rival Persian in that respect. Though deeply saturated with Persian literary and cultural heritage, the Urdu poets and writers made enough use of the Indian landscape in the portrayal of Characters and situations particularly in the composition of qasida, masnavi, hijju and marsiya if not of ghazal.72

Regarding Urdu an attempt was made not in Delhi (mixed with Persian and Hindi but in the Deccani style first perhaps. Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah (d. 1723), Jafar Zatah (d. 1713), Wali (d. 1723), Sauda (d. 1780-81) and lyricist ‘Mir’ (d. 1810) were took keen interest in prose and poetry for the development of the Urdu. Hence a new “Hindustani” dialect emerged from the mixture of the literary Hindi (written in Devanagri script) and Urdu (written in Arabic script).73
Notes and References


22. For an analysis, see Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, pp. 215-20.


29. *Farhang-i-Jahangiri*, vol. 1, pp. 6, 7 and 14-17.


36. Urfi Shirazi, *Diwan*, p. 3.


45. Sawati ‘al ilham was printed in 1306/1888 in Lucknow (see Schimmel, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, ‘Iconography’, XXVIa). A certain Lutfullah Muhandis produced a work titled ‘Sahir-i-halal’ in 1659, which is likewise completely undotted. Marshall, *Moghuls in India*, no. 997. Bada’uni remarked that Akbar had the Arabic alphabet simplified, replacing consonants that are difficult for non-Arabs to pronounce with easier ones (II, p. 340). The Shah of Iran attempted something similar.


48. Ibid., III, p. 219, for Tulsi Das.

49. There is a whole series of Hindi publications dealing with *khan-i-khanan’s* Hindi poetry; see the bibliography by C.R. Naik, ‘Abdu’r Rahim Khan-i khanan and his Literary Circle, Ahmadabad, 1966, p. 551.


51. Further Sanskrit works are in Marshall, *Moghuls in India*, 827, 1512, 1727, 1825, 945, 1774.

52. See also Pramod Chandra, *The Tutinama* of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Origins of Mughal Painting.


54. See also Fakhri Harawi, *Raudat as-salatin wa jawahir al-‘aja’ib*. 
55. Bada’uni, III, p. 266, on Bairam Khan’s poetry. The elder brothers of Shamsaddin Atqa, the Khan Kalan who died in 1575, also wrote verses in Persian and Turki, Shamsham ad-daula, *Ma’athir al-umara*, II, p. 155.

56. There is an older translation by Mirza Payanda *Hasan-i-Ghaznawi*, see Marshall, *Moghuls in India*, no. 1227.


60. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, VI, p. 509.


72. Ram Babu Saksena, in *History of Urdu Literature*, Allahabad, 1940, p. 23 has criticized this blind adoption on the Persian tradition and called it ‘Serrile absorption’ and ‘servile imitation’. Prof. Mujeeb holds a different view and states: Urdu never broke with (Persian) tradition, and it would have been a serious loss if it did, for the Persian tradition represented in a unique form the union of the spiritual, the physical, the godly and the human at the highest aesthetic level, and its images and conventions enabled the mind to seek self expression with a boundless freedom”. *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, p. 464-65.