Hindi
Encyclopaedia of Islam 3

Hindi has been used by Indian Muslims in various contexts at least from the thirteenth century.

The term *Hindi* and its more archaic forms, *hindavī/hindūʾī, hindīyah* etc., were first used in Arabic and Persian sources in the sense of "Indian (language)". Their more specific meaning, however, was not initially fixed (Chatterji, *India: A Polyglot Nation and Its Linguistic Problems Vis-à-vis National Integration* 35-7). The term *hindīyah* referred to the language of India already in ninth-century Arab sources (Flood, *Objects of translation: material culture and medieval "Hindu-Muslim" encounter* 44). Nonetheless, it is unclear what language was meant by it. It is similarly obscure whether classical or vernacular languages were meant by Ghaznavid references to Hindavi writing and poetry, such as of Maḥmūd Ghaznī's (r. 998-1030/388-421) Hindu general Tilak, who was an excellent writer in Hindavi and Persian *(khaṭṭī nīkū ba-hindavī va fārsī)* (Bayhaqi, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* 522-33; Baihakí, *Táríkhu-s Subuktugin by Baihakí* vol. 2, 125-34), to the encomium in Hindavi *(lughat-e hindavī)* by the Chandelā king Nanda of Kalinjar, which was highly appreciated in the court of Maḥmūd Ghaznī (Gardizi, *Kitāb Zāyn al-Akhbār* 70-71; , 940-1), or to the Hindavi divan of Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān of Lahore (b. 1046[?1049]/438[?441], d. 1121/515) (, 161-2 and Faruqi, *Early Urdu* 65). When we have extant „Indian" poetry from these times, namely 'Abd al-Raḥmān's twelfth-century *Sandesha-rāsaka*, it is in the literary language Apabhramsha (, 163). However, from the early fourteenth century onwards, the term *Hindavi* appears to refer primarily to vernaculars. The Indo-Persian poet Amīr Khusraw on the one hand in his preface to his *Ghurrat al-kamāl* (c1294/693) identifies his own vernacular with Hindavi, on the other, in his *Nūh sipihr* (1318/717) he lists twelve Indic vernaculars which he also qualifies as *hindavī* (Faruqi, *Early Urdu*, 66 and 69). Sufi remarks on Hindavi singing, such as that of Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyā from 1316/715, are likely to refer to vernacular compositions (see below). In around 1379/779 Maulānā Dāūd called his vernacular *Hindukī (turakī liḵẖi liḵẖi hindukī gāī*, , verse 9, manuscript from 1617/1026). From the fourteenth century onwards, we can assume that the term Hindavi referred to the type of Hindi composed or studied by Muslims, especially to the language of the Sufi romances. The word Hindi, appears to be a later spelling of *Hindavī*. In the eighteenth century, it rather designated Urdu (Faruqi, *Early Urdu* 23, 27-29).

Hindi as an umbrella term for a range of spoken dialects and literary idioms owes its present scope of meaning to colonial and nationalist scholarship. However, the major old literary traditions in the Hindi Belt, that is Avadhī, Braj bhāṣā, Sant bhāṣā and K̲h̲arī bolī (used initially in Persian-mixed Rekhta compositions), for long lacked clear borders, and their names and boundaries are relatively late constructions. These traditions were mutually intelligible, shared their poetic forms and were often anthologised together. Many authors easily moved between one and another.

The modern misconception that Hindi was the language of Hindus and Urdu of Indian Muslims, obscured the fact that a profuse Islamic literature existed also in what is labelled now as Hindi. Colonial, nationalist and contemporary Hindi literary histories have accepted all available work of this literature as its own. The literature that will be discussed in the following paragraphs contain Sufi or bhakti poetry composed by Muslims, Hindu bhakti poetry interpreted to illustrate Sufi ideas, syncretistic Sant works and mixed-language K̲h̲arī Bolī Rekhta verses composed in the Nāgarī script. From the earliest times until the Hindi-Urdu bifurcation, Hindi was a rich treasury of poetry with Islamic forms and meanings.

The Hindi Belt in North India never has been a monolingual region. Various form of multilingualism and diglossia operated throughout the late medieval and modern periods (, 404-5; , ). This lead to a rich cross-fertilisation of various cultural traditions.

We can infer from later parallels that Sufis in Hindi Belt are likely to have used the local vernacular(s) in their communication and possibly interpreted local songs or narratives according to Sufi tenets from the earliest times. They must also have composed songs in the vernacular. However, such compositions never seem to have been written down as literature before the fourteenth century. As far as high literature is concerned, nothing is known about Mas'ūd's Hindavi divan (, 161-2; Faruqi, *Early Urdu* 65). His extant Persian oeuvre suggests that he had not yet fully accommodated the Indian cultural milieu. Although he made use of Indian imagery it did not play a prominent role (, 163). If his Hindavi poetry existed at all, it was not deemed to be of a work of particular value by subsequent scribes and was not copied to the extent that it could survive. In contrast with Mas'ūd, Amīr Khusraw's Persian writing displays an unparalleled pride in India. The poet also mentioned that he had composed songs in Hindavi although he did not deem them to be worthy of writing down (Faruqi, *Early Urdu* 69). Braj bhāṣā and Rekhta songs bearing his name today may not have been composed by him as no record of them exists prior to the seventeenth century and they show linguistic and stylistic features peculiar to the sixteenth to nineteenth-centuries (, 30-33). Similarly, most Hindavi poetry attributed to other Muslim authors during the Sultanate period (1206-1526/602-932) may not originate from the time of their putative authors (Jafar and Jain, *Tārīk̲h-i adab-i urdū 1700 tak* vol. I, 383, 422-8; Zaidi, *History of Urdu Literature* 19; Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* vol. I, 327-8.).

There are however, a few notable exceptions that belong now to the precious corpus of pre-Mughal Hindi. The earliest records of the Muslim use of Hindavi come from the discourses *(malfūẓāt)* of fourteenth-century Sufi masters. They often use Hindavi utterances in their discourses as repartees, mimicking women's speech and, rarely, the language of the idolaters or spells (, 410-415). *Malfūẓāt* texts at other times make references to Hindavi singing or present specimens of poetry. The quoted poems are not songs but some twenty couplets used for homiletic purposes. Distichs attributed to Bābā Farīd (b. 1174/569, d. 1265/664) (Ernst, *Eternal Garden* 71-77; Singh, *Śaikh Farīd dī Bhāl*, pp. 123-143; *Nafā'is al-anfās* with verses attributed to Farīd is included in Williams, *Sacred Sounds* 83.), as well as to Shaikh Ḥamīd al-dīn Nāgaurī (d. 1273/671) (Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* vol. I, 327-8) are embedded into mid-fourteenth-century Persian texts. Both of them are Chishtī sufi authors close to Shaikh Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī. While Farīd is linked to Panjab, Nāgaurī to Rajashan and Delhi. The form used in the distichs is Indic: corrupt or proper *dohā*. While the language of the Farīd couplets has been linguistically identified as Siraikī (Western Panjabi), his *dohā*s have also become part of the Hindi tradition, and were especially popular in seventeenth-eighteenth-century Dādūpanthī anthologies (Singh, *Śaikh Farīd dī Bhāl* 108-122; Singh, *Śaikh Farīd dī Bhāl*Singhal, *Śek̲h̲ pharīd* Singhal, *Śek̲h̲ pharīd gañj-e śakar: Jīvanī aur račnāeṁ*).

The Indo-Sufi maṣnavī *Chāndāyan* (1377/779 or 1379/781) is the most successful of the earliest works in Hindi (Hines, *Daud's Cāndāyan*). This romance, based on a popular local folktale but presented with spiritual overtones, addressed both the Sultanate court cultures of Turkish and Afghan nobles as well as Sufi hospices (, 59). Through its blending of Persian and Indic traditions, it utilised Hindavi poetry as a means of indigenising Sufism and has enjoyed a wide circulation throughout north India and, possibly, northern Deccan. It was illustrated (Adamjee, *Strategies for Visual Narration*), translated (Hines, *Daud's Cāndāyan* 69; Behl, *Love's subtle magic* 59; Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian literature* 220; d'Hubert, *Culture and circulation* 61)

and emulated by later authors, especially in the sixteenth century. Its popularity reached its peak during the rule in Delhi of the eastern Sūrī dynasty (1540-1555), when it was lavishly illustrated (Quintanella, *The Chandayan and Early Mughal Painting* 105-124) and emulated. Apparently it was perceived as an emblematic eastern Hindavi text. Through this popularity and consequentiality, A. Busch presents this work to be at the beginning of the Avadhi and indeed Hindi literary tradition (, 208-9). In later centuries, apparently overshadowed by the more sophisticated *Padmāvat* (1540/947) it fell into oblivion and was to be brought to the modern public only in the 1960s by Parameshvarī Lāl Gupta (1964) and Mātā Prasād Gupta (1967).

The *Chāndāyan* fits well into the above cultural development and it served as a model for later Hindavi romances (Bruijn, *Ruby in the Dust*, pp. 13, 111-112; Cf. Hines, *Daud's Cāndāyan*Bruijn, *Ruby in the Dust*). At least eighteen different authors with over thirty works have been listed in various surveys (Hines, *Daud's Cāndāyan* 26; Adamjee, *Strategies for Visual Narration* 79-80). The most famous of the later ones are Qutuban's *Mirgāvatī* (c1503/908), Malik Muḥammad Jāysī's *Padmāvat* (1540/947) and Manjhan's *Madhumālatī* (1545/951). The most successful of them, the *Padmāvat*, is the story of how Ratan Sen, the ruler of Chittor hears about the beauty of Padminī of Sinhala Dvīpa through her escaped parrot and how he undertakes a journey as a yogi to that distant island to achieve her. The second, shorter part of the romance tells how Emperor 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī tries to take her by force. The heroes die at the siege of Chittor and 'Alā al-Dīn remains unsuccessful. While the first part of the story draws on the typical Sufi allegory of ascent, the second half is with its historical material is a bold innovation within the genre. The complex aesthetics at work in the Indo-Sufi *maṣnavī*s has been studied in superb detail in the various works of Aditya Behl and Thomas de Bruijn (Behl and Weightman, *Madhumālatī: an Indian Sufi romance*; , ; , ; Bruijn, *Ruby in the Dust*). The Sufi interpretation of the stories was facilitated by a long tradition of interpreting the experience of *'ishq*, "love" in literature and beyond, as leading to the divine.

Interestingly, there is a gap of more than a century between the *Chāndāyan* and the later romances and hardly any record survives from the Sufi usage of Hindavi from most of the fifteenth century. The only Sufi with Hindavi output was of Shaikh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī (b. 1456/860, d. 1537/944), who composed Hindavi songs with esoteric yogic imagery or bridal mysticism under the pen name Alakẖdās (, , 1-66 and , 415-419). All the above authors were Sufis, most of them linked to the Chishtī order.

Although reconstructing the original language and style of pre-Mughal Hindavi works always remain tentative, the above instances show that the Hindavi favoured by North Indian Sufis in their gatherings was probably closer to the Indic idioms Braj bhāṣā, Avadhi and Sant Bhāṣā than to the lingua franca *Kẖaṛī bolī* and the mixed-register Rekhta. Mīr 'Abd al-Waḥīd Bilgrāmī's *Haqā'iq-i hindī* (1566/974), for example, interpreted the Radha-Krishna imagery in a Sufi light and the examples of Hindavi are in Braj bhāṣā. (*, )*. Furthermore, Perso-Arabic vocabulary was not used profusely (Cf. Digby, *Before Timur Came* 335) as authors rather looked for equivalents of Islamic terms in the local languages (Stewart, *In Search of Equivalence* 260-287). This search for equivalence can be traced to the earliest times when not so much linguistic but rather conceptual equivalence was sought for. Salmān Sa'd Mas'ūd, for example used the Persian term *bahār* (spring) for the Indian rainy season (, 118). The Indian rainy season carries a similar association with love as does the Persian and western concept of spring.

Hindavi was also the vehicle of the independent Nirgun Sants ("worshippers of the qualityless") who, just like many Sufis, aimed to transcend the apparent antagonism of Hinduism and Islam. They proclaimed that God, though inherent in everyone, is

beyond qualities and is not present in idols or in rituals. Although they frequently referred to the transmigration of the souls, they put particular emphasis on the present human life as a unique chance to reach God. The most outstanding Nirgun sant was Kabīr (15th-early 16th c.?), who equally distanced himself from the outside appearances of Islam and Hinduism and came to be venerated by both Hindus and Muslims parallelly. Although he is remembered as an illiterate weaver from Varanasi, his poetry shows good acquaintance with contemporary Hindavi literary forms (, ). His death memorial in Magahar contains both a Hindu temple and a Muslim rauza clearly separated from each other. The earliest sources, the *Ā'īn-i akbarī* of Abū'l Faḍl (b. 1551/958, d. 1602/1011), and the *Akhbār al-akhyār fi āṣār al-abrār* of Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddath Dihlavī (b. 1555/962, d. 1642/1052), both presented him as a monotheist *muwaḥḥid*. The earliest layer of his poetry presents an imagery of esoteric yoga and of bridal mysticism similar to his Sufi contemporary, 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī (, and , 426.). Another influential Nirgun sant with possible Muslim roots was Dādū Dayāl (d. 1603/1011) (, 31). Although their poetry reject outward religion, the followers of both Kabīr and Dādū have organised themselves into sects with more Hindu than Muslim leanings. Dādū's disciples included Muslims who renounced the world, such as Rajjab (, and , ) and a Pathan named Bājīd (, ). Both of them had prolific literary output. The tradition of the Nirgun Sants continued into the later centuries.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Hindavi was also used as an additional language of administration in the Delhi Sultanate under the Lodīs (1451-1526/855-932) and the Sūrīs (1540-1555/947-962) (, 158; , 123). According to Bābur, most local Afghan chiefs could not speak Persian (Alam, *Persian in Pre-Colonial Hindustan* 157-8). The emergence of the use of Hindavi by Indian Muslims may be linked to the decline and fragmentation of the Persianate 'Ajam culture and is paralleled by the emergence of regional Indian literary cultures in India and of Uzbek and Ottoman Turkish at the corners of the former 'Ajam world (, 154-8).

The advent of the Mughals has in several respects changed Indian Islamic attitudes to Hindi. In order to distance themselves from the Hindavi literary taste and practical administration of their predecessors, the Mughals reinforced the position of Persian in both fields (, 158). In literature, however, they only rejected the eastern Hindavi of the Sufi romances so dear to the Afghans and cultivated, patronised and promoted Brajbhasha (, 335). Hindi songs in *dhrupad* and other styles have been popular in Mughal courts since the time of Akbar's court musician Tānsen (d. 1586/994 or 1589/997) (Delvoye, *Tânsen*). Mughal courtiers also experimented with Hindi-Persian mixed-language compositions called Rekhta. Through their allies, Mughals also promoted the fledgling devotional Krishna poetry in Brajbhasha as well as the more courtly, classicist *rīti* poetry, which primarily operated with Krishna imagery (Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*; , ; , ; Agraval, *Akbarī darbār ke hindī kavi*; , ; , , pp. 130-165; Phukan, *"Through Throats Where Many Rivers Meet"*). One of the foremost Mughal noblemen, 'Abdur Rahīm Khān-i khānān (b. 1556/964, d. 1627/1036), along with an outstanding literary corpus in Persian, composed particularly popular Krishna-poetry (McGregor, *Hindi literature* pp. 121-2 and Lefèvre, *Culture and circulation* 75-106). Moreover, the Mughal emperors themselves are also credited with Brajbhasha poetry though their authenticity and exact context of production are unclear (, and , ). Other outstanding Muslim authors of classicist Brajbhasha poetry include Ālam (fl. 1583/991), and Sayyid Ghulām Nabī 'Raslīn' (fl. 1740/1152) (Mishra, *Ālam kṛt Mādhavānal kāmkandalā: Avadhī premākhyānak* 24-32, McGregor, *Hindi literature* 188-9, 194, Vanina, *Madhavanala-Kamkandala* 66-77; , 115-118).

Although most devotional and classicist Hindi poetry was linked to the Krishna imagery, its Islamic perception was made possible by the Sufi idea of cultural

equivalences according to which various elements of the Krishna lore stood for particular Sufi concepts as has been elaborated in Mīr 'Abdul Vaḥīd Bilgrāmī's *Haqā'iq-i hindī* (1566/974) (, 222-246). The grammar and aesthetics of Brajbhasha poetry was the subject of Mirzā Khān's *Tuhfat ul-Hind* (1675/1086), a Persian work that also turns out to be the first grammar of Hindi (Mīrzā and Ziauddin, *A grammar of the Braj bhakha*; Khān, *Tuḥfat al-Hind: vāzhah nāmah-yi Hindī bi-fārsī*). Hindi was also the spoken intermediary between Pandits and Persian translators while working on Sanskrit-Persian translation projects (Truschke, *Culture of encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* 9, 216).

An apparently insignificant development with far-reaching results in the Mughal court was the composition of primarily Perso-Hindi mixed language poetry called Rekhta. The first known Rekhta composer from north India was Emperor Bābur. The Hindi component of Rekhta was normally not Brajbhasha but K̲h̲aṛī bolī, the commercial and military lingua franca of the empire. The occasional Rekhta experiments, however, reached beyond the Mughal court to various Hindu and syncretistic circles who recorded poetry in this idiom in the Nāgarī script already in the early 17th century. Nāgarī Rekhta remained in vogue until the emergence of modern Hindi prose at the time of Bhāratendu Harīshchandra (1850-1885) (, 22-83). The emergence of Rekhta, apart from apparently mimicking the lingua franca, also introduced a new paradigm of interpreting Indian phenomena by Muslim authors that rejected the idea of equivalences. By the time of the Mughals, Islam had been present in most of India for several centuries. Islamic concepts and Persian terms became familiar to a large section of the society and required no translation.

With the emergence of Urdu as a language that married the practical exigencies of everyday life with courtly prestige in the 18th century, Indian Muslim authors enthusiastically turned to this idiom and gradually abandoned literary activity in other forms of the language, which came to be grouped under the umbrella of Hindi later. The Sanskritisation of Hindi in the nineteenth century alienated Indian Muslims from this language (King, *One Language, Two Scripts*).

In the twentieth century Hindi reappeared among Indian Muslims first in Bollywood cinema and then as literature by eminent authors such as Abdul Bismillah and Asghar Wajahat, who found it useful to explore not only contemporary questions but also the Indo-Islamic past.

Through its history, as old as north Indian Islam, literary idioms considered Hindi have been vehicles of various literary messages for Muslim authors. The extended presence of Hindi among Indian Muslims may be due to its capability to adopt to the various exigencies of emerging readerships. The thirteenth to fifteenth centuries were dominated by the Sufi use of the language either as songs, sententious couplets in Sant Bhāṣā or long romances in Avadhi. Sufis aimed at finding equivalences for their concepts in their target language. From the sixteenth century onwards new literary idioms and new paradigms emerge. Brajbhasha and Krishna poetry also permeates Mughal and allied courts. The emerging new literary idiom of Rekhta rejects the search for equivalences and introduces Persian concepts into the Indic grammatical and indeed cultural template more directly. As Rekhta develops into Persianised standard Urdu and Hindi into Sanskritised Standard Hindi, a vehicle of Indian and Hindu nationalism, Muslim authors distance themselves from this idiom. In contemporary India, Hindi media can easily be followed by most Indian Muslims and Muslim novelists and playwrights reach out to new audiences in Hindi.

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