

PUNJABI LITERATURE

Punjabi literature refers to literary works written in the Punjabi language particularly by peoples from the historical Punjab of India and Pakistan including the Punjabi diaspora. The Punjabi language is written in several different scripts, of which the Shahmukhi, the Gurmukhī scripts are the most commonly used.

Medieval era

The earliest Punjabi literature is found in the fragments of writings of the 11th Nath yogis Gorakshanath and Charpatnah which is primarily spiritual and mystical in tone. Notwithstanding this early yogic literature, the Punjabi literary tradition is popularly seen to commence with Fariduddin Ganjshakar (1173–1266) whose Sufi poetry was compiled after his death in the *Adi Granth*.

The Mughal and Sikh periods

The *Janamsakhis*, stories on the life and legend of Guru Nanak (1469–1539), are early examples of Punjabi prose literature. He composed Punjabi verse incorporating vocabulary from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and other South Asian languages as characteristic of the *Gurbani* tradition. Punjabi Sufi poetry developed under Shah Hussain (1538–1599), Sultan Bahu (1628–1691), Shah Sharaf (1640–1724), Ali Haider (1690–1785), Saleh Muhammad Safoori and Bulleh Shah (1680–1757). In contrast to Persian poets, who had preferred the *ghazal* for poetic expression, Punjabi Sufi poets tended to compose in the *Kafi*.

Punjabi Sufi poetry also influenced other Punjabi literary traditions particularly the Punjabi *Qissa*, a genre of romantic tragedy which also derived inspiration from Indic, Persian and Quranic sources. The *Qissa of Heer Ranjha* by Waris Shah (1706–1798) is among the most popular of Punjabi *Qissey*. Other popular stories include *Sohni Mahiwal* by Fazal Shah, *Mirza Sahiba* by Hafiz Barkhudar (1658–1707), *Sassi Punnun* by Hashim Shah (1735–1843), and *Qissa Puran Bhagat* by Qadaryar (1802–1892).

Heroic ballads known as *Vaar* enjoy a rich oral tradition in Punjabi. Prominent examples of heroic or epic poetry include Guru Gobind Singh's *Chandi di Var* (1666–1708). The semi-historical [Nadir Shah] *Di Vaar* by Najabat describes the invasion of India. The *Jangnama*, or 'War Chronicle,' was introduced into Punjabi literature during the Mughal period; the Punjabi *Jangnama* of Shah Mohammad (1780–1862) recounts the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1845–46.

British Raj era

The Victorian novel, Elizabethan drama, free verse and Modernism entered Punjabi literature through the introduction of British education during the Raj. The first Punjabi printing press (using Gurmukhi font) was established through a Christian mission at Ludhiana in 1835, and the first Punjabi dictionary was published by Reverend J. Newton in 1854.

The Punjabi novel developed through Nanak Singh (1897–1971) and Vir Singh. Starting off as a pamphleteer and as part of the Singh Sabha Movement, Vir Singh wrote historical romance through such novels as Sundari, Satwant Kaur and Baba Naudh Singh, whereas Nanak Singh helped link the novel to the storytelling traditions of Qissa and oral tradition as well as to questions of social reform.

The novels, short stories and poetry of Amrita Pritam (1919–2005) highlighted, among other themes, the experience of women, and the Partition of India. Punjabi poetry during the British Raj moreover began to explore more the experiences of the common man and the poor through the work of Puran Singh (1881–1931). Other poets meanwhile, such as Dhani Ram Chatrik (1876–1957), Diwan Singh (1897–1944) and Ustad Daman (1911–1984), explored and expressed nationalism in their poetry during and after the Indian freedom movement. Chatrik's poetry, steeped in Indian traditions of romance and classical poetry, often celebrated varied moods of nature in his verse as well as feelings of patriotism. Modernism was also introduced into Punjabi poetry by Prof. Mohan Singh (1905–78) and Shareef Kunjahi. The Punjabi diaspora also began to emerge during the Raj and also produced poetry whose theme was revolt against British rule in Ghadar di Gunj (Echoes of Mutiny).

Post-Independence

Western Punjab (Pakistan)

Najm Hossein Syed, Fakhar Zaman and Afzal Ahsan Randhawa are some of the more prominent names in West Punjabi literature produced in Pakistan since 1947. Literary criticism in Punjabi has also emerged through the efforts of West Punjabi scholars and poets, Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, Ahmad Salim, and Najm Hosain Syed (1936).

The work of Zaman and Randhawa often treats the rediscovery of Punjabi identity and language in Pakistan since 1947. Ali's short story collection Kahani Praga received the Waris Shah Memorial Award in 2005 from the Pakistan Academy of Letters. Mansha Yaad also received the Waris Shah Award for his collection Wagda Paani in 1987, and again in 1998 for his novel Tawan TawaN Tara, as well as the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz (Pride of Performance) in 2004. The most critically successful writer in recent times has been Mir Tanha Yousafi who has won the Massod Khaddar Posh Trust Award 4 times, and has had his books transliterated into Gurmukhi for Indian Punjabi readers.

Urdu poets of the Punjab have also written Punjabi poetry including Munir Niazi (1928–2006). The poet who introduced new trends in Punjabi poetry is Pir Hadi Abdul Mannan. Though a Punjabi poet, he also wrote poetry in Urdu.

Eastern Punjab (India)

Amrita Pritam (1919–2005), Jaswant Singh Rahi (1930–1996), Shiv Kumar Batalvi (1936–1973), Surjit Patar (1944–) and Pash (1950–1988) are some of the more prominent poets and writers of East Punjab (India). Pritam's *Sunehe* (Messages) received the Sahitya Akademi in 1982. In it, Pritam explores the impact of social morality on women. Kumar's epic *Luna* (a dramatic retelling of the legend of Puran Bhagat) won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1965. Socialist themes of revolution meanwhile influenced writers like Pash whose work demonstrates the influence of Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz.

Punjabi fiction in modern times has explored themes in modernist and post-modernist literature. Moving from the propagation of Sikh thought and ideology to the themes of the Progressive Movement, the short story in Punjabi was taken up by Nanak Singh, Charan Singh Shaheed, Joshua Fazal Deen, and Heera Singh Dard. Women writers such as Ajit kaur and Daleep Kaur Tiwana meanwhile have questioned cultural patriarchy and the subordination of women in their work. Hardev Grewal has introduced a new genre to Punjabi fiction called Punjabi Murder Mystery in 2012 with his Punjabi novel, "Eh Khudkushi Nahin Janab! Qatl Hai" (published by Lahore Books). Kulwant Singh Virk (1921-1987) won the Sahitya Akedemi award for his collection of short stories "Nave Lok" in 1967. His stories are gripping and provide deep insight into the rural and urban modern Punjab. He has been hailed as the "emperor of Punjabi short stories".

Diaspora Punjabi literature

Punjabi diaspora literature has developed through writers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the United States, as well as writers in Africa such as Ajaib Kamal, born in 1932 in Kenya, and Mazhar Tirmazi, writer of famous song "Umraan Langhiyan Pabhan Bhaar." Themes explored by diaspora writers include the cross-cultural experience of Punjabi migrants, racial discrimination, exclusion, and assimilation, the experience of women in the diaspora, and spirituality in the modern world. Second generation writers of Punjabi ancestry such as Rupinderpal Singh Dhillon (writes under the name Roop Dhillon) have explored the relationship between British Punjabis and their immigrant parents as well as experiment with surrealism, science-fiction and crime-fiction. Other known writers include Kuljeet kaur ghazal, Sadhu Binning and Ajmer Rode (Canada), Mazhar Tirmazi, Amarjit Chandan, Harjeet Singh Atwal and Surjit Kalsi. The most successful writer has been Shivcharan Jaggi Kussa.

Punjabi Language in Pakistan

When Pakistan was created in 1947, English and Urdu were chosen as the national language of Pakistan, the latter due to its association with South Asian Muslim nationalism and because the leaders of the new nation wanted a unifying national language instead of promoting one ethnic group's language over another. Article 251 of the Constitution of Pakistan declares that that these two languages would be the only official languages at the national level, while provincial governments would be allowed to make provisions for the use of other languages. Eventually,

Punjabi was granted status as a provincial language in Punjab Province, while the Sindhi language was given official status in 1972 after 1972 Language violence in Sindh.

Despite gaining official recognition at the provincial level, Punjabi is not a language of instruction for primary or secondary school students in Punjab Province (unlike Sindhi and Pashto in other provinces). Pupils in secondary schools can choose the language as an elective, while Punjabi instruction or study remains rare in higher education. One notable example is the teaching of Punjabi language and literature by the University of the Punjab in Lahore which began in 1970 with the establishment of its Punjabi Department.

In the cultural sphere, there are many books, plays, and songs being written or produced in the Punjabi-language in Pakistan. Until the 1970s, there were a large number of Punjabi-language films being produced by the Lollywood film industry; however since then Urdu has become a much more dominant language in film production. Additionally, television channels in Punjab Province (centred on the Lahore area) are broadcast in Urdu. The preeminence of Urdu in both broadcasting and the Lollywood film industry is seen by critics as being detrimental to the health of the language.

Language Demands in Punjab Province

The use of Urdu and English as the near exclusive languages of broadcasting, the public sector, and formal education have led some to fear that Punjabi in Pakistan is being relegated to a low-status language and that it is being denied an environment where it can flourish. Several prominent educational leaders, researchers, and social commentators have echoed the opinion that the intentional promotion of Urdu and the continued denial of any official sanction or recognition of the Punjabi language amounts to a process of "Urdu-isation" that is detrimental to the health of the Punjabi language. In August 2015, the Pakistan Academy of Letters, International Writer's Council (IWC) and World Punjabi Congress (WPC) organized the Khawaja Farid Conference and demanded that a Punjabi-language university should be established in Lahore and that Punjabi language should be declared as the medium of instruction at the primary level. In September 2015, a case was filed in Supreme Court of Pakistan against Government of Punjab, Pakistan as it did not take any step to implement the Punjabi language in the province. Additionally, several thousand Punjabis gather in Lahore every year on International Mother Language Day.

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is a worldwide annual observance held on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. First announced by UNESCO on 17 November 1999, it was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution establishing 2008 as the International Year of Languages.