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# The genesis of Persian and Urdu languages and literatures in India (Article)

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## Abstract

**The** Indian subcontinent has contained a vast array of ethnicities, cultures, traditions and **languages** since **the** beginning of civilisation. While classical Indian civilisation was based on Sanskrit, **the** sacerdotal **language** of **the** Brahmins, this sacred **language** did not affect **the** general mass of people, nor **literature** beyond a privileged elite. **The** first true lingua franca that transcended caste barriers to a certain extent was **Persian**, which was adopted by **the** ruling dynasties of Muslim **India** (who themselves were generally Turks or indigenous Indians rather than **Persians**), their Hindu peers, as well as **the** civil servants. However, from **the** beginning of **the** seventeenth century **Urdu** began to form around **the** lower echelons of society as a pidgin common tongue to enable communication between **the** myriad ethnicities of **the** Mughal Empire, ultimately restricting **Persian** to a refined **language** of culture and courtly life in **the** Mughal court and becoming a vibrant and dynamic **language** in its own right, thus becoming **the** first literary **language** with a substantial original contribution from Indians since ancient Sanskrit. This article charts **the** adoption of **Persian** and later **the** emergence of **Urdu** as spoken and literary **languages** in **the** Indian subcontinent using original sources in those **languages**.

## Author keywords

**India**; **Language**; Muslims; **Persian**; Sanskrit; **Urdu**

## References (49)

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