



## Development of Arabic and its Impact on Indian Languages and Literatures

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### ABSTRACT

*Historically speaking, Arabic has been used in India almost exclusively by its Muslim population, and has been a key force in delineating and shaping Indian Muslim identity. This is not surprising, for it is generally acknowledged that the Arabic language has a predominantly sacred character outside the Arabic speaking Middle East. A thorough study of Indian history suggests that India's first substantial contact with the Arabic language came when the Arab Muslims settled in the western Indian province of Sind. Subsequently, the Arabic language continued to flourish further under the patronage of the Mughal rulers in India. In the Islamic epochs, the usage of Arabic was liturgical. . The religious need of Indian Muslims to learn Arabic also helped to flourish this language. To this end, this paper presents an attempt to analyze the processes and extent of development and uses of Arabic in India since its arrival in the eighth century through the twentieth century indicating career prospects in the days to come, in as much as they bring into sharper focus the scriptural face of Indian Arabic.*

**Keywords:** Arabic language, Indian Arabic, development of Arabic language, Mughal rulers.

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## Introduction

The rise of Arabic Language to the status of a major world language is inextricably intertwined with the rise of Islam as a major world religion. The first acquaintance of the residents of the Indian subcontinent with the Arab people came about when Arab sailors first docked at Indian ports in order to acquire spices in pre- Islamic times, perhaps as far in the past as 50 CE. This early trade contact occurred two centuries before Arabic was attested as a distinct language in the Arab Peninsula in the third century. Trade contacts persisted, and at some point in time, through Arab traders, Indians must have gained rudimentary acquaintance with the Arabic language. (Ahmad 1968). Arab Muslims settled there, and with their colonization of Sind came India's first substantial and sustained contact with both the religion of Islam and the Arabic language. At this time, Indians began to convert to Islam. The initial act required of any convert, the recitation of the Islamic creed of faith, "la ilāhā ill" 'llāh, muhammad'" rasul" 'llāh" (There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God), had an Arabic linguistic frame, which meant that Indian converts to Islam came into contact with Arabic through their very first religious experience. Non-sacred Arabic hegemony was

promoted in many parts of the world by political, social, and economic factors. So much so, that in some of the lands conquered by the Arab Muslims, such as Coptic speaking Egypt, Arabic almost entirely displaced and replaced the local languages( Rahman,2014). In India, however, this did not happen, mainly because Arab Muslims did not have political control over more than the western provinces, and this control was for a limited time. The major Muslim dynasties in India were of Turkic origin, and their cultural language was, in the main, Persian. Other than the colony in Sind, Arab Muslim presence in India was constituted by small and early Arab trader settlements of mostly Yemeni and Basran descent on the Malabar coast, by limited contingents of Yemeni mercenary soldiers employed by various Muslim rulers, and by occasional Arab visitors. Thus, Arab Muslims never really had a major presence in India. The locals continued for the most part to use their own Indo European and Dravidian languages, with Arabic playing a subsidiary (albeit religiously significant) linguistic role. (Versteegh,2001) Currently, it is used almost solely by the 13.19 million Muslims who form 13.43 percent of the total 1.03 billion Indian population." Conversely, almost all



Muslims in India appear to have some acquaintance with Arabic. From the early eighth century, Arabic in India has borne an Islamic identity, which has continued to be elaborated and strengthened through the thirteen centuries of its use under Muslim, Hindu, and British rule. The succeeding dynasties of Muslims.

Much of the Arabic vocabulary that has been incorporated into Indian languages over the centuries has to do with religion, moral values, and issues discussed extensively in the Quran. Heaviest absorption appears to be into languages used to a great extent by Muslims in particular Urdu. In India, during Mughal period, Persian was very dominant language and all the official correspondence was done in Persian.

The Influence of Arabic on Indian Language: Historically and Linguistically 163 Arabic into Indian languages took place primarily through its mediation—thus Arabic vocabulary that had earlier been absorbed into Persian came into Indian languages as Arabo-Persian words. Arabic language has pervaded into almost all the fields of academics. A large number of libraries in India, house Arabic works by Indian and Middle Eastern scholars, including thousands of manuscripts, some very valuable.

Some of the libraries in North India are the Raza Library of Rampur, Maulana Azad Library of AMU, Aligarh, Kutub khana-i-Nasiriyya in Lucknow etc. In brief, Arabic language had reached India in the seventh century as a sacred language of the religion of Islam which was mainly studied and used by Muslims only. Previously, the usage of Arabic was liturgical. But after the independence of India, more precisely, after liberalization of the Indian economy, non-sacred usage of Arabic gained momentum. So, the Indian Government paid considerable attention towards the study and research of Arabic language by including it in the universities as a foreign language. By the inception of 21st century, the demand of Arabic language has increased manifold augmenting career prospects in various fields in the days to come.

#### **Development of Arabic in India:**

Arabic, in India, has been taught in different ways for more than fifteen centuries. The relations between India and the Arab world date back to very ancient times, and the Arab merchants appear to have played leading part in establishing as well as strengthening commercial and cultural links between the two nations. With the advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent, these ties of friendship became



stronger than ever before, particularly, for cultural and political reasons. Several Muslim empires were established on the soil of India which lasted for more than eight centuries. India became enriched with their treasures of various sciences of knowledge, arts, culture and literatures. It is to be remarked here that India has been one of the most well-known non-Arab states where Arabic language and literature grew, developed and flourished on a large scale. During the period of Arab rule in the Indian Territory, Arabic continued to be the official language of the government and administration and the unrivalled medium of sacred knowledge and literary achievement. Moreover, various Arabic madrasas and cultural institutions of higher learning under the personal guidance and scholarly interest of the Sultans were set up which produced a good number of poets, writers, Islamic thinkers, commentators of the holy Qur'an, scholars of the Hadith etc. Their noble works can be compared to any work of any great Arab scholar. Mention may be made here in this regard about the following scholars. Allamah Sighani Lahori (d. 1252), the author of the great book al—'Ubabuz-Zakhir wa al-Lubabul--Fakhir" on grammar and lexicography. Gulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (1116-1200A.H.), who has penned many outstanding

Arabic books on history and literature like "Subhatul-Marjan. Besides, he is regarded to be the greatest Indian Arabic poet and is well known as Hassanul-Hind. About 11,000 verses composed by him are the living proof of his extraordinary poetic talent. Shah Waliullah Dihlawi (1114-1176A.H.), who has produced the great book "Hujjatullahil-Balighah on the science of Hadith. Abdul Hai al-Hasani (1286-1341A. H.), the writer of the famous book "Nuzhatul-Khawatir" on the great Indianscholars in different fields from 622 .A.D. up to the time of the author. Zainuddin bin Abdul Aziz who produced an authentic prose work entitled —Tuhfatul Mujahidin on the struggle of the Zamorins of Calicut against the Portuguese. Siddiq Hasan Khan (1248-1307 A.H.) who besides bieng a poet, was a great scholar of Hadith, and authored a good number of valuable books on Arabic philology like —Abjadul-Uloom. Muhammad \_Ala al-Thanawi, composer of the outstanding dictionary —Kash-shaf Istilahat al-Funun on technical terms. Abul Faid Faidi (954-1004A.H.), the author of the undotted tafsir "Sawatiul-Ilham. Abdul Haqq Dihlawi (958-1052 A.H), the pioneer of Hadith studies in the Indian subcontinent who produced many pearls and gems in Hadith literature like —Lamatut-Tanqeeh. Fadl Haqq Khairabadi (1212-1278



A.H.), one of the greatest Indian philosophers and author of the famous book —al-Hadiyyatus-sayeddiyyah on wisdom literature, and so on.

### **Impact of Arabic Language on Indian Languages and Literatures:**

The influence of Arabic on Muslims is well manifested in their languages and it left a tremendous influence on the languages and literatures of Muslim nations like Iran, Afghanistan and India etc. Persian is written in Arabic script, and more than 30 percent of vocabulary is of Arabic origin. Turkish before the reforms of the twenties was also written in Arabic. The Hausa language before the coming of the British colonialists was written in Arabic and the script is known as Ajami Script. The incidence of Arabic loan-words in Hausa language is very high. ‘Ali Abu Bakr observed that one-fifth of currently used words in Hausa and Fulani are of Arabic origin. If one ventures into a Hausa-speaking community with an Arabic speaker using only Arabic; such a speaker has been found to establish quite a fair degree of communication with the people. Thus, Hausa words, al-maksh(scissors), bindiga (gun), hakimi(ruler), alkalami (pen) are of Arabic origin. Another feature of the significance of Arabic among Muslims is the

establishment of Quranic Arabic Schools in every Muslim community to teach the Holy Quran, Arabic language and fundamentals of Islamic religion. A considerable number of works have been written on the language in Arabic and other languages spoken by Muslims. This enthusiasm is summed up in the observation of Al-Thaalib I (d.1038 A.D.). He says, “When the Almighty ennobled and exalted the Arabic language, He elevated its rank and showed greater regard to it than any other language. He decreed for its fate guarding and treasuring a select people, the leaders of virtues and the luminaries of the earth who gave up lust and roamed the desert land in its service; who befriended the notebooks, the book case and inkstand for its acquisition, and who exerted themselves systemising its rules, and dedicated their life to immortalizing its books”. In the present scenario, for the growth and promotion of Arabic language, we all have to make efforts in the right perspective and need to make a recourse to our pristine values, we should be the transmitters of knowledge, particularly that of Arabic language and Islam, from our progenitors to our progenies(Abdul,2001).





Here are other some words with the Arabic meaning, which the Urdu derives from, but may deviate somewhat from. wāqt(time), admi(human being) ,insān (human being) ,takriban (approximately, almost) ,leken (but) ,shaitan (devil, satan) ,mabhoom(hidden, unknown future event) shukriya( thank you, not an exact copy, "ya" is added) ,khabar(news item ) ,ākhhbar(plural of news), mohtaram (respected) , sahib (companion, friend) ,ādab (good manners), āynak ( from eye (ain), means spectacles in Hindi), alam ( universe) ,alim (scholar, scientist, learned person) , āsali (original) , qalām ( pen) ,kursi (chair), ijazat (permission), qubul ( agree), māshhoor (famous), khāss (special, distinct).

### **Conclusion**

Much of the Arabic vocabulary that has been incorporated into Indian languages over the centuries has to do with religion, moral values, and issues discussed extensively in the Quran. Heaviest absorption appears to be into languages used to a great extent by Muslims in particular Urdu. In India, during Mughal period, Persian was very dominant language and all the official correspondence was done in Persian, as a result of which the integration Arabic into Indian languages took place primarily through its mediation—thus Arabic

vocabulary that had earlier been absorbed into Persian came into Indian languages as Arabo-Persian words. Arabic language has pervaded into almost all the fields of academics. A large number of libraries in India house Arabic works by Indian and Middle Eastern scholars, including thousands of manuscripts, some very valuable. Some of the libraries in North India are the Raza Library of Rampur, Maulana Azad Library of AMU, Aligarh, Kutubkhana-iNasiriyya in Lucknow etc. In brief, Arabic language had reached India in the seventh century as a sacred language of the religion of Islam which was mainly studied and used by Muslims only. Previously, the usage of Arabic was liturgical. But after the independence of India, more precisely, after liberalization of the Indian economy, non-sacred usage of Arabic gained momentum. So, the Indian Government paid considerable attention towards the study and research of Arabic language by including it in the universities as a foreign language. By the inception of 21st century, the demand of Arabic language has increased manifold augmenting career prospects in various fields in the days to come.



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