

Urdu

Urdu (/ˈʊərduː/^[10] Urdu: اُردُو, ALA-LC: *Urdū*, [ˈurduː] (listen)) – also known as **Lashkari** (لشکری, *Laṣkarī*, [ləʃkəriː]^{[11][12]}) – or **Modern Standard Urdu** is often described as a Persianised standard register of the Hindustani language.^{[13][14][15][16]} Urdu is the official national language, and *lingua franca*, of Pakistan. In India, it is one of 22 constitutionally recognised official languages, having official status in the five states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, as well as the national capital territory of Delhi.

As both registers are composed of the same Indo-Aryan vocabulary base,^{[17][18]} colloquial Urdu is largely mutually intelligible with colloquial Hindi,^[19] with the two registers being grouped together as Hindustani or Hindi-Urdu.^{[20][21][13][14]} With respect to literary vocabulary, however, formal Urdu draws heavily from Persian vocabulary and requires knowledge of some simple Persian grammatical structures,^[22] while formal Hindi heavily draws from Sanskrit for its formal and technical vocabulary.^[22]

Urdu became the official language of government in northern and northwest India, along with English, from 1837 onwards in place of Persian, which had been used by various Indo-Islamic empires as their language of government.^{[23][24][25]} Religious, social, and political factors arose during the colonial period that advocated for a distinction between Urdu and Hindi, leading to the Hindi–Urdu controversy.^[26]

According to Nationalencyklopedin's 2010 estimates, Urdu is the 21st most spoken first language in the world, with approximately 66 million who speak it as their native language.^[27] According to Ethnologue's 2018 estimates, Urdu, is the 11th most widely spoken language in the world,^[28] with 170 million *total* speakers, including those who speak it as a second language.^[29] If grouped along with Hindi, Hindustani would be the 3rd most spoken language in the world, with approximately 329.1 million native speakers, and 697.4 million total speakers of both Urdu and Hindi.^{[30][31]}

Urdu	
Modern Standard Urdu	
اُردُو	
<div>اُردُو</div>	
 <div>Urdu in Nastaʿlīq script</div>	
Pronunciation	[ˈurduː] (listen)
Native to	 Pakistan and India
Region	 South Asia
Ethnicity	No specific ethnicity ^{[1][2]}
Native speakers	<div><div><div></div><div>Native speakers: 68.62 million (2019)</div></div><div><div></div><div>L2 speakers: 101.58 million (2019)^{[3]}</div></div></div>
Language family	<div>Indo-European<ul style="list-style-type: none">Indo-Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Indo-Aryan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Central Zone<ul style="list-style-type: none">Western Hindi<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hindustani^{[4]}<ul style="list-style-type: none">Urdu</div>
Early forms	<div>Hindustani<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rekhta</div>
Dialects	<div><div><div>Dakhni</div><div>Dhakaiya</div><div>Rekhta</div></div></div>
Writing system	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Perso-Arabic (Urdu alphabet)Urdu Braille</div>
Signed forms	<div><div>Indian Signing System (ISS)^{[5]}</div><div>Signed Urdu^{[6]}</div></div>
Official status	
Official language in	 Pakistan

Contents

History

Urdu, like Hindi, is a form of Hindustani.^{[32][33][34]} Some linguists have suggested that the earliest forms of Urdu evolved from the medieval (6th to 13th century) Apabhramśa register of the preceding Shauraseni language, a Middle Indo-Aryan language that is also the ancestor of other modern Indo-Aryan languages.^{[35][36]}

In the Delhi region of India the native language was Khariboli, whose earliest form is known as Old Hindi.^[37] It belongs to the Western Hindi group of the Central Indo-Aryan languages.^{[38][39]} The Turko-Afghan Delhi Sultanate established Persian as its official language in India, a policy continued by the Mughal Empire, which extended over most of northern South Asia from the 16th to 18th centuries and cemented Persian influence on Hindustani.^{[40][41]}

The contact of the Hindu and Muslim cultures during the period of Islamic administrative rule in India led to the development of Hindustani as a product of a composite Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb.^{[42][43][44][45][46][47]} In cities such as Delhi, the Indian language Old Hindi began to acquire many Persian loanwords and continued to be called "Hindi" and later, also "Hindustani" and "Urdu".^{[48][49][41][50][38]} From the 13th century until the end of the 18th century the language now known as Urdu was called *Hindi*,^[50] *Hindavi*, *Hindustani*,^[49] *Dehlavi*,^[50] *Lahori*,^[51] and *Lashkari*.^[52] By the end of the reign of Aurangzeb in the early 18th century, the common language around Delhi began to be referred to as *Zaban-e-Urdu*,^[53] a name derived from the Turkic word *ordu* (army) or *orda* and is said to have arisen as the "language of the camp", or "*Zaban-i-Ordu*" or natively "*Lashkari Zaban*".^[54] The name *Urdu* was first introduced by the poet Ghulam Hamadani Mushafi around 1780.^{[55][50]} As a literary language, Urdu took shape in courtly, elite settings.^{[56][57]} While Urdu retained the grammar and core Indo-Aryan vocabulary of the local Indian dialect Khariboli, it adopted the Nastaleeq writing system^{[38][58]} – which was developed as a style of Persian calligraphy.^[59]

Urdu, which was often referred to by the British administrators in India as the Hindustani language,^[60] was promoted in colonial India by British policies to counter the previous emphasis on Persian.^[61] In colonial India, "ordinary Muslims and Hindus alike spoke the same language in the United Provinces in the nineteenth century, namely Hindustani, whether called by that name or whether called Hindi, Urdu, or one of the regional dialects such as Braj or Awadhi."^[62] Elites from Muslim and Hindu religious communities wrote the language in the Perso-Arabic script in courts and government offices, though Hindus continued to employ the Devanagari script in certain literary and religious contexts while Muslims used the Perso-Arabic script.^{[62][58][63]} Urdu replaced Persian as the official language of India in 1837 and was made co-official, along with English.^[23] In colonial Indian Islamic schools, Muslims taught Persian and Arabic as the languages of Indo-Islamic civilisation; the British, in order to promote literacy among Indian Muslims and attract them to attend government schools, started to teach Urdu written in the Perso-Arabic script in these governmental educational institutions and after this time, Urdu began to be seen by Indian Muslims as a symbol of their religious identity.^[62] Hindus in northwestern India, under the Arya Samaj agitated against the sole use of the Perso-Arabic script and argued that the language should be written in the native Devanagari script,^[64] which triggered a backlash against the use of Hindi written in Devanagari by the Anjuman-e-Islamia of Lahore.^[64] Hindi in the Devanagari script replaced Urdu written in the Perso-Arabic script as the official language of Bihar in 1881, establishing a sectarian divide of "Urdu" for Muslims and "Hindi" for Hindus, a divide that was formalised with the partition of colonial India into the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan after independence (though there are Hindu poets who continue to write in Urdu, including Gopi Chand Narang and Gulzar).

Urdu was chosen as an official language of Pakistan in 1947 as it was already the *lingua franca* for Muslims in north and northwest British India,^[65] although Urdu had been used as a literary medium for colonial Indian writers from the Bombay Presidency, Bengal, Orissa Province, and Tamil Nadu as well.^[66] In 1973, Urdu was recognised as the sole national language of Pakistan – although English and regional languages were also granted official recognition.^[67] Following the 1979 Soviet invasion

of Afghanistan and subsequent arrival of millions of Afghan refugees who have lived in Pakistan for many decades, many Afghans, including those who moved back to Afghanistan,^[68] have also become fluent in Hindi-Urdu, an occurrence aided by exposure to the Indian media, chiefly Hindi-Urdu Bollywood films and songs.^{[69][70][71]}

There have been attempts to purge Urdu of native Prakrit and Sanskrit words, and Hindi of Persian loanwords – new vocabulary draws primarily from Persian and Arabic for Urdu and from Sanskrit for Hindi.^{[72][73]} English has exerted a heavy influence on both as a co-official language.^[74] A movement towards the hyper-Persianisation of an Urdu emerged in Pakistan since its independence in 1947 which is "as artificial as" the hyper-Sanskritised Hindi that has emerged in India;^[75] hyper-Persianisation of Urdu was prompted in part by the increasing Sanskritisation of Hindi.^[76] However, the style of Urdu spoken on a day-to-day basis in Pakistan is akin to neutral Hindustani that serves as the *lingua franca* of the northern Indian subcontinent.^{[77][78]}

Demographics and geographic distribution

There are over 100 million native speakers of Urdu in India and Pakistan together: there were 50.8 million Urdu speakers in India (4.34% of the total population) as per the 2011 census;^{[79][80]} approximately 16 million in Pakistan in 2006.^[81] There are several hundred thousand in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United States, and Bangladesh.^[82] However, Hindustani, of which Urdu is one variety, is spoken much more widely, forming the third most commonly spoken language in the world, after Mandarin and English.^[83] The syntax (grammar), morphology, and the core vocabulary of Urdu and Hindi are essentially identical – thus linguists usually count them as one single language, while some contend that they are considered as two different languages for socio-political reasons.^[84]

Owing to interaction with other languages, Urdu has become localised wherever it is spoken, including in Pakistan. Urdu in Pakistan has undergone changes and has incorporated and borrowed many words from regional languages, thus allowing speakers of the language in Pakistan to distinguish themselves more easily and giving the language a decidedly Pakistani flavour. Similarly, the Urdu spoken in India can also be distinguished into many dialects like Dakhni (Deccan) of South India, and Lahori of the Punjab region. Because of Urdu's similarity to Hindi, speakers of the two languages can easily understand one another if both sides refrain from using literary vocabulary.

Pakistan

Urdu is widely spoken and understood throughout Pakistan, where it is mostly learned as a second or a third language; only 7% of Pakistan's population spoke Urdu as their native language around 1992.^[85] Most of the nearly three million Afghan refugees of different ethnic origins (such as Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazarvi, and Turkmen) who stayed in Pakistan for over twenty-five years have also become fluent in Urdu.^[71] Muhajirs since 1947 have historically formed the majority population in the city of Karachi, however.^[86] Many newspapers are published in Urdu in Pakistan, including the Daily Jang, Nawa-i-Waqt, and Millat.

No region in Pakistan uses Urdu as its mother tongue, though it is spoken as the first language of Muslim refugees (known as Muhajirs) in Pakistan who fled from India after independence in 1947.^[87] Urdu was chosen as a symbol of unity for the new state of Pakistan in 1947, because it had already served as a *lingua franca* among Muslims in north and northwest British India.^[65] It is written, spoken and used in all provinces/territories of Pakistan, although the people from differing provinces may have different native languages.

Urdu is taught as a compulsory subject up to higher secondary school in both English and Urdu medium school systems, which has produced millions of second-language Urdu speakers among people whose native language is one of the other languages of Pakistan – which in turn has led to the

absorption of vocabulary from various regional Pakistani languages,^[88] while some Urdu vocabulary has also been assimilated by Pakistan's regional languages.^[89] Some who are from a non-Urdu background now can read and write only Urdu. With such a large number of people(s) speaking Urdu, the language has acquired a peculiar Pakistani flavour further distinguishing it from the Urdu spoken by native speakers, which diversifies the language even further.^[90]

India

In India, Urdu is spoken in places where there are large Muslim minorities or cities that were bases for Muslim empires in the past. These include parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra (Marathwada and Konkanis), Karnataka and cities such as Lucknow, Delhi, Malerkotla, Bareilly, Meerut, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Roorkee, Deoband, Moradabad, Azamgarh, Bijnor, Najibabad, Rampur, Aligarh, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, Agra, Kanpur, Badaun, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Bangalore, Kolkata, Mysore, Patna, Gulbarga, Parbhani, Nanded, Kochi, Malegaon, Bidar, Ajmer, and Ahmedabad. Some Indian schools teach Urdu as a first language and have their own syllabi and exams. India's Bollywood industry frequently employs the use of Urdu – especially in songs.^[91]

India has more than 3,000 Urdu publications, including 405 daily Urdu newspapers. Newspapers such as *Neshat News Urdu*, *Sahara Urdu*, *Daily Salar*, *Hindustan Express*, *Daily Pasban*, *Siasat Daily*, *The Munsif Daily* and *Inqilab* are published and distributed in Bangalore, Malegaon, Mysore, Hyderabad, and Mumbai.

Elsewhere

Outside South Asia, it is spoken by large numbers of migrant South Asian workers in the major urban centres of the Persian Gulf countries. Urdu is also spoken by large numbers of immigrants and their children in the major urban centres of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Germany, Norway, and Australia. Along with Arabic, Urdu is among the immigrant languages with the most speakers in Catalonia.^[92]

Cultural identity

Colonial India

Religious and social atmospheres in early nineteenth century British India played a significant role in the development of the Urdu register. Hindi became the distinct register spoken by those who sought to construct a Hindu identity in the face of colonial rule.^[26] As Hindi separated from Hindustani to create a distinct spiritual identity, Urdu was employed to create a definitive Islamic identity for the Muslim population in British India.^[93] Urdu's use was not confined only to northern India – it had been used as a literary medium for British Indian writers from the Bombay Presidency, Bengal, Orissa Province, and Tamil Nadu as well.^[66]

As Urdu and Hindi became means of religious and social construction for Muslims and Hindus respectively, each register developed its own script. According to Islamic tradition, Arabic, the language spoken by the prophet Muhammad and uttered in the revelation of the Qur'an, holds spiritual significance and power.^[94] Because Urdu was intentioned as means of unification for Muslims in Northern India and later Pakistan, it adopted a modified Perso-Arabic script.^{[95][26]}

Pakistan

Urdu continued its role in developing a Muslim identity as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was established with the intent to construct a homeland for Muslims of South Asia. Several languages and dialects spoken throughout the regions of Pakistan produced an imminent need for a uniting language. Urdu was chosen as a symbol of unity for the new state of Pakistan in 1947, because it had already served as a *lingua franca* among Muslims in north and northwest British India.^[65] Urdu is also seen as a repertory for the cultural and social heritage of Pakistan.^[96]

While Urdu and Islam together played important roles in developing the national identity of Pakistan, disputes in the 1950s (particularly those in East Pakistan, where Bengali was the dominant language), challenged the idea of Urdu as a national symbol and its practicality as the *lingua franca*. The significance of Urdu as a national symbol was downplayed by these disputes when English and Bengali were also accepted as official languages in the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).



Official status

Pakistan

Urdu is the sole national, and one of the two official languages of Pakistan (along with English).^[67] It is spoken and understood throughout the country, whereas the state-by-state languages (languages spoken throughout various regions) are the provincial languages, although only 7.57% of Pakistanis speak Urdu as their first language.^[97] Its official status has meant that Urdu is understood and spoken widely throughout Pakistan as a second or third language. It is used in education, literature, office and court business,^[98] although in practice, English is used instead of Urdu in the higher echelons of government.^[99] Article 251(1) of the Pakistani Constitution mandates that Urdu be implemented as the sole language of government, though English continues to be the most widely used language at the higher echelons of Pakistani government.^[100]



A trilingual signboard in Arabic, English and Urdu in the UAE

India



A multilingual New Delhi railway station board

Urdu is also one of the officially recognised languages in India and the official language of Jammu and Kashmir, one of the two official languages of Telangana and also has the status of "*additional official language*" in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the national capital, New Delhi.^[101]^[102] In Jammu and Kashmir, section 145 of the Kashmir Constitution provides: "The official language of the State shall be Urdu but the English language shall unless the Legislature by law otherwise provides, continue to be used for all the official purposes of the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of the Constitution."^[103]

India established the governmental Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu in 1969, although the Central Hindi Directorate was established earlier in 1960, and the promotion of Hindi is better funded and more advanced,^[104] while the status of Urdu has been undermined by the promotion of Hindi.^[105] Private Indian organisations such as the Anjuman-e-Tariqqi Urdu, Deeni Talimi Council and Urdu Mushafiz Dasta promote the use and preservation of Urdu, with the Anjuman successfully launching a campaign that reintroduced Urdu as an official language of Bihar in the 1970s.^[104]

Dialects

Urdu has a few recognised dialects, including Dakhni, Dhakaiya, Rekhta, and Modern Vernacular Urdu (based on the Khariboli dialect of the Delhi region). Dakhni (also known as Dakani, Deccani, Desia, Mirgan) is spoken in Deccan region of southern India. It is distinct by its mixture of vocabulary from Marathi and Konkani, as well as some vocabulary from Arabic, Persian and Chagatai that are not found in the standard dialect of Urdu. Dakhini is widely spoken in all parts of Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Urdu is read and written as in other parts of India. A number of daily newspapers and several monthly magazines in Urdu are published in these states. [[cn}}

Dhakaiya Urdu is a dialect native to the city of Old Dhaka in Bangladesh, dating back to the Mughal era. However, its popularity, even amongst native speakers, has been gradually declining since the Bengali Language Movement in the 20th century. It is not officially recognised by the Government of Bangladesh. The Urdu spoken by the Stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh is different to this dialect.

Code switching

Many bilingual or multi-lingual Urdu speakers, being familiar with both Urdu and English, display code-switching (referred to as "Urdish") in certain localities and between certain social groups. On 14 August 2015, the Government of Pakistan launched the *Ilm* Pakistan movement, with a uniform curriculum in Urdish. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister of Pakistan, said, "Now the government is working on a new curriculum to provide a new medium to the students which will be the combination of both Urdu and English and will name it Urdish."^{[106][107][108]}

Comparison with Modern Standard Hindi

Standard Urdu is often compared with Standard Hindi.^[109] Both Urdu and Hindi, which are considered standard registers of the same language, Hindustani (or Hindi-Urdu) share a core vocabulary and grammar.^{[110][14][17][18]}

Apart from religious associations, the differences are largely restricted to the standard forms: Standard Urdu is conventionally written in the Nastaliq style of the Persian alphabet and relies heavily on Persian and Arabic as a source for technical and literary vocabulary,^[111] whereas Standard Hindi is conventionally written in Devanāgarī and draws on Sanskrit.^[112] However, both share a core vocabulary of native Prakrit and Sanskrit words and large numbers of Arabic and Persian loanwords, with a consensus of linguists considering them to be two standardised forms of the same language^{[113][114]} and consider the differences to be sociolinguistic;^[115] a few classify them separately.^[116] The two languages are often considered to be a single language (Hindustani or Hindi-Urdu) on a dialect continuum ranging from Persianised to Sanskritised vocabulary.^[105] Old Urdu dictionaries also contain most of the Sanskrit words now present in Hindi.^{[117][118]}



















Urdu and Hindi on a road sign in India

Mutual intelligibility decreases in literary and specialised contexts that rely on academic or technical vocabulary. In a longer conversation, differences in formal vocabulary and pronunciation of some Urdu phonemes are noticeable, though many native Hindi speakers also pronounce these phonemes.^[119] At a phonological level, speakers of both languages are frequently aware of the Perso-Arabic or Sanskrit origins of their word choice, which affects the pronunciation of those words.^[120] Urdu speakers will often insert vowels to break up consonant clusters found in words of Sanskritic origin, but will pronounce them correctly in Arabic and Persian loanwords.^[121] As a result of religious nationalism since the partition of British India and continued communal tensions, native speakers of both Hindi and Urdu frequently assert them to be distinct languages.

The grammar of Hindi and Urdu is identical,^{[110][122]} though formal Urdu makes more use of the Persian "-e-" *izafat* grammatical construct (as in *Hamam-e-Qadimi*, or *Nishan-e-Haider*) than does Hindi. Urdu speakers more frequently use personal pronouns with the "ko" form (as in "*mujh-ko*"), while Hindi speakers more frequently use the contracted form (as in "*mujhe*").^[123]

Urdu speakers by country

The following table shows the number of Urdu speakers in some countries.

Country	Population	Urdu as a native language speakers	Native speakers or very good speakers as a second language
 Pakistan	207,862,518 ^[124]	15,100,000 ^[125]	94,000,000
 India	1,296,834,042 ^[126]	50,772,631 ^[65]	12,151,715 ^[65]
 Afghanistan	34,940,837 ^[120]	–	1,048,225 ^[120]
 Saudi Arabia	33,091,113 ^[127]	757,000	–
 Nepal	29,717,587 ^[128]	691,546 ^[129]	–
 United Kingdom	65,105,246 ^[130]	400,000 ^[131]	–
 United States	329,256,465 ^[132]	397,502 ₂₀₀₉₋₂₀₁₃ ^[133]	–
 Bangladesh	159,453,001 ^[134]	250,000 _{2006 estimate} ^[135]	–
 Canada	35,881,659 ^[136]	243,090 _{2016 census} ^[137]	–
 Qatar	2,363,569 ^[138]	173,000	–
 Oman	4,613,241 ^[139]	95,000	–
 Iran	83,024,745 ^[140]	88,000	–
 Bahrain	1,442,659 ^[141]	74,000	–
 Norway	5,372,191 ^[142]	34,000	–
 Turkey	81,257,239 ^[143]	24,000	–
 Germany	80,457,737 ^[144]	23,000	–

Phonology

Consonants

Consonant phonemes of Urdu^[145]

		Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Nasal		<u>m</u> م		<u>n</u> ن			ŋ ن		
	Aspirated consonant	mʰ مھ		nʰ نہ					
Plosive/ Affricate	voiceless	p پ	t ت		ʈ ٹ	tʃ چ	k ک	q ق	ʔ ع
	voiceless aspirated	pʰ پھ	tʰ تھ		ʈʰ ٹھ	tʃʰ چھ	kʰ کھ		
	voiced	b ب	d د		ɖ ڊ	dʒ ج	g گ		
	voiced aspirated	bʰ بھ	dʱ دھ		ɖʱ ڊھ	dʒʰ جھ	gʰ گھ		
Flap/Trill				r ر	ɽ ڙ				
	voiced aspirated			rʰ رھ	ɽʰ ڙھ				
Fricative	voiceless	f ف		s س		ʃ ش	x خ		h ھ
	voiced	v و		z ز		ʒ ژ	ɣ غ		
Approximant				l ل		j ی			
	Aspirated consonant			lʰ لھ		jʰ یھ			

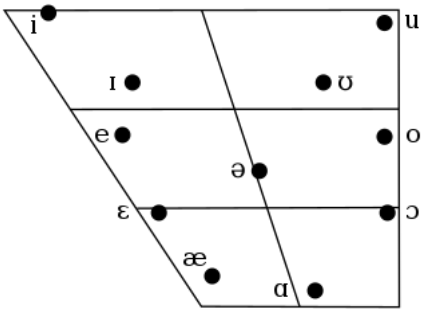
Notes

- Marginal and non-universal phonemes are in parentheses.
- /ɣ/ is post-velar.^[146]

Vowels

Urdu vowels^[145]

		Front		Central		Back	
		short	long	short	long	short	long
Close		ɪ	iː			ʊ	uː
	nasal	ĩ	ĩː			ũ	ũː
Close-mid		e	eː	ə		o	oː
	nasal		ẽː	ẽ			õː
Open-mid						ɔ	
	nasal					õ	
Open		æ	æː			ɑ	
	nasal		ǣː			ǣ	



The oral vowel phonemes of Urdu according to Ohala (1999:102)

Note

- Marginal and non-universal vowels are in parentheses.

Vocabulary

Syed Ahmed Dehlavi, a 19th-century lexicographer who compiled the *Farhang-e-Asifiya* Urdu dictionary, estimated that 75% of Urdu words have their etymological roots in Sanskrit and Prakrit,^{[147][148][149]} and approximately 99% of Urdu verbs have their roots in Sanskrit and Prakrit.^{[150][151]} Urdu has borrowed words from Persian and to a lesser extent, Arabic through Persian,^[152] to the extent of about 25%^{[147][148][149][153]} to 30% of Urdu's vocabulary.^[154] A table illustrated by the linguist Afroz Taj of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill likewise illustrates the amount of Persian loanwords to native Sanskrit-derived words in literary Urdu as comprising a 1:3 ratio.^[149]

The "trend towards Persianisation" started in the 18th century by the Delhi school of Urdu poets, though other writers, such as Meeraji, wrote in a Sanskritised form of the language.^[155] There has been a move towards hyper Persianisation in Pakistan since 1947, which has been adopted by much of the country's writers;^[156] as such, some Urdu texts can be composed of 70% Perso-Arabic loanwords just as some Persian texts can have 70% Arabic vocabulary.^[157] Some Pakistani Urdu speakers have incorporated Hindi vocabulary into their speech as a result of exposure to Indian entertainment.^{[158][159]} In India, Urdu has not diverged from Hindi as much as it has in Pakistan.^[160]

Most borrowed words in Urdu are nouns and adjectives.^[161] Many of the words of Arabic origin have been adopted through Persian,^[147] and have different pronunciations and nuances of meaning and usage than they do in Arabic. There are also a smaller number of borrowings from Chagatai, and Portuguese. Some examples for Portuguese words borrowed into Urdu are *cabi* ("chave": key), *girja* ("igreja": church), *kamra* ("cámara": room), *qamīz* ("camisa": shirt), *mez* ("mesa": table).^[162]

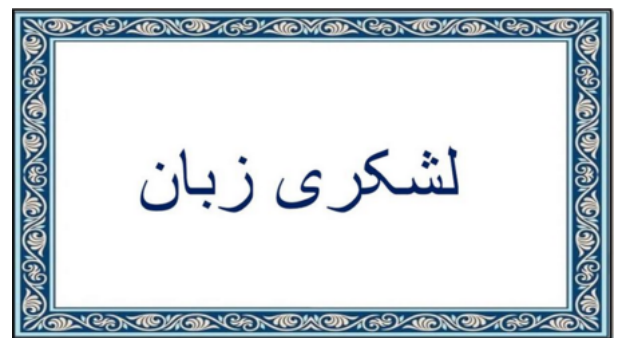
Although the word *Urdu* is derived from the Turkic word *ordu* (army) or *orda*, from which English *horde* is also derived,^[163] Turkic borrowings in Urdu are minimal^[164] and Urdu is also not genetically related to the Turkic languages. Urdu words originating from Chagatai and Arabic were borrowed through Persian and hence are Persianised versions of the original words. For instance, the Arabic *ta' marbuta* (ة) changes to *he* (ه) or *te* (ت).^{[165][note 1]} Nevertheless, contrary to popular belief, Urdu did not borrow from the Turkish language, but from Chagatai, a Turkic language from Central Asia. Urdu and Turkish both borrowed from Arabic and Persian, hence the similarity in pronunciation of many Urdu and Turkish words.^[166]

Formality

Urdu in its less formalised register has been referred to as a *rekhtah* (ریختہ, [reːxtaː]), meaning "rough mixture". The more formal register of Urdu is sometimes referred to as *zabān-i Urdū-yi mu'allā* (زبانِ اُردوئے معلیٰ [zəbaːn eː ʊrdu eː moəllaː]), the "Language of the Exalted Camp", referring to the Imperial army^[167] or in approximate local translation *Lashkari Zabān* (لشکری زبان [ʌʃkɜːiː zaːbaːn])^[168] or simply just *Lashkari*.^[169] The etymology of the word used in Urdu, for the most part, decides how polite or refined one's speech is. For example, Urdu speakers



The phrase *Zabān-i Urdū-yi Mu'allā* ("the language of the exalted camp") written in Nasta'liq script.



Lashkari Zabān title in Nasta'liq script

would distinguish between پانی *pānī* and آب *āb*, both meaning "water": the former is used colloquially and has older Sanskrit origins, whereas the latter is used formally and poetically, being of Persian origin.

If a word is of Persian or Arabic origin, the level of speech is considered to be more formal and grander. Similarly, if Persian or Arabic grammar constructs, such as the *izafat*, are used in Urdu, the level of speech is also considered more formal and grander. If a word is inherited from Sanskrit, the level of speech is considered more colloquial and personal.^[170]

Writing system

Urdu is written right-to left in an extension of the Persian alphabet, which is itself an extension of the Arabic alphabet. Urdu is associated with the Nasta'liq style of Persian calligraphy, whereas Arabic is generally written in the *Naskh* or *Ruq'ah* styles. *Nasta'liq* is notoriously difficult to typeset, so Urdu newspapers were hand-written by masters of calligraphy, known as *kātib* or *khush-nawīs*, until the late 1980s. One handwritten Urdu newspaper, *The Musalman*, is still published daily in Chennai.^[171]

A highly Persianised and technical form of Urdu was the *lingua franca* of the law courts of the British administration in Bengal and the North-West Provinces & Oudh. Until the late 19th century, all proceedings and court transactions in this register of Urdu were written officially in the Persian script. In 1880, Sir Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal abolished the use of the Persian alphabet in the law courts of Bengal and ordered the exclusive use of Kaithi, a popular script used for both Urdu and Hindi.^[172] Kaithi's association with Urdu and Hindi was ultimately eliminated by the political contest between these languages and their scripts, in which the Persian script was definitively linked to Urdu.

More recently in India, Urdu speakers have adopted Devanagari for publishing Urdu periodicals and have innovated new strategies to mark Urdu in Devanagari as distinct from Hindi in Devanagari. Such publishers have introduced new orthographic features into Devanagari for the purpose of representing the Perso-Arabic etymology of Urdu words. One example is the use of अ़ (Devanagari *a*) with vowel signs to mimic contexts of ع (*‘ain*), in violation of Hindi orthographic rules. For Urdu publishers, the use of Devanagari gives them a greater audience, whereas the orthographic changes help them preserve a distinct identity of Urdu.^[173]

Literature

Urdu has become a literary language only in recent centuries, as Persian was formerly the idiom of choice for the Muslim courts of North India. However, despite its relatively late development, Urdu literature boasts of some world-recognised artists and a considerable corpus.

Prose

Urdu afsana is a kind of Urdu prose in which many experiments have been done by short story writers from Munshi Premchand, Saadat Hasan Manto, Rajindra Singh Bedi, Ismat Chughtai, Krishan Chander to Naeem Baig and Rahman Abbas.

Religious

ا	ب	پ	ت	ٹ	ث	ج	چ	ح	خ
ā	b	p	t	ṭ	ṯ	j	ch	h	kh
و	ذ	ز	ر	ڑ	ڙ	س	ش	ص	ض
w	dh	z	r	ṛ	ẓ	s	sh	ṣ	ẓ
ن	م	ل	پ	ف	ق	ک	گ	ل	م
n	m	l	p	f	q	k	g	l	m
ی	ے	ی	ی	ی	ی	ی	ی	ی	ی
y	e	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
۰	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
۱۰	۱۱	۱۲	۱۳	۱۴	۱۵	۱۶	۱۷	۱۸	۱۹
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

The Urdu Nasta'liq alphabet, with names in the Devanagari and Latin alphabets

Urdu holds the largest collection of works on Islamic literature and Sharia. These include translations and interpretation of the Qur'an as well as commentary on Hadith, Fiqh, history, and Sufism. A great number of classical texts from Arabic and Persian have also been translated into Urdu. Relatively inexpensive publishing, combined with the use of Urdu as a *lingua franca* among Muslims of South Asia, has meant that Islam-related works in Urdu far outnumber such works in any other South Asian language. Popular Islamic books are also written in Urdu.

Literary

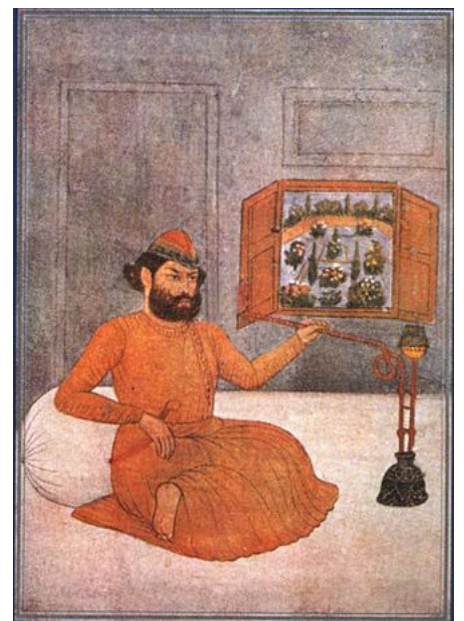
Secular prose includes all categories of widely known fiction and non-fiction work, separable into genres. The *dāstān*, or tale, a traditional story that may have many characters and complex plotting. This has now fallen into disuse.

The *afsāna* or short story is probably the best-known genre of Urdu fiction. The best-known *afsāna* writers, or *afsāna nigār*, in Urdu are Munshi Premchand, Saadat Hasan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander, Qurratulain Hyder (Qurat-ul-Ain Haider), Ismat Chughtai, Ghulam Abbas, Rashid ul Khairi and Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi till Rahman Abbas. Towards the end of last century Paigham Afaqui's novel *Makaan* appeared with a reviving force for Urdu novel resulting into writing of novels getting a boost in Urdu literature and a number of writers like Ghazanfer, Abdus Samad, Sarwat Khan and Musharraf Alam Zauqi have taken the move forward. However, Rahman Abbas has emerged as the most influential Urdu Novelist in the 21st century and he has raised the art of story-telling to a new level.^[174]

Munshi Premchand, became known as a pioneer in the *afsāna*, though some contend that his were not technically the first as Sir Ross Masood had already written many short stories in Urdu. Novels form a genre of their own, in the tradition of the English novel. Other genres include *safēr-nāma* (travel story), *mazmoon* (essay), *sarguzisht* (account/narrative), *insha'ya* (satirical essay), *muraseela* (editorial), and *khud navvisht* (autobiography).

Poetry

Urdu has been one of the premier languages of poetry in South Asia for two centuries, and has developed a rich tradition in a variety of poetic genres. The Ghazal in Urdu represents the most popular form of subjective music and poetry, whereas the Nazm exemplifies the objective kind, often reserved for narrative, descriptive, didactic or satirical purposes. Under the broad head of the Nazm we may also include the classical forms of poems known by specific names such as Masnavi (a long narrative poem in rhyming couplets on any theme: romantic, religious, or didactic), Marsia (an elegy traditionally meant to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, grandson of Muhammad, and his comrades of the Karbala fame), or Qasida (a panegyric written in praise of a king or a nobleman), for all these poems have a single presiding subject, logically developed and concluded. However, these poetic species have an old world aura about their subject and style, and are different from the modern Nazm, supposed to have come into vogue in the later part of the nineteenth century. Probably the most widely recited, and memorised genre of contemporary Urdu poetry is *nāt*—panegyric poetry written in praise of Muhammad. *Nāt* can be of any formal category, but is most commonly in the *ghazal* form. The language used in Urdu *nāt* ranges from the intensely colloquial to a highly persified formal language. The great early 20th century scholar



Mir Taqi Mir (1723–1810) (Urdu: میر تقی میر) was the leading Urdu poet of the 18th century in the courts of Mughal Empire and Nawabs of Awadh.

Ala Hazrat, Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi, who wrote many of the most well known *nāts* in Urdu (the collection of his poetic work is *Hadaïq-e-Baqhshish*), epitomised this range in a *ghazal* of nine stanzas (*bayt*) in which every stanza contains half a line each of Arabic, Persian, formal Urdu, and colloquial Hindi.

Another important genre of Urdu prose are the poems commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali at the Battle of Karbala, called *noha* (نوحہ) and *marsia*. Anees and Dabeer are famous in this regard.

Gulzar, Javed Akhtar, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Ahmad Faraz, Jaun Elia, Rahat Indori and Waseem Bareilvi are some famous and widely read Urdu poets.^{[175][176][177][178][179][180][181][182]}

Music

Ghazal "Gayaki", the art of singing or performing the ghazal in the Indian classical tradition, is very old. The very specific and detailed meter (Beher) of a Ghazal makes the music very pleasant.

Singers like Ustad Barkat Ali and many other singers in the past used to practice it, but the lack of historical records make many names anonymous. It was with Begum Akhtar and later on Ustad Mehdi Hassan that classical rendering of ghazals became popular in the masses. The categorisation of ghazal singing as a form of "light classical" music is a misconception.

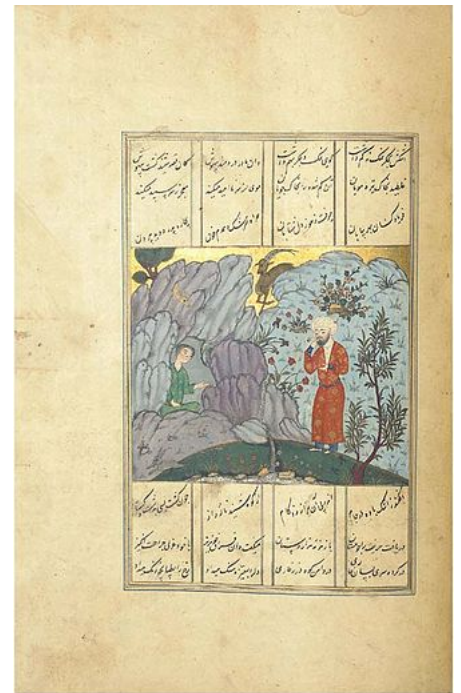
Classical ghazals are difficult to render because of the varying moods of the "shers" or couplets in the ghazal. Amanat Ali Khan, Begum Akhtar, Talat Mahmood, Ustad Mehdi Hassan, Abida Parveen, Jagjit Singh, Farida Khanum, and Ustad Ghulam Ali are popular classical ghazal singers.

Terminologies

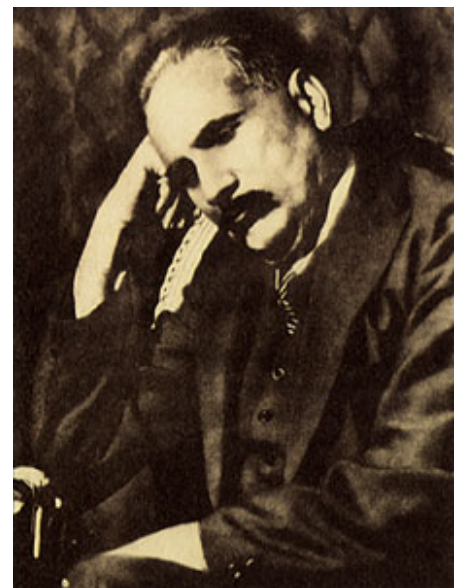
Ash`ār (اشعار, verse, couplets): It consists of two hemistiches (lines) called *Miṣra`* (مصرع); first hemistich (line) is called مصرع اولی (*Miṣra`-i ūlā*) and the second is called (مصرع ثانی) (*Miṣra`-i ṣānī*). Each verse embodies a single thought or subject (singular) شعر *shī`r*.

In the Urdu poetic tradition, most poets use a pen name called the *takhalluṣ*. This can be either a part of a poet's given name or something else adopted as an identity. The traditional convention in identifying Urdu poets is to mention the *takhalluṣ* at the end of the name. Thus Ghalib, whose official name and title was Mirza Asadullah Beg Khan, is referred to formally as Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, or in common parlance as just Mirza Ghalib. Because the *takhalluṣ* can be a part of their actual name, some poets end up having that part of their name repeated, such as Faiz Ahmad Faiz.

The word *takhalluṣ* is derived from Arabic, meaning "ending". This is because in the ghazal form, the poet would usually incorporate his or her pen name into the final couplet (*maqta`*) of each poem as a type of "signature".



An illustrated manuscript of one of Amir Khusrau's (1253–1325 CE) Persian poems



Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan

Urdu poetry example

This is Ghalib's famous couplet in which he compares himself to his great predecessor, the master poet Mir:^[183]

ریختہ کے تمہیں اُستاد نہیں ہو غالب
کہتے ہیں اگلے زمانے میں کوئی میر بھی تھا

Transliteration

Rekhtaḥ ke tumhī ustād nahīn ho Ghālib
Kahte haiṅ Agle zamāne meṅ ko'ī Mīr bhī thā

Translation

You are not the only master of *Rekhta*,^[note 2] Ghalib
(They) say that in the past there also was someone (named) Mir.

Sample text

The following is a sample text in Urdu, of the Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (by the United Nations):

Urdu text

دفعہ ۱: تمام انسان آزاد اور حقوق و عزت کے اعتبار سے برابر پیدا ہوئے ہیں۔ انہیں ضمیر اور عقل ودیعت ہوئی ہے۔ اس لیے انہیں ایک دوسرے کے ساتھ بھائی چارے کا سلوک کرنا چاہئے۔

Transliteration (ALA-LC)

Daf'ah 1: *Tamām insān āzād aur ḥuqūq o 'izzat ke i'tibār se barābar paidā hū'e haiṅ. Unheṅ ḡamīr aur 'aql wadī'at hū'ī hai. Is li'e unheṅ ek dūsre ke sāth bhā'ī chāre kā sulūk karnā cāhī'e.*

IPA transcription

dəfɑː eːkː təməːm ɪnsɑːn ɑːzɑːd ɔːr ɬuquːq oː ɪzzət keː etɪbɑːr seː bərəːbər pɛːdɑː huːeː hɛ̃ː.
unhẽː ɡəmiːr ɔːr əql wədɪːət huːiː hɛ̃ː. ɪs liːeː unhẽː eːk duːsreː keː sɑːtʰ bʰɑːiː tʃɑːreː kɑː suluːk
kərnɑː tʃɑːhiːeː.

Gloss (word-for-word)

Article 1: All humans free[,] and rights and dignity *(s) consideration from equal born are.
Them to conscience and intellect endowed is. This for, they one another *(s) with brotherhood *
(s) treatment do should.

Translation (grammatical)

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience. Therefore, they should act towards one another in a spirit of

brotherhood.

Note: **('s) represents a possessive case that, when written, is preceded by the possessor and followed by the possessed, unlike the English "of".*

See also

- List of Urdu-language poets
- List of Urdu-language writers
- National Translation Mission (NTM)
- Persian and Urdu
- States of India by Urdu speakers
- Urdu in the United Kingdom
- Uddin and Begum Hindustani Romanisation
- Urdu Digest
- Urdu in Aurangabad
- Urdu Informatics
- Urdu keyboard
- Glossary of the British Raj

Notes

- An example can be seen in the word "need" in Urdu. Urdu uses the Persian version ضرورت rather than the original Arabic ضرورة. See: John T. Platts "A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi, and English" (1884) Page 749 (<http://dsalsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.5:1:5370.platts>). Urdu and Hindi use Persian pronunciation in their loanwords, rather than that of Arabic—for instance rather than pronouncing ض as the *emphatic consonant* "ḍ", the original sound in *Arabic*, Urdu uses the Persian pronunciation "z". See: John T. Platts "A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi, and English" (1884) Page 748 (<http://dsalsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.5:1:5339.platts>)
- Rekhta was the name for the Urdu language in Ghalib's days.

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42. Farooqi, M. (2012). *Urdu Literary Culture: Vernacular Modernity in the Writing of Muhammad Hasan Askari* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=Vc1fAQAAQBAJ&pg=PT185&dq=Urdu+cultural+contact+Hindus+Muslims#v=onepage>). Springer. ISBN 978-1-137-02692-7. "Historically speaking, Urdu grew out of interaction between Hindus and Muslims. He noted that Urdu is not the language of Muslims alone, although Muslims may have played a larger role in making it a literary language. Hindu poets and writers could and did bring specifically Hindu cultural elements into Urdu and these were accepted."
43. Dhulipala, Venkat (2000). *The Politics of Secularism: Medieval Indian Historiography and the Sufis*. University of Wisconsin–Madison. p. 27. "Persian became the court language, and many Persian words crept into popular usage. The composite culture of northern India, known as the Ganga Jamuni tehzeeb was a product of the interaction between Hindu society and Islam."
44. *Indian Journal of Social Work, Volume 4*. Tata Institute of Social Sciences. 1943. p. 264. "... more words of Sanskrit origin but 75% of the vocabulary is common. It is also admitted that while this language is known as Hindustani, ... Muslims call it Urdu and the Hindus call it Hindi. ... Urdu is a national language evolved through years of Hindu and Muslim cultural contact and, as stated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, is essentially an Indian language and has no place outside."
45. "Women of the Indian Sub-Continent: Makings of a Culture - Rekhta Foundation" (<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/women-of-the-indian-sub-continent-makings-of-a-culture-rekhta-foundation/dwJy7qboNi3flg?hl=en>). Google Arts & Culture. Retrieved 25 February 2020. "The "Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb" is one such instance of the composite culture that marks various regions of the country. Prevalent in the North, particularly in the central plains, it is born of the union between the Hindu and Muslim cultures. Most of the temples were lined along the Ganges and the Khanqah (Sufi school of thought) were situated along the Yamuna river (also called Jamuna). Thus, it came to be known as the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, with the word "tehzeeb" meaning culture. More than communal harmony, its most beautiful by-product was "Hindustani" which later gave us the Hindi and Urdu languages."
46. Zahur-ud-Din (1985). *Development of Urdu Language and Literature in the Jammu Region*. Gulshan Publishers. p. 13. "The beginning of the language, now known as Urdu, should therefore, be placed in this period of the earlier Hindu Muslim contact in the Sindh and Punjab areas that took place in early quarter of the 8th century A.D."

47. Jain, Danesh; Cardona, George (2007). *The Indo-Aryan Languages*. Routledge. ISBN 978-1-135-79711-9. "The primary sources of non-IA loans into MSH are Arabic, Persian, Portuguese, Turkic and English. Conversational registers of Hindi/Urdu (not to mentioned formal registers of Urdu) employ large numbers of Persian and Arabic loanwords, although in Sanskritised registers many of these words are replaced by *tatsama* forms from Sanskrit. The Persian and Arabic lexical elements in Hindi result from the effects of centuries of Islamic administrative rule over much of north India in the centuries before the establishment of British rule in India. Although it is conventional to differentiate among Persian and Arabic loan elements into Hindi/Urdu, in practice it is often difficult to separate these strands from one another. The Arabic (and also Turkic) lexemes borrowed into Hindi frequently were mediated through Persian, as a result of which a thorough intertwining of Persian and Arabic elements took place, as manifest by such phenomena as hybrid compounds and compound words. Moreover, although the dominant trajectory of lexical borrowing was from Arabic into Persian, and thence into Hindi/Urdu, examples can be found of words that in origin are actually Persian loanwords into both Arabic and Hindi/Urdu."
48. Kesavan, B. S. (1997). *History Of Printing And Publishing In India*. National Book Trust, India. p. 31. ISBN 978-81-237-2120-0. "It might be useful to recall here that Old Hindi or Hindavi, which was a naturally Persian- mixed language in the largest measure, has played this role before, as we have seen, for five or six centuries."
49. Bhat, M. Ashraf (2017). *The Changing Language Roles and Linguistic Identities of the Kashmiri Speech Community*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN 978-1-4438-6260-8.
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55. Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman (2003), Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture Part 1* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=ak9csfpY2WoC>), *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions From South Asia*, University of California Press, p. 806, ISBN 978-0-520-22821-4
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57. Tariq Rahman (2011). "Urdu as the Language of Education in British India" (http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/1.%20URDU%20AS%20THE%20LANGUAGE,%20Tariq%20Rahman%20FINAL.pdf) (PDF). *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*. NIHCR. **32** (2): 1–42.

58. Delacy, Richard; Ahmed, Shahara (2005). *Hindi, Urdu & Bengali*. Lonely Planet. pp. 11–12. "Hindi and Urdu are generally considered to be one spoken language with two different literary traditions. That means that Hindi and Urdu speakers who shop in the same markets (and watch the same Bollywood films) have no problems understanding each other -- they'd both say yeh *kitne* kaa hay for 'How much is it?' -- but the written form for Hindi will be यह कितने का है? and the Urdu one will be یہ کتنے کا ہے؟ Hindi is written from left to right in the Devanagari script, and is the official language of India, along with English. Urdu, on the other hand, is written from right to left in the Nastaliq script (a modified form of the Arabic script) and is the national language of Pakistan. It's also one of the official languages of the Indian states of Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir. Considered as one, these tongues constitute the second most spoken language in the world, sometimes called Hindustani. In their daily lives, Hindi and Urdu speakers communicate in their 'different' languages without major problems. ... Both Hindi and Urdu developed from Classical Sanskrit, which appeared in the Indus Valley (modern Pakistan and northwest India) at about the start of the Common Era. The first old Hindi (or Apabhramsha) poetry was written in the year 769 AD, and by the European Middle Ages it became known as 'Hindvi'. Muslim Turks invaded the Punjab in 1027 and took control of Delhi in 1193. They paved the way for the Islamic Mughal Empire, which ruled northern India from the 16th century until it was defeated by the British Raj in the mid-19th century. It was at this time that the language of this book began to take form, a mixture of Hindvi grammar with Arabic, Persian and Turkish vocabulary. The Muslim speakers of Hindvi began to write in the Arabic script, creating Urdu, while the Hindu population incorporated the new words but continued to write in Devanagari script."
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62. Hutchinson, John; Smith, Anthony D. (2000). *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*. Taylor & Francis. ISBN 978-0-415-20112-4. "In the nineteenth century in north India, before the extension of the British system of government schools, Urdu was not used in its written form as a medium of instruction in traditional Islamic schools, where Muslim children were taught Persian and Arabic, the traditional languages of Islam and Muslim culture. It was only when the Muslim elites of north India and the British decided that Muslims were backward in education in relation to Hindus and should be encouraged to attend government schools that it was felt necessary to offer Urdu in the Persian-Arabic script as an inducement to Muslims to attend the schools. And it was only after the Hindi-Urdu controversy developed that Urdu, once disdained by Muslim elites in north India and not even taught in the Muslim religious schools in the early nineteenth century, became a symbol of Muslim identity second to Islam itself. A second point revealed by the Hindi-Urdu controversy in north India is how symbols may be used to separate peoples who, in fact, share aspects of culture. It is well known that ordinary Muslims and Hindus alike spoke the same language in the United Provinces in the nineteenth century, namely Hindustani, whether called by that name or whether called Hindi, Urdu, or one of the regional dialects such as Braj or Awadhi. Although a variety of styles of Hindi-Urdu were in use in the nineteenth century among different social classes and status groups, the legal and administrative elites in courts and government offices, Hindus and Muslims alike, used Urdu in the Persian-Arabic script."
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64. Clyne, Michael (24 May 2012). *Pluricentric Languages: Differing Norms in Different Nations* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=ieMgAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA385>). Walter de Gruyter. ISBN 978-3-11-088814-0.

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69. Hakala, Walter N. (2012). "Languages as a Key to Understanding Afghanistan's Cultures" (http://media.nationalgeographic.org/assets/file/asia_8.pdf) (PDF). *National Geographic*. Retrieved 13 March 2018. "In the 1980s and '90s, at least three million Afghans--mostly Pashtun--fled to Pakistan, where a substantial number spent several years being exposed to Hindi- and Urdu-language media, especially Bollywood films and songs, and beng educated in Urdu-language schools, both of which contributed to the decline of Dari, even among urban Pashtuns."
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- Urdu language (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Urdu-language>) at *Encyclopædia Britannica*
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