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Chapter 7 – Indian Languages & Literature-II: Northern Indian Languages & Literature, Persian and Urdu and Hindi Literature (For CBSE, ICSE, IAS, NET, NRA 2022)

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We have seen how languages evolved in India right up to the early medieval period. The old apabramsha had taken new forms in some areas or wars in the process of evolving into other forms.

Northern Indian Languages & Literature

- Languages were evolving at two levels:
 - The spoken language
 - The written language
- The old Brahmi script of the Ashoka days had undergone a great change. The alphabets during Ashoka's period were uneven in size but by the time of Harsha, the letters had become of the same size and were regular, presenting the picture of a cultivated hand.
- The studies have indicated that all the scripts of present northern Indian languages, except that of Urdu, have had their origin in old Brahmi.
- If we compare the scripts of Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi, we can easily understand this change.
- As for the spoken word, there are over 200 languages or dialects spoken in India at present.
- Some are widely used while others are limited to a particular area. Out of all these, only twenty-two have found their way into our Constitution.

Persian and Urdu

- Urdu emerged as an independent language towards the end of the 4th century AD.

- Arabic and Persian were introduced in India with the coming of the Turks and the Mongols.
- Persian remained the court language for many centuries. Urdu as a language was born out of the interaction between Hindi and Persian.
- Originally it was a dialect but slowly it acquired all the features of a formal language when the authors started using Persian script.
- Urdu became more popular in the early eighteenth century. People even wrote accounts of later Mughals in Urdu.
- Urdu was patronised by the Nawabs of Lucknow, who held symposiums in this language. Slowly it became quite popular. Pakistan has adopted Urdu as the state language.

Hindi Literature

- There was a tremendous growth of regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Marathi and Gujarati during this time.
- The emergence of all these languages resulted in the decline of Sanskrit as they came to be used as the medium through which the administrative machinery functioned.
- We have already noted the various dialects that developed in northern and western India.
- Prithviraj Raso is supposed to be the first book in Hindi language. It is an account of exploits of Prithvi Raj Chauhan.
- Hindi literature looked to Sanskrit classics for guidance and Bharata's Natyashastra was kept in mind by Hindi writers.
- As its influence reached the north, it started affecting the prose and poetry that were being composed in Hindi.
- Hindi evolved during the Apabhramsha stage between the 7th and 8th centuries A. D. and the 14th C.
- It was patronised by the Rajput rulers as it glorified chivalry and poetry. The most famous figures from this period were Kabir and Tulsidas.
- All the above mentioned Hindi poets, except Kabir, expressed their sentiments essentially to satisfy their own devotional instincts.

Hindi Language Makes Progress in Modern Period

Hindi Language

- The development of modern language states at the end of the 18th century.

- The main writers of this period were Sadasukh Lal and Enshallah Khan. Bhartendu Harishchandra also strengthened Hindi language.
- Similarly, Raja Lakshman Singh translated Shakuntala into Hindi. Hindi continued to develop in adverse circumstances as the office work was done in Urdu.

Hindi Literature

- Bhartendu Harish Chandra, Mahavira Prasad Dwivedi, Ramchandra Shukla and Shyam Sunder Das were the main among the prose writers of Hindi literature.
- Jai Shanker Prasad, Maithalisharan Gupta, Sumitranandan Pant, SuryakantTripathi 'Nirala', MahadeviVerma, Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' and Haribans Rai 'Bacchan' made great contribution to the development of Hindi poetry.

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