

# The Past and Present Trends of the Urdu Literature Collectively with Its Derivation and Geographic Circulation

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## Abstract

The history of any literature is the chronological progress of its writings in prose or poetry that endeavors to give amusement, clarification or education to the persons who read, pay attention or view it, as well as the advancement of the literary techniques utilized in the communication of these sections. This article includes history of Urdu literature coupled with this is the work relating to production of knowledge for making available on Urdu language with stress on technological development as well as knowledge of ideas evolved in the modern context. Urdu literature has an enormous field of massive knowledge and rich literary work by well-known writers and poets. Basically, Urdu literature has drawn a lot of inspiration from other literatures and even now a day's many words in Urdu are belonging to Persian, Arabic as well as Turkish languages. As a result, Urdu literature can be said combination of the richest languages due to a unique intermingle of other languages in it. The sophistication and stylishness of Urdu literature is owing to its wealthy vocabulary. The vocabulary of Urdu literature has a huge reserve of literary words that are extremely momentous, outstanding and striking. With a few major exceptions, the Urdu literature is the work of Muslim writers who take their themes from the life of the subcontinent. Poetry written in Urdu flourished from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but no real prose literature developed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, despite the fact that histories and religious prose treatises are known from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. More colloquial forms of writing gradually displaced the classically ornate literary Urdu in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Urdu literature has been stimulated by nationalist, pan-Islamic and socialist feelings, and writers from the Punjab began to contribute more than those from the traditional Urdu areas of the subcontinent. Amir Khusro exercised a great influence on the initial growth of not only Urdu literature, but also to the language itself, which only truly took shape as distinguished from Perso-Arabic script around in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Urdu literature has generally composed more of poetry than of prose, therefore, it is said that the Urdu language acquired the status of a literary language due to the contributions of earlier Muslim writers and poets.

## Keywords

Urdu, Literature, Civilization, Urdu History, Literary Movements, Progressive Movement

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## 1. Introduction

Literature and writing are although connected, yet both are not synonymous. The extraordinarily scholars have often

disagreed the concerning when written record-keeping became more like "literature" than anything else. The old testimony has been compiled and edited by various scholars over a period of centuries. The works including both secular and religious matters have been subjected to various literary

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evaluations (Riches, 2000; Lim, 2005). Furthermore, knowing the importance of expanse as a cultural isolator in previous centuries, the chronological progress of literature did not happen at an even speed across the globe. The problems of creating a uniform global history of literature are compounded by the fact that many texts have been lost over the millennia, either deliberately, by accident or by the total disappearance of the originating culture. The mainly sound recognized fiction from the Islamic world is the book of "One Thousand and One Nights" (Arabian Nights), which is an assemblage of a lot of previous folk tales. The epic took form in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, attained its ultimate form by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the number and type of tales have varied from one manuscript to another. A number of stories within the One Thousand and One Nights (Arabian Nights) also feature science fiction elements (Pinault, 1992; Geraldine and Rosamund, 1999; Irwin, 2003). The publications on Urdu literature can be rated not very high in numbers in the academic circles. Therefore, the focus of this publication is to produce quality information on the development of Urdu literature for readers, listeners and observers. The mainly vital action under this publication is to make available a real text of evolution of Urdu literature during the last many years. For pursuance of the objective, joined with this is the work relating to production of Urdu language for making available of knowledge from all aspects of society with stress on technological development as well as knowledge of ideas evolved in the modern context.

## 2. Beginning of Urdu Literature

The history of Urdu literature is closely linked to the growth of the Urdu language. The word Urdu itself is of Turkish origin and refers to a military camp, which in its literary variant is most commonly written in the style of the Arabic alphabets borrowed from Indo-Persian. The origin of Urdu is a subject of a little difference of opinions among scholars depending upon sources on which the several linguistic, historical, literary and geographically diverse scholars make use of many plausible speculations. The minimal explanation on which most scholars agree, and which is probably the least misleading, is that a literary written language similar to what is now called Urdu, gradually began to replace Persian in importance in early eighteenth century at Delhi. From Delhi and nearby Agra this literary Urdu spread to Avadh, Punjab, Deccan and Bihar. In time, Lucknow, Lahore and Hyderabad as well as Delhi, became major centers of Urdu publishing and scholarship (Faruqi, 2001; 2003).

Before the eighteenth century various dialects of a proto-Urdu are probably widely spoken over a very wide geographic area across India. In other explanations, the

emergence of Urdu has been traced as far back as the first arrival of Persian Muslims into North India in the eleventh century, to the introduction of Arabic, Persian and Turkish expressions into the local Indian languages over the centuries, and to areas as diverse as Deccan, Gujarat, Ganga-Jamuna region and Punjab. Still other peoples hold the view that the mixture of West Asian and Indic linguistic, and literary traditions took place at the Mughal court, especially in the military camp and market place on the environs of the Delhi fort and the court of Shahjahan (from 1628 to 1658). It only came into sole usage at the end of the nineteenth century (Anvar, 1991; Frances, 1994). In short, by defining Urdu essentially in terms of the grafting of West Asian and classical Islamic linguistic and literary traditions onto Indic, local and largely colloquial languages, Urdu scholars agree to place Urdu firmly at the points of Muslim's interaction and experience in South Asia. For example, the Urdu literary canon, with its emphasis on works of West Asian expression and its exclusion of works in local dialects, is an apparent, but little examined the reflection of this view. The process of formation of this now generally accepted canon in the nineteenth century holds important implications for Urdu's close ties to Muslim nationalism in South Asia (Naim, 1978).

As Muslims identity politics gathered strength in colonial India, and Urdu turned into the print language of the emerging nation, discussions of an apparently purely literary nature became a veritable mirror of ideological and sociopolitical changes among India's Muslims. For example, calls for the reform of pre-colonial Urdu poetics mirrored analogous reform initiatives in the religious, social and political spheres. This relationship has continued in different ways, since the division of British India into India and Pakistan. This ongoing dialogue between the reform of Urdu and issues of Muslims identity attempted to highlight as the major literary trends, works and writers in Urdu in the twentieth century (Omar, 1996). Urdu is one of the very widely-spoken languages of South Asia and it has attained a wider circulation in other parts of the world where it is regarded as the major cultural language by most Muslims. Urdu is the countrywide language of Pakistan and among one of the official languages of India. In its everyday spoken form it is fundamentally somewhat similar to Hindi, though distinguished from it in script and in higher vocabulary. Besides its important role as the chief vehicle of Islam in South Asia, Urdu has a rich secular literature, whose poetry is closely based on Persian models. The history of literature is the historical development of writings in prose or poetry which attempts to provide entertainment, enlightenment or instruction to the readers, listeners and observers, as well as the development of the literary techniques used in the communication of these pieces. However, not all writings

constitute a literature. Some recorded materials, such as compilations of data (e.g., a check register) are not considered literature, and this article relates only to the evolution of the works as defined above (Khalique, 2006; Robina et al., 2015).

Urdu literature tends to be dominated by poetry, especially the verse forms of the ghazal and nazm, however, it has expanded into other styles of writing, including that of the short story or *afsana*. As the national language of Pakistan is Urdu, so, Urdu literature is mainly popular in this locality, and at the same time it is also famous in India. Urdu literature originated sometime around the 14<sup>th</sup> century in North India among the sophisticated gentry of Persian courts. The continuing traditions of Islam and Persia marked their influence on the Urdu language given that both cultural heritages are strongly present throughout Urdu territory. The vocabulary of Urdu language, almost evenly splits between Sanskrit-derived Prakrit and Arabo-Persian words. With a few major exceptions, the Urdu literature is the contributions of Muslim writers who take their themes from the life of the subcontinent. Poetry written in Urdu flourished from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but no real prose literature developed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, despite the fact that histories and religious prose treatises are known from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. More colloquial forms of writing gradually displaced the classically ornate literary Urdu in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Urdu literature is stimulated by nationalist, pan-Islamic and socialist feeling, and writers from the Punjab began to contribute more than those from the traditional Urdu areas of the subcontinent (National Language Authority, 2005; Robina et al., 2015).

### 3. Some Extraordinary Contributors of Earlier Urdu Literature

Among the extraordinary contributors of Urdu literature, Amir Khusro worked out immense persuade on the original growth of not only Urdu literature, but also the Urdu language itself that only really took form as eminent from both Persian and other languages around the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Amir Khusro is accredited with the systematization of Northern Indian classical music and wrote his works both in Persian and Hindavi. At the same time, the couplets that come down from him are representative of Arabo-Persian vocabulary, and his influence on court viziers and writers must have been transcendental for a century subsequent to his passing away. Sultan Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah remained speaking a language that might be considered to be Urdu. He appeared as a scholar in Persian and Arabic, but as well he wrote poetry in Urdu language. His poetry has been

compiled into Dewan or volume entitled “Kulliyat-e-Quli Qutub Shah” and has the distinction of being the first Saheb-e-dewan Urdu poet as well as is credited with introducing a new sensibility into prevailing genres of Persian-Urdu poetry. It is understood that due to his contributions the Urdu language acquired the status of a literary language (Sayyed, 1967; Amber, 2004; Iftekhar, 2012).

### 4. Modernism and Progressive Movement in Urdu Literature

Modernism in any part of the world is the outcome of the vacuum prevalent in the society and it takes birth at the moment when the old values become meaningless and new possibilities emerge. Old literary forms cannot cope with these new possibilities and emotionally peoples cling to their past though intellectually they want to cope with the changing world. Modernism, in Urdu literature, emerged after Allamah Muhammad Iqbal though it has its roots in the works of writers writing in the perspective of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It started with Sir Syed, Hali and Shibli as they are the first to consciously relate literature with the society. Gradually, it divided into several movements like the Progressive Movement, Cultural Movement and Neo Progressive Movement (Wazeer, 1982).

Sobia (2012) explored evolution of Progressive Movement in Urdu literature over the years and traces influence of European Modernism on it. English and European literatures influenced Urdu literature in two ways, directly and indirectly i.e., through translation. Translation of various works not only introduced short story into Urdu literature but also helped it to develop as a successful and mature genre of literature. These translations broadened the vision of Urdu writers by introducing new techniques of writing being practiced by their foreign contemporaries all over the world. The Urdu story owes a lot to the translators and translations of English, American, European, Russian and Arabic fiction. These translations not only helped to Urdu writers but also made a common Urdu reader more aware person of the world around him. Progress and development made in industrial, agricultural, philosophical, psychological, social and political fields have also been transferred through these translations. Due to this influence, Urdu fiction emerged with the spirit to experiment in Existentialism, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Impressionism, Expressionism and Surrealism. These translations helped to Urdu fiction, especially short story to flourish. Maupassant, Chekov, Maughum, Lawrence have special influence on Urdu literature. Following the line of modernists, the progressive writers highlighted the external tyrannical conditions and torture faced by inner self but they are not pessimistic about man’s destiny. They hoped to bring

about a change through constant struggle. They presented man as a dignified and a significant creature, capable of proving himself in a capitalistic and feudal society that is exploiting him. They believed in Marxist maxim of changing the world. Encyclopedia of Indian Literature states, "Modernist writers have sought to correct the progressive overemphasis on society, the family and the group, and have focused on the individual self, and its own interior and introspective processes".

## 5. Humor in Urdu Literature

It is hard for a person to go forward with a serious and sad life at all times, and there need enjoyment, mind recreation and some sort of amusement in the form of verbal, visual or physical actions. Urdu literature is the mainly appropriate and guiltless choice for the purpose of humor, and the life sneeringly can get laughing with it. When a cursory glance is thrown at Urdu literature the early onset of humor can be originated in a number of earliest Dastan (legends). For the first time, humor is noticeably experiential in the letters written by Ghalib and has been sanctified with twofold features of being a prose writer and poet. Humor is a fraction of his personality and Hali called him as "Hewann-e-Zareef" (humorous animal). In addition to Ghalib, humor as well is noticed in the writings of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Shibli Naumani, while, the essentials of parody are further detailed in the writings donated by Deputy Nazir Ahmad. Some others names such as Mullah Ramuzi, Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui, Farhatallah Baig, Azeem Baig Chughtai, Patras Bukhari, Shaukat Thanwi and Falak Pema, etc., are valuable for stating at this point. The style of Wazeer Agha is based upon features of action, sparkle and chirpiness in his writings (Tazeen and Tabassum, 2012). The key components of Urdu literature are summarized below:-

### 5.1. Epics (Dastaangoi)

Urdu literature is generally composed more of poetry than of prose. The prose component of Urdu literature has mainly restricted to the ancient form of epic stories called Dastan that are often originally written in Persian. These long stories have complicated plots that deal with magical and otherwise fantastic creatures and events. The genre originated in Iran and has been disseminated by folk storytellers while their plots are based both on folklore and classical literary subjects.

### 5.2. Literary Memoirs (Tazkiras)

Tazkiras, are compilations of literary memoirs that include verses and maxims of the great poets along with biographical information and commentaries on their styles. They are often

a collection of names with a line or two for information about each poet, followed by specifics about his composition. Some of these Tazkiras give biographical details and a little idea of the style or poetical power is transmitted.

### 5.3. Poetry

Urdu poetry has reached its peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The well-developed form of poetry is the ghazal, known for its quality and quantity within the Urdu tradition. Urdu poets influenced by English and other European-languages poetry began writing sonnets in Urdu in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.4. Novels

Originally, Urdu novels focused on urban social life, and eventually widening in scope to include rural social life. These also covered the changing times under the progressive writing movement; however, since the independence of Pakistan in 1947, there has a great impact on the novel, by bringing up questions of identity. Towards the end of the previous century, the novel took a serious turn towards the contemporary life and realities of the young generations.

### 5.5. Short Stories (Afsanah Nigari)

Urdu literature has included the short stories form for slightly more than one hundred years ago. During this period it has passed through some major phases including the early romantic period, progressive writings, modernist writings and the current phase. Although a number of male and female writers wrote short stories during the first phase including romantic stories and social criticisms, yet the short stories crystallized as a regular part of Urdu literature in the growth of the writings of many writers. Urdu short stories have dealt with a wide range of the dimensions of life, but the most famous stories concern with the trauma of the independence of Pakistan and the violence generated out of it.

### 5.6. Drama

Urdu drama has evolved from the prevailing dramatic traditions of North India and this tradition took the shape of Theatre. Agha Hashr Kashmiri is the culmination of this tradition. Urdu theatre traditions have greatly influenced modern theatre. Among all the languages, Urdu along with Gujrati, Marathi and Bengali theatres have remained popular. Many Urdu dramas have also been made into films.

### 5.7. Digest

Urdu Digest is a monthly Urdu magazine in Pakistan and it is first digest in the country published since November 1960 at Lahore. Its appearance is similar to the famous American monthly, Reader's Digest. Its writings present a traditional way of religious Pakistani life and cover a large variety of

topics. Urdu Digest is constantly performing the duty of character building and consciousness of Pakistanis and also has been serving to strengthen the ideology of Pakistan and promoting national integration. It publishes translations of international literary stories, adventure stories, hunting stories and articles on science, technology, history, animals, education, health, positive thinking and business role models.

## 6. Conclusion

The history of Urdu Literature is connected to Urdu that is the national language of Pakistan and one of the most widely-spoken languages of South Asia, which has acquired a wider distribution in other parts of the world. Besides major cultural language of most of Muslims and its important role as the chief vehicle of Islam in South Asia, Urdu has a rich secular literature closely based on Persian models. Urdu literature, particularly Urdu poetry or prose, can boast of having narratives not known in other literatures of the world. The several publications of Urdu literature have been rated very far above the ground in the academic circles of the world. The focus of these publications agenda is to produce quality literature and textbooks for Urdu medium education disciplines. The mainly important action under publications is making available an authentic text of classics written during last so many years of evolution of Urdu poetry and prose. Coupled with this is the work relating to the objective for making available the knowledge of scientific and technological development as well as knowledge of ideas evolved in the modern context of society. Following the line of modernists, the progressive Urdu writers highlighted the external tyrannical conditions and torture faced by inner self, but they are not pessimistic about man's destiny. They hoped to bring about a change through constant struggle and presented man as a dignified and a significant creature, capable of proving himself in a capitalistic and feudal society that is exploiting him. But this may be too much to expect from Urdu or any other literature. On the other hand, Urdu literature, as always, seems eager to take part on all the debates, which have contributed to its remarkable energy since the nineteenth century. Going through the present academic paper, one can has a comprehensive picture of past and recent trends in Urdu literature. Likewise, quite a lot of conferences and seminars on Urdu literature can be organized for discussing some important issues facing by society and literature. The voyage of Urdu literature is still on progress and a lot of writers are determined to build their names in this field. Simply the coming time can make a decision to construct their place in this field, however, they are surely able to contribute in the flow of Urdu literature.

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