**The Impact of Arabic on Urdu Calligraphy**

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***Abstract:***

*Every language has unique writing rules, which are followed by experienced users and recognition engines. Languages which are written from right to left like Arabic, Persian and Urdu have a lot of variations due to fonts and writing style. Arabic script has significant value because it includes a message which is meaningful to the artist. Arabic calligraphy expresses the pure beauty that is full moral integrity, value and ethics. Arabic calligraphy found its way into popular culture and calligraphers increasingly turned to Urdu Language. Arabic language and culture have great influence on Urdu calligraphy. There are different Arabic calligraphic styles having impact on different level of Urdu calligraphy. The most common styles in Urdu language are Nasakh and Nastalique. The relationships of the Nastalique script particularly to the Urdu languages are akin to the bonds between the text and the image. These relationships started after the advent of Islam in India. The Nastalique, due to its relations with Arabic, found its way into the more popular arenas and calligraphers used Urdu newspapers and printing-presses to mass produce their visual culture. The present study aims to analyze the impact of Arabic language and culture on Urdu calligraphy.*

***Key Words:*** *Arabic language, Calligraphy, Islamic Art, Urdu Culture, Nasakh, Nastalique*

1. ***Introduction:***

Every language offers a rich and unique insight into different ways of thinking and living as well as into the history of the myriad of cultures and peoples across the globe. Arabic is a very rich language. It has different dialects and different calligraphic forms and styles. Arabic calligraphy has developed for over fifteen centuries in various regions around the world. This history and diversity has enriched Arabic scripts with ever more complex and artistic forms. During this long period, the Baghdadi and Ottoman eras contributed the most to its development. Arabic calligraphy is still today one of the most widely acknowledged arts. Calligraphy is a visual art of writing. Calligraphy is more than beautiful writing or to elaborate lettering techniques.Calligraphy is the art of forming beautiful symbols by hand and arranging them well. Calligraphy, the art of fancy lettering of a script is one of the most important and fascinating aspects of Islamic culture. The art of calligraphy has long served the Muslim world for the regulation of mental activity. The art of calligraphy first started with writing of Quran in *kufi* script in Arabic language. With the expansion of Islam, calligraphy also reached other parts of the world, where it was encouraged and adopted with the regional characters and flourished in different ways. The present paper aims to highlight the influence of Arabic language and culture on Indian language particularly Urdu. This paper explores the historical development of *Nastalique*, tracing how Arabic calligraphy has given a birth of a new shape of *Nastalique* in India which later developed its own artistic style and became very popular in Urdu calligraphy.

1. ***The Art of Calligraphy:***

**Calligraphy** is the art of writing letters and words with decorative strokes. The word calligraphy means ‘beautiful writing’. Calligraphy is an important part not only of the Perso-Arabic script, but all other scripts. Calligraphy is a very distinctive and important feature of Arab culture. It can be seen in art forms and historical periods across the Arab world. Arabic calligraphy has naturally become the most reverend form of Islamic art. It provides a link between the languages of the Muslims with the religion of Islam. The holy book of Islam ‘Quran’ has played an important role in the development and evolution of the Arabic Language. Arabic calligraphy involves the beauty and true morality connected with historical and religious literature. There is a compelling spiritual and aesthetic tradition comprehension of the Arabic calligraphy in the world of Islam. Arabic calligraphy developed into a very important and flourishing art and found important part in devotional activities of Islam. It was regarded one of the best means by which the divine word of God can be recorded or displayed. It has all aspects of creative expression in Muslim culture, including art and architecture. It encompasses the visual arts produced from the seventh century onward. It spans some 1400 years of Islamic civilization covers many lands and populations, and includes a range of artistic fields including architecture, calligraphy, painting, glass, ceramics, textiles and many others. Ibn Khaldun points out that calligraphy strengthens the power of civilization and weakens its fallibilities. He says: “the art that Muslims themselves put supreme value on is the art of calligraphy, they were proud of their commitment to this art and

refined it for themselves, and they did not feel the help of foreign artists.[[1]](#endnote-1) The synthesis of Arabic calligraphy has had an intertwined history of Islamic civilization. It has an attractive splendor. It is in the essence of human thought about creativity, eternity, and immortality.[[2]](#endnote-2) Islamic art has focused on the depiction of patterns and Arabic calligraphy, rather than on figures, because it is feared by many Muslims that the depiction of the human form is idolatry. Arabic calligraphy remains one of the most important sources of artistic knowledge. Graphics and literal text help to form meaning in spoken or audible words.

1. ***Brief History of Arabic Calligraphy:***

Arabic calligraphy was originally a tool for communication. The art of calligraphy has long served the Muslim world for the regulation of mental activity. It began to be used in architecture, decoration and coin design. The history of Arabic calligraphy is not identical with the history of the language as for a long time Arabic did not have the fixed written form. Arabic script is derived from the Aramaic *Nabataean* alphabet. Arabic script has developed in a comparatively brief span of time and is comprised of most frequently used alphabet, and today it stands second in use only to the Roman alphabet. Arabic belongs to the group of Semitic alphabetical scripts in which mainly the consonants are represented. Arabic lettering has achieved a high level of sophistication, Moreover inscriptions are found incorporated in the decoration of almost very Islamic work.[[3]](#endnote-3) The Arabs entered a world of progress and creativity, and presented to the world with innovative art. For example, although ancient societies composed art in pictures and statues, the Arabs, through Islam, made Arabic calligraphy an art form.

During the Prophet Muhammad’s lifetime very, few people could read and write, so calligraphy was a prerogative of the professional scribes. The Arabic language played a crucial role in the culture of the Islamic world.[[4]](#endnote-4) The art of calligraphy facilitated the development of the language and led to the formation of the unique Islamic art that is still a part of the Muslim culture. The history of the Arabic language is deeply connected with the art of calligraphy as it pushed the written word to the higher levels of embellishment and elegance. The history of the Arabic language can be roughly subdivided into three main stages that have a distinct set of features and peculiarities.[[5]](#endnote-5) The holy ‘Quran’ has played an important role in the development and evolution of the Arabic Language, and expansion of calligraphy in the Arabic alphabet. It is known by Muslims that the descent of *Al-Alaq* ‘the first verses in the Quran’ is the beginning of the wonderful journey from which Arab calligraphy started, through the call of Islam for science.[[6]](#endnote-6) Hence, the creation of calligraphy began in the era of the Prophet. From that modest beginning, the calligraphers steadily developed their art.

The development of the Arab-Islamic society in the time of the Caliphs was a tangible development and a radical change, with the state rule instead of rule by tribal leaders. Laws replaced customs. As a result, it encouraged the improvement of the calligraphy and its proficiency.[[7]](#endnote-7) This is due to the stage in which they called for the strength of the young state of Muslims, the renaissance of the science of research and codification, and the display of Islamic Art through Arabic calligraphy, which instills confidence that Arabic calligraphy grown with the growth and extension of Islam. No other calligraphy has reached this status in the history of humanity.[[8]](#endnote-8)

In the Umayyad Period, calligraphy made significant progress. It was the first time professional calligraphers came into existence. The famous calligrapher *Qutbah al-Tahrir,* who invented a new calligraphy, introduced a mixture of the *Hijazi* and *Kufi* styles.[[9]](#endnote-9) The calligraphers in the Umayyad era, for the first time, drew beautiful calligraphy which decorated the palaces, mosques and wrote in the records of the young state and its modern dynasties.[[10]](#endnote-10) The Umayyad caliphs played a crucial role in the renaissance of Arabic calligraphy and pushed it forward to keep pace with the comprehensive renaissance of the Islamic state to create solid foundations.[[11]](#endnote-11)

The calligraphers and artists, as well as the writers and scientists, receive rewards for their creativity from the caliphs, princes, and masters, and others turned to Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid state and the city of the great caliphs, *al-Rashid* (766-809 AD) and *al-Ma'mun* (786-833 AD).[[12]](#endnote-12) The calligraphy in the era was so plentiful that it became striking in characterizing the kingdom in the Arabic script. The calligraphers before the end of the century developed more than twenty calligraphic styles. Abu Ali Muhammad bin *Muqlah al-Wazir who* standardized Arabic calligraphy. He created the calligraphy of the *Ruk'ah,* and distinguished the calligraphy to create *Naskh* and presented it in the offices of the caliphate.[[13]](#endnote-13)

In the late Abbasid period, calligraphy reached more than eighty calligraphic styles, and saw the progress of art and decoration alongside the development of calligraphy. After the fall of the Abbasids in 1258, the cultural and power centre of the Islamic world moved from Baghdad to Persia, where the Persian scripts were developed: *Ta'liq,* *Nasta'lique*that is still the official script of Persian and Urdu. In 1517, it was the Ottomans' turn to inherit the Islamic world, and Turkish developments gave us the super structured *Diwani* script and *Ruq'ah* on which today's handwriting across the Arab world is based.

Baghdad calligraphy of the tenth century laid the foundation for all scripts and traditional materials used for this art. Since about the twelfth-century, regional variants of calligraphy began to emerge with the most prominent being North African and *Andalusian* styles. The nineteenth century Ottoman calligraphy brought plenty of innovations to this sphere and paved the way for contemporary calligraphy.[[14]](#endnote-14)

The Ottomans inherited calligraphy from the Tabriz school, which thrived not only in calligraphy. The Turks became an outstanding independent school and were renowned in the *Thuluth* calligraphy. They added beautiful decorations and elegant adornments to this calligraphy.[[15]](#endnote-15) The mosques of the Ottoman Caliphate were filled with magnificent calligraphy and beautiful decorations by the Turkish and non-Turkish calligraphers who were attracted by the Ottoman Caliphate to work in the state. The Ottoman Era was the age of maturity for Arabic calligraphy, and it is often called ‘the golden age’ of the Arabic calligraphy.

Arabic calligraphy has naturally become the most reverend form of Islamic art. Famous Islamic artists have created specimens in Arabic calligraphy of supreme quality. Even today, it flourished across the world in the form of the proverbs, verses, from the *hadith* and passages from the Holy Quran. Arabic calligraphy developed into a very important and flourishing art, and found important part in devotional activities of Islam. It has all aspects of creative expression in Muslim culture, including art and architecture. Arabic Calligraphy is still used for traditional purposes, like the decoration of mosques or religious texts, but it has also become a powerful visual art that is appreciated all over the world.

1. ***Development of Arabic language in India:***

The Arabic Language has never been an alien to India and Indians. The Arabic language was first introduced by the Arab traders with the passage of time, Arab culture and traditions influenced the Indians in various ways. The relations between India and the Arab world date back to very ancient times. The Arab merchants played leading part in establishing as well as strengthening commercial and cultural links between the two nations. With the advent of Islam, in the Indian subcontinent, these ties of friendship became stronger than ever before, particularly, for cultural and political reasons.[[16]](#endnote-16)

In 7thcentury, the Arab-Muslim Umayyad commander *Muhamad b. al-Qasim al-Thaqafi* invaded and conquered the western Indian Province of Sind. Arab Muslims settled there, and with their colonization of Sind came India’s first substantial and sustained contact with both the religion of Islam and the Arabic Language.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Several Muslim empires were established on the soil of India which lasted for more than eight centuries. India became enriched with their treasures of various sciences of knowledge, arts, culture and literatures. It is to be remarked here that India has been one of the most well-known non-Arab states where Arabic language and literature developed and flourished on a large scale. The Indian history suggests that Indian’s first substantial contact with the Arabic language came with the Arab Muslims settled in the western Indian province of Sind.

The Arabic language continued to flourish further under the patronage of the Mughal rulers in India. It may be noted that a large of Arabic scholars emerged on India soil like Allamah Sighani Lahori (d.1252), the author of the great book *al-'Ubabuz-Zakhir wa alLubabul--Fakhir"* on grammar and lexicography. Gulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (1116- 1200A.H.), who has penned many outstanding Arabic books on history and literature like *"Subhatul-Marjan.* Besides, he is regarded to be the greatest Indian Arabic poet and is well known as Hassanul-Hind. Shah Waliullah Dihlawi (1114-1176A.H.), who has produced the great book *"Hujjatullahil-Balighah’* on the science of Hadith. Abdul Hai al-Hasani (1286- 1341A. H.) the writer of the famous book *"Nuzhatul-Khawatir"* on the great Indian scholars in different fields from 622 .A.D. up to the time of the author. Zainuddin bin Abdul Aziz who produced an authentic prose work entitled *“Tuhfatul Mujahidin”*, Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan (1248- 1307 A.H.) he authored a good number of valuable books in Arabic. There are many more Islamic scholars whose contribution in the Arabic language makes a remarkable note to the development of Arabic studies in India.[[18]](#endnote-18)

In the Twentieth century, India has produced a good number of literary figures and writers who got World Wide fame and their literary products are similar to that of a great Arab literature. For instance, Abul Hassan Ali al Nadwi (1914-1999 AD). The author of the world famous book “Islam and World”, Abdul Aziz Maimoni (1888-1978 AD) Indian Muslim scholars made their all efforts to establish Arabic and Islamic cultural learning centers across the country, with a view to reviving the glorious position of Arab Islamic culture. These writers were greatly influenced by modern Arabic literature and its various art forms.

India has been one of the most well- known non-Arab states where Arabic language and literature developed and flourished on a large Scale. During the period of Arab rule in the Indian Territory. Moreover, various Arabic *Madrassa* and cultural institutions of higher learning under the personal guidance and scholarly interest of the Sultans were set up which produced good number of poets, writers, Islamic thinkers, commentators of the holy Qur’an, scholars of the *Hadith.* Arabic language and literature, today has been one of the important subjects of learning.

1. ***The Impact of Arabic on Indian language and culture:***

Indo- Arab relations are very old and multidimensional. The relationship evolved by constant interaction and migration of people, trade and ideas. The Arabs had close commercial and cultural relations with the Indians in pre- Islamic period. The socio- cultural relations between Arabs and Indian subcontinent dates back to the very ancient times, Indian and Arab sailors plied their ships across the seas and established commercial links with each other. As a result, Arab traders built their permanent settlements on the western coast of India which played an important role in exchange of India-Arab cultural relations. From the time immemorial, these two civilizations have been in constant contact with the exchange of goods, ideas, cultures and people of each other.[[19]](#endnote-19)

In ancient times, Arab travelers used to do business with South Indian people. Arabs were very much fond of Indian spices and they used to import these spices to Arabs. The oldest mosque in India is in Kerala and it is said that one of the companions of the Prophet, *Malik bin Deenar* settled in Kerala.[[20]](#endnote-20) Arabs had also links with Sind region. After the advent of Islam, many Arab Muslims migrated to Sind in the early period of Islam. They settled there and started preaching Islam. The converted Muslims of the area started to learn Arabic language as it is the language of the Quran. Late, in the Umayyad Period, in 8th century AD, Arabs invaded Sind under the leadership of Muhammad bin Qasim. They established Arab government in the area and Arabic became the official language in Sind for some time.[[21]](#endnote-21)

Arabic has influenced many languages because of its rich culture and civilization. Even today, there are many English words in use which was originally from Arabic, especially during the middle Ages, when Arab scholars were world leaders in science and technology. Arabic vocabularies had been incorporated into Indian languages over the centuries.[[22]](#endnote-22) Religious Arabic phrases are habitually interjected into Urdu and other Indian-languages. These phrases usually contain like *"Allah"* component, ‘*Insha Allah’* and many more. Many Arabic words which have more general meanings in Arabic took a religious connotation in India. *Ziyārat,* which means visit, connotes here a visit to the shrine of a saint. *Majlis,* which means sitting or assembly, indicates here a religious assembly. Other words of general meaning, in both Arabic and Indian languages, can denote a religious meaning like the word *kitāb,* which means any book, often represents here a religious book, picking up on the designation of the Quran. One of the most common uses of Arabic in India is liturgical. This includes Quranic recitation, litanies *‘tasbih’*, prose prayers *‘dua’,* formulaic expressions connected with the ritual prayer*‘salah’*, ‘*Sufi’,’dhikr’,* and the chanting of religious poetry *Naat*.[[23]](#endnote-23)

The recitation of the Quran in Arabic is considered by Muslims a meritorious act and important part of their religiosity. The Quranic recitation in India takes place in homes, *masjids,* *madrasas,* and other venues. It is oblivious to read and write the Arabic script. Since Quranic recitation in the original Arabic is an integral part of the mandatory ritual prayers.[[24]](#endnote-24) The Arabs have contributed even to the naming of this region *‘Hindustan’*. The name to the religion *‘Hinduism’* is partly an Arab contribution. It was the Arabs, Persians or Greeks that we owe the concept of the Hindu- the people who live across the river Sindhu or Indus.[[25]](#endnote-25) Infect, the arrival of Muslims caused revolutionary changes in culture and civilization. They contributed a lot in all departments of Indian social life in India.

1. ***Urdu Language: Origin and Development:***

Urdu is a language with elements of Arabic, Persian and Turkish blended into the *Khari Boli* dialect of Delhi. Written Urdu has been derived from the Persian alphabet, which itself has been derived from the Arabic alphabet. Like Arabic, Urdu is written from right to left. It was promoted as a lingua franca by the Mughals among its soldiers. ‘Urdu’ means camp or army in Turkish. From the time of inception, Urdu adapted Arabic script for writing. It started developing in north India around Delhi in 12th century.[[26]](#endnote-26)It was based on the language spoken in the region around Delhi. It was heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian, as well as Turkish. Urdu shares its origins with Hindi, sometimes referred to as a ‘sister’ language of Urdu due to the similar grammar base that they share.[[27]](#endnote-27) However, Urdu initially went on to be written in *‘Devanagri’* the same script as Sanskrit, whereas, its vocabulary has more influence of Persian and Arabic. During the 14th and 15th centuries, much poetry and literature began to be written in Urdu. Urdu has mainly been connected with the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, but there are many major works of Urdu literature written by Hindu and Sikh writers.[[28]](#endnote-28) Urdu and Hindi share an Indo-Aryan base, but Urdu is associated with the *Nastalique* script style of Arabic calligraphy. The earliest linguistic influences in the development of Urdu probably began with the Muslim conquest of Sindh in 711. The language started evolving from Persian and Arabic contacts during the invasions of the Indian subcontinent by Persian and Turkish forces from the 11th century onward.

Urdu developed more decisively during the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and the Mughal Empire that is from1526 to 1858. When the Delhi Sultanate expanded south to the Deccan Plateau, the literary language was influenced by the languages spoken in the south, by Punjabi and Haryanvi, and by Sufi and court usage. The earliest verse dates to the 15th century, and the golden period of Urdu poetry was the 18th -19th centuries.[[29]](#endnote-29)

The Urdu language is an amiable mixture of many languages such as Persian, Arabic and Turkish. Urdu developed mostly because of fusion of the Indian and Islamic cultures during the Sultanate and Mughal periods. The incident of arrival of the Muslims in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent created an era. Influence of Islam affected different departments of social life here and the language, one of the basic necessities of life, was the most significant among all other departments. The Muslims have not given India anything greater than Urdu language. Therefore, the issue of the origin or birth of Urdu may be attached to the arrival and residing of the Muslims in the sub-continent.

1. ***The Impact of Arabic on Urdu language:***

Urdu has a rich culture of literature spanning many centuries. This literature has a history that is inextricably tied to the development of the Urdu language. During the very initial stage, the Muslims came to the sub-continent in three capacities, such as traders or business men, as commanders and soldiers or conquerors. The origin of Urdu is related to the arrival and residing of the Muslims in the subcontinent, they did not bring it with them. It came into being just due to the interaction of the conquerors and the conquered, and the heterogeneous language like Urdu arose due to amalgamation of local languages with Arabic.[[30]](#endnote-30)

The Urdu language is an amiable mixture of many languages such as Persian, Arabic, Hindi and Turkish. Urdu developed mostly because of fusion of the Indian and Islamic cultures during the Sultanate and Mughals periods. Urdu langue developed adopting Arabic vocabularies along with words borrowed from Persian and Arabic and later it progressed identically with Urdu.[[31]](#endnote-31) Urdu is traditionally written in an adapted form of Arabic script. The Urdu script is written from right to left which is in the opposite direction to English. There are 36 letters in the Urdu alphabet that are in an extension of the Persian alphabets, which are their self an extension of the Arabic alphabets. However, there are also some symbols that can go above or below letters to modify their sound.[[32]](#endnote-32)

A new common language developed and by the nineteenth century it became the lingua franca of India. Its basic structure and grammar were of Indian origin but the vocabulary borrowed liberally from Turkish, Arabic, Persian and other local dialects. Within a very short period this dialect adopted the vocabulary of this culture and achieved a new shape and style from the perception and thought of this culture. Thus it turned to be a common mode of communication among the Muslims and the ancient inhabitants of the sub-continent due to modern cultural, social and linguistic compulsions”.[[33]](#endnote-33)

Urdu writing style is derived from Arabic script. Arabic script has many writing styles. Urdu is written in Arabic script called *Nastalique,* a flow and ornate and hanging script. Urdu is getting depicted in *naskh,* an angular and rather stodgy script that comes from Arabic. Though, the *Nastalique* writing style is far more complex than other writing styles of Arabic script based languages. The *Nastalique* writing style was developed by *Mir Ali Tabrazi* in 14th century by combining *Naskh* and *Taleeq.*[[34]](#endnote-34) *Nastalique* used as a great visual metaphor and stands as an unrivaled testament to the panorama of the great Indian composite cultures. It becomes very clear by reviewing the opinion of the researchers of linguistic science that ancient Urdu that was *‘Hindvi’* originated with the rise of modern Hind Aryan languages in 1000 AD when Muslims conquerors settled in the areas of North Western and the Islamic influence began to spread here rapidly. After this there remains no issue of the origin of Urdu but stages of its evolution and development that Urdu has passed and taken the present shape.

1. ***Development of Arabic Calligraphy in India:***

Arabic calligraphy is an art that contains the Arabic script. It has significant value because it includes a message which is meaningful to the artist. After the advent of Islam, the art of calligraphy has gone a long way from west Asian & Central Asian countries to Indian sub-continent to achieve the status of such an Islamic art. It must be noted that the cultural history of medieval India will be considered as incomplete.[[35]](#endnote-35) Indo-Islamic architecture, royal stationary, royal orders, coins, seals, wall hangings books, manuscripts all were evidently influenced by this art calligraphy. When Muslim rule was established in India in 12th century A.D., the building activities, along with socio-cultural institutions started taking shape on this soil and thus started a process of innovation and blending experiments in respect of art of calligraphy. Hence, India of the period of Muslim rule could claim possession of some of the marvels of calligraphy in the world.

The Arabic calligraphy also enriched architecture of the Islamic world. With the spread of Islam in different regions of world the art of calligraphy transmitted to new territories and consequently various styles of calligraphy were developed. The early Muslim rulers in India, the Sultans developed this art and later Mughals enriched and flourished it to its peak. The Arabic calligraphic art on Indian monuments are in the form of Quranic verses, *Hadith* or inscriptions mentioning information regarding monument and its builder.[[36]](#endnote-36) By that time when Islamic rule was established in North India, Islam had already a five hundred years old culture and heritage rooted in West and Central Asia. Many Islamic arts including calligraphy had already been established in its advanced form. Indians further enhanced this art and its best examples could be seen during Mughal period. In India before the arrival of Muslims, Arabic calligraphy was unknown.

The earliest examples of Arabic calligraphy on monuments could be observed in the first mosque of North India known as *Quwwatul Islam* mosque and on *Qutub Minar*.[[37]](#endnote-37) First Mughal ruler, Babur contributed a new style of calligraphy which was named as *Khat-e-Baburi*, but this style could not get popularity. Babur ruled India for a brief period of time where he built many mosques and gardens. The art of calligraphy reached new heights in India during Mughals because of Persian influence. Calligraphy was executed beautifully on miniatures as well as varied manuscripts were written down during Mughal period in attractive designs. Initially, *Kufi,* *Naskh,* and *Thuluth* styles were adopted by the Muslim calligraphers during this era. The intense development of calligraphy led to the creation of new versions of *Naskh* and *Thuluth.* These mughal scripts are thicker and bolder the letters are widely spaced, and the curves are more rounded.[[38]](#endnote-38)

* ***Kufi Script:*** The *Kufi* script is one of the oldest Arabic scripts that persisted in common use until the 13th century. Its name refers to the city of *Kufa* in Iraq, where it first appeared, yet most instances of this script were found nearly a thousand kilometers to the south in Medina. While *Kufi* has been used for a long time and is one of the more common scripts across the Islamic civilization. The *Kufi* script evolved as the next stage of Arabic calligraphy’s development. Unlike those two old scripts, we can identify known letter shapes in the early development of the *Kufi* script. It played an essential role in documenting the Muslim holy book the Quran.After the establishment of first Muslim Sultanate in India at the end of 12th century, the tradition of adorning monuments with large scale calligraphy was set. We get good specimen of *Kufi* on monuments of Sultanate period, which were generally comprised of *Bismillah*, Quranic "verses, names of Allah etc.[[39]](#endnote-39)
* ***Naskh Script:*** *Naskh*, which means “copy,” was later refined by Islamic calligrapher Seyh Hamdullah (1436-1520) during the Ottoman dynasty. The *Naskh* was traditionally used for long texts and inscriptions. Its use continues today in the design of printed Arabic books, due to its modern look and cursive letters. It was preferred to *Kufi* script for copying the Quran as technique used for writing in this style was more refined. *Naskh* style displayed a very rhythmic line because of comprehensive system of proportion. Later again it was refined by Al Bawwad and others to modified into an elegant script, it became easy to read and write. *Naskh* is considered the supreme script for almost all Muslims and Arabs around the world. During the same period, the 10th century, another main script was developed. It was used to copy books, especially the Holy Quran.[[40]](#endnote-40)
* ***Thuluth Script:*** *Thuluth* script was first formulated in the 7th century during the Umayyad caliphate. But it could not be developed fully till the late 9t h century. The name means one third, because of the proportion of the straight lines to curves or just because of the script was a third, the size of another popular contemporary script. It was rarely used for writing the Quran. It is still the most important of all the ornamental scripts. The *thuluth* script had ornamental beauty formerly associated with the *Kufian* script in the 13t h century. *Thuluth* is known for its elaborate graphics and remarkable plasticity.[[41]](#endnote-41) *Thuluth* was though introduced in India right from the 14th century. *Thulth* was more dignified and much more artistic. It had a great ornamental value for decorative bands on central *mihrabs* of mosques medallions etc. The Mughal calligraphers used this style generously. *Jama Masjid* Golconda, *Taj Iahal* Agra, among others, is the best example of this style. The greatest beauty of this style is its accommodative &overlapping quality and visual value which adds elegance and beauty to the monument.[[42]](#endnote-42)
* ***Riq’a Script:*** This script is also called *Ruqah*. It has evolved from *Naskh*, and *Thuluth*. *Riq’a* was one of the favorite scripts of the Ottoman calligraphers and underwent many improvements at the hand of Shaykh Hamdullah Al Amasi. Later *Riq’a* was revised by other calligraphers and went on to become the most popular and widely used script.
* ***Taliq and Nastalique Script:*** The Taliq style was developed in Iran for writing Persian texts, this was the a hanging style meaning that the letters slanted from top right to bottom left. It is believed to have been developed by the Persians from an early and obscure Arabic script called *Firamuz*. The Persians started using Arabic script in place of their own script after their conversion to Islam and Arab conquest. The *Taliq* and *Nastalique* styles were contributed to Arabic calligraphy by the Persians.[[43]](#endnote-43)

The script is currently in great favor with Arabs, and popular in different calligraphic styles among the Persian, Indian and Turkish Muslims. The Persian calligraphist Mir Ali sultan-al Tabrizi developed from *Taliq* a lighter and more elegant variety which came to be known as *Nastaliueq.* The word *Nastalique* is a compound word derived from *Naskh* and *Taliq.* *Taliq* and *Nastalique* script were used extensively for copying Persian anthologies, epics, miniatures, and other literary works but not for the Holy Quran.[[44]](#endnote-44) In the Mughal period, the new script of *Nastalique* was already equally popular amongst the elite and with the public in Iran and India, Indian calligraphers exclusively practiced the Iranian form of *Nastalique* under their Persian masters, but it was Abdur Rashid Daylami a royal calligrapher of the Emperor Shahjahan who made early efforts to transform the Iranian form of *Nastalique* to accord with the elements of popular visual taste for calligraphy in India. Arabic calligraphy acquired a sublime reputation for being the Devine, moral and artistic representation of Islamic faith and arts. The contributions of calligraphers and their legacies still remain today. The rules governing the use of scripts, the writing techniques, and the entire calligraphic culture the scripts generated are a valued part of the heritage in India.

1. ***Urdu Calligraphy: Origin and Development:***

Medieval India was the period when calligraphy was elevated as an art form. Calligraphy in Urdu script is considered an art form. The Muslims had a marvelous contribution in their culture and civilization including architecture, painting and calligraphy. Muslim calligraphers in India were directly influenced by Persian calligraphers. Indian Muslims adopted *Nastalique* as a national script and applied it considerably to Urdu. The main characteristics of this script which we may term Indian *Naskh,* are its heavier bold and more widely spaced letters.[[45]](#endnote-45) Its curves are also more perfectly rounded which give it a solidity that is lacking in ordinary *Naskhi.* These developments were fully consolidated under the Mughal period (1526-1857). Calligraphy was especially favored by the Mughal Emperors such as Babur, Akbar, Jahangir and Jahangir keenly admired the art of calligraphy. They promptly rewarded with a high rank anyone who presented him with a specimen by the hand of this great Persian Calligrapher.[[46]](#endnote-46)

Mughals were the great lovers of art, especially of Indian works of art and architecture. The Mughals in India recognized the *Nastalique* as an independent and authentic form of the art of calligraphy. Mughal emperors patronized the *Nastalique* so generously that this particular idiom of calligraphy became associated with the art of illustration in text-and-image relationships. In Mughal period, the calligraphy of *Nastalique* was deemed as an art form in Urdu calligraphy.[[47]](#endnote-47) Interestingly during this period, the *Nastalique* was adopted by the general public for writing purposes. The *Nastalique* script was not forcefully imposed by the Sultans of Delhi or the Mughal emperors, considering its immense popularity, the Sufis also used the same script to compose their poetry.[[48]](#endnote-48) *Nastalique* was one of the main calligraphic hands used in writing the Persian script which traditionally the predominant style in Persian calligraphy. The *Nastalique* was widely adopted in Urdu calligraphy. This writing style was developed in the 14th century in Iran by combining the rules of two writing styles *Naskh* and *Ta’līq*.[[49]](#endnote-49) Due to its beauty and efficient adjustment of text on paper, this writing style is extensively used to write the content of Arabic script languages including Urdu in India.

Urdu is generally that is written in the *Nastaliqu*e style of the Perso-Arabic script. Calligraphy in the Perso-Arabic script was practiced by many people. It is still a very highly respected art. The art of practicing calligraphy was passed from generation to generation. It was mostly used to write poems or religious text. Calligraphy was done not only on paper but also stone and metal. Calligraphy can be seen on the walls of many mosques and religious buildings in India.

There are different styles of *Nastalique* calligraphy as well. People from different regions have different styles of writing, proportions of the letters and way of writing them differs in many ways. The example can be cited of the Delhi style and the *Lahori* style of writing *Nastalique.* The *lahori* way of writing is more spread out, the height of the letter is more than that of the *Delhi* style.[[50]](#endnote-50) In colonial period, Muhammad Amir Rizvi (b. 1857), Alias Mir Punja Kash practiced *Nastalique* in the tradition set by Aqa Rashid so skillfully that he was able to develop the style further. He improved upon the form of circles and sharpened the edges of syllabaries which lead to create the new idioms of *Nastalique* *Dehlvi* and *Nastaliq Lahori*.[[51]](#endnote-51)

The nature of the visual art of calligraphy emerged as a new idiom of *Nastaliq* and the language of Urdu respectively matched each other. One more reason could be the strong relationship of the *Nastaliuque* and the Persian language.[[52]](#endnote-52) Considering the influence of the Persian language and Persian speakers who came to India at this time, as well as their pivotal role in the early developments of the Urdu language, the emergence of the *Nastalique* as a script of Urdu is not surprising at all. The *Nastalique*, due to its relations with the Urdu found its way into the more popular arenas and calligraphers used Urdu newspapers and printing-presses to mass produce their visual culture. In Urdu language, the *Nastalique* can be used as a great visual metaphor and stands as an unrivaled testament to the panorama of the great Indian composite cultures. The *Nastalique* is the most influential script that was developed in Persia during the post-Sassanid era. Within the history of Islamic calligraphy, the invention of the script of *Nastalique* stands not only as a revolutionary development, but also as a great riddle in the history of calligraphy.[[53]](#endnote-53)

The art of calligraphy in the Muslim world reflects the art of *Nastalique* as a form of Islamic art, irrespective of its indigenous, cultural, political and aesthetic values. Urdu calligraphers used different methods to make Arabic script more easy and beautiful in Urdu writing style. This process of making the script more beautiful and easy gave birth to different styles. Some of the styles become very popular and famous.

* ***Deewani Script:*** The script was largely developed by accomplished calligrapher Ibrahim Munif in the late 15th century from the Turkish Persian *Taliq.* *Deewani* reached its zenith in the 17th century under the reign of the early Ottoman Turks.[[54]](#endnote-54)
* ***Bihari Script:*** This script attributed to Sultanate India 13th to 16th centuries, one group of Korans stands out. There emerged some calligrapher who wrote the Holy Quran in *Bihari* script. They were defined by the use of *Bihar*i calligraphy, a writing style specific to the Indian subcontinent. By this way, India boasted of adding a new style to the world of Islamic art of calligraphy in *Bihari* Style.
* ***Thghra Script:*** Taghara means bird in Arabic and the word Tughra is derived from this very word. Tughra is a form of calligraphy in which the names of Allah, Quranic verses, king's name, emblem of government etc. are written in bird or animal form or beautiful geometric arrangement. Tughra is not a separate style from Kufi, Naskh, Thulthand Nastalique. It is generally found in medallions, arms, flags, guns, coins, seals and royal orders.
* ***Naskh Script:*** Another popular style which was flourishing side by side was *Naskh* which totally ousted *Kufi* and had a sway over the inscriptions till 16th century. *Naskh* was the most popular style for executing inscriptions for the quality of its consistency and facility of easy writing and reading.
* ***Nasta'liq Script:*** By the start of the 16th century the world of art saw a very delicate cursive style called *Nastalique.* It was Khwaja Mir Ali Tabrizi (d.1416) who for the first time designed a new style of calligraphy by masterfully blending Naskh and Taliq together, The *Nastalique* was invented in Iran and refined in India during the Sultanate period, a period characterized by renewed artistic engagement between cultures.

With the spread of Islam in different countries, the art of Arabic calligraphy was also spread widely and developed far and wide with the progress and development of Islam. Not only copying of the Quran was done through of calligraphy but various *ahadeeth* of the prophet were also written in different forms of calligraphy. Before the development of Arabic and Persian calligraphy in India, the art of Sanskrit calligraphy continued to flourish in the domain of religious texts and Hindu literature during Sultanate and Mughal’s periods in India. Mughals in India recognized the *Nastaliq* as an independent and authentic form of the art of calligraphy. *Nastalique* was introduced and popularized by Great Mughals in India. Mughals preferred *Nasta'lique* for writing anything except Quranic verses. The *‘farmans’*, royal orders, epigraphs, coins, seals, potteries, arms and manuscripts were inscribed in *Nastalique.*

1. ***The Impact of Arabic Calligraphy on Urdu Calligraphy:***

The Muslim presence in India stretches back at least a thousand years, with the medieval period serving as a high point of exchange characterized mainly by Muslim contributions toward the development of Indian cultures and civilization, especially in the realms of painting, architecture, music, language, literature and calligraphy.

In medieval India, the Mughal patronage nurtured the arts of calligraphy and miniature paintings in the process strengthening the relationship between the text and the image. Medieval India was the period when calligraphy was elevated as an art form on a par with miniature painting, without any artistic binary distinctions. Mughal rulers, scholars and nobles took a keen interest in the art of calligraphy. Apart from calligraphy on paper, they encouraged it on important monuments. The founder of the Mughal dynasty, Babur was a practitioner of calligraphic arts. He claimed to have devised a kind of script called *Khat-e Baburi.[[55]](#endnote-55)*

The subsequent Mughal emperor, Hamayun had a well-documented affinity for painting and calligraphy. He made a habit of inviting a number of ambitious artists and calligraphers to visit his place in India. The most renowned of his guests were *Khwaja Abdul Samad Shirazi and Mir Sayyid Ali Tabrizi*[[56]](#endnote-56)*.* Hamayun’s successor and the great Mughal Emperor Akbar could not himself master the art of calligraphy, yet he too was famous for his generous patronage of both miniature painters and calligraphers. During his reign, calligraphers came from Persia to join the service of Akbar. Indians with artistic talent also flocked to his court. Abul Fazal says: “His Majesty shows much regard for the art and takes a great interest in the different styles of writing; hence the large number of skillful calligraphists. *Nastalique* has especially received a new impetus.[[57]](#endnote-57)

Emperor Jahangir, apart from his deep love for miniature painting, also had very good handwriting skills, and he offered all of his sons training in the art of calligraphy as well. Prince Khusraw, Sultan Perwaiz and Prince Khurram including Emperor Shahjahan were all notably proficient in the art of calligraphy. The princesses were never behind their male counterparts. Gulbadan Begum, the youngest daughter of Emperor Babur, Jahan Ara Begum, the eldest daughter of Shahjahan, Zebun Nisa, the daughter of Aurangzeb, also took interest and learned the art of calligraphy in depth.[[58]](#endnote-58)

The different styles of Arabic calligraphy were mostly displayed on the wall surfaces, in writing of manuscripts, on miniature paintings to describe the theme and also in writing poetry by different poets. These were very popular under Muslim emperors. They patronized and encouraged the use of Arabic calligraphy mostly for decorative purposes. Letters were changed in length and thickness according to the taste of the artist and the thickness of the pen. Letters were unique for their accuracy and extension and they bore no formations. Arabic and Persian script was used in writing the titles of books and letters and is widely used in India.[[59]](#endnote-59) During Mughal period having some Arabic influence and in some of them beautiful depiction of miniatures in accordance with the theme of the calligraphy is visible.The *Nastalique* the Perso-Arabic script became the most popular idiom of the art of calligraphy in the Indian subcontinent. Mughal emperors cherished and patronized the *Nastalique* so generously that this particular idiom of calligraphy became associated with the art of illustration in text-and-image relationships. It was at this time that the calligraphy of *Nastalique* was deemed as an art form parallel to the miniature paintings.[[60]](#endnote-60) The *Nastalique* as an art form parallel to miniature painting in the text-and-image relationships in the medieval period in India, There is an impressive body of works that focuses on the Islamic calligraphy in the Indian subcontinent.

Initially, Indian calligraphers exclusively practiced the Iranian form of Nastalique under their Persian masters. But it was Abdur Rashid Daylami (d.1670), a royal calligrapher of the Emperor Shahjahan (1627-1658), who made early efforts to transform the Iranian form of *Nastalique* to accord with the elements of popular visual taste for calligraphy in India.[[61]](#endnote-61) Urdu recognition approaches for *Nastalique* use features along with the sequence of characters’ labels for classification and recognition. In Arabic-like cursive script, the characters are joined together to form a ligature. The conventional methods process the connected stroke of ligatures as a sequence of characters. It was discussed earlier that Urdu has a history inextricably tied to the development of Urdu in the Perso -Arabic script. Basically, the *Nastalique* is a refined version of the *Ta’liq* script, although with elements of Naskh, It developed during the 15th century and continued until the 16th century in Persia and Turkey. It was imported to India and adapted in Urdu calligraphy with some modification. Both the *Ta’liq* and *Nasta’liq* scripts have left their mark on Urdu calligraphy.

The uniqueness and flexibility of Arabic letters encouraged calligraphers to introduce various scripts in Urdu with different mediums. *Kufi*, *Naskh*, *Nastalique* and *Tugra* are some scripts which were used to decorate Urdu manuscripts, architecture and different type of utilitarian artifacts. The *Nastalique,* due to its relations with the Urdu found its way into the more popular arenas and calligraphers used Urdu newspapers and printing-presses to mass produce their visual culture.

**Calligraphy on Qutub Minar:**Qutub Minar was a victory tower whose foundation was laid by Qutubuddin Aibak. Aibak completed the first level of tower and Iltutmish built an additional two storeys and began the fourth. The remainder of fourth storey and fifth storey were built by Firoz Shah Tughlaq. There are calligraphic bands encircling the plain, fluted exterior of Minar in *Naskh* script. Each stroke made by calligraphers depicts different meaning. It majorly depends on the person as to how he interprets the meaning from it. An amalgamation of Persian, Arabic and Indian styles that later came to be known as *Indo-Saracenic*, alternatively Indo-Islamic. The calligraphic bands are bordered with floral designs and patterns. Kufic, Naskh and *Thulut* styles can be seen in this Minar.

**Calligraphy on Buland Darwaza:** The blend of Hindu and Muslim styles of architecture is evident by the use of Quranic inscriptions on the front, pillars, and cenotaph. The arch of entrance from both the sides shows a very fine blend of Persian and Arabic calligraphy. The calligraphy work done on the inner facade of Buland Darwaza has no parallel in India or any other country.The *Thuluth* script was used in the inscriptions made in Arabic in the small rectangles, some inscriptions were made of Persian style in some places.[[62]](#endnote-62)

**Calligraphy on Taj Mahal:** During the rule of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, calligraphy reached new heights of excellence especially when the Taj Mahal was built, one name remain closely associated with the Taj Mahal, in particular with the superb calligraphic inscriptions displayed in the geometric friezes on the white marble that is the name of the ingenious calligrapher Amanat Kha. Shah Jahan conferred the title of Amanat Khan upon this Iranian as a reward for the calligrapher’s dazzling virtuosity. Amanat Khan has been responsible for the calligraphic work of the Akbar mausoleum at Sikandra and for that of the Madrasah Shahi Mosque at Agra.

The main gateway of the Taj Mahal is made up of red sandstone, its archways and its pishtaq arch incorporate Arabic calligraphy One of the inscription known as Daybreak ‘al Fajr’ completely in illegible *Thuluth* script. It utilizes inlaid decorations with floral motifs. The vaulted ceilings and walls have elaborate geometric designs. Across the four arches of the main building Surah *‘Yasin‟* is written in beautiful Arabic calligraphy in *Thuluth* script.

1. ***Conclusion:***

Arabic language has had many contacts with the languages of the conquered territories including Urdu. Urdu belongs to the Arabic script which is cursive in nature. There is also a close relationship between Arabic script with Urdu language and its common usage throughout history. The relationships of the *Nastalique* script to the Urdu languages are akin to the bonds between the text and the image. It carries an Arab connotation because it is the preferred script for the Arabic language. *Nastalique* text reveals that different contextual shapes of Arabic character. Arabic calligraphy has contributed greatly to the development of *Nastalique* as Urdu writing style. The Persians developed the *Nastaliqu*e from the scripts of *Naskh* and *Taliq*. it helped Iranians to reconstruct their Persian or *Ajami* ‘non-Arab’ identity, at the level of writing style. it was visually pleasing to Persian or non-Arab eyes. During the early fifteenth century, Khwajah Mir Ali gave definite shape and name to an existing ordinary style of writing to become an elegant flowing style called the Nastalique. It came to India with the Muslims, and it is evident that the Nastalique was in use long before the establishment of the Mughal rule. It developed its dual relationships with Urdu languages. The *Nastalique* sript soon become popular among both the general public and the elite due to the aesthetic quality of the emergent new idiom. Fortunately Urdu language matched with this visual art, it adapted it and nurtured greatly through the practice under their Persian masters for about two hundred years. Later it developed a new form of *Nastalique*. Finally Indian artists managed to evolve new forms of Indian idiom popularly known as *Nastalique Dehlvi* and *Nastaliq Lahori.*

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