

# The Rise and fall of Persian to the Muslims of South Asia

Abdul Rahim

Department of Public Administration, University of Sindh  
[chandiorahim@gmail.com](mailto:chandiorahim@gmail.com)

**Abstract-** Persian secured the prestigious position being a language of an elitist culture, religious knowledge, literary service, administrative interaction, voice of a poet, and linguistic tune courts in the Muslims of South Asia. Persian made as the official, literary, and source of Islamic learning language which got due significant status in the subcontinent and conquerors applied every effort substitute the languages of the conquered regions with Persian. People of the literate class learned Persian and made capable to participate the courts, religious activities, and government offices during the Muslim rule in the subcontinent. The scholarly services of the Persian scholars, jurists, writers and Sufis of the Persian descend also become the cause of the rise of the Persian in the region whereas abrupt dominating colonial rule failed Muslims to materialize a superior language for a common communication across the Muslim world. Likely, the substitution of local languages, development of literature and the rise of English as the dominating language during the colonial became the cause of the decline of the Persian in the South Asia and the language ceased and lost the prestigious in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Persian, language, Rise, fall, South Asia

## Introduction

South Asia highlights a region of Asia that can be defined by means of geographical and ethno-cultural terms and the region contains the Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. The current study is concerned with the rise and fall of the Persian language in the south Asia particular in subcontinent where it was made Persian an official, bureaucratic, court, and literary language by the Muslim ruler in the region that secured the prestigious for 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (Abbas, 2016; Khansir, 2014). The arrival of Persian in the subcontinent came from the greater Persia and it secured the prestige in 10<sup>th</sup> century. The great Muslim ruler Mahmud of Ghazni was the patron of the Persian and it is considered that Persian was firstly introduced by Ghaznavids in the Indian subcontinent which shifted the Persian literary patronage from the Ghazana to Lahore, Uch, Multan. And 13<sup>th</sup> century Ghurid mobilized it to Delhi and influx of the Persian poets, Sufis, and scholars from the Khurasan, and Iran Persianate the region. The Persian contact in the South Asia came to appear in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century (Ghani, 2017; Canfield, 2002; David Lelyveld, 1978). The Muslim conquest of south Asia materialized the popularity of Arabic and Persian language in the literary, court, and administrative services in which the ruler and literate Muslims of the subcontinent promoted the Persian in their courts, a poet's voice, religious decree (Farmaans), cultural activities, civil servants in government offices and social purpose of the Indian communities (Khansir, 2014; Abidi, et al., 2008; Baevskii, 2008; Kachru, 2008; Canfield, 2002; Rahman, 1999). Likely, it is supported by the Lelyveld, (1978) the literate people made capable the language to be used and participated in the government offices, courts and culture activities during the Muslim rule in the subcontinent.

According to Dr Francis Robinson a professor of the history of south Asia (Royal Holloway University of London) Persian language and religious knowledge always remained the two pillars of influence in South Asia of Iranian in the region and met it with its pinnacle. The Persian culture and its influence in the South Asia start from Mughal emperor Babar to Aurangzeb and it allowed a massive Iranian influence and the Jehangir the Mughal ruler appointed the two paintings to highlight the relationship with the Iranian ruler Shah Abbas and king of Safavid and painters of Iranian origin deeply influenced the Mughal art (Rahman, 1999). The chief source of the Persian influence was the Islamic Dynasties in central Asia and Iran and the Mughal Emperor in the subcontinent and the entry of the large number of Iranian to serve in the Mughal Court also become a leading factor of the influence (Khansir, 2014; Abidi, et al., 2008). In the production of the literary and intellectual development Persian remained a major language in the North India in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and by the 16<sup>th</sup> century it became a prominent language of the Mughal Empire in which Hindu and Muslim got mastery in the language to result to secure key positions in the employment.

In the early British East India Company Persian sustained official status in the way to ensure communication with the local power brokers and English language followed the administration in the 1839 to marginalize the Persian progressively and went to disappear by Independence from the public sphere as the Persian was the social, political and cultural language of the people in India (Maryam Sahebi, 2020; Abbas, 2016; Kumar, 2015; Khansir, 2014). The rise of the British colonialism and its policies marginalized the political position and divorced the Persian from the history of subcontinent. The decline of Persian followed with the death of Aurangzeb and Hindustani languages as Urdu and Hindi took due position and the travel of the English along the Hindustani languages seized the importance of the Persian and the process of decline of Persian began between the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Chopra, 2012; Gargesh, et al., 2008; Patrick, 2004). The colonial rule in the subcontinent not only declined the Mughal Empire but it also brought the end of the Persian as an intellectual, literary, court, and administrative language. The loss of patronage, slowing



There are numerous Sindhi nouns which are derived from the adjectives of Persian language by adding “YE” Bahaduri, Badkari,

Persian	Sindhi
Shagun	(Sugun) ٹسو
Bechara	(Vecharo) ويچارو
Pairhan	(Pahryan) پهريان
Deedah Danista	(Deena Dasti) دينا دستي
Marham	(Malam) ملم
Shujaat	(Shujaat) شجاعت

Aqalmandi, Bekari from the Bahadur, Badkar, Aqalmand, and Bekar. In addition, infinitives in Persian can be Sindhized as Kharidinu, Azmainu, and Farmainu derived from the Kharidan, Azmudan (), and Farmudan. The adverbs in Persian language emerge as Hargiz, Akhir (), Aksar () and Baghair and the Persian conjunctions Albat, Lekin, Magar, and Agar whereas the exclamation signs in Persian also reveal as, Shahbash, Khabardar, and Bus. The prepositions in Persian remain as Be, Bad, Dar, Ba, Na and Bar and the suffix in Persian can be mentioned as Andaz, Gir, 'Ban, Saaz, Khor, Dan, Mand, Posh, Baz, Kar, Dar, Aviz, Gar, Band, and Var also brought in use in Sindhi Language as these are applied like Bawafa, Dagha baz, Saudagar, MezPosh, Dil Avez, Dadagir, Dar Asul, Nadan, Zamindar, Gharee Saz, Bar waqt, Nazarband, Badnam, Muft Khor, Bekar, Khidmatgar, Mukhtiar Kar, Darban, Silslevar, Teer Andaz, Roshandan, and Sihatmand etc.

### Persian in South Asia

In the early age Persian maintained its position during the Umayyad and Abbasside dynasties as Persian people materialized their proximity with the Arabs. The Abbasid employed the Turkic slave warriors in the military services which assimilated with the Persianate culture and the gaining political power Turk origin deeply affected with the language that create a Turko-Persian class of conquerors to absorb the Persian into their courts, intellectual, literary, and administration. The warrior class assimilated with the Turko-Persian tradition as they emerged in the form of Mahmud of Ghazni possessed a great Persian writer and poet in the Ghaznavid court known as Farrukhi and the Akbar the Mughal court surrounded with 168 poets to read out the Persian couplets, Persian verses written, and the key post of poet laureate dominated by the Persian poets. In this way, it became the reason that Persian spread widely in the subcontinent as a common and secular language rather than the Arabic and Turkic as it prevailed father west (Bergne, 2007). Resultantly Persian rooted with an immediate adjacent on the lands of the Turks, Persian, and subcontinent as remained the targets of the conquerors and brought the Persian with them which ensured its presence of the Persian for 8 centuries in India.

The Persian language in the South Asia sustained its traces beyond the conversion of Persian people into Islam and their effective role in the religious affairs and literary development made a significant position in the region. The British colonization and the lingua franca of the region and widely use in the official basis also encouraged the Persian in North India. Moreover, the Persian language came into south Asia via initiatives and sources in the form of numerous Afghan and Turkic dynasties particular Ghaznavid, Ghurid, Delhi, and Mughal dynasty in which the language secured the official status in the administration and courts (Rahman, 1999). The arrival Persian in the subcontinent, Afghanistan, and Transoxia came into force with the conversion into Islam by Iranian people and raise of the Iranian-Islamic empires and people of Turk Persianise the conquered regions and the Samanids considered to be most significant in its development (Nourzhanov, et al., 2013). The roots of Persian in the central Asia rooted by Samanids whereas the Muslims invaders of the Afghan and Turkic origin laid the foundation of the Persian strength in the South Asia (Nourzhanov, et al., 2013; Bergne, 2007). Persian broadened the significance in the Samarkand, Farghana, Khawarazm and Sogdia were Persianized during the Samanid rule (Nourzhanov, et al., 2013; Bergne, and Bergne, 2007).

The Iranian influence in the 16th to 17th centuries Persian strengthened in the society as the Hindavi the language of administration and Sufis was substituted with Persian by Akbar and declared the Persian as an official language to be spoken in courts and administration. The Persian strengthened to substitute the local languages and made official language by the Akbar to be used in administration where the officials of higher to lower courts, common soldier to Zaminadr, from royal decree (Farmans) to village paper work written in Persian. The Persian works Saadi and Tabriz were considered with deep dignity with other literary services and the people of subcontinent both Hindu and Muslims were attracted the language. Islamic learning centers (Madrassah) played effective service and got a powerful injection of Persian knowledge particular in Maqulat and rational knowledge. Moreover, it is considered that Persian has been introduced in the subcontinent by the Ghaznavid that consolidated its position in the Punjab and Delhi in 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### Persian in decline

The decline of the Persian begins with the arrival of the English language in the subcontinent and East India Company replaced it with the colonial language (Yarshater, 2004). Besides this, rise of the local languages with an effective motivation to people to attract them in the form of the Hindi and Urdu on the Indian soil also impact the Persian to lower down its influence. Moreover, there are number of factors that became the cause of the decline of the Persian language in the subcontinent which can be enumerated as below.

- ✚ Colonial power and its cultural dominancy in the India Subcontinent dominant the local culture and language as the Persian declined its position and status in the society.
- ✚ Development of the local languages like Urdu, Hindi, and Sindhi etc attracted people to play their services in these respective languages which diverted attention of people from the singularity and monopoly of Persian.
- ✚ The chief supporter of the Persian were Indian rulers as they dethroned with the failure of the war of independence that also lost the battle of their language as it became the scene with the Persian in subcontinent.
- ✚ Demining the teaching of the Persian decreased the demand and significance of the language as the teaching of the regional language in their particular geography and ethnicity secured position like Bengali in Bengal, Sindhi in Sindh, Hindi, Urdu and English also took footsteps.

Persian declined as the Urdu and English empowered which became the language of the elite and feudal class which attracted an ordinary man to meet the advance and modern languages. Henceforth all successors of the colonial rule adopted the English and Urdu language and these were taught in elitist institutions in the subcontinent.

### Conclusion

Persian remains an administrative and court language in the various regions in South Asia. Moreover the ruse of the language security status in the Muslim regions and administration due to deep attachment of the Muslim Scholars, Sufis, Literate person and rulers with Persian hence it motivated and encouraged the development and progress of the language. With the time of emergency of the Persian decline at least the Muslims intelligentsia was replaced with Urdu in the British India which was taught in lower level of government service and distinguishing the Muslim identity in India. The decline of the Persian is directly proportionated with the downfall of the Muslim political power as it became a course of interaction of Mughal, Ghaznavid, and Delhi Sultanate. Urdu remained the Muslim identity in the British India to go against the Hindi and Persian maintained its recognition with minor traces particular in the religious schools of Muslims in society and Sufis teachings.

### Dedication

*I dedicate this study to my teacher and Moral guide Mufti Muhammad Essa Channa whom spirituality made me capable to develop keen interest in the Persian language and made capable to carry out the task in hand.*

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