

## Urdu (in Arabic script)

### Letters of the Alphabet

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization
ا	ا	ا	ا	omit (see Note 1)
ب	ب	ب	ب	b
پ	پ	پ	پ	p
ت	ت	ت	ت	t
ٹ	ٹ	ٹ	ٹ	ṭ
ث	ث	ث	ث	<u>s</u>
ج	ج	ج	ج	j
چ	چ	چ	چ	c
ح	ح	ح	ح	ḥ
خ	خ	خ	خ	<u>kh</u>
د	د	د	د	d
ڈ	ڈ	ڈ	ڈ	ḍ
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	<u>z</u>
ر	ر	ر	ر	r
ڑ	ڑ	ڑ	ڑ	ṛ
ز	ز	ز	ز	z
ژ	ژ	ژ	ژ	zh
س	س	س	س	s
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh
ص	ص	ص	ص	ṣ
ض	ض	ض	ض	ẓ
ط	ط	ط	ط	ṭ
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ẓ
ع	ع	ع	ع	' (ayn)
غ	غ	غ	غ	<u>gh</u>
ف	ف	ف	ف	f
ق	ق	ق	ق	q
ک	ک	ک	ک	k
گ	گ	گ	گ	g
ل	ل	ل	ل	l
م	م	م	م	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	n
و	و	و	و	<u>n</u> (see Note 2)
و	و	و	و	v

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization
ھ	ھ	ا	و	h
-	-	آ	و	t (see Rule 10)
ی	ی (ے، ی)	ی (ے، ی)	ی	y (see Note 3)

**Digraphs Representing Urdu Aspirates (see Note 4) Value**

bh	بھ
ph	پھ
th	تھ
ṭh	ٹھ
jh	جھ
ch	چھ
dh	دھ
ḍh	ḍھ
ṛh	رھ
kh	کھ
gh	گھ

**Urdu Vowels and Diphthongs (see Note 5) Value**

a	ا
u	و
i	ی
ā	آ
á	آ، اِ
ū	و
ī	ی
o	و
e	ے، ی
au	و
ai	ے

**Notes**

1. For the use of | (*aliif*) to support ء (*hamzah*) and م (*maddah*), see rules 1 and 2, respectively. For the romanization of ء by (*aliif*), see rule 12. For other orthographic uses of | see rules 3-4.
2. For the distinction between و and و, see rule 6.

3. For the distinction between ع and ح, see rule 11(c) and (e).
4. For the form of the letter و in these digraphs, see rule 9.
5. Vowel points are used sparingly, and for romanization must be supplied from a dictionary.

## RULES OF APPLICATION

### Letters Which May Be Romanized in Different Ways Depending on Their Context

1. | (*alif*), و and ع are used to support ء (*hamzah*); see rule 12. When so used, these letters are not represented in romanization.
2. | (*alif*) is used to support م ( *maddah*); see rule 13. When so used, it is not represented in romanization.
3. | (*alif*) is used after a consonant to indicate the long vowel romanized *ā*.

rāj	راج
karnā	كرنا

In some words of Arabic origin this *alif* appears as a superscript letter over ع representing the *alif maqṣūrah*.

da'vá	دعوى
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The *alif* is sometimes omitted in writing. It is always represented in romanization.

'Abdurrahmān	عبد الرحمن ، عبد الرحمان
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4. | (*alif*) may be used as an orthographic sign without phonetic significance. In these cases it is not represented in romanization. See rule 16.

'amlan	عملاً
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5. ط appears as a superscript letter over ت, د, and ر when the latter represent the cerebral sounds romanized *ṭ*, *ḍ*, and *ṛ*, respectively.

6. Regardless of pronunciation, undotted forms of the letter ن are romanized *n* and dotted forms are romanized *n*.

jahān	جهان
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7. و is used:

- (a) To represent the consonant sound romanized *v*.

dev	ديو
vujūd	وجود

In some words of Persian origin this consonant, though written, has ceased to be pronounced. It is retained in romanization.

<u>kh</u> vīsh	خویش
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- (b) To represent the long vowel romanized *ū*.  
Urdū اردو
- (c) To represent the long vowel romanized *o*.  
os اوس  
dost دوست  
For the romanization of the conjunction و as *o* see rule 19.
- (d) To represent the diphthong romanized *au*.  
aur اور  
qaumī قومی
- (e) To support ء (*hamzah*). See rule 12.  
For the use of ّ (*shaddah*) with و see rule 14.

8. ɔ is used to represent the consonantal sound romanized *h*.

ham هم  
gāh گاه

Final ɔ, though not pronounced, is normally retained in romanization.

kih که  
guldastah گلدسته

Exception is made in the case of words whose final syllable ends in an aspirated consonant. When final ɔ is added to the letter ه in this position, it is not represented in romanization.

mukh مکھ

9. ɔ (usually written in the form ھ) is used to represent the aspirated element of the sounds romanized *bh, ph, th, ṭh, jh, ch, ḍh, ṛh, kh, gh*.

phūl پھول  
acchā اچھا

For the writing and romanization of words ending in an aspirated consonant, see rule 8.

10. ɔ and ت, which are sometimes used interchangeably, are both romanized *t*.

ḥikmat حکمت ، حکمت

11. ɣ is used:

- (a) To represent the consonant romanized *y*.  
siyāsat سیاست  
diyā دیا
- (b) To represent the long vowel romanized *ī*.  
taṣvīr تصویر

- (c) To represent the long vowel romanized *e*.

sher	شیر
nevā	نیوا

When ی with this value is final, the form ے generally replaces ی.

se	سے
laṛke	لڑکے

- (d) To represent the long vowel romanized *á*. See rule 3.

da'vá	دعوی
'uqbá	عقبی

- (e) To represent the diphthong romanized *ai*.

maidān	میدان
bail	بیل

When ی with this value is final, it is generally written ے .

hai	ھے
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- (f) To support ء (*hamzah*). In this position ی is usually undotted. See rule 12.

For the use of ّ (*shaddah*) with ی see rule 14.

For the use of ی in a *muzāf* see rule 17.

### Romanization of Orthographic Symbols Other Than Letters and Vowel Signs

Although vowel signs are frequently omitted in printed texts, they are always taken into consideration in romanization. The rules for other symbols vary.

#### 12. ء (*hamzah*)

- (a) In initial position ء is not represented in romanization.

- (b) In medial and final position, when ء represents a consonant, it is romanized ' (*aliḥ*).

mu'min	مؤمن
li'e	لئے
bhāṭ	بھائی

- (c) When ء represents the connective syllable joining a *muzāf* to what follows, it is romanized -*yi*. See rule 17.

malikah-yi Inḡlistān	ملکہ انگلستان
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#### 13. آ (*maddah*)

- (a) At the beginning of a word, or following the Arabic article ال, آ is romanized *ā*.

āb	آب
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(b) At the beginning of a syllable within a word,  $\bar{ā}$  is romanized 'ā.

mir'āt	مرآت
Qur'ān	قرآن

(c)  $\bar{ā}$  is otherwise omitted in romanization.

14.  $\overset{\circ}{\text{c}}$  (*shaddah* or *tashdīd*) indicates the doubling in pronunciation of the letter over which it is written. It is represented in romanization by doubling the letter or digraph concerned.

caccā	چچا
khattā	کھٹا
makkhī	مکھی

When  $\overset{\circ}{\text{c}}$  occurs over  $\text{چ}$  and  $\text{ک}$ , these letters are regarded as representing consonants. They are romanized *vv* and *yy*, respectively.

quvvat	قوت
sayyid	سید
Zakariyyā	زکریا

15.  $\overset{\circ}{\text{c}}$  (*sukūn* or *jazm*) indicates the absence of a vowel following the letter over which it is written. It is not represented in romanization.

16. *Tanvīn* (written  $\overset{\circ}{\text{c}}$ ,  $\overset{\circ}{\text{c}}$ ,  $\overset{\circ}{\text{c}}$  ( $\bar{\text{ā}}$ )) is romanized *un*, *in*, *an*, respectively, when it occurs in a word or expression borrowed from Arabic. Otherwise it is not represented in romanization.

fauran	فوراً
'amlan	عملاً

### Romanization as Affected by Grammatical Structure

17. *izāfat*.

(a) When the *muḏāf*, the first of two words in the grammatical relationship known as, *izāfah* ends in a consonant, *-i* is added to it in the romanization.

tārīk <sub>h</sub> -i Hindūstān	تاریخ ہندوستان
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(b) When the *muḏāf* ends in a vowel or in silent *o*, *-yi* is added.

daryā-yi shor	دریائے شور
zabān-i Urdū-yi mu'allā	زبان اردو معلی
malikah-yi Inglīstān	ملکہ انگلستان

For the use of  $\text{ء}$  (*hamzah*) to indicate the *muḏāf*, see rule 12(c).

18. The Arabic article ال is romanized differently depending on the letters and context with which it is associated.

(a) When it is prefixed to a word beginning with a “moon letter”

(خ، ع، غ، ف، ق، ك، م، و، ه، ي، ا، ب، ج، ح) it is romanized *a/*.

al-Qur’ān

القرآن

(b) When it is prefixed to a word beginning with a “sun letter”

(ز، س، ش، ص، ض، ط، ظ، ل، ن، ت، ث، د، ذ، ر) the / of the article is replaced in romanization by the same letter or digraph as that which begins the following word.

as-sijill

السجل

(c) When it occurs before the second element in a name, the vowel of the article is replaced by the final vowel of the preceding word.

‘Abdul‘azīz

عبد العزيز

‘Abdurrashīd

عبد الرشيد

Abūlfazl

ابو الفضل

Zūlqarnain

ذو القرنين

Faḍlullāh

فضل الله

19. The conjunction و, when used to join two closely associated members of a phrase, is romanized *o*.

māl o asbāb

مال و اسباب

Otherwise و is romanized *va*.

20. Rules for the capitalization of English are followed, except that the Arabic article *a/* is lowercased in all positions.

21. The macron is used with both capital and lowercase letters.

22. The hyphen is used:

(a) To connect a *muḏāf* with the following vowel or syllable. See rule 17.

(b) To connect the Arabic article *a/* with the following word. See rule 18.

23. Foreign words in an Urdu context, including Arabic and Persian words, are romanized according to the rules for Urdu.

جناب ہیڈ ماسٹر صاحب گورنمنٹ ہائی اسکول

Janāb-i Heḍ Māṣṭar ṣāḥib-i Gavarnmanṭ Hāī Iskūl

For short vowels not indicated in the script, the Urdu vowels nearest the original pronunciation of the word concerned are supplied in romanization.

24. A quotation in another language using the Arabic script is romanized according to the rules for the language concerned.

# Urdū Romanization

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# Urdu alphabet

Urdu alphabet اردو تہجی	
 <p>Example of writing in the Urdu alphabet: <i>Urdu</i></p>	
<b>Type</b>	Abjad
<b>Languages</b>	Urdu, Balti, Burushaski, others
<b>Parent systems</b>	Proto-Sinaitic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phoenician               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aramaic                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nabataean                       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arabic                           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perso-Arabic                               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urdu alphabet اردو تہجی</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Unicode range</b>	U+0600 to U+06FF <sup>[1]</sup> U+0750 to U+077F <sup>[2]</sup> U+FB50 to U+FDFF <sup>[3]</sup> U+FE70 to U+FEFF <sup>[4]</sup>

Urdu alphabet	
ی ء ہ و ن م ل گ ک ق ف غ ع ظ ط ض ص ش س ژ ز ر ذ د خ ح چ ج ث ت پ ب ا	
Extended Perso-Arabic script	
•	History
•	Diacritics
•	Hamza
•	Numerals
•	Numeration

The **Urdu alphabet** is the right-to-left alphabet used for the Urdu language. It is a modification of the Persian alphabet, which is itself a derivative of the Arabic alphabet. With 38 letters and no distinct letter cases, the Urdu alphabet is typically written in the calligraphic Nasta'liq script, whereas Arabic is more commonly in the Naskh style. Usually, bare transliterations of Urdu into Roman letters (called Roman Urdu) omit many phonemic elements that have no equivalent in English or other languages commonly written in the Latin script. The National Language Authority of Pakistan has developed a number of systems with specific notations to signify non-English sounds, but these can only be properly read by someone already familiar with Urdu, Persian, or Arabic for letters such as خ غ ط

ض ع ح ع ظ or ق and Hindi for letters such as □.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## History

The Urdu language emerged as a distinct register of Hindustani well before the Partition of India. It is distinguished most by its extensive Persian influences (Persian having been the official language of the Mughal government and the most prominent lingua franca of the Indian subcontinent for several centuries before the solidification of British colonial rule during the 19th century). The standard Urdu script is a modified version of the Perso-Arabic script, expanded to accommodate the phonology of Hindustani.

Despite the invention of the Urdu typewriter in 1911, Urdu newspapers continued to publish prints of handwritten scripts by calligraphers known as *katibs* or *khush-navees* until the late 1980s. The Pakistani national newspaper *Daily Jang* was the first Urdu newspaper to use *Nasta'liq* computer-based composition. There are efforts under way to develop more sophisticated and user-friendly Urdu support on computers and the internet. Nowadays, nearly all Urdu newspapers, magazines, journals, and periodicals are composed on computers with Urdu software programs.

Apart from being more or less Persianate, Urdu and Hindi are mutually intelligible.

## Countries where Urdu language has been spoken

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Burma, France, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Malawi, Mauritius, Nepal, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Tajikistan, the UAE, the UK, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Canada and Zambia.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Nasta'liq

The Nasta'liq calligraphic writing style began as a Persian mixture of scripts Naskh and Ta'liq. After the Mughal conquest, Nasta'liq became the preferred writing style for Urdu. It is the dominant style in Pakistan, and many Urdu writers elsewhere in the world use it. Nasta'liq is more cursive and flowing than its Naskh counterpart.

## Alphabet

A list of the letters of the Urdu alphabet and their pronunciation is given below. Urdu contains many historical spellings from Arabic and Persian, and therefore has many irregularities. The Arabic letters *yaa* and *haa* both have two variants in Urdu: one of the *yaa* variants is used at the ends of words for the sound [e:], and one of the *haa* variants is used to indicate the aspirated consonants. The retroflex consonants needed to be added as well; this was accomplished by placing a small ٴ (*tō'ē*) above the corresponding dental consonants. Several letters which represent distinct consonants in Arabic are conflated in Persian, and this has carried over to Urdu. This is the list of the Urdu letters, giving the consonant pronunciation. Some of these letters also represent vowel sounds.

خ xē खे	ح baḥī ḥē बड़ी है	چ cē चे	ج jīm जीम	ث ṭē टे	ٹ ṭē टे	ت tē ते	پ pē पे	ب bē बे	ا alif अलिफ़
ص ṣuād सुआद	ش ṣhīn शीन	س sīn सीन	ژ žē जे	ز zē जे	ڑ ṛē रे	ر rē रे	ذ zāl जाल	ڈ ḍāl डाल	د dāl वाल
ل lām लाम	گ gāf गाफ़	ک kāf काफ़	ق qāf काफ़	ف fē फ़े	غ ghayn ग़ैन	ع ayn ऐन	ظ ẓōē ज़ोए	ط ṭōē तोए	ض ẓuād ज़ुआद
		ے baṛī yē बड़ी ये	ی chōṭī yē छोटी ये	ء hamzah हमज़ा	ھ dō-ḥāsmī hē दो-हसमी हे	ہ chōṭī hē छोटी हे	و wāo वाओ	ن nūn नून	م mīm मीम
۰ sifār सिफ़र	۱ ek एक	۲ dō दो	۳ tīn तीन	۴ ḥār चार	۵ pañc पांच	۶ ḥēḥē छे	۷ sāt सात	۸ āṭh आठ	۹ nō नौ

The Urdu alphabet, with names in the Devanagari and Latin alphabets

No.	Letter	Name of letter	Transcription	IPA
1	ا, آ	'alif	ā, ', –	/ɑː/, /ʔ/, /∅/
2	ب	bē	b	/b/
3	پ	pē	p	/p/
4	ت	tē	t	/t/
5	ٹ	ṭē	ṭ	/ʈ/
6	ث	ṭē	s	/s/
7	ج	jīm	j	/d͡ʒ/
8	چ	cē	c	/t͡ʃ/
9	ح	baṛī hē	h	/h/, /ɦ/
10	خ	xē	x	/x/
11	د	dāl	d	/d̪/
12	ڈ	ḍāl	ḍ	/d̪ʱ/
13	ذ	zāl	z	/z/
14	ر	rē	r	/r/
15	ڑ	ṛē	ṛ	/r̪/
16	ز	zē	z	/z/
17	ژ	žē	zh	/ʒ/
18	س	sīn	s	/s/
19	ش	ṣhīn	sh	/ʃ/
20	ص	ṣu'ād	s	/s/
21	ض	ẓu'ād	z	/z/
22	ط	iō'e	t	/t/

23	ظ	ẓō'ē	z	/z/
24	ع	'ain	ā, ō, ē, ' ,	/ɑ:/, /o:/, /e:/, /ʔ/, /ʕ/, /Ø/
25	غ	ġain	gh	/ɣ/
26	ف	fē	f	/f/
27	ق	qāf	q	/q/
28	ک	kāf	k	/k/
29	گ	gāf	g	/g/
30	ل	lām	l	/l/
31	م	mām	m	/m/
32	ن	nān	n	/n/, /ɳ/, /ŋ/ or /ɲ/
33	و	wā'ō	w, u, ō, au or ū	/ʊ/, /ʊ/, /o:/, /ɔ:/ or /u:/
34	ھ	chōḡī hē	h	/h/ or /ɦ/
35	ہ	dō chashmī hē	h	/ʰ/ or /ʱ/
36	ء	hamzah	' , –	/ʔ/, /Ø/
37	ی	chōḡī yē	y, ī	/j/ or /i:/
38	آ	barī yē	ai or ē	/ɛ:/, or /e:/

## Vowels

Vowels in Urdu are represented by letters that are also considered consonants. Many vowel sounds can be represented by one letter. Confusion can arise, but context is usually enough to figure out the correct sound.

## Vowel chart

This is a list of Urdu vowels found in the initial, medial, and final positions.

Romanization	Pronunciation	Final	Medial	Initial
a	/ə/	اَ	اِ	اِ
ā	/a:/	اَ	اِ	اِ
i	/ɪ/	اِ	اِ	اِ
ī	/i:/	اِ	اِ	اِ
u	/ʊ/	اِ	اِ	اِ
ū	/u:/	اِ	اِ	اِ
ē	/e:/	اِ	اِ	اِ
ai	/ɛ:/	اِ	اِ	اِ
ō	/o:/	اِ	اِ	اِ
au	/ɔ:/	اِ	اِ	اِ

## Short vowels

Short vowels ("a", "i", "u") are represented by marks above and below a consonant.

Vowel	Name	Transcription	IPA
اَ	<i>zabar</i>	ba	/ə/
اِ	<i>zer</i>	bi	/ɪ/
اُ	<i>pesh</i>	bu	/ʊ/

## Alif

*Alif* (ا) is the first letter of the Urdu alphabet, and it is used exclusively as a vowel. At the beginning of a word, *alif* (ا) can be used to represent any of the short vowels, e.g. اب *ab*, اسم *ism*, اردو *urdū*. Also at the beginning, an *alif* (ا) followed by either *wā'o* (و) or *ye* (ی) represents a long vowel sound. However, *wā'o* (و) or *ye* (ی) alone at the beginning represents a consonant.

*Alif* also has a variant, call *alif madd* (آ). It is used to represent a long "ā" at the beginning of a word, e.g. آپ *āp*, آدمی *ādmi*. At the middle or end of a word, long ā is represented simply by *alif* (ا), e.g. بات *bāt*, آرام *ārām*.

## Wā'ō

Wā'ō is used to render the vowels "ū", "ō", "u" and "au" ([u:], [o:], [ʊ] and [ɔ:] respectively), and it is also used to render the labiodental approximant, [ʋ].

## Ye

*Ye* is divided into two variants: **choḡi ye** and **barī ye**.

*Choḡi ye* (چ) is written in all forms exactly as in Persian. It is used for the long vowel "ī" and the consonant "y".

*Barī ye* (ب) is used to render the vowels "e" and "ai" (/e:/ and /ɛ:/ respectively). *Barī ye* is distinguished in writing from *choḡi ye* only when it comes at the end of a word.

## Use of specific letters

### Retroflex letters

Retroflex consonants were not present in the Persian alphabet, and therefore had to be created specifically for Urdu. This was accomplished by placing a superscript ط (*to'e*) above the corresponding dental consonants.

Letter	Name	IPA
ٹ	ṭē	[ʈ]
ڈ	ḍāl	[ɖ]
ڙ	ṛē	[ɽ]

### ***Do chashmī he***

The letter *do chashmī he* (ڙ) is used in native Hindustānī words, for aspiration of certain consonants. The aspirated consonants are sometimes classified as separate letters, although it takes two characters to represent them.

Transcription	IPA
ڙ	bhā [bʰɑ:]
ڙ	phā [pʰɑ:]
ڙ	thā [tʰɑ:]
ڙ	dhā [dʰɑ:]
ڙ	jhā [d͡ʒʰɑ:]
ڙ	chā [t͡ʃʰɑ:]
ڙ	dhā [dʰɑ:]
ڙ	q̄hā [q̄ʰɑ:]
ڙ	r̄hā [r̄ʰɑ:]
ڙ	khā [kʰɑ:]
ڙ	ghā [gʰɑ:]

### **Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization**

Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization is another system for Hindustani. It was proposed by Syed Fasih Uddin (late) and Quader Unissa Begum (late). As such is adopted by The First International Urdu Conference (Chicago) 1992 as "The Modern International Standard Letters of Alphabet for URDU-(HINDUSTANI) - The INDIAN Language script for the purposes of hand written communication, dictionary references, published material and Computerized Linguistic Communications (CLC)".

There are significant advantages to this transcription system:

- It provides a standard which is based on the original works undertaken at the Fort William College, Calcutta, India (established 1800), under John Borthwick Gilchrist (1789–1841), which has become the de facto standard for Hindustani during the late 1800.
- There is a one-to-one representation for each of the original Urdu and Hindi characters.
- Vowel sounds are written rather than being assumed as they are in the Urdu alphabet.
- Unlike Gilchrist's alphabet, which used many special non-ASCII characters, the proposed alphabet only uses ASCII.
- Since it is ASCII based, more resources and tools are available.
- Liberate Urdu–Hindustani language to be written and communicated using all of the available standards and free us from Unicode conversion drudgery.
- Urdu – Hindustani with this character set fully uses paper and electronic print media.

## References

- [1] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0600.pdf>
- [2] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0750.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/UFB50.pdf>
- [4] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/UFE70.pdf>
- [5] <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/urdu.htm>

## External links

- Download entire English to Urdu dictionary, editable, 24,000 words, urdu script ([http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/411177/English\\_to\\_Urdu\\_Dictionary](http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/411177/English_to_Urdu_Dictionary))
- Urdu alphabet (<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/urdu.htm>)
- Urdu alphabet with Devanagari equivalents (<http://www.user.uni-hannover.de/nhtcapri/urdu-alphabet.html>)
- NLA Urdu letters ([http://www.nla.gov.pk/urdu\\_letters\\_files/slide0001.htm](http://www.nla.gov.pk/urdu_letters_files/slide0001.htm))
- Urdu alphabets (<http://www.urdustuff.com/forums/>)
- Hugo's Urdu Alphabet Page (<http://users.skynet.be/hugocoolens/newurdu/newurdu.html>)
- A resource for urdu calligraphy and script (<http://calligraphyislamic.com>)

## Roman Urdu

**Roman Urdu** is the name used for the Urdū language written with the Roman script.

According to the Urdū scholar Habib R. Sulemani: "Roman Urdu is strongly opposed by the traditional Arabic script lovers. Despite this opposition it is still used by most on the internet and computers due to limitations of most technologies as they do not have the Urdu script. Although, this script is under development and thus the net users are using the Roman script in their own ways. Popular websites like Jang Group have devised their own schemes for Roman Urdu. This is of great advantage for those who are not able to read the Arabic script. MSN, Yahoo and some desi-chat-rooms are working as laboratories for the evolving new script and language (Roman Urdu)."<sup>[1]</sup>

خ	ح	چ	ج	ث	ٹ	ت	پ	ب	ا
xē خے	bafī hē بافی ہے	chē چے	jīm جیم	ṡē سے	ṡē ٹے	ṡē تے	pē پے	bē بے	alif الف
ص	ش	س	ژ	ز	ڑ	ر	ذ	ڈ	د
ṡuād سواد	ṡīm شین	sīm سین	ṡē ژے	zē زے	ṡē ڑے	rē رے	zāl جال	dāl ڈال	dāl دال
ل	گ	ک	ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
lām لام	gāf گاف	kāf کاف	qāf قاف	fē فے	ghān غین	'ayn عین	ẓōē ظوے	ṡōē طوے	ṡuād ضواد
		ے	ی	ء	ہ	و	ن	م	
		bafī yē بافی یے	chōī yē چوئی یے	hamzah ہمزہ	dō-ṡāsmī hē دو-ṡāsmī ہے	chōī hē چوئی ہے	wāō واو	nūn نون	mīm میم
۰	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹
0 sifār سیفار	1 ek اک	2 dō دو	3 tīn تین	4 ṡār چار	5 pāṡṡ پانچ	6 ṡhē ṡھے	7 ṡāt سات	8 āṡṡ آٹ	9 nō نوی

The Urdū Perso-Arabic alphabet, with names in the Devanāgarī and Roman Urdū alphabets

Although the idea of romanizing Urdu had been suggested several times, it was General Ayub Khan who most seriously suggested adopting the Roman script for Urdu and all Pakistani languages during his rule of the country.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup> The suggestion was inspired to an extent by Atatürk's adoption of Roman for Turkish in Turkey.

## Sample texts

### Zabu'r 23 Dáúd ká Mazmúr

#### Roman Urdū

<sup>1</sup>KHUDÁWAND merá chaupán hai; mujhe kamí na hogí. <sup>2</sup>Wuh mujhe harí harí charágáhon men bithátá hai: Wuh mijhe ráhat ke chashmon ke pás le játá hai. <sup>3</sup>Wuh merí ján ko bahál kartá hai: Wuh mujhe apne nám kí khátir sadáqat kí ráhon par le chaltá hai. <sup>4</sup>Balki khwáh maut ke sáye kí wádí men se merá guzar ho, Main kisé balá se nahín darúngá; kyúnki tú mere sáth hai: Tere 'asá aur terí láthí se mujhe tasallí hai. <sup>5</sup>Tú mere dushmanon ke rúbarú mere áge dastarkhwán bichhátá hai: Tú ne mere sir par tel malá hai, merá piyála labrez hotá hai. <sup>6</sup>Yaqínan bhalái aur rahmat 'umr bhar mere sáth sáth rahengí: Aur main hamesha KHUDÁWAND ke ghar men sukúnat karúngá.<sup>[5]</sup>

(Kita'b I Muqaddas: Zabu'r 23 az Dáúd)

#### Perso-Arabic script

##### {{{2}}} 1

2 مجھے راحت کے چشموں کے پاس لے جاتا ہے: وہ مجھے ہری ہری چراگاہوں میں بٹھاتا ہے

3 مجھے اپنا نام کی خاطر صداقت کی راہوں پر چلتا ہے: وہ میری جان بحال کرتا ہے

تیرے عصا اور تیری لائی سے: بلکہ خواہ موت کے سایہ کی وادی میں سے میرا گزر لو، میں کسی بلا سے نہ لینگا، کیونکہ تو میرے ساتھ ہے

4 مجھے تسلی ہے

5 تو نے میرے سر پر تیل ملا ہے، میرا پیالا لبریز لہریز ہوتا ہے: تو میرے دشمنین کے روبرو میرے آگے دسترخوان بچھاتا ہے

6 کے گلے میں سکونت کرو گے خداوند اور میں ہمیشہ یقیناً بلا لائے اور رحمت عمر بھر میرے ساتھ ساتھ رہے گی

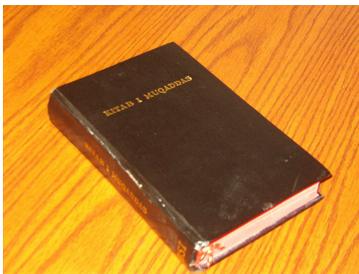
از داؤد 23 کتاب مقدس کے زبور

#### Devanāgarī script

<sup>1</sup>खुदावन्द मेरा चौपान है; मुझे कमी ना होगी। <sup>2</sup>वह मुझे हरी हरी चरिगाहों में बठिता है: वह मुझे राहत के चशमों के पास ले जाता है। <sup>3</sup>वह मेरी जान बहाल करता है: वह मुझे अपने नाम की खातरि सदाकत की राहों पर चलाता है। <sup>4</sup>बलके खाह मौत के साये की वादी में से मेरा गुजर हो, मैं किसी बला से नहीं डरूंगा; क्योंकि तू मेरे साथ है: तेरे अला और तेरी लाठी से मुझे तसलली है। <sup>5</sup>तू मेरे दुश्मनीन के रूबरू मेरे आगे दस्तरखान बछिता है: तू ने मेरे सर पर तेल मला है, मेरा पियाला लब्रीज होता है। <sup>6</sup>यकीनन भलाई और रेहमत उमर भर मेरे साथ साथ रहेगी: और मैं हमेशा खुदावन्द के घर में सकूनत करूंगा।

(कतिब-ए मुकद्दस के जुबूर 23 अज दाऊद)

## Roman Urdu amongst Christians



Roman Urdu Bibles are used by many Christians from the South Asian subcontinent

Urdu was the dominant native language among Christians of Karachi, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan in the 20th century and is still used today by some people in these Pakistani and Indian states. Pakistani and Indian Christians often used the Roman script for writing Urdu. Thus Roman Urdu was a common way of writing among the Christians in these states up to the 1960s. The Bible Society of India publishes Roman Urdu Bibles, which enjoyed sale late into the 1960s (though they are still published today). Church songbooks are also common in Roman Urdu. However, the usage of Roman Urdu in Christian contexts is declining in India with the wider use of Hindi and English in the states.

## Roman Urdu and film industry

Bollywood, India's major film industry, uses a version of Roman Urdu as the main script for its film titles. This is because Bollywood films have an appeal for viewers across South Asia and even in the Middle East. The Devanāgarī script is used mostly by Hindi speakers while the Perso-Arabic script is used primarily by Urdu speakers. The language used in Bollywood films is so called Hindi, but most dialogues are actually written in Hindustani—they can be understood by Urdu and Hindi speakers alike. So this so-called Hindi is Urdu in its real sense. Because the film industry wants to reach the largest possible audience, just using the Devanāgarī or Perso-Arabic script would be unfavorable for the Bollywood industry as few individuals are literate in both scripts. In addition to this situation, a significant number of Indians cannot read the Devanāgarī script as India has a diverse linguistic landscape and some people do not speak Hindi even though it is an official language of India. English, which is written in the Roman script, often becomes the way to communicate among Indians who speak different languages. For these reasons, the neutral Roman script is used for Bollywood film titles, though some films include the Hindi and Urdu scripts as well. The similar circumstances are also applied with Pakistan's Lollywood filming industry, where, along with the Urdu name or title of the movie, a Roman Urdu title is always provided for viewers.

## Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization

Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization is another system for Hindustani. It was proposed by Syed Fasih Uddin (late) and Quader Unissa Begum (late). As such it is adopted by The First International Urdu Conference (Chicago) 1992, as "The Modern International Standard Letters of Alphabet for URDU-(HINDUSTANI) - The INDIAN Language script for the purposes of hand written communication, dictionary references, published material and Computerized Linguistic Communications (CLC)".

There are significant advantages to this transcription system:

- It provides a standard which is based on the original works undertaken at the Fort William College, Calcutta, India (established 1800), under John Borthwick Gilchrist (1789–1841), which has become the de facto standard for Hindustani during the late 1800.
- There is a one-to-one representation for each of the original Urdu and Hindi characters.
- Vowel sounds are written rather than being assumed as they are in the Urdu alphabet.
- Unlike Gilchrist's alphabet, which used many special non-ASCII characters, the proposed alphabet only utilizes ASCII.
- Since it is ASCII based, more resources and tools are available.
- Liberate Urdu–Hindustani language to be written and communicated utilizing all of the available standards and free us from Unicode conversion drudgery.
- Urdu – Hindustani with this character set fully utilizes paper and electronic print media.

## The Hamari Boli Initiative

Initiated in 2011, the Hamari Boli Initiative <sup>[6]</sup> is a full-scale open-source Language planning initiative aimed at Hindustani (Hindi-Urdu) Script, Style, Status & Lexical reform and modernization. One of primary stated objectives of Hamari Boli is to relieve Hindustani of the crippling Devanagari-Nastaliq Digraphia by way of Romanization <sup>[7]</sup>

## Footnotes

- [1] The News International, September 8, 2003, (<http://web.archive.org/web/20040301145532/http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/sep2003-daily/08-09-2003/oped/o5.htm>)
- [2] Paving new paths to romanise Urdu script (<http://www.dawn.com/2008/11/27/fea.htm#2>), Mushir Anwar, Dawn (newspaper), Nov 27, 2008
- [3] The Urdu-English Controversy in Pakistan (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/28397723/Urdu-Language-Controversy>), Tariq Rahman, Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), pp. 177-207
- [4] The Language Movement: An Outline ([http://www.21stfebruary.org/eassy21\\_5.htm](http://www.21stfebruary.org/eassy21_5.htm)), Rafiqul Islam
- [5] World Bible Translation Center (pdf file) ([http://www.wbtc.com/downloads/bible\\_downloads/Urdu19Ps.pdf](http://www.wbtc.com/downloads/bible_downloads/Urdu19Ps.pdf))
- [6] <http://www.hamariboli.com>
- [7] The News International - Dec 29, 2011 (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-84689-Hamari-boli-angraizon-ke-rasmul-khat-mein>) -- "Hamari Boli (our language) is perhaps one of the very first serious undertakings to explore, develop and encourage the growth of Roman script in the use of Urdu/Hindi language"

## Bibliography

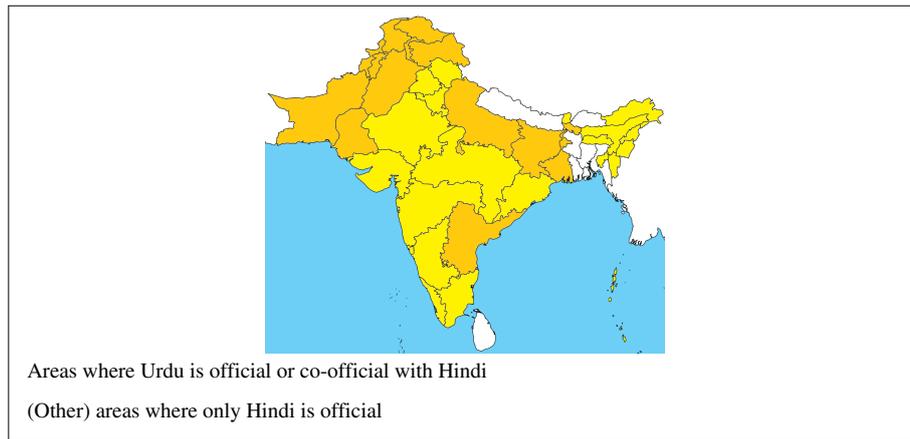
- Dua, Hans R. (1994b). *Urdu*. In Asher (Ed.) (pp. 4863–4864).
- Insha, Ibn e. (2002) *Urdu Ki Aakhri Kitab*. New Delhi: Kitab Wala. ISBN 81-85738-57-2.
- B.S.I. *Kita'b I Muqaddas*. Bangalore: The Bible Society of India, 1994. ISBN 81-221-3230-8.

## External links

- The Hamari Boli Initiative (<http://www.HamariBoli.com>)
- Google Urdu Transliteration Service (<http://maboot.com/how-to-write-in-urdu-on-computer-or-internet/71/>)
- Urdu Transliteration Bookmarklet (<http://www.syedgakbar.com/products/web/>)
- Download entire English to Roman Urdu dictionary, editable, 24000 english words, urdu script, excel format (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/14203656/English-to-Urdu-and-Roman-Urdu-Dictionary>)
- Download entire English to Urdu dictionary, editable, 24000 words, urdu script ([http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/411177/English\\_to\\_Urdu\\_Dictionary](http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/411177/English_to_Urdu_Dictionary))
- Download IPA for Urdu and Roman Urdu for Mobile and Internet Users (<http://www.theelp.org/library.htm>)
- Roman Urdu Dictionary (<http://www.dictionaryurdu.com/>)
- Dinesh Prabhu's Roman Urdu Dictionary: (<http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~navin/india/urdu.dictionary>) Includes Grammar, Word Origins, and more
- Vaneeta's Roman Urdu Dictionary (<http://urdudict0.tripod.com/>)
- Hindustani-English-Kalasha-Khowar-Nuristani-Pashtu Comparative Word List: (<http://www.lexicool.com/dlink.asp?ID=0FW3HU5663&L1=34&L2=44>) Comparative list of 210 words in South Asian languages
- Romanized to Unicode Hindi transliterator (<http://www.iit.edu/~laksvij/language/hindi.html>)
- Roman Urdu Dictionary (<http://bzupages.com/f311/browse-full-z-english-urdu-dictionary-roman-urdu-2246/>)
- English-Urdu-Roman Urdu Dictionary (<http://www.urduword.com/>)
- Urdu Nigar Unicode - Urdu Word Editor supporting spell check (<http://www.ajsoftpk.com/urdunigarunicode/>)
- English Translation to Urdu words (<http://www.urdu-dictionary.info/>)

# Urdu

<b>Urdū</b>	
اُردُو	
 <p><i>Urdu in Perso-Arabic script (Nasta'liq style)</i></p>	
<b>Pronunciation</b>	Urdu: [ˈʊɾd̪u] (  listen)
<b>Native to</b>	Pakistan, India, Bangladesh ("Bihari"), Nepal
<b>Native speakers</b>	65 million (2007) <sup>[1]</sup> Second language: 40 million (1999) Total (including Hindi): 490 million (2010)
<b>Language family</b>	Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indo-Iranian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indo-Aryan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central zone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Western Hindi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hindustani <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Khariboli</li> <li>• <b>Urdū</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	Urdu alphabet (Arabic script) Devanagari Indian Urdu Braille (Bharati) Pakistani Urdu Braille
<b>Official status</b>	
<b>Official language in</b>	 Pakistan  India (states of Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi)
<b>Regulated by</b>	National Language Authority (Pakistan); National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (India)
<b>Language codes</b>	
<b>ISO 639-1</b>	ur
<b>ISO 639-2</b>	urd
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	urd
<b>Linguasphere</b>	59-AAF-q (with Hindi, including 58 varieties: 59-AAF-qaa to 59-AAF-qil)



**Urdu** (/ˈʊərduː/; Urdu: اُردُو *Urdū*; [ˈʊr̩d̪uː] ( listen<sup>ⓘ</sup>)), or more precisely **Modern Standard Urdu**, is a standardized register of the Hindustani language. Urdu is historically associated with the Muslims of the region of *Hindustan*. It is the national language and *lingua franca* of Pakistan, and an official language of five Indian states and one of the 22 scheduled languages in the Constitution of India. Apart from specialized vocabulary, it is mutually intelligible with another register of Hindustani, Standard Hindi, which is associated with the Hindu community. Since the end of the Mughal period in the nineteenth century, varieties of Hindustani have been the lingua franca for much of South Asia. The two varieties of Hindustani are nearly identical in basic structure and grammar, and at a colloquial level also in vocabulary and phonology. If considered the same language, the population of Hindi-Urdu speakers is the fourth largest of the languages of the world, after Mandarin Chinese, English and Spanish.

## Origin of Urdu

The word *Urdu* is derived from the same Turkic word *ordu* (army) that has given English *horde*.

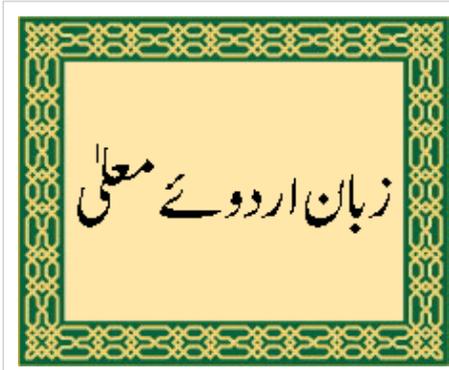
Since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire until the British Raj, Hindustani, written in the Urdu script, was the language of both Hindus and Muslims. The language was variously known as *Hindi*, *Hindavi* and *Dehlavi*. The communal nature of the language lasted until it replaced Persian as the official language in 1837 and was made coofficial along with English. This triggered a Hindu backlash in northwestern India, which argued that the language should be written in the native Devanagari script. Thus a new literary register, called "Hindi", replaced traditional Hindustani as the official language of Bihar in 1881, establishing a sectarian divide of "Urdu" for Muslims and "Hindi" for Hindus, a divide that was formalized with the division of India and Pakistan after independence (though there are Hindu poets who continue to write in Urdu to this day<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>). At independence, Pakistan established a highly Persianized literary standard of Urdu as its national language.



Mughal court in Delhi

Although there have been attempts to "purify" Urdu and Hindi by purging them of, respectively, their Sanskrit and Persian loan words, and new vocabulary draws primarily from Persian and Arabic for Urdu and from Sanskrit for Hindi, this has primarily affected academic and literary vocabulary, and both national standards remain heavily influenced by both Persian and Sanskrit. English has exerted a heavy influence on both as a coofficial language.

## Speakers and geographic distribution



The phrase *Zaban-e Urdu-e Mualla* ("The language of the exalted camp") written in Nasta'liq script.

There are between 60 and 70 million native speakers of Urdu: there were 52 million in India per the 2001 census, some 6% of the population; 13 million in Pakistan in 2008, or 8%; and several hundred thousand in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United States, and Bangladesh, where it is called "Bihari". However, a knowledge of Urdu allows one to speak with far more people than that, as Hindi-Urdu is the fourth most commonly spoken language in the world, after Mandarin, English, and Spanish. Because of the difficulty in distinguishing between Urdu and Hindi speakers in India and Pakistan, as well as estimating the number of people for whom Urdu is a second language, the estimated number of speakers is uncertain and controversial.

Owing to interaction with other languages, Urdu has become localized wherever it is spoken, including in Pakistan itself. Urdu in Pakistan has undergone changes and has lately incorporated and borrowed many words from Pakistani languages like Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi and Balti as well as former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) Bengali language, thus allowing speakers of the language in Pakistan to distinguish themselves more easily and giving the language a decidedly Pakistani flavour. Similarly, the Urdu spoken in India can also be distinguished into many dialects like Dakhni (Deccan) of South India, and Khariboli of the Punjab region since recent times. Because of Urdu's similarity to Hindi, speakers of the two languages can easily understand one another if both sides refrain from using specialized vocabulary. The syntax (grammar), morphology, and the core vocabulary are essentially identical. Thus linguists usually count them as one single language and contend that they are considered as two different languages for socio-political reasons.<sup>[2]</sup>

In Pakistan Urdu is mostly learned as a second or a third language as nearly 93% of Pakistan's population has a mother tongue other than Urdu. Despite this, Urdu was chosen as a token of unity and as a lingua franca so as not to give any native Pakistani language preference over the other. Urdu is therefore spoken and understood by the vast majority in some form or another, including a majority of urban dwellers in such cities as Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Multan, Faisalabad, Hyderabad, Peshawar, Quetta, Jhang, Sargodha and Skardu. It is written, spoken and used in all provinces/territories of Pakistan despite the fact that the people from differing provinces may have different indigenous languages, as from the fact that it is the "base language" of the country. For this reason, it is also taught as a compulsory subject up to higher secondary school in both English and Urdu medium school systems. This has produced millions of Urdu speakers from people whose mother tongue is one of the State languages of Pakistan such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, Potwari, Hindko, Pahari, Saraiki, Balti, and Brahui who can read and write only Urdu. It is absorbing many words from the regional languages of Pakistan. This variation of Urdu is sometimes referred to as Pakistani Urdu.

So although most of the population is conversant in Urdu, it is the first language of only an estimated 7% of the population who are mainly Muslim immigrants (known as Muhajir in Pakistan) from different parts of South Asia. The regional languages are also being influenced by Urdu vocabulary. There are millions of Pakistanis whose mother tongue is not Urdu, but because they have studied in Urdu medium schools, they can read and write Urdu along with their native language. Most of the nearly five million Afghan refugees of different ethnic origins (such as Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazarvi, and Turkmen) who stayed in Pakistan for over twenty-five years have also become fluent in Urdu. With such a large number of people(s) speaking Urdu, the language has in recent years acquired a peculiar Pakistani flavour further distinguishing it from the Urdu spoken by native speakers and diversifying the language even further.

A great number of newspapers are published in Urdu in Pakistan, including the *Daily Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, *Millat*, among many others (see List of newspapers in Pakistan#Urdu language Newspapers).

In India, Urdu is spoken in places where there are large Muslim minorities or cities which were bases for Muslim Empires in the past. These include parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra (Marathwada), Karnataka and cities namely Lucknow, Delhi, Bareilly, Meerut, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Roorkee, Deoband, Moradabad, Azamgarh, Bijnor, Najibabad, Rampur, Aligarh, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, Agra, Kanpur, Badaun, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mysore, Patna, Gulbarga, Nanded, Bidar, Ajmer, and Ahmedabad. Some Indian schools teach Urdu as a first language and have their own syllabus and exams. Indian madrasahs also teach Arabic as well as Urdu. India has more than 3,000 Urdu publications including 405 daily Urdu newspapers. Newspapers such as *Sahara Urdu*, *Daily Salar*, *Hindustan Express*, *Daily Pasban*, *Siasat Daily*, *The Munsif Daily* and *Inqilab* are published and distributed in Bengaluru, Mysore, Hyderabad, and Mumbai (see List of newspapers in India).

Outside South Asia, it is spoken by large numbers of migrant South Asian workers in the major urban centres of the Persian Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia. Urdu is also spoken by large numbers of immigrants and their children in the major urban centres of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Germany, Norway, and Australia. Along with Arabic, Urdu is among the immigrant languages with the most speakers in Catalonia, leading to fears of linguistic ghettos.

## Official status



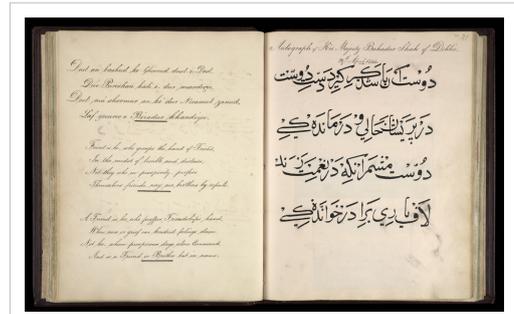
A multilingual New Delhi railway station board

Urdu is the national and one of the two official languages of Pakistan, the other being English, and is spoken and understood throughout the country, whereas the state-by-state languages (languages spoken throughout various regions) are the provincial languages. Only 8% of Pakistanis have Urdu as their native language, but Urdu is understood all over Pakistan. It is used in education, literature, office and court business.<sup>[3]</sup> It holds in itself a repository of the cultural and social heritage of the country.<sup>[4]</sup> Although English is used in most elite circles, and Punjabi has a plurality of native speakers, Urdu is the lingua franca and national language in Pakistan.

Urdu is also one of the officially recognized languages in India and has official language status in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and the national capital, New Delhi.

In Jammu and Kashmir, section 145 of the Kashmir Constitution provides: "The official language of the State shall be Urdu but the English language shall unless the Legislature by law otherwise provides, continue to be used for all the official purposes of the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of the Constitution."<sup>[5]</sup>

The importance of Urdu in the Muslim world is visible in the Holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, where most informational signage is written in Arabic, English and Urdu, and sometimes in other languages.



Autograph and a couplet of Last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, dated 29 April 1844

## Dialects

Urdu has a few recognised dialects, including Dakhni, Rekhta, and Modern Vernacular Urdu (based on the Khariboli dialect of the Delhi region). Dakhni (also known as Dakani, Deccani, Desia, Mirgan) is spoken in Deccan region of southern India. It is distinct by its mixture of vocabulary from Marathi and Konkani, as well as some vocabulary from Arabic, Persian and Turkish that are not found in the standard dialect of Urdu. Dakhini is widely spoken in all parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Urdu is read and written as in other parts of India. A number of daily newspapers and several monthly magazines in Urdu are published in these states. In terms of pronunciation, the easiest way to recognize a native speaker is their pronunciation of the letter "qāf" (ق) as "ḥē" (ح).

The Pakistani variant of the language becomes increasingly divergent from the Indian dialects and forms of Urdu, as it has absorbed many loan words, proverbs and phonetics from Pakistan's indigenous languages such as Pashto, Punjabi and Sindhi. Furthermore, due to the region's history, the Urdu dialect of Pakistan draws heavily from the Persian and Arabic languages, and the intonation and pronunciation are more formal compared with corresponding Indian dialects.

In addition, Rekhta (or Rekhti), the language of Urdu poetry, is sometimes counted as a separate dialect, one famously used by several poets of high acclaim in the bulk of their work. These included Mirza Ghalib, Mir Taqi Mir and Muhammad Iqbal.

Urdu spoken in Indian state of Odisha is different from Urdu spoken in other areas; it is a mixture of Oriya and Bihari.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Urdu and Hindi

Urdu is often contrasted with Hindi. Apart from religious associations, the differences are largely restricted to the standard forms: Standard Urdu is conventionally written in the Nastaliq style of the Persian alphabet and relies heavily on Persian and Arabic as a source for technical and literary vocabulary, whereas Standard Hindi is conventionally written in Devanāgarī and draws on Sanskrit. However, both have large numbers of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit words, and most linguists consider them to be two standardized forms of the same language, and consider the differences to be sociolinguistic, though a few classify them separately.<sup>[6]</sup> Mutual intelligibility decreases in literary and specialized contexts which rely on educated vocabulary. Further, it is quite easy in a longer conversation to distinguish differences in vocabulary and pronunciation of some Urdu phonemes. Due to religious nationalism since the partition of British India and continued communal tensions, native speakers of both Hindi and Urdu frequently assert them to be distinct languages, despite the numerous similarities between the two in a colloquial setting.

## Vocabulary

Urdu has a vocabulary rich in words of Middle Eastern origins. The language's Indo-Aryan base has been enriched by borrowing from Persian and Arabic. There are also a smaller number of borrowings from Chagatai, Portuguese, and more recently English. Many of the words of Arabic origin have been adopted through Persian and have different pronunciations and nuances of meaning and usage than they do in Arabic.

## Levels of formality

Urdu in its less formalised register has been referred to as a *rēḥtā* (ریختہ, [reːx̪t̪aː]), meaning "rough mixture". The more formal register of Urdu is sometimes referred to as *zabān-e-Urdu-e-mo'allā* (زبانِ اُردوئے معلّٰی) [zəbaːn eː ʊr̪d̪u eː moəllaː]), the "Language of the Exalted Camp", referring to the Imperial army.<sup>[7]</sup>

The etymology of the word used in the Urdu language for the most part decides how polite or refined one's speech is. For example, Urdu speakers would distinguish between پانی *pāni* and آب *āb*, both meaning "water" for example, or between آدمی *ādmi* and مرد *mard*, meaning "man". The former in each set is used colloquially and has older

Hindustani origins, whereas the latter is used formally and poetically, being of Persian origin.

If a word is of Persian or Arabic origin, the level of speech is considered to be more formal and grand. Similarly, if Persian or Arabic grammar constructs, such as the *izafat*, are used in Urdu, the level of speech is also considered more formal and grand. If a word is inherited from Sanskrit, the level of speech is considered more colloquial and personal. This distinction is similar to the division in English between words of Latin, French and Old English origins.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Politeness

Urdu syntax and vocabulary reflect a three tiered system of politeness called *ādāb*. Due to its emphasis on politeness and propriety, Urdu has always been considered an elevated, somewhat aristocratic, language in South Asia. It continues to conjure a subtle, polished affect in South Asian linguistic and literary sensibilities and thus continues to be preferred for song-writing and poetry, even by non-native speakers.

Any verb can be conjugated as per three or four different tiers of politeness. For example, the verb *to speak* in Urdu is *bōlnā* (بولنا) and the verb *to sit* is *bēṭhnā* (بیٹھنا). The imperatives "speak!" and "sit!" can thus be conjugated five different ways, each marking subtle variation in politeness and propriety. These permutations exclude a host of auxiliary verbs and expressions which can be added to these verbs to add even greater degree of subtle variation. For extremely polite or formal situations, nearly all commonly used verbs have equivalent formal synonyms (Row 5 below).

<b>Literary</b>	[tū] bōl!	[بول] تُو!	[tū] bēṭh!	[بیٹھ] تُو!
<b>Casual and intimate</b>	[tum] bōlō.	[بولو] تُم	[tum] bēṭhō	[بیٹھو] تُم
<b>Polite and intimate</b> <sup>[8]</sup>	[āp] bōlō.	[آپ] بولو	[āp] bēṭhō.	[آپ] بیٹھو
<b>Formal yet intimate</b>	[āp] bōlē <sup>n</sup> .	[آپ] بولیے	[āp] bēṭhē <sup>n</sup> .	[آپ] بیٹھیے
<b>Polite and formal</b>	[āp] bōli'ē.	[آپ] بولئے	[āp] bēṭhi'ē.	[آپ] بیٹھئے
<b>Ceremonial / Extremely formal</b>	[āp] farmā'iyē.	[آپ] فرمائیے	[āp] taṣṭrif rakhi'ē.	[آپ] تشریف رکھئے

Similarly, nouns are also marked for politeness and formality. For example, *us kī wālidah*, "his mother" is a politer way of saying *us kī ammī*. *Us kī wālidā-ē mohtarmah* is an even more polite reference, whereas saying *us kī mā<sup>n</sup>* would be construed as derogatory. None of these forms are slang or shortenings, and all are encountered in writing.

Expressions are also marked for politeness. For example, the expression "no" could be *nah*, *nahī<sup>n</sup>*, *nahī<sup>n</sup> jī* or *jī nahī<sup>n</sup>* in order of politeness. Similarly, "yes" can be *hā<sup>n</sup>*, *jī*, *hā<sup>n</sup> jī* or *jī hā<sup>n</sup>* in order of politeness.

## Non-secular feature of Urdu

Use of certain Urdu words is reserved for Muslims only. Shaheed (شہید) is essentially meant to be used for Muslim martyrs and marhoom (مرحوم) "late" (literally "in position of mercy") is only used before Muslim names. In contrast, the word for "late" used with a non-Muslim is *ānjahānī* (آنجانانی), a Persian coinage that means the deceased person belongs to the other world. If someone refers to a deceased Muslim as *ānjahānī*, that person is likely to be rebuked.

## Writing system

### Urdu script

Urdu is written right-to left in an extension of the Persian alphabet, which is itself an extension of the Arabic alphabet. Urdu is associated with the Nasta'liq style of Persian calligraphy, whereas Arabic is generally written in the *Naskh* or *Ruq'ah* styles. *Nasta'liq* is notoriously difficult to typeset, so Urdu newspapers were hand-written by masters of calligraphy, known as *katib* or *khush-navees*, until the late 1980s<sup>[citation needed]</sup>. One handwritten Urdu newspaper, *The Musalman*, is still published daily in Chennai.<sup>[9]</sup>

خ	ح	چ	ج	ث	ٹ	ت	پ	ب	ا
xē خے	baḥī hē بہی ہے	ḥē ہے	jīm جیم	ṭē ٹے	tē تے	pē پے	bē بے	alif الف	
ص	ش	س	ژ	ز	ڑ	ر	ذ	ڈ	د
ṣuād سواد	ṣīn شین	sīn سین	ḏē ڈے	zē زے	rē رے	rē رے	ḏāl ذال	ḏāl ڈال	dāl دال
ل	گ	ک	ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
lām لام	gāf گاف	kāf کاف	qāf قاف	fē فے	ghān غان	ʿayn عین	ḏōḥ ذوہ	tōḥ ٹوہ	ḏuād ڈواد
		ے	ی	ء	ھ	ہ	و	ن	م
		baḥī yē بہی ہے	ḥōṭī yē خوٹی ہے	hamzah ہمزہ	dō-ḥāsmī hē دوہاشمی ہے	ḥōṭī hē خوٹی ہے	wāo واو	nūn نون	mīm میم
۰	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹
ṣifār سیفار	ek اک	dō دو	tīn تین	ḥār چار	pāñḥ پانچ	ḥē ہے	sāt سات	āṭh آٹھ	nō نوں

The Urdu Nasta'liq alphabet, with names in the Devanāgarī and Latin alphabets

### Kaithi script

Urdu was also written in the Kaithi script. A highly Persianized and technical form of Urdu was the *lingua franca* of the law courts of the British administration in Bengal, Bihar, and the North-West Provinces & Oudh. Until the late 19th century, all proceedings and court transactions in this register of Urdu were written officially in the Persian script. In 1880, Sir Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal abolished the use of the Persian alphabet in the law courts of Bengal and Bihar and ordered the exclusive use of Kaithi, a popular script used for both Urdu and Hindi.<sup>[10]</sup> Kaithi's association with Urdu and Hindi was ultimately eliminated by the political contest between these languages and their scripts, in which the Persian script was definitively linked to Urdu.

## Devanagari script

More recently in India, Urdu speakers have adopted Devanagari for publishing Urdu periodicals and have innovated new strategies to mark Urdu in Devanagari as distinct from Hindi in Devanagari. Such publishers have introduced new orthographic features into Devanagari for the purpose of representing the Perso-Arabic etymology of Urdu words. One example is the use of अ (Devanagari *a*) with vowel signs to mimic contexts of ع ('*ain*'), in violation of Hindi orthographic rules. For Urdu publishers, the use of Devanagari gives them a greater audience, whereas the orthographic changes help them preserve a distinct identity of Urdu.<sup>[11]</sup>



## Roman script

Urdu is occasionally written in the Roman script. Roman Urdu has been used since the days of the British Raj, partly as a result of the availability and low cost of Roman movable type for printing presses. The use of Roman Urdu was common in contexts such as product labels. Today it is regaining popularity among users of text-messaging and Internet services and is developing its own style and conventions. Habib R. Sulemani says,

"The younger generation of Urdu-speaking people around the world, especially Pakistan, are using Romanised Urdu on the Internet and it has become essential for them, because they use the Internet and English is its language. Typically, in that sense, a person from Islamabad in Pakistan may chat with another in Delhi in India on the Internet only in Roman Urdu. They both speak the same language but would have different scripts. Moreover, the younger generation of those who are from the English medium schools or settled in the west, can speak Urdu but can't write it in the traditional Arabic script and thus Roman Urdu is a blessing for such a population."<sup>[12]</sup>

Roman Urdu holds significance among the Christians of Pakistan and North India. Urdu was the dominant native language among Christians of Karachi and Lahore in present-day Pakistan and Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh Rajasthan in India, during the early part of the 19th and 20th century, and is still used by Christians in these places. Pakistani and Indian Christians often used the Roman script for writing Urdu. Thus Roman Urdu was a common way of writing among Pakistani and Indian Christians in these areas up to the 1960s. The Bible Society of India publishes Roman Urdu Bibles which enjoyed sale late into the 1960s (though they are still published today). Church songbooks are also common in Roman Urdu. However, the usage of Roman Urdu is declining with the wider use of Hindi and English in these states.

## Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani romanization

Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization is another system for Hindustani. It was proposed by Syed Fasih Uddin (late) and Quader Unissa Begum (late). As such is adopted by The First International Urdu Conference (Chicago) 1992, as "The Modern International Standard Letters of Alphabet for URDU-(HINDUSTANI) - The INDIAN Language script for the purposes of hand written communication, dictionary references, published material and Computerized Linguistic Communications (CLC)".

There are significant advantages to this transcription system:

- It provides a standard which is based on the original works undertaken at the Fort William College, Calcutta, India (established 1800), under John Borthwick Gilchrist (1789–1841), which has become the de facto standard for Hindustani during the late 1800.
- There is a one-to-one representation for each of the original Urdu-Hindustani characters.
- Vowel sounds are written rather than being assumed as they are in the Urdu alphabet.



## Confusable glyphs in Urdu and Arabic script

Characters in Urdu	Characters in Arabic
پ (U+06C1), پ (U+06BE)	پ (U+0647)
ی (U+06CC)	ی (U+0649), ی (U+064A)
ک (U+06A9)	ک (U+0643)

In 2003, the Center for Research in Urdu Language Processing (CRULP) — a research organization affiliated with Pakistan's National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences — produced a proposal for mapping from the 1-byte UZT encoding of Urdu characters to the Unicode standard.<sup>[15]</sup> This proposal suggests a preferred Unicode glyph for each character in the Urdu alphabet.

### Sample text

The following is a sample text in Urdu, of the Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (by the United Nations):

#### Urdu text

تمام انسان آزاد اور حقوق و عزت کے اعتبار سے برابر پیدا ہوئے۔ ان کے ضمیر اور عقل ودیعت ہوئی۔ اس دفعہ ۱  
لئے ان میں ایک دوسرے کے ساتھ بھائی چارے کا سلوک کرنا چاہئے۔

#### Transliteration (ALA-LC)

**Daf'ah 1:** Tamām insān āzād aur ḥuqūq o-'izzat kē i' tibār sē barābar paidā hū'ē hai<sup>n</sup>. Unhē<sup>n</sup> ḍamīr aur 'aql wadī'at hū'ī hai. Is li'ē unhē<sup>n</sup> ēk dūsre kē sāth bhā'ī čārē kā sulūk karnā čāhi'ē.

#### IPA transcription

ḍəfə e:k: t̪əma: m insɑ: n a: zɑ: d̪ o: r h̪uqu: q o: -izzət̪ ke: e: t̪i bɑ: r se: bəra: bər pe: d̪ɑ hue: h̪e: . Ūnh̪e: zəmi: r o: r əql v̪əd̪i: ət̪ hui h̪e: . ɪs li: e: Ūnh̪e: e: k d̪u: sre: ke: sɑ: t̪h̪ b̪ɑ: i t̪jɑ: re: kɑ s̪ul̪u: k kərnɑ t̪jɑ: h̪i: e.

#### Gloss (word-for-word)

**Article 1:** All humans free[,] and rights and dignity \*(s) consideration from equal born are. To them conscience and intellect endowed is. Therefore, they one another \*(s) with brotherhood \*(s) treatment do should.

#### Translation (grammatical)

**Article 1:** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience. Therefore, they should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

**Note:** \*(s) represents a possessive case which when written is preceded by the possessor and followed by the possessed, unlike the English "of".

## Literature

Urdu has become a literary language only in recent centuries, as Persian was formerly the idiom of choice for the Muslim courts of North India. However, despite its relatively late development, Urdu literature boasts of some world-recognised artists and a considerable corpus.

### Prose

#### Religious

Urdu holds the largest collection of works on Islamic literature and Sharia. These include translations and interpretation of the Qur'an as well as commentary on *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, history, spirituality, Sufism and metaphysics. A great number of classical texts from Arabic and Persian have also been translated into Urdu. Relatively inexpensive publishing, combined with the use of Urdu as a lingua franca among Muslims of South Asia, has meant that Islam-related works in Urdu far outnumber such works in any other South Asian language. Popular Islamic books are also written in Urdu.

It is interesting to note that a treatise on Astrology was penned in Urdu by Pandit Roop Chand Joshi in the eighteenth century. The book, known as Lal Kitab, is widely popular in North India among astrologers and was written at a time when Urdu was very much spoken in the Brahmin families of that region.

#### Literary

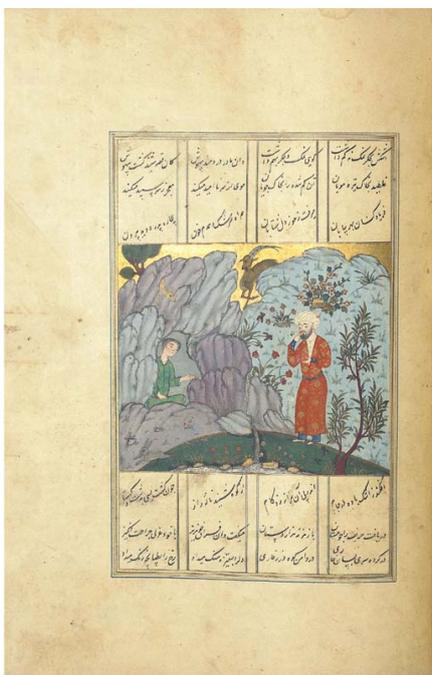
Secular prose includes all categories of widely known fiction and non-fiction work, separable into genres. The *dāstān*, or tale, a traditional story which may have many characters and complex plotting. This has now fallen into disuse.

The *afsāna* or short story, probably the best-known genre of Urdu fiction. The best-known *afsāna* writers, or *afsāna nigār*, in Urdu are Munshi Premchand, Saadat Hasan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander, Qurratulain Hyder (Qurat-ul-Ain Haider), Ismat Chughtai, Ghulam Abbas, and Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi. Towards the end of last century Paigham Afaqui's novel *Makaan* appeared with a reviving force for Urdu novel resulting into writing of novels getting a boost in Urdu literature and a number of writers like Ghazanfer, Abdus Samad, Sarwat Khan and Musharraf Alam Zauqi have taken the move forward. Munshi Premchand, became known as a pioneer in the *afsāna*, though some contend that his were not technically the first as Sir Ross Masood had already written many short stories in Urdu. Novels form a genre of their own, in the tradition of the English novel. Other genres include *saférnāma* (travel story), *mazmoon* (essay), *sarguzisht* (account/narrative), *inshaeya* (satirical essay), *murasela* (editorial), and *khud navvisht* (autobiography).

## Poetry



Mir Taqi Mir (Urdu: میر تقی میر) (born 1723 - died 1810), was the leading Urdu poet of the 18th century in the courts of Mughal Empire and Nawabs of Awadh



An illustrated manuscript of one of Amir Khusrau's (1253–1325 CE) Urdu poems

Urdu has been one of the premier languages of poetry in South Asia for two centuries, and has developed a rich tradition in a variety of poetic genres. The Ghazal in Urdu represents the most popular form of subjective music and poetry, whereas the Nazm exemplifies the objective kind, often reserved for narrative, descriptive, didactic or satirical purposes. Under the broad head of the Nazm we may also include the classical forms of poems known by specific names such as Masnavi (a long narrative poem in rhyming couplets on any theme: romantic, religious, or didactic), Marsia (an elegy traditionally meant to commemorate the martyrdom of Hazrat Husayn ibn Ali, grandson of Muhammad, and his comrades of the Karbala fame), or Qasida (a panegyric written in praise of a king or a nobleman), for all these poems have a single presiding subject, logically developed and concluded. {However, these poetic species have an old world aura about their subject and style, and are different from the modern Nazm, supposed to have come into vogue in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Probably the most widely recited, and memorised genre of contemporary Urdu poetry is *nāt*—panegyric poetry written in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. *Nāt* can be of any formal category, but is most commonly in the *ghazal* form. The language used in Urdu *nāt* ranges from the intensely colloquial to a highly Persified formal language. The great early 20th century scholar Ala Hazrat, Imam Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi, who wrote many of the most well known *nāts* in Urdu (the collection of his poetic work is *Hadaiq-e-Baqhshish*), epitomised this range in a *ghazal* of nine stanzas (*bayt*) in which every stanza contains half a line each of Arabic, Persian, formal Urdu, and colloquial Hindi.

Another important genre of Urdu prose are the poems commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali(r.a) at the Battle of Karbala, called *noha* (نوحہ) and *marsia*. Anees and Dabeer are famous in this regard.

### Terminology

**Aš‘ār** (أشعار, verse, couplets): It consists of two hemistiches (lines) called *Miṣra‘* (مِصْرَع); first hemistich (line) is called *مِصْرَعٌ أُولَى* (*Miṣra‘-ē ūlā*) and the second is called *(مِصْرَعٌ ثَانِي)* (*Miṣra‘-ē tānī*). Each verse embodies a single thought or subject (singular) *شِعْرٌ Ši‘r*.

In the Urdu poetic tradition, most poets use a pen name called the *takhallus*. This can be either a part of a poet's given name or something

else adopted as an identity. The traditional convention in identifying Urdu poets is to mention the *takhallus* at the end of the name. Thus Ghalib, whose official name and title was Mirza Asadullah Beg Khan, is referred to formally as Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, or in common parlance as just Mirza Ghalib. Because the *takhallus* can be a part of their actual name, some poets end up having that part of their name repeated, such as Faiz Ahmad Faiz.

The word *taxalluṣ* is derived from Arabic, meaning "ending". This is because in the ghazal form, the poet would usually incorporate his or her pen name into the final couplet (*maqtaʿ*) of each poem as a type of "signature".

### Urdu poetry example

This is Ghalib's famous couplet in which he compares himself to his great predecessor, the master poet Mir:

ریختہ کہ تمہلی اُستاد نہ لے گا لب  
کہتے ہیں اگلے زمانہ میں کوئی میر بھی تھا

### Transliteration

*Rēxtē kē tumhi ustād nahīṅ hō Ḡālib*

*Kehtē haiṅ aglē zamānē mēṅ kōī Mīr bhī thā*

### Translation

You are not the only master of *Rekhta*,<sup>[16]</sup> Ghalib

(They) say that in the past there also was someone (named) Mir.

### Phrases

English	Urdu	Transliteration	Notes
(Hello) Peace be upon you.	السلامُ علیکم	Assalām-u-Alaikum.	<i>lit.</i> "Peace be upon you." (from Arabic). Often shortened to 'Salām'.
(Reply to Salam) Peace be upon you, too.	وَعَلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامُ	Wa-Alaikumussalām.	<i>lit.</i> "And upon you, peace." Response to assalāmu alaikum.
Hello.	عَرَضَ (آداب)	ādāb (arz hai).	<i>lit.</i> "Regards (are expressed).", a very formal secular greeting.
Goodbye.	حَافِظِ خُدا حَافِظُ، اللهُ	Khuda Hāfiz, Allah Hāfiz.	<i>lit.</i> "May God be your Guardian". "Khuda" from Persian for "God", "Allah" from Arabic for "God".
Yes.	ہاں	hāṅ.	casual.
Yes	جی	jī.	formal.
Yes.	جی ہاں	jī hāṅ.	confident formal.
No.	نہیں	nā.	rare.
No.	نہیں، جی نہیں	nahīṅ, jī nahīṅ.	casual; jī nahīṅ is formal.
Please	(مہربانی) آپ کی	(āp kī) meherbānī.	<i>lit.</i> "(Your) kindness" Also used for "thank you".
Thank you.	شکریا	shukriyā.	from Arabic <i>shukran</i> .
Please, come in.	تشریف لائیے	tashrīf la'iyē.	<i>lit.</i> "(Please) bring your honour".
Please, have a seat.	تشریف رکھیے	tashrīf rakhi'ē.	<i>lit.</i> "(Please) place your honour".
I am happy to meet you.	آپ سے مل کر خوشی ہوئی	āp sē mil kar khushī hūī.	<i>lit.</i> "(I) felt happiness (after) meeting you".
Do you speak English?	کیا آپ انگریزی بولتی ہیں؟	kyā āp angrēzī bōltē/boltī haiṅ?	"bōltē" is for a male addressee, "bōltī" is for female.
I do not speak Urdu.	میں اردو نہیں بولتی	maiṅ urdū nahīṅ bōltā/boltī.	<i>boltā</i> is for masculine speaker, <i>boltī</i> is for feminine.
My name is __ .	میرا نام _____ ہے	merā nām __ hai.	

Which way to Karachi?	کراچی کس طرف ہے؟	Karācī kis taraf hai?	<i>lit.</i> "Which direction is Karachi (in)?"
Where is Lucknow?	لکھنؤ کہاں ہے؟	lakhnau kahān hai?	
Urdu is a good language.	اردو اچھی زبان ہے۔	urdū achhī zabān hai.	

## Software

The *Daily Jang* was the first Urdu newspaper to be typeset digitally in *Nasta'liq* by computer. There are efforts underway to develop more sophisticated and user-friendly Urdu support on computers and the Internet. Nowadays, nearly all Urdu newspapers, magazines, journals, and periodicals are composed on computers via various Urdu software programmes, the most widespread of which is InPage Desktop Publishing package. Microsoft has included Urdu language support in all new versions of Windows and both Windows Vista and Microsoft Office 2007 are available in Urdu through Language Interface Pack support. Most Linux Desktop distributions allow the easy installation of Urdu support and translations as well.

## Notes

- [1] Nationalencyklopedin "Världens 100 största språk 2007" The World's 100 Largest Languages in 2007
- [2] e.g.
- [3] In the lower courts in Pakistan, despite the proceedings taking place in Urdu, the documents are in English whilst in the higher courts, ie the High Courts and the Supreme Court, both documents and proceedings are in English.
- [4] Zia, Khaver (1999), "A Survey of Standardisation in Urdu". 4th Symposium on Multilingual Information Processing, (MLIT-4) (<http://www.cicc.or.jp/english/hyoujyunka/mlit4/7-10Pakistan/Pakistan2.html>), Yangon, Myanmar. CICC, Japan
- [5] <http://jkgad.nic.in/statutory/Rules-Costitution-of-J&K.pdf>
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- [16] Rekhta was the name for the Urdu language in Ghalib's days.

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- History of Urdu (<http://www.theurdulanguage.com>) (Urdu site)
- Urdu Editor for online Urdu writing (<http://www.forumpakistan.com/urueditor.html>)
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