Chapter II
DEVELOPMENT OF PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DURING EARLY MUGHAL PERIOD

LANGUAGE

The Mughals, who succeeded the Afghan sultans of north India in the sixteenth century, showed unprecedented interest in patronizing Persian literary culture during their rule. Mughal India has been particularly noted for its extraordinary achievement 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 Mughal dynasty. The Mughals were Chaghatai Turks by origin, and we know that, unlike them, Turkic 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 Baburnama, the story of his exploits in Turkic and Turkic poetry, enjoyed a considerable audience at his son Humayun’s court even after Humayun’s return from Iran.

Nonetheless, it was not Turkic but Persian which came to symbolize Mughal triumph in India. One may conjecture that, in matters of language, the Mughals had no other choice, and that they simply inherited a legacy and

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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 the early sixteenth centuries,⁴ even while Hindavi texts such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi’s *Padmavat* represent the best expression of Muslim Sufi ideas at this time. Persian does not appear to be very strong under the Afghans either, from whom the Mughals took over the reins of power. 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 Lodi sultans, immediate predecessors to the Mughals.⁵ For the extraordinary rise of Persian under the Mughals, the explanation may then be sought more in a


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convergence of factors within the Mughal regime than within the Indo-Persian heritage of preceding Muslim regimes. We can list a number of these factors.

A large number of Iranianans accompanied Humayun on his return from Iran, where he had taken refuge following his defeat against the Sur ruler of India, Sher Shah Sur. Later, in the 1560s, Akbar needed Iranian help too, and encouraged them to join his imperial service to overcome the difficulties he faced from ambitious Chaghatay nobles. Before Humayun, the Iranianans had helped Babur in 1511, during his fight against the Uzbeks, following the destruction of Timurid power in Herat. 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 to 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 (daral-aman) where the wise and the learned would receive

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encouragement.\textsuperscript{9} Migration to India at this time promised material comforts
and honored positions, Iran under the Safavids having turned Shi’ite 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 \textit{sulh-i-kul} (peace with all). Growing numbers of
nonconformist and dissident Iranianans found a natural refuge in India.\textsuperscript{10} 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. His 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 chose to invite
in person, and who were among the noted nonconformists, faced drastic
punishment and several were even executed by the Shah.\textsuperscript{11} However, the
Mughal emperor’s desire to bring ‘the exalted [Iranianan] community closes
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

\textsuperscript{9} ‘Abd al-Nabi Qazwini, \textit{Tazkira-i-Maikhana}, ed. Ahmad Golchin Ma’ani, Tehran,
1961/1340 sh., p. 809.
\textsuperscript{10} ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni, \textit{Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh}, transl. W.H.Lowe, reprints, Delhi,
\textsuperscript{11} Israel and Wagle, \textit{Islamic Culture}, p. 356.

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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 – at a time when he was consolidating Mughal power in India – was preparation of a Persian translation of his grandfather’s Baburnama. Ironically, the translator was ‘Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, the son of Bairam Khan, who had been a poet in Turkic. 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 Turkic was the native tongue of the princess and of her husband Khizr Khwaja Khan. (Antoinette Beveridge, who translated Gulbadan’s work into English, suspects that the book was originally composed in Turkic.)¹² Similar was the case of two other accounts of Humayun’s time, Tazkirat al-Waqiat: both were meant to serve as sources for Abu’l Fazl’s mammoth history, Akbarnama; 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.¹³

Akbar had no formal education and therefore important books were, read out to him regularly in his assembly hall. His Library consisted 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. Akbar, according to one report, could also compose verses in Persian and Hindi; but Mughal sources generally record only his Persian couplets. 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-shuara* (poet laureate) at a royal court. It was 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 Mashhadi, Husain Sanai, Tallib Amuli, Kalim Kashani and Qudsi Mashhadi – all Iranianans; Abu’l Faiz ‘Faizi’ (1547-95) was the sole exception. Only nine out of fifty nine rated in Akbar’s court as the best among the thousand poets in Persian who had completed a *diwan* or written *masnawi*, were identified as non-Iranianans. 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.

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Over a 1000 poets and 31 scholars were associated with the establishment of Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan alone.\textsuperscript{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 Turkic, 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.\textsuperscript{18} It was for him that Jayasi’s \textit{Padmavat} was translated into Persian, though the work was recognized only as an Indian fable (\textit{afsana-i Hindi}) and not as one on Islamic mysticism in Hindi. Still later, with volumes of letters and edicts, Aurangzeb (1658-1707) established himself as an accomplished prose writer of his time. The formal abolition of the institution of \textit{malik al-shuara}, only slightly affected the supreme status of Persian. Indeed, late 17\textsuperscript{th} 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 (d.1694).


LITERATURE

Persian was the language of Mughal intellectual life. Since the Ghaznavid occupation of Lahore in the beginning of the eleventh century, Persian had been the official language of the government and the literary language of the higher classes, but with the advent of the Mughals it entered into a new era. Hitherto, Persian had reached India mainly from Afghanistan, Turkistan, and Khorasan, and had many common features with Tajiki and Dari Persian. With the establishment of closer relations between India and Iran after Humayun's visit to that country, and the arrival of a large number of distinguished Iranianans during the reign of Jahangir and later Mughal rulers, the linguistic and literary currents began to flow from Iran itself. Shiraz and Isfahan now replaced Ghazni and Bukhara in literary inspiration, with considerable refining of the language as a result. Literature of diverse types were produced Sabak-i-Hindi was further enriched.

Poetry

Persian poetry attained new heights under the inspiring patronage of Mughal monarchs and their nobles. There is hardly a chronicle of the period which does not refer to the poetic celebrities that throve during the age. In fact, the period was so deeply permeated with the spirit of poetry that every educated person attempted versification of a fairly good order. The unprecedented recognition of art by the Mughal court and the Deccan rulers encouraged migration to India of a large number of poets from Persia,
Bukhara, Samarqand, etc., converting the country into a veritable nest of singing birds. The poets and writers from diverse backgrounds of culture, regions and faiths further enhanced the Persian literature during the period and introduced new dimension and subjects into the poetry.

It is interesting to note that Jami, the leader of the poetic galaxy was keen on visiting India during the reign of Babur. Even Hafiz could not resist the temptation of such a visit, and would have certainly reached India but for a cyclone that made him change his mind. The experience is effectively epitomized in the following couplet:

بُس آسان می نمود اول غم دریا بیوئید
غلط گفتتم که یک موجش بصد گوه نمی ارزد

(The hopes of finding pearls made the hazards of voyaging appear insignificant in the beginning. But sorry, I have erred, for even a hundred pearls are not worth the perils of a single stormy wave.)

A number of prominent Iranian poets, including Urfi, Naziri, Talib, and Kalim, migrated to India, and at times the level of Persian literature was higher in Mughal India than in Iran. Abul Fazl enumerates 75 poets who came to India during Akbar’s time. The influx of poets continued during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Some of the immigrant poets were weighed in


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silver. The Mughal emperors were extremely liberal in their patronage of poetry. Some of the poets were even appointed commanders of 5,000- for example, Ghaznavi and Zaya Khan. Jagirs were granted to Ghazali, Faizi, Hayati and many others for excellence of their poems. Huge rewards in cash were also given. Besides the emperors, nobles and grandees patronized poetry. Abdul Fath Gilani, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Ali Quli Khan, Khan-i-Zaman, Zafar Khan, Khan-i-Azam Kokaltash and the famous Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur were known for their liberal patronage of poets and scholars. Zafar Khan, Governor of Kashmir, is said to have prepared a bayaz which contained the selective poems of each poet in his own hand with his photograph on the reverse.

The style of poetry, which was popular in both the countries at that time, was the subtle and involved type made popular by Baba Fighani of Shiraz. This school of poetry culminated in Bedil, the best known poet of Aurangzeb's reign. His similes and metaphors are often obscure, but his poetry is marked by great originality and profundity of thought. From love, the traditional preoccupation of Persian poets, he turned to the problems of life and human behavior, and in certain circles (particularly in Afghanistan and Tajikistan) he ranks high as a philosophical poet. Bedil is more famous in Afghanistan and Tajikistan than his country of birth or in Iran. Before the Soviet occupation of Tajikistan there used to Bedilkhani (reading Bedil) in Samarqand and Bukhara and other adjoining areas, where people would gather and read the couplets of Bedil and discuss its meaning. Even in present

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day Tajikistan there is the study of Bedil is compulsory for the students who go for the religious studies. After Quran, Hadith, students of the Madrassas have to study Saadi and Bedil. But the two poets who outshone all others in a distinguished group were Faizi and Ghalib. Faizi (1547–1595), whose genius matured before the large-scale immigration of poets from Iran and the introduction of the "new" school of poetry, was the brother of Abul Fazl. As Akbar's poet-laureate, his poetry mirrors a triumphant age. Ghalib (1796–1869), who was attached to the court of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, began in the style of Bedil, but soon outgrew it and came under the spell of the immigrant Iranian poets—Urfi, Naziri, Zahuri, and Hazin. His mature work epitomizes all that is best in the different schools of Mughal poetry—the profundity and originality of Bedil's thought, combined with the polished diction of Urfi and Naziri. He wrote largely of love and life, but the deep, melancholy note in his poetry reflects the sad end to which the Mughal Empire was drawing in his day.

It was in this congenial atmosphere that Persian poetry thrived and lured Iranian poets to come to India and enjoy the admiration which was withheld in their own country.
Ali Quli Salim of Tehran says:

Iran hardly offers palpable means for achieving perfection; until it finds its way to India.

Kalim says:

Ibid, p. 316.

Ibid, pp. 316-17.
(A captive of India that I am, I regret this enforced journey. But whither shall this wing-fluttering carry the lacerated bird?

Kalim goes lamenting towards Iran dragged by the company of eager fellow-travellers, covering like the camel bell each stage of journey as on others' feet.

Drawn by love and fondness for India, I look back with such intense longing that even if I set my face unto the road nothing meets my eye.)

Mirza Saib, who flourished during Aurangzeb's reign when the patronage of Persian poetry had certainly received a setback due to the orthodox views of the Emperor, says:

همچو عزم سفر هند که در هر دل هست

رقص سودائ تو در هیچ سری نیست که نیست 22

(Like the desire to go to India which possesses every heart,

There is not a head which does not dance to the tune of thy love.)

Thus there were quite a large number of poets to illumine the Indo-Persian poetry during the Mughal period. The contemporary Safavid court could not boast poets of equal merit or originality. It was not lack of genius, but of court patronage that was mainly responsible for this setback. To borrow the words of Dr. Hemann Ethe, these poets of the 16th and 17th centuries produced the "Indian Summer of Persian Poetry." Strong national sentiments of the Persians had made them rather chary of recognizing the poetic talents of the Indians. Hadi Hasan in his *Mughal Poetry: Its Culture and Historical Value* has examined the views of Iranians and the Europeans about Mughal poetry. He comes to the conclusion that "Persian criticism of Mughal poetry is altogether vague." Browne has tried to analyze the reasons for the denunciation of Mughal poetry by Persians-"disparagement of national heroes and monuments, the use of unfamiliar words, the distortion of the meaning of familiar words, the coinage of new words, and above all, the hair-splitting subtlety of the Indian mind which makes the sweetheart's mouth the end of a hair and then literary splits the hair." The disapprobation of the Persian works *Atashkada* by Lutf Ali Beg Azar and the *Majma-ul-Fusaha* by Riza Quli Khan is sweeping in the case of poets who came to India. They praise all those poets who stayed on in Iran and find fault with such well-known masters of style as Faizi, Urfi, Zuhuri and Saib. In most cases no critical account is given about the poetical demerits of these poets except advancing the plea that "they were not liked by Persians in that age." However, there were independent critics who did not hesitate to properly evaluate the
contribution of these poets of Mughal India. "After Jami," writes Gibb, Urfi and Faizi were the chief Persian influences on Turkic poetry." Nefi, the greatest Turkic poet of the 17th century, is seen vying with Urfi, and it is significant that some of the best qasidas and diwans of Urfi are found in the libraries of Ankara and Istanbul.

The main themes of the Persian poets in India were: mysticism; divine love; beauty of the sweetheart; praise of God; Prophet and the beloved. Waqai-goi, masalia, mazmun afrini and khial bandi were the chief features of poetry produced during the period. All forms of poetry- ghazals, qasidas, qitaz- were produced in abundance during the Mughal period. Most of the poets, however, expressed themselves through the medium of ghazal. Shibli rightly calls it the "age of ghazals."23

In the sphere of ghazals, Urfi of Shiraz, Saib Tabrizi, Naziri Nishapuri, Hakim Shafai, and Ali Naqi excelled others. Among the qasida writers, Urfi, Zuhuri and Talib Amuli distinguished themselves. In the sphere of masnavis there was some definite deterioration. It was no longer the medium of expression for moral or historical themes in a simple and un-rhetorical style. Kalim's Shahjahan-Nama, written in a highly ornamental style, may be cited as an example. Rubai (quatrain) provided a convenient medium to the poets to tackle different philosophical themes. There was however, a significant departure from the traditional style. An attempt was

23 Ibid, p. 318.
made to express an idea in one verse which was usually done in two or three verses. It made difficult for the reader to comprehend the true meaning. Naziri and Sarmad were the two well-known *Rubai* writers of the period.

Urfi, Qudsi, Talib Amuli, Anwari and Muhammad Jan excelled in the composition of *qasidas*. Urfi was a creator of a new style in this particular branch of poetry. The "novelty in this style lay, apart from the introduction of a number of fresh terms into the conventional vocabulary of poetry, in the deposition of rhetoric from the chief seat and the enthronement of loftiness of tone and stateliness of language in its stead." Shibli gives him the lofty title of the "king of *qasidas*." Qudsi no doubt lacked Urfi's forceful diction and Amuli's metaphors and smiles. Yet he surpassed both in his originality of themes. Qudsi presented a beautiful *qasida* to Shahjahan in 1145 A.H. The emperor was so much pleased with his performance that he was weighed in silver. Talib Amuli's compositions are characterized by the novelty of themes, figurative language, and fine allegories and metaphors.\(^{24}\)

**Prose**

The prose literature which developed in the Mughal court and in the contemporary courts of the Deccan carried on the tradition of the Persian prose of the Sultanate. Historiography was no doubt most enthusiastically cultivated, but there is hardly any other branch of literature—biographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, ethics, belles-lettres, religion— which was not

\(^{24}\) Ibid, p. 319.
touched. However, there seems deterioration in the standard of prose not only in India, but also outside, mainly in contemporary Persia, especially after the advent of the Turks, Tatars and Mongols. Most of the works produced in India during the period were marked by verbosity and exaggeration. This was especially true of the official histories compiled during the period.

Badauni in his *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* refers to several works written by scholars in the times of Babur and Humayun. Only a few of these works are now extant and it is, therefore, not possible to know the merits of these treatises. Moreover, it is not always safe to ascribe them to a particular period. We may, however, take note of some of the important works.

To Abdul Wahid Bilgrami, who probably flourished in the time of Humayun and Akbar, are ascribed *Jawaharnama-i-Humayun*, a work on the use of precious and other minerals, and *Sanbali*, a treatise on the technical terms of Sufism. *Muslih-al-Din* is said to have written a commentary in Persian on all Timurids, besides several Arabic works. Shah Tahir was a prolific writer both in Arabic and Persian. His letters, contained in a volume entitled *Insha-i-Shah Tahir*, deserves mention. S. K. Banerji mentions some of the works written during Humayun’s time in his *Humayun Badshah*. But the real contribution in Persian prose was made during the time of Akbar, who had a number of brilliant scholars at his court.

Next to poetry and prose, history and biography were most extensively cultivated during the Mughal period. Historians include Abul Fazl (1551–1602), whose comprehensive Akbar Nama is one of the most important historical works produced in India; Badauni (1540–1615), who some time writes with bias and even venom, yet who was a consummate artist, a master of the telling phrase, and capable of evoking a living picture with a few deft strokes; the intelligent and orderly Firishta; Khafi Khan; and the author of Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin, the last of the great Mughal historical works. Among biographical works, Babur's autobiography, originally written in Turkic, but soon translated into elegant Persian by Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, is the best. There were, however, other biographical works, including the comprehensive Ma'asir'ul-umara dealing with the Mughal nobility, and numerous biographies of saints, poets, and statesmen. A very interesting historical work written during Aurangzeb's reign is Dabistan-i-Mazahib, which has been translated into English under the misleading title "School of Manners," but which is really a "History of Religions." The author, who belonged to the band of the writers and thinkers around Dara Shikoh, gives considerable first-hand information about non-Muslim sects.

The Persian literature produced in India is of interest not only for its intrinsic worth, but also for the influence it exercised on the formation and

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26 Selections from the writings of many of these historians are found in H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians (London, 1867–1877). 27 The Dabistan or School of Manners, trans. by David Shaw and Anthony Troyer (3 Vols.; Paris, 1843).
shaping of regional literatures, especially those cultivated by the Muslims. In addition to vocabulary and general influence on thought, it contributed a number of literary genres to the regional languages, provided models for the writers, and supplied themes for many major literary works. Indeed, apart from Islam itself, the Persian literary heritage has been the most important basis of the cultural unity of Muslim India.

Other languages during the Mughal Period

The literary trend under Mughal rule was not exactly in the same direction. The establishment of a well-organized central government at Delhi, with cohesive control over the outlying regions, resulted in greater linguistic unification, and the influence of Persian became far more dominant. Mughal rule, however, indirectly assisted the regional literatures. Apart from the direct patronage of Hindi at the Delhi court, the conditions in the country helped the regional literatures. The general peace and tranquility; greater prosperity, particularly in urban areas; the more general diffusion of education; and the patronage of literature by the Mughal emperors and the nobility, led to extensive literary activity, from which the regional literatures benefited. By now they had developed so much that they could not wither away by want of direct court patronage, and the general prosperity in the country was enough to sustain them. The result was that a marked literary activity in the regional languages continued along with the cultivation of Persian, and particularly in the later part of Mughal rule there was a great outburst of literary activity in
Bengali, Deccani, Hindi, Sindhi, Pushto, Kashmiri, and other regional languages

**Hindi Language During the Mughal Period**

It is characteristic of the Mughals that, next to Persian, the language which received the greatest patronage at court was Hindi/Hindavi/Hindustani. The practice started in Akbar's day of having a Hindi *kavi rai* (poet-laureate) along with the Persian *malik-ul-shuara*. Already Muslim poets such as Jaisi and Kabir had enriched the Hindi language. Among Hindus, the greatest Hindi poet of Akbar's days was the famous Tulasidas, whose career was spent far from the worldly courts. There were, however, well-known Hindi poets amongst Akbar's courtiers. Raja Birbal (1528–1583) was the kavi rai, but the works of Akbar's famous general Abdul Rahim have been better preserved. A skillful writer in Hindi/Hindustani, Abdul Rahim furthered the development of the language by extending his patronage to a number of other poets who used it. The title of *kavi rai* continued to be conferred even in Aurangzeb's time, and two of his sons, Azam and Muazzam, who ascended the throne as Bahadur Shah, were known to be patrons of Hindi literature. It is interesting to observe that during the later Mughal period Hindi poets like Bihari followed the same ornate style which was popular with the contemporary Persian poets.
Urdu Language During the Mughal Period

Until the decline of the empire Urdu literature received scarcely any encouragement at the Mughal courts, but it was systematically nourished in the south by the Sufi saints and the Deccan rulers. Nusrati, a poet attached to the court of Bijapur, wrote masnavis (or narrative poems) in a language remote from modern Urdu but within its tradition. The first collection of Urdu lyrics was written by Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah (r.1581–1611), the king of Golconda and founder of the city of Hyderabad. Modern Urdu poetry really began, however, with Wali (1667–1741), who came in contact with the spoken Urdu of the Mughal camp during the long campaigns of Aurangzeb in the Deccan. He blended the Deccani and Gujarati idioms with the polite and more sophisticated language of the north, and following the traditions of standard Persian literature, he produced poetry which set a literary fashion in Delhi. He transferred to Urdu poetry ideas and images with which readers of Persian poetry were familiar; and thus enriched, Urdu could replace Persian poetry. Although a proportion of Wali's verse is in Deccani idiom, a good proportion is in polished Urdu.

Once Urdu was adopted as the medium of literary expression by the writers of the metropolis, its development was rapid, and it soon replaced Persian as the court language and principal literary language of Muslim India. The process of change-over to the new literary language was facilitated by certain other factors. The invasion of Delhi by the Persian monarch Nadir
Shah in 1739 and the massacres perpetrated by his army may also have led to revulsion of feeling against everything Persian—including the language. An acute literary controversy of the period further hastened the process. Hazin, a major Persian poet who came to India to escape Nadir Shah, was subjected to great hardship in the unsettled conditions prevailing at that time, and in a controversy with Arzu, the foremost local writer of Persian verses, expressed his contempt for the Persian poetry written in India. Some local writers sided with him, but the general effect of the controversy must have been to set people thinking about the advisability of writing in Persian.

Thus the ground was prepared for literary change-over. What was needed was the appearance of talented writers in the new language to give it a literary status. This was provided by Mazhar (1699–1781), Sauda (1717–1780), the Sufi poet Dard (1719–1785), and above all Mir (1724–1808)—popularly known as the four pillars of classical Urdu poetry. Both Sauda and Mir had been trained by Arzu to write in Urdu rather than in Persian.

The encouragement which the growth of regional languages and literature received in the regional kingdoms has already been outlined. Majority of these rulers being Muslim, unhampered by any religious devotion to Sanskrit, freely patronized Bengali, Kashmiri, Hindi, Deccani, and other languages of the people. This trend was most powerful in the regional kingdoms which grew up after the weakening of the Delhi Sultanate. Persian
continued as the court language in these kingdoms; but local languages were freely patronized, and became respectable vehicles of literary expression.

During the Mughal period, Persian language and literature reached the highest stages of development in Bengal and greatly influenced the local language and literature. Contemporary and later chronicles and biographers have referred to the dignitaries of learning at the courts of the Mughal governors of Bengal: Munim Khan, Islam Khan, Qasim Khan, Shah Shuja, Shayesta Khan and Mir Jumla. These governors encouraged Persian poetry and offered asylums to many poets.

Mirza Jafar Beg Qazvini, another immigrant poet in Bengal, during Akbar's rule, compiled a masnavi, titled Shirin-o-Khusrau, in the style of Nizami Ganjawi, a renowned poet of Persia. Mirza Nathan, a petty military officer, wrote Baharistan-i-Ghaibi which contains references to numerous soldier poets such as Luqman, Mir Qasim and Malik Mubarak, who accompanied the army and composed poems commemorating the victories and achievements of soldiers in the battle-field. Mirza Nathan, who served in Bengal for about twenty years, gives an explicit account of events that took place during Emperor Jahangir's reign in Bengal and Assam. Mir Jumla who hailed from Isfahan was an accomplished scholar and poet. His kulliyat (collection of poems) contained 20,000 verses. Shahabuddin Talish, a chronicler of Mir Jumla, who accompanied his master on his military
campaigns in Coochbihar and Assam, compiled an authentic account of the areas of Assam entitled *Fath-i-Ibriyya* in 1663.

Muhammad Sadiq, who came to Bengal in the company of Qasim Khan, governor of Bengal, in 1628, was the author of a historical and biographical work, *Subh-i-Sadiq*. He attached himself to the court of Shah Shuja when the latter became the governor of Bengal in 1639. The *Subh-i-Sadiq* contains the biographies of a number of Persian writers resident in Jahangirnagar as well as examples of verses of several poets, some of whom were professional soldiers. Abdul Hamid Lahuri, the author of the *Padshahnamah*, describes Sadiq as an embodiment of the sciences and traditions, excelling others in theology, medicine and mathematics. Among the renowned historians of the age was Meer Muhammad Masum who compiled the *Tarikh-i-Shah Shujai* under the patronage of Shah Shuja.

In the early 18th century, Murshid Quli Khan established an independent *Subadari* in Bengal. This led to another influx of poets and writers from strife-torn Iran and northern India to the capital city of Bengal *Subah* (province) Murshidabad, which attracted quite a number of intelligentsia and versifiers from the eastern parts of Bengal, particularly Dhaka. Nawab Nusratjang, Nawab Nazim of Dhaka from 1796 to 1823, wrote a Persian history named *Tarikh-i-Nusratjangi*. It was published by the Asiatic Society of Calcutta in 1908.
There was tremendous literary activity during the Mughal period, because with the return of a stable and prosperous empire, there was once again patronage for their work. Languages like Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu saw tremendous creative activity as did many vernacular languages.

Persian literature received a lot of attention as it was the court language. A vast number of works were written during the period of the Mughals. Broadly one can divide them into three categories, historical works, translations, poetry and novels. Our understanding of the Mughal period was greatly enhanced by these books, and most of the historical works of this period provide us with a fairly reliable source of information. The important historical works written in this time were *Ain-i-Akbari*, and *Akbarnamah* by Abul Fazl, the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* by Mulla Daud. Jehangir possessed a keen interest in literature, and his autobiography is one of the finest amongst the Mughal emperors. During his reign important historical works like *Ma'asir-I-Jahangir*, the *Iqbalnamah-i-Jahangiri* and the *Zubud-ut-Tawarikh* were written.

Many important works in translation were also written during this period, with the translation of the epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana taking place. Many of the *Vedas* were also translated and several previous historical books were also translated. All this translation added to the wealth of Indian literature and spread ancient knowledge to a greater audience. This renewed interest in Indian literature would be an important tool used by the
social reformers of the eighteenth century to educate the people about what
the ancient texts really said as opposed to the distorted interpretations that
were being followed.

The Mughal Empire had a large number of poets and writers and
hence there was a lot of work published in this era. Especially during the reign
of Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jahan they had tremendous patronage and many
remarkable works were composed. Since the Mughal emperors had integrated
themselves into Indian society politically, socially and culturally, they
patronized many Indian languages leading to some good quality literature
being developed for these languages. The main themes of the period were
essentially religious, covering most of the major religions being practiced by
the people in that period. One of the most famous Hindu religious works
composed during this time was, Ramcharitmanasa (the pool of Rama's life)
by Tulsidas, which was a simplified version of the Ramayana. In Bengal
there was a lot of work being created in Vaishnava literature. Writers like
Krishnada and Kaviraj were popular authors of the time. Many biographies
were written, especially of the great saint Chaitanya Deya.

The keen interest in literature that the Mughal emperors had, led to
the establishment of many libraries which became repositories of knowledge.
The works were properly filed and locating information was very easy. The
art of calligraphy also reached a level of excellence. Literary activity did not
decline with the Mughal empire and flourished even in the twilight years of

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the Mughal empire, in fact some of the later Mughals were better poets and writers than they were capable emperors.