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GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN INDIA: A STUDY

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Abstract:

India has a strong and important history in the growth and development of Arabic language and literature, even though it is not an Arabic-speaking country. This development was made possible by long-standing cultural and trade relations between India and Arab countries. During the period of Arab influence in some parts of India, Arabic language grew widely and was even used for official purposes. India has always been a supportive place for learning Arabic. There are many madrasas across the country that teaches Arabic along with Islamic studies. In addition, more than thirty universities in India offer courses and research in Arabic. These institutions have produced many respected poets, writers, and Islamic scholars who studied the Quran and Hadith. Some famous names include Sheikh Abd al-Haque Muhaddith al-Dehlowi, Mullah Mahmud Junpuri, Shah Waliullah Dehlowi, Murtada Al-Zabidi Bilgrami, Abdul Aziz Al-Maimani, Abu Mahfuz Masoomi, Gulam Ali Azad Al-Bilgrami, Allamah Fazl-e- Haque Al-Khairabadi, Faizul Hasan Al-Saharanpuri, and Abul Hasan Ali Al-Nadwi, etc.

These scholars made important contributions that were recognized both in Arab countries and other parts of the world. Some of their well-known works are Hujjatullahi Al-Balighah by Shah Waliullah al-Dehlowi, Sabhat al-Marzan fi Athar-e-Hindustan by Gulam Ali Azad Al-Bilgrami, Faiz al-Bari by Anowar Shah al-Kashmiri, Al-I'lamu biman fi Tarikh-e-al-Hindi Min al-I'lam by Abd al-Hai al-Hasani, Ma ja khasara al-aalam bi Inhitat al-Muslimin by Abul Hasan Ali al-Nadwi, etc.

In this paper, I will focus on providing a brief history of the development of Arabic literature in India, along with highlighting the key personalities who contributed to its growth and development.

Keywords: Arabic literature, India, Islamic scholarship, madrasas, cultural exchange.

INTRODUCTION:

The development of Arabic literature in India is closely linked to the arrival and spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent from the 7th century CE onward. Early interactions between Arab traders and the coastal regions of India laid the foundation for the introduction of the Arabic language and its literary traditions. A more structured growth began with the establishment of Muslim rule in Sindh under Muhammad bin Qasim in the 8th century, which facilitated cultural and intellectual exchanges between India and the Arab world. Over time, Arabic emerged not only as a religious language but also as a medium of scholarship, administration, and literary expression.

During the medieval period, numerous scholars, theologians, and poets contributed to the enrichment of Arabic literature in India. Educational institutions such as madrasas played a crucial role in preserving and promoting Arabic learning. Works produced in India included religious texts, commentaries, poetry, and translations, reflecting both classical Arabic styles and local influences. The continued importance of Arabic in understanding the Qur'an and Hadith ensured its sustained relevance in Islamic education.

In modern times, although the prominence of Arabic has somewhat declined due to the rise of other languages, it still holds a significant place in religious and academic contexts in India.

The historical development of Arabic literature in India highlights a rich tradition of cross-cultural exchange and intellectual contribution. Arabic has always been considered a foreign language in India during the long period of Islamic rule. It did



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not become a mother tongue for the people, except in some parts of the western coast where it was sometimes used as an official language. Even so, the language spread widely across the country, and Islamic literature and arts developed in many regions.

Over time, many Arabic schools and cultural centers were established, along with important historical monuments that still exist today. This shows that India became one of the leading non-Arab countries in promoting Arabic and Islamic culture. Many Indian scholars worked hard in this field and achieved a high level of knowledge, sometimes equal to famous Arab scholars. One well-known example is Abu 'Atā' al-Sindī (d. 180 AH), who was a respected poet.

In simple terms, although Arabic was not the native language of India, it still grew strongly and played an important role in shaping the country's cultural and intellectual history.

ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN INDIA:

India is one of the richest countries in the world when it comes to languages. It has a wide variety of both local and foreign languages. The country has not only accepted modern languages like English and German but has also carefully preserved ancient languages and their special features. Even today, Indian universities actively teach and promote both old and new languages. Arabic has a special position in India because it is both a foreign and an ancient language. Its difficult grammar and strong connection with religion could have made it hard for people to learn and spread. However, its beauty, deep meanings, and expressive style helped it grow and become popular.

Even during the time of Muslim rule in India, Arabic did not receive much official support because rulers preferred Persian. Despite this, Arabic continued to develop and spread across the country. Many schools taught Arabic, libraries kept Arabic books on different subjects, and many writers and poets worked in this language.

In simple terms, although Arabic was not widely supported by the government, it still gained respect and importance in India. This shows the strong interest and efforts of the people in learning and promoting Arabic language and literature.

In India, the Arabic language and its literature grew steadily and naturally, reaching higher levels over time. From early periods, cities like Lahore and Multan had already become centers of learning. When the Mongol invasions took place in the 6th century Hijri, they destroyed many famous centers of knowledge in regions like Khurasan, Sistan, Shiraz, and Nishapur. However, India remained mostly safe from this destruction, and this situation actually helped it grow as a new center of knowledge and culture. Delhi, as the capital, became a major place for scholars. Learned people from different regions came there and started teaching and sharing their knowledge. This made Delhi an important center of education for a long time, even until the later Mughal period. From Delhi, knowledge spread to other regions like Gujarat and Malwa, where learning also developed. Jaunpur became so famous for knowledge and literature that it was called the "Shiraz of India." Later, this influence helped Lucknow grow into another important center of learning.

During this time, Mulla Nizamuddin Sihalvi Firangi Mahali introduced a new system of education known as Dars-i-Nizami. This system gave a fresh direction to the study of Arabic language and literature and other sciences in India.

In simple words, India became a strong center of Arabic learning, especially when other parts of the world were facing decline. The work of Indian scholars was so important that even scholars from Arab countries benefited from it.

The famous scholar Ibn Khaldun mentioned in his famous book "MUQADDIMAH" that many of the great scholars of Islamic sciences were not Arabs by origin.

If we look at history, this idea fits very well with Indian scholars. A large number of knowledgeable and skilled scholars in Islamic studies came from India, and their work clearly proves this point.



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Although, Islam spread into India in a well-organized way through regions like Khurasan and Transoxiana. Along with it, Arabic knowledge and learning also entered through the same routes. Because people in this region had a strong interest in thinking and reasoning, they were naturally drawn to subjects such as grammar, Islamic law, theology, and logic.

However, our main interest is an even earlier stage when Arabic was just beginning to take root in India. At that time, it was slowly starting to be used for speaking and communication. To understand this early phase, we need to go far back in history and look at historical evidence that shows how Arabic first developed and spread in India. In the late nineteenth century, Arabic language and literature in India started to develop in a new way. At the same time, the Arab world was also developing rapidly, and Arabic language and literature were moving into a modern and progressive period. Many Indian researchers and writers have produced valuable books about Indian personalities in Arab-Islamic culture. They discussed in detail the lives of Indian scholars, their academic and literary contributions, and their great efforts in the development of the Arabic language and literature throughout history.

These works highlight how Indian scholars played a significant role in enriching Arabic learning and preserving Islamic intellectual traditions over the centuries. One of the most famous books in this field is *سيرة المرجان في آثار هندوستان* written by غلام علي آزاد البلغرامي, which is considered an important source for understanding the contributions of Indian scholars to Arabic and Islamic studies. *معارف العوارف في انواع العلوم و المعارف* written by Abdul Hai al-Hasani, *المسلمون في الهند* written by Abul Hasan Ali Al-Nadwi.

ABUL HASAN ALI HASANI NADWI (1914–1999 AD):

Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was a well-known Islamic scholar, writer, and thinker from India. He belonged to a respected family whose lineage was connected to Hasan ibn Ali. His father, Allama Abdul Hai ibn Fakhruddin, was also a famous scholar who passed away in 1341 AH. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was born in the Rai Bareli district in a village called Takia during the month of Muharram in 1332 AH. His family had Arab roots and strongly followed the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They were also devoted to spreading Islam and serving the religion. When he was only nine years old, his father died. After this, He started his education with his mother by learning the Qur'an. His mother was a pious and respected woman. He became skilled in Urdu and Persian languages from an early age, when he was twelve years old, he began to learn English. This helped him understand subjects like history, civilization, and philosophy. Later, he started learning Arabic from Shaykh Khalil ibn Muhammad al-Yamani. He spent two years studying Arabic literature and read many old and modern literary books.

In 1927, Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi joined University of Lucknow to study Arabic language and literature. At that time, he was the youngest student in the university. He completed his studies under Dr. Shaykh Taqiuddin al-Hilali. In 1929, he entered Nadwatul Ulama and stayed there for two years studying Hadith under the scholar Haidar Khan. Later, he travelled to Lahore and met the famous poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal. After that, he wrote a book about the great poet and thinker.

During the 1950s and 1960s, he strongly criticized Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism, considering them a new form of جاهلية (ignorance of Islamic values). Instead, he supported Pan-Islamism and emphasized the unity of Muslims around the world. He started his academic career in 1934 as a teacher at Nadwatul Ulama. Later, in 1961, he became the Chancellor of the institution. In 1985, he was appointed Chairman of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

HIS NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION:

ماذا خسرَ العالمُ بأنحطاطِ المُسلمين This book was written by the Indian Islamic thinker Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi (1914–1999). The first edition was published in 1950, and it soon became very popular in the Arab world. Scholars and intellectuals paid great attention to the book and discussed it widely in academic and religious circles.

The book is divided into three main sections.



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The first section discusses the Age of Ignorance before the rise of Islam. In this part, Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi gives a clear and brief picture of the condition of the world in the East and the West, from India and China to Persia and Rome, before the light of Islam appeared. He also describes the condition of societies that followed different religions and beliefs such as Judaism, Christianity, idol worship, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

The second section explains the transition from ignorance to Islam. Here, the author highlights the role of Islam in improving human life and freeing society from superstition, slavery, corruption, injustice, and oppression. He also explains how Islam helped in building a society based on purity, cleanliness, freedom, knowledge, and moral values.

The third section talks about the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphate and the influence of Islamic leadership on public life. The writer explains how decline began after the death of great people who were outstanding in faith, character, action, and spiritual training. According to the author, this decline happened when the Muslim community lost true Islamic leadership and authority passed into the hands of unsuitable people. He also discusses the spiritual and material causes behind this decline and describes how the whole world suffered after losing this guiding leadership.

He died on 23 Ramadan, 1420 AH (31 Dec 1999 AD) In Raebareli (UP) at the age of 85.

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