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ORIGIN OF URDU: A REVIEW

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Abstract

Urdu started developing in north India around Delhi in about the 12th century. It was based on the language spoken in the region around Delhi, and it was heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian, as well as Turkish.

Urdu shares its origins with Hindi, sometimes referred to as a ‘sister’ language of Urdu due to the similar grammar base that they share. However, Hindi went on to be written in ‘Devanagiri’, the same script as Sanskrit, and its vocabulary has more of a Sanskrit influence than a Persian and Arabic influence.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, much poetry and literature began to be written in Urdu. More recently, Urdu has mainly been connected with the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, but there are many major works of Urdu literature written by Hindu and Sikh writers.

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Urdu was chosen to be the national language of the new country. Today Urdu is spoken in many countries around the world, including Britain, Canada, the USA, the Middle East and India. In fact there are more Urdu speakers in India than there are in Pakistan.

Urdu’s origin

Some myths are so deep-rooted that one has to work really hard to make people, especially students face facts. One such myth is about the origin of Urdu. Most of our students subscribe to the view that Urdu is a ‘lashkari zaban’ or ‘camp language’. With due apologies, let me add that even some of our teachers, too, believe in this old notion that was proved wrong long ago.