

UNIT 33 LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Structure

- 33.0 Objectives
- 33.1 Introduction
- 33.2 Sanskrit Literature
- 33.3 Arabic Literature
- 33.4 Persian Literature
 - 33.4.1 Early Phase
 - 33.4.2 Contribution of Amir Khusrau
 - 33.4.3 Other Persian Poets
 - 33.4.4 Historical Works in Persian
 - 33.4.5 Sufi Literature in Persian
 - 33.4.6 Sanskrit Translations in Persian
- 33.5 Literature in Regional Languages
- 33.6 Social Background of the Development of Regional Languages
- 33.7 Literature in the Regional Languages of North India
 - 33.7.1 The Development of Hindi Literature
 - 33.7.2 The Origin and Growth of Urdu Language
 - 33.7.3 Punjabi Literature
 - 33.7.4 Bengali Literature
 - 33.7.5 Assamese Literature
 - 33.7.6 Oriya Literature
 - 33.7.7 Marathi Literature
 - 33.7.8 Gujarati Literature
- 33.8 Literature in the Languages of South India
 - 33.8.1 Tamil Literature
 - 33.8.2 Telegu Literature
 - 33.8.3 Kannada Literature
 - 33.8.4 Malayalam Literature
- 33.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 33.10 Key Words
- 33.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

33.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you should be able to know:

- that decadence had crept into the quality of Sanskrit works produced during the period under review,
- about the introduction and growth of Persian language and literature in India,
- about the origin and growth of Urdu language,
- the factors responsible for the growth of regional languages and literature, and
- about the nature of cultural and literary synthesis achieved in this period.

33.1 INTRODUCTION

The Sultanate witnessed the flowering of a rich corpus of literature. This was a period when new languages were introduced with a remarkable growth in the sphere of culture and literature. This cultural and literary synthesis is manifested in the origin and growth of a synthetic language like Urdu and in the interchange between Persian and Sanskrit. The regional languages and literature which were considerably influenced by Sanskrit and Persian mirrored the religious, social and popular attitudes of the period under study. The Hindi works of Muslim writers like Amir Khusrau and Jayasi as well as the Bengali Vaishnavite poems composed by Bengali Muslims also highlight the process of cultural synthesis operative during this period.

33.2 SANSKRIT LITERATURE

It is generally believed that the loss of official patronage caused the decline of Sanskrit literature during the Sultanate period. While it is true that Persian replaced

Sanskrit as the official language, there was no quantitative decline in the production of Sanskrit literary works as such. The period is remarkable for the immense production of literary works in different branches of Sanskrit literature – **kavya** (poetical narrative), religion and philosophy, grammar, drama, stories, medicine, astronomy, commentaries and digests on the Law Books (**Dharmashastras**) and other classical Sanskrit works. Nor was the loss of official patronage to Sanskrit absent for there were still many kings who patronized Sanskrit poets—especially in South India and Rajasthan. But while Sanskrit works continued to be produced in large number, there seems to be a marked decline in the quality of these works. This decline had set in before the establishment of the Sultanate and became more pronounced during the Sultanate period. There was not much originality in most of the Sanskrit works that appeared during this period. Much of the Sanskrit writing was wearisomely repetitive, artificial and forced. Sanskrit works on religious themes were often characterised by metaphysical speculations. Biographical works were mainly in the form of heroic ballads which contained hagiographical details and stories of romance. Sanskrit lost the patronage of the new Persian speaking ruling class but the Sultanate did not interfere with the independent production of Sanskrit literary works. In fact, the introduction of paper during the Sultanate period gave an impetus to the literary activity of reproduction and dissemination of already existing Sanskrit texts such as the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**.

South India, Bengal, Mithila and Western India played the leading role in the production of Sanskrit literary works. The Vijaynagar kings patronised Sanskrit poets. The Jain scholars in Western India also contributed to the growth of Sanskrit literature. The most famous Jain scholars of Sanskrit literature in Western India was Hemachandra Suri who belonged to the 12th century. Mithila in northern Bihar developed into yet another centre of Sanskrit. Later, towards the end of the Sultanate period and during the Mughal period, the Chaitanya movement in Bengal and Orissa contributed to the production of Sanskrit works in several fields — drama, **champu** (a mixed form of verse and prose), grammar, etc.

Many Rajput rulers patronised Sanskrit poets. These poets wrote the family histories of their patrons in the classical form of a Sanskrit eulogy. The writings of these family histories followed a set formula and became an established trend during this period. Some of these Sanskrit works such as **Prithvirajavijaya** and **Hammirmahakavya** are well known. A number of historical poems are on Muslim rulers, e.g., **Rajavinoda** — a biography of Sultan Mahmud Begarha of Gujarat written by his court poet, Udayaraja. Kalhan's **Rajatarangini** (12th century), which presents the history of Kashmir kings, was followed in the Sultanate period by a second **Rajatarangini** by Jonaraja who wrote the history of Kashmir kings from Jayasimha to Sultan Zainul Abedin (1420-1470). A third **Rajatarangini** was written by Srivara who took the history of Kashmir down to A.D. 1486. All these works present eulogistic accounts of their patrons but they contain useful historical material, too. In addition to these historical **kavyas**, a large number of semi-historical texts called **prabandhas** were also written. The **prabandhas** are replete with legendary and hagiographical material but, some of them, such as Merutunga's **Orabandhakasha Chintamani** and Rajashekhar's **Prabandhakosha** contain material of historical significance. On the whole, however, it must be pointed out that despite voluminous production, the Sanskrit literature of the Sultanate period had lost much of its original vitality and creativity, and the bulk of this literature remained unaffected by the intellectual developments of the age.

33.3 ARABIC LITERATURE

Arabic was the dominant language of the Islamic World in the first few centuries after the rise of Islam. It was the language of the Prophet as well as that of the Islamic religion and theology. Although attention was paid to the cultivation of the Arabic language in India after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the Turkish rulers were more influenced by the Persian language which had developed as the dominant language in the Islamic kingdoms of Central Asia from the 10th century onwards. As a consequence, the production of literary works in Arabic was restricted to a small circle of Islamic scholars and philosophers. During the reign of Iltutmish several Arabic scholars sought refuge at Delhi after the sack of Bukhara by

Changez Khan. Sultan Feroz Shah Tughluq (1351-1388) patronised many Arabic scholars and it was under his patronage that the great Arabic dictionary — the *Qamus* — by Majduddin Ferozabadi was produced. After the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate, the rulers of many provincial kingdoms also patronised Arabic learning and many places came into prominence as centres of Arabic learning during this period.

33.4 PERSIAN LITERATURE

Here we will discuss the early phase of the development of Persian language and literature as well as the contribution of Amir Khusrau and others poets in the field of Persian literature. The historical and *sufi* works written in Persian as well as the Persian translations of Sanskrit works have also been discussed in this section.

33.4.1 Early Phase

A new language — Persian — was introduced in India during the period of Ghaznavi rule in the Punjab. There was remarkable growth in Persian literature in Iran and Central Asia from the tenth century onwards. Some of the great poets of Persian language such as Firdausi and S'adi, composed their works during this phase of growth of Persian literature in Iran and Central Asia. Lahore — which was the centre of Turkish political authority in India before the beginning of the 13th century — attracted many Persian poets from the Islamic countries of Iran and Central Asia. The works of only a few of the early writers of Persian literature in India have survived. One of them was a poet Masud Sad Salman d. c. A.D. 1131) whose compositions reflect a sense of attachment for Lahore. However, by and large, the Persian literature written in India before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate was derivative in character and adopted literary forms and imagery which were prevalent in Iran.

It was after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate that Indian influence began to exert itself on Persian works written in India as is evident from the literary compositions of Amir Khusrau.

33.4.2 Contribution of Amir Khusrau

The reign of the Khaljis was a glorious period from the viewpoint of growth of Persian literature in India. According to Ziauddin Barani, the famous contemporary historian, "there lived at Delhi scholars of such eminence and calibre as were not to be found in Bukhara, Samarkand, Tabriz and Isfahan, and in their intellectual accomplishments they equalled Razi and Ghazali. Under every stone lay hidden a precious gem of literary excellence". The most outstanding of the Persian scholars and poets of the period was Abul Hasan, usually known by this pseudonym of Amir Khusrau. Later, in the Mughal period, the historian Badauni, and contemporary of Akbar praised Amir Khusrau's contribution to Persian literature. He wrote "after the appearance of the cavalcade of the king of poets, the poetry of his predecessors became bedimmed like stars at the rise of the sun". Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) was one of those few Indian writers of Persian poetry whose works have been read and admired beyond their own country. His works represent the beginning of a new trend in Indian-based Persian literature — the trend of the growing familiarity with Indian literature and influence of Indian literature on Persian writings in India.

Amir Khusrau was the Indian born son of a Turkish immigrant. He began his career as a courtier and poet during the reign of Sultan Balban. He became a disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, the famous *sufi* saint of the Chisti order. He was the court-poet during the reigns of Jalaluddin Khalji and Alauddin Khalji. Later, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq also patronised him. He lived through the reigns of six Sultans of Delhi and was connected with their courts.

Amir Khusrau was a prolific and versatile writer and is said to have composed half a million verses and ninety-nine works on different themes. His poetry consisted of a great variety of forms — lyric, ode, epic, and elegy. His poetry was essentially Indian in sentiment though he followed Persian models in technique. Thus he created a new style of Persian which came to be known as *sabaq-i Hindi* or the Indian style. Some of

the works composed by Amir Khusrau have been lost. Five literary masterpieces composed by him are **Mutla-ul Anwar**, **Shirin Khusrau**, **Laila Majnun**, **Ayina-i Sikandari** and **Hasht Bihisht**. He dedicated all of them to Alaaddin Khalji. His five **diwans** (collection of compositions called **ghazals**) include **Tuhfat-us Sighar**, **Wast-ul Hayat**, **Ghurrat-ul Kamal**, **Baqiya Naqiya** and **Nihayat-ul Kamal**. These compositions show the great lyrical talent of his poetry. Amir Khusrau also wrote historical **masnavis** (narrative poems) which have great literary and historical value. He was not a historian in the actual sense of the term but since he enjoyed the patronage of successive Sultans of Delhi and since he selected historical themes for his **masnavis**, the historical content of his writings is of great interest to the students of the history of his times. In **Qiran-us Sa'dain**, Amir Khusrau describes the quarrel and reconciliation between Sultan Kaiqubad and his father Bughra Khan. **Miftah-ul Futuh** deals with the military successes of Sultan Jalauddin Khalji. '**Ashiq**' is the story of romantic love between Khizr Khan, the eldest son of Sultan Alauddin Khalji and Deval Rani, daughter of Rai Karan, the Raja of Gujarat. In **Nuh Siphir (The Nine Skies)** he gives a poetical description of Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji's reign. This work also contains references to contemporary social and religious conditions. The **Tughluq Nama** describes Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's rise to power. Another historical work written by Amir Khusrau is **Khazain-ul Futuh** in which he gives an account of Alauddin Khalji's conquests in the South. However, it must be noted that Amir Khusrau, being a court-poet, looked at events largely through official eyes.

One remarkable aspect of Amir Khusrau's Persian poetry was his love for his country. He says, "I have praised India for two reasons. First, because India is the land of my birth and our country. Love of the country is an important obligation.....Hindustan is like heaven. Its climate is better than that of Khurasan.....it is green and full of flowers all the year round..... The Brahmans here are as learned as Aristotle and there are many scholars in various fields....." Amir Khusrau composed verses in **hindavi** (a form of Hindi or Urdu) also and showed the way for the future development of the Urdu language.

33.4.3 Other Persian Poets

Shaikh Najmuddin Hasan (d. A.D. 1327), popularly known as Hasan Dehlawi was another famous Persian poet during the Sultanate period. He was a friend of Amir Khusrau. He was one of the court poets of Sultan Alauddin Khalji. The quality of his **ghazals** earned him the title of S'adi of Hindustan. Poetical writings in Persian continued during the reigns of the Tughluq and Lodi Sultans. The expansion of the Delhi Sultanate led to the extension of the Persian literature to various parts of India. The emergence of provincial kingdoms following the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate also contributed to this process. With the foundation of the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan, many Persian poets and scholars migrated to Gulbarga where they were patronised by the Bahmani Sultans.

33.4.4 Historical Works in Persian

One of the important contributions of Persian literature during the Sultanate period (and later during the Mughal period) was in the sphere of history writing. Many historians wrote the history of the period in Persian language. For the history of the Sultanate, we have to depend largely on the accounts provided by the court chroniclers of this period. There are many methodological and chronological flaws in the historical writings of these chroniclers and most of them are not free from personal and ideological prejudices. Nevertheless, they are of indispensable value for the study of the history of the Sultanate period. The most important of these historians were Minaj'us Siraj (author of the **Tabaqat-i Nasiri**), Isami (author of the **Futuh-us Salatin**), Shams Siraj Afif (author of the **Tarikh-i Feroz Shahi**). Among the Sultans, Feroz Shah Tughluq wrote the **Futuhat-i Ferozshahi**. But the greatest historian of this period was Ziauddin Barani. His **Tarikh-i Ferozshahi** is the most valuable work of history written during the period. Barani completed this work in 1357 when he was seventy-four years old. The book is named after Feroz Shah Tughluq. Barani began to write this work at an age when his memory had started

fading and consequently he made many chronological errors. Moreover, his personal, ideological, social and sectarian prejudices often colour his interpretation of various historical events. These shortcomings of his work notwithstanding, Barani's contribution to the writing of history was unparalleled during the period. He broke new grounds in history writing and did not confine himself to rulers, courts and campaigns. He described and analysed administrative matters and economic phenomena. He provides an analytical study of conflicts between various social groups during his period. Barani wrote another book, *Fatwa-i Jahandari* which deals with political theory.

33.4.5 Sufi Literature in Persian

During the period under review, large amount of religious and philosophical literature was produced in Persian. The **sufi** literature written in Persian is of great value both from religious and literary points of view. A distinctive genre of Persian literature emerged in the form of **malfuzat** (conversations or discourses of the leading **sufi** masters of the period). The **malfuzat** also contained didactic poetry and anecdotes. Amir Hasan Sijzi wrote the **malfuzat** of the famous **Chishti** **sufi** master, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. The work is known as **Fawa'id-ul Fu'ad**. Several fabricated **malfuzat** were also produced as a result of the increasing popular demand for the details regarding the life, teachings and miracles of the various **sufis**. Mir Khwurd's **Siyaru-ul Auliya** is the earliest known biographical dictionary of **sufis** written in India. The **Khair-ul M'ajah's** is the **malfuzat** of Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud (Chiragh Delhi). These works often reflect social and economic realities of the times, apart from spiritual matters.

33.4.6 Sanskrit Translations in Persian

The pioneering experiments of Amir Khusrau laid the foundation of literary and cultural synthesis in the contemporary Indian society. There was a growing interchange between Persian and Sanskrit. Many Sanskrit works began to be translated into Arabic and Persian. The first scholar to translate Sanskrit stories into Persian was Zia Nakhshabid (d. 1350). His **Tuti Nama** is based on a Sanskrit work. Many Sanskrit works were translated into Persian during the reigns of Feroz Shah Tughluq and Sikandar Lodi, Zain-ul Abedin, the famous ruler of Kashmir during the 15th century, got the **Mahabharata** and Kalahan's **Rajatarangini** translated into Persian from Sanskrit. Thus it appears that by the end of the Sultanate period such literary exercises must have given rise to a set of people who were familiar with both Sanskrit and Persian and who had the knowledge of the religious ideas of Hinduism and Islam. However, little attempt was made by the Sanskrit knowing non-Muslim scholars to translate works of Persian and Arabic literature into Sanskrit. Such an absence of reciprocity on the part of the Brahmanical elite indicated its insular outlook which was earlier highlighted by Alberuni in the 11th century. The lack of receptivity to ideas from other cultures and languages may partly explain the decadence of the Sanskrit literature during this period.

It is thus clear that Persian occupied an important place among the languages of the period. It became the official language and the language of the Sultanate ruling elite. It brought with it many new and refreshing social and religious ideas. Its introduction in India led to the widening of the intellectual horizon of the Indian poets, thinkers and social reformers. Above all, it introduced new literary forms and styles.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the contribution of Amir Khusrau to the growth of Persian literature in India.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Mark ✓ or × against the statements given below:

- a) The great Arabic dictionary, the **Qamus** was produced by Sultan Feroz Tughluq.
- b) Kalhan's **Rajatarangini** gives an account of the history of Kashmir kings.
- c) Barani's **Fatwa-i-Jahandari** is an autobiographical account.
- d) Zia Nakhshabi was the first scholar to translate Sanskrit stories into Persian.

33.5 LITERATURE IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES

One of the important features of the literary history of this period is the development of literature in regional languages in various parts of India. Regional languages which grew rapidly during this period in northern India included Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Marathi and Gujarati.

Each one of these languages originated from a corresponding Indo-Aryan Prakrit in its **apabhramsa** stage. This origin can be traced back to the seventh-eighth centuries. The three South Indian languages — Tamil, Kannada and Telugu — have a longer literary history than that of the North Indian regional languages. The literary history of the Tamil language goes back to the beginning of the Christian era. Kannada and Telugu also have older literary traditions than the North Indian regional languages. Malayalam is the youngest among the South Indian languages and it was not before the fourteenth century that it developed as an independent literary form.

33.6 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Important factors which contributed to the development of the literature in the regional languages during our period are as follows :

- i) During the post-Gupta period, the growth of 'feudal' society, economy and polity led to the emergence of regional entities and cultures roughly from the seventh-eighth centuries. One consequence of the growth of regionalism was the emergence of the earliest forms of the regional languages from the Apabhramsa.
- ii) As has been mentioned above, the decline in the quality of Sanskrit literature had set in much before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. Much of the Sanskrit literature which appeared from the 10th-11th centuries lacked spontaneity and did not appeal to the masses. Its appeal was confined to a very small Brahmanical circle. The replacement of Sanskrit by Persian as the official language during the Sultanate period further intensified the process of the decline of the Sanskrit literature. Once it lost the official patronage it had enjoyed at the centre, many kingdoms during the Sultanate period promoted the use of regional languages since Persian was an unfamiliar language in many parts of the country. Regional languages were used, in addition to Sanskrit, for administrative purpose in many kingdoms even during the pre-Turkish period. In the territories under the rule of the Sultans of Delhi, there are references to Hindi-knowing revenue officials at the local level.
- iii) The Turkish conquest of Northern India during the 13th century led to the end of the Rajput-Brahman alliance and consequently the influence of the Brahmins diminished in the society. Once the upper caste domination diminished, the primacy of Sanskrit received a setback, and regional languages which were spoken at the popular level, came to the fore.
- iv) The growth of non-Brahmanical and non-conformist **nathpanthi** movement and later that of various **bhakti** movements — both conformist and radical monotheistic — played an important role in the rapid growth of regional

literature. We have already discussed the historical background of these movements in the chapter on the **bhakti** movement. Before the rise of the **nathpanthi**, much of the literature of their predecessors — the Buddhist **siddhas** — was written in regional languages including Hindi. The **nathpanthi** movement, which was the first beneficiary of the diminished influence of Brahmanism and which reached its culmination during the 13th and 14th centuries, promoted the cause of regional popular languages. The growth of the **bhakti** movements in North India from 15th century onwards played the most crucial role in the development of the regional languages and contributed to the rapid development of a great corpus of literature in these languages. The **bhakti** saints composed their verses in the languages understood by the people who were attracted towards them. They made use of popular idioms, popular legends and folk tales. The **bhakti** movements contributed to the growth of popular regional languages in yet another way. The **bhakti** saints, in particular those who belonged to the conventional stream of the **bhakti** movement, translated or adapted epics, **Puranas** and the **Bhagavad Gita** from Sanskrit into regional languages in order to make their contents accessible to the people. In this way, the **bhakti** poets popularized **bhakti** episodes drawn from various Sanskrit texts. The contents of these texts were not only translated in the languages in which people could understand them but they were also presented in simple terms before the people.

33.7 LITERATURE IN THE REGIONAL LANGUAGES OF NORTH INDIA

In this section we will deal with the literary works produced in the regional languages of North India.

33.7.1 The Development of Hindi Literature

What is today known as Hindi developed in various forms in the medieval period. The dialects of Hindi included Brajhasha, Awadhi, Rajasthani, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Malwi, etc. In our period the literature of Hindi language developed in these dialects. In addition to these dialects, a mixed form of Hindi, known as **Khari Boli** (originally meaning a rough, crude and raw speech) was also developing.

First Phase

Scholars have placed the origin of the Hindi language between 7th and 10th centuries — it was in this period that Hindi was evolving out of **Apabhramsa**. The period between 7th-8th centuries and 14th century (before the rise of the **bhakti** poetry) is characterised as '**Veergatha Kala**' (age of Heroic Poetry) by scholars. Another name used for describing this period is **Adi Kala** (early period). Much poetry of this period was composed by bards who were patronised by various Rajput rulers. The bards glorified such virtues of their patrons as chivalry and bravery. They also highlighted the element of romance in their poetical narratives. In its essence, this literature symbolises the values and attitudes of the Rajput ruling classes. The bards who composed this literature were not concerned with the aspirations of the common people. Most of the bardic poetical narratives were composed in the Rajasthani dialect of Hindi. The most famous of them is the **Prithviraja Raso** which is attributed to Chand Bardai, the court ministerial of Prithviraja, the last Rajput king of Delhi. Other heroic poetical narratives included **Visaldeva Raso**, **Hammir Raso**, **Khumana Raso**, etc. The authenticity of most of these **raso** narratives in their existing forms is open to grave doubts and it seems that their contents were expanded during the later centuries. Thus for instance, it is only the nucleus of the **Prithviraja Raso** which was written during this period (12th century), and interpolations were made later in the original draft.

Not all the Hindi literature of the period between 7th-8th centuries and 14th century belonged to the genre of bardic poetry. The Buddhist **siddhas** and later the **nathpanthi yogis** composed religious poetry in an archaic form of Hindi. In Western India, the Jain scholars also composed religious poetry in Rajasthani highlighting various aspects of religious and social life of the people. The contribution of Amir Khusrau to Persian literature has already been mentioned. But he also composed

poems in mixed form of Hindi which ultimately developed into **Khari Boli** or **Hindustani**. He called this language **hindavi**. Some of his Hindi verses are found in his **Khaliq Bari** which is often ascribed to him but which in all likelihood was written much later.

The Age of the Bhakti Poetry

The second phase in the growth of Hindi literature began in the 14th-15th centuries. Various streams of the **bhakti** movement exercised profound influence on the Hindi literature of this phase. This phase of Hindi literature has been characterised as **Bhakti Kala** (Age of Devotion) and it continued till the Mughal period. This phase which began with Kabir marked the richest flowering of Hindi literature. The **bhakti** poets of the period were two-fold: the **saguna** poets (who believed in god with human form and attributes) and **nirguna** poets (who believed in non-incarnate Absolute God). Kabir was the leader of the **nirguna bhakti** poets most of whom belonged to lower castes of the society and were poor and illiterate. Kabir's own mother-tongue was Bhojpuri but he composed in a mixed dialect which could be understood by people in various parts of North India. Kabir's language is characterised by what has been termed 'rough rhetoric'. The non-conformist and unorthodox ideas of Kabir and other **nirguna** saints have already been discussed in the chapter on the **bhakti** movement. What is important from literary point of view is Kabir's use of a language which combines bluntness of style with potency and eloquence. He used his strong and rough verses to present a powerful denunciation of various rituals. Another important characteristic of Kabir's short poetical utterances is the use of **ulatbasi** or 'upside-down language' which consisted of a series of paradoxes and enigmas. It has been pointed out that Kabir inherited the **ulatbasi** tradition from the **nathpanthis** and adapted it for an effective rhetorical and teaching device. Kabir and other "low-caste" monotheistic poets (Sen, Pipa, Dhanna, Raidas, etc.) expressed themselves in oral style. The poetry they composed forms a part of oral literature. Their verses were compiled much later — earliest instance of their written compositions are from the **Adi Granth** in 1604. Being illiterate, they had no direct access to the Sanskrit literature. They expressed themselves in the local languages of the people. The literary genre in which they composed most of their short but effective utterances was **doha** (a short rhymed poem). In short, the poetry of Kabir and other **nirguna** saints of the 15th century played the most important role in transforming the Hindi vernaculars into a 'literary' language.

The poets belonging to the conventional **vaishnava bhakti** movement in North India were mostly Brahmins and were familiar with Brahmanical scriptures and Sanskrit texts. The **vaishnava** poets believed in the concept of devotion to a personal God and, accordingly, came to be divided as devotees of Rama and Krishna. The **Rama bhakti** poetry in Hindi flourished mainly during the Mughal period. Its greatest exponent and perhaps the greatest poet of Hindi literature was Tulsidas (A.D. 1532-1623) who wrote the famous **Ram Charit Manas** in the Awadhi dialect of Hindi. Among the Krishna **bhakti** poets, Vidyapati composed verses about the love of Radha and Krishna in Maithili Hindi. The influence of his lyrical poetry was felt in Bengal and some Bengali poets imitated his songs. Vrindavan near Mathura emerged as a centre of **vaishnava bhakti** poetry by the end of the Sultanate period. These poets were devotees of Krishna and composed their verses in **Braj bhasha**. The greatest of these poets was Surdas (c. 1483-1563). Another great name in the **Vaishnava bhakti** poetry was that of Mira Bai (c. 1498-1543). She was a Krishna devotee and composed her songs in Rajasthani but many of these songs were later incorporated in other Hindi dialects and also in Gujarati.

Sufi Contribution to Hindi Literature

Sufi saints and other scholars of this period contributed substantially to the growth of Hindi literature. The **Chishti** sufis made use of Hindi devotional songs in **sama** (ecstatic singing and dancing) sessions. Sufi mystical and allegorical meanings were given to various Hindi terms such as "Gopis", "Raslila", etc. The **sufi** poets combined Islamic mysticism with imaginative use of Indian love tales, popular legends and stories. Mulla Daud's **Chandayan** (written in c. 1379) is the earliest of such poetical works. Kutuban's **Mrigavati** (written in 1501) is another example of mystical romantic poetry composed in Hindi. Malik Muhammad Jayasi's **Padmavat** written in 1540 in Awadhi Hindi is the best example of allegorical narrative. The

literary compositions of the sufi poets also contributed to the incorporation of many Arabic and Persian words into Hindi literature and thus played an important role in cultural and literary synthesis.

33.7.2 The Origin and Growth of Urdu Language

Scholars have advanced various theories to explain the origin of the Urdu language in the period following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. Various opinions have been expressed on the identity of the dialect of Hindi on which the Persian element was grafted resulting in the growth of a new language. The dialects that have been mentioned are Braj bhasha, Haryanvi and other dialects spoken in the neighbourhood of Delhi, and the Punjabi language. All these dialects have influenced the Urdu language in its formative stage and it is difficult to pinpoint the exact dialect which combined with Persian to give rise to Urdu. However, it is an established fact that by the end of the 14th century, Urdu was emerging as an independent language. Like Hindi, the basic structure of Urdu consisted of **Khari Boli** — a mixture of various dialects spoken in Delhi and surrounding regions. Delhi, during this period, was ideally situated for the growth of a synthetic language since, on the one hand it was surrounded by people speaking different dialects and, on the other hand, it had a Persian speaking ruling elite. Thus, Urdu adopted Persian script and Persian literary tradition but by incorporating the basic structure of Hindi dialects evolved an individuality of its own.

The word Urdu is of Turkish origin and means an army or camp. In its initial form, Urdu appears to have been devised as an improvised speech to enable the Persian speaking Turkish ruling class and soldiers to communicate with the local people including Muslim converts. However, it had not yet acquired a literary form. This new common language took a century to acquire a concrete shape and came to be called "**Hindavi**" by Amir Khusrau. **Hindavi** thus forms the basis of both Hindi and Urdu. Amir Khusrau composed verses in **Hindavi** (using Persian script) and thus laid the foundation of Urdu literature. However, it was in the Deccan that Urdu first acquired a standardized literary form and came to be known as **Dakhini** during the 15th century. It developed first under the Bahmani rule and flourished in the Bijapur and Golkunda kingdoms. Gesu Daraz's **Miraj-ul Ashiqin** is the earliest work in **Dakhini** Urdu. Till the 18th century, Urdu was called by various names such as "**Hindavi**", "**Dakhini**", "**Hindustani**" or "**Rekhta**" (which means mingling several things to produce something new). In its developed form, **Dakhini** Urdu travelled back to the north and soon became popular during the Mughal period. It was during the period of the disintegration of the Mughal empire in the 18th century that the Urdu literature reached great heights.

33.7.3 Punjabi Literature

Two distinct trends developed in the history of the Punjabi literature during the period between the beginning of the 13th century and beginning of the sixteenth century. On the one hand, this period was marked by the growth of sufi and bhakti poetry and, on the other, by heroic ballads and folk literature. Sufi poetical compositions attributed to the famous Chisti sufi master Baba Farid (Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj Shakar (c. 1173-1265) are regarded as pioneering contribution to poetry in the Punjabi language. The hymns composed by Guru Nanak in the sixteenth century imparted a proper literary form to the language. The second Sikh Guru Angad gave the Punjabi language a distinct script called **Gurumukhi**. The hymns composed by Guru Nanak were later incorporated in the **Adi Granth** by the fifth Sikh Guru Arjun in 1604. His poetry is characterised by chastity of sentiment and by variety in his style and poetic diction.

33.7.4 Bengali Literature

Folk songs called **Charyapads** — composed between the 10th and 12th century are the earliest specimens of Bengali language. The Turkish conquest of Bengal by the middle of 13th century contributed to the decline of Sanskrit and the importance of folk themes and forms as media of literary expression began to increase. By the fifteenth century, three main trends developed in the Bengali literature :

- (i) **Vaishnav bhakti** poetry; (ii) translations and free adaptations of the epics, and
- (iii) **mangala kavya**. The first great vaishnava bhakti poet in Bengal was Chandidas

(1512-32) patronised Bengali literature. Two Bengali poets Kavindra and Srikaranandi translated the **Mahabharata** into Bengali verse during their reigns. In the early years of the fifteenth century, Kritivasa Ojha produced a Bengali poetical contemporary of Chandidas, Vidyapathi composed his devotional songs in Maithili dialect but many of his songs were later absorbed into Bengali under the influence of the **vaishnava** movement. Chaitanya and his movement gave further impetus to the growth of the **vaishnava** literature in Bengali. Many **vaishnava** poets were inspired by Chaitanya in his own time and after his death. Among the **vaishnava** poets, some were Muslims. The second major trend in the history of Bengali literature which began from the early fifteenth century drew inspiration from the epics and other Sanskrit scriptures. Sultan Husain Shah (1493-1519) and his successor Nusrat Shah (1514-32) patronised Bengali literature. Two Bengali poets Kavindra and Srikaranandi rendered the Mahabharata into Bengali verse during their reigns. In the early years of the fifteenth century, Kritivasa Ojha produced a Bengali poetical adaptation of Valmiki's Sanskrit **Ramayana**. Maladhar Basu adapted **vaishnava** Sanskrit work the **Bhagavata Purana** into Bengali during the later 15th century and it came to be known as **Srikrishnavijaya**. Another, and the most popular Bengali rendering of the Mahabharata, was produced by Kasirama. These Bengali translations and adaptations played an important role in influencing the cultural and religious life of the people in medieval Bengal. The third trend in the Bengali literature consisted of the emergence of **Mangala kavya**. These are sectarian poetical narratives and focus on the conflicts and rivalries among gods and goddesses. But they do contain humanistic elements, too, since they highlight popular aspirations and sufferings. Manika Datta and Mukundrama were two notable poets of **Mangala kavya** during the later 15th and 16th centuries.

33.7.5 Assamese Literature

Hema Sarasvati was the first poet of Assamese language. She composed **Prahladacharita** and **Hara-Gauri Samvada** during the later part of the 13th century. Her contemporary poet was Harihara Vipra who chose episodes from the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata** for his poetry. From the 14th century, Kamata and Cachar became centres for the development of Assamese literature. Madhava Kundali, who popularized the **Ramayana** story in Assam by rendering it into the language and idiom of the common people, was the most important Assamese poet of the 14th century. His language was less Sanskritized than that of Hema Sarasvati and Harihara Vipra and was closer to the language of the common people. The growth of **vaishnava bhakti** movement under Sankaradeva in the second part of the fifteenth century made considerable contribution to the Assamese literature. **Kirtana ghosa** is regarded as the most important **vaishnava** religious text written in Assamese language. It is an anthology of devotional songs, most of which were composed by Sankaradeva but other poets also made their contributions. Sankaradeva also wrote many dramas (**Ankiya Nat**) which were based on the **Purana** episodes. He also composed a new type of devotional poetry called **Bargit (Bragita)**. Sankaradeva's disciple Madhavadeva (A.D. 1489-1596) also composed many literary works and further enriched the **Bargit** form of poetry.

33.7.6 Oriya Literature

It was during the 13th-14th centuries that the Oriya language assumed literary character. Saraladasa (14th century) was the first great poet of Orissa. He composed the Oriya **Mahabharata** which is regarded as a great epic by the people of Orissa. Oriya literature began to enter into a new phase from the beginning of the 16th century when the **Vaishnava bhakti** movement grew there under Chaitanya's influence. Many of Chaitanya's disciples translated or adapted Sanskrit works on **bhakti** into the Oriya language. One of the close associates of Chaitanya was Jagannath Das who became the greatest Oriya literary figure of his time. His Oriya translation of the **Bhagavata Purana** became popular among the people.

33.7.7 Marathi Literature

Literature in verse form began to emerge in the Marathi language from the later part of the 13th century. Early Marathi literature was dominated by **salva nathpanthis**. Two earliest Marathi texts — **Viveka darpana** and the **Gorakhagita** — belonged to the **nathpanthi** tradition. The most important poet of this phase was

Mukundaraj who belonged to the **nathpanthi** tradition and who wrote his **Vivek Sindhu** in chaste popular language. Another dominant influence on the Marathi literature during its formative stage was exercised by the poets belonging to the **Mahanubhava** cult which emerged in the 13th century.

The **Mahanubhava** saint-poets were among the architects of the early Marathi devotional literature and made important contribution to Marathi lexicography, commentaries, rhetoric, grammar, prosody, etc.

The **Varkari bhakti** saint-poets of Maharashtra further developed the **bhakti** literature in the Marathi language. First among them was Jnanadeva (13th century). He wrote a commentary on the **Bhagavad Gita**. It was named **Bhavartha dipika** and popularly came to be known as **Jnanasvari**. It is the fundamental text of the Maharashtra **vaishnava bhakti** saints belonging to the **varkari** tradition. Another saint-poet belonging to the **varkari** tradition was Namdev (1270-1350). He composed large number of **Abhangas** (short lyrical poems) in Marathi. He travelled to the north and later his verses were included in the Sikh scripture, the **Adi Granth**.

Two other great saint-poets of medieval Maharashtra, Eknath (1548-1600) and Tukaram (1598-1649) belong to the Mughal period: they also made substantial contribution to the growth of the Marathi literature.

33.7.8 Gujarati Literature

Both Rajasthani and Gujarati languages emerged from old Western Rajasthani. The first phase in the development of the Gujarati literature lasted till the middle of the fifteenth century. During this phase, two main literary forms developed in the Gujarati literature — the **prabhand** or the narrative poem and the **muktaka** or the short poem. The first category included heroic romances, poetic romances and **rasas** or long poems. The subject-matter of these poems consisted of historical themes interspersed with fiction, popular legends and Jain mythology. The second category of **muktaka** or short poem adopted various forms such as **phagu**, **baramasi** and the **chapo**. **Phagu** means a short lyrical poem stressing on the element of **viraha** or separation. The second phase in the history of the Gujarati literature began in the late fifteenth century with the spread of the **Vaishnava bhakti** poetry. Narasimha Mehta (1414-1480) was a great Gujarati **bhakti** poet. He made use of his poetry to popularize **Vaishnava bhakti** in Gujarat.

33.8 LITERATURE IN THE LANGUAGES OF SOUTH INDIA

This section takes into account the progress made in the literature written in the South Indian languages.

33.8.1 Tamil Literature

The great age of the Tamil literature came to an end with the decline of the Chola Empire. Writers and poets, however, continued to make contribution to the Tamil literature. Villiputtur who probably lived in the thirteenth century was an important literary figure of the period. He rendered the Tamil version of the **Mahabharata** which is called **Bharatam** and which became popular among the Tamil-speaking people. He introduced the tradition of using Sanskrit words and literary expressions in Tamil poetry. Another great poet and a contemporary of Villiputtur was Arunagirinatha. He composed **Tiruppagal** — a lyrical and devotional work in praise of god Murugan. The period is also known for elaborate commentaries written by **vaishnava** scholars. Commentaries were also written on such literary works of the **Sangam** age as the **Tolkappiyam** and the **Kural**. These commentaries are a model of medieval Tamil prose and are known for their clarity and brevity. Another great author, Kachiappa Sivachariar composed **Kanda-puranam** in praise of god Subramanya.

33.8.2 Telugu Literature

Literature in the Telugu language made great progress from 13th century onwards. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Telugu translations and adaptations of Sanskrit

works were produced. The most important Telugu poet in the first half of the 14th century was Errapragada. He popularized the **Champu** genre of literary writing (mixed form of verse and prose). He composed the **Ramayana** in this genre. He translated a part of the **Mahabharata** and another **Vaishnava** Sanskrit work, **Harivamsa** into Telugu. Srinatha (1365-1440) was another great Telugu writer. He translated Sriharsha's **Naishadha Kavya** into Telugu. He also composed verses on the theme of historical romance and this laid the foundation for the age of classical **prabandhas** in the Telugu literature. His contemporary, Potana, was a great poet who translated the **Bhagavata Purana** into Telugu. The Telugu literature achieved its highest position in the sixteenth century during the reign of the Vijaynagar king, Krishnadeva Raya, who himself was a poet in both Sanskrit and Telugu and who wrote **Amukta Malyada** in Telugu. He patronised many Telugu poets, most famous of whom was Peddana. Peddana wrote **Manu Charita** in Telugu. One important characteristic of the Telugu literature of this period was the increasing influence of Sanskrit on the Telugu language.

33.8.3 Kannada Literature

The early phase of the Kannada literature (upto 12th century) was dominated by Jain writers. From the middle of the 12th century, **Virasaivism** — a popular religious movement — began to influence the people and literature of the Kannada speaking region. The religious literary work of Basava (known as **Vachanas**), the founder of the **Virasaiva** movement and those of his followers constitute an important contribution to the medieval Kannada literature. A late 14th century **Virasaiva** poet, Bhima Kavi composed the **Basava Purana**. Before him, two other **Virasaiva** poets of the 13th century, Harisvara and Raghavanka, composed their works in new Kannada styles which later became popular. The later Hoysala rulers patronised many Kannada poets and writers. One of them, Rudra Bhatta wrote **Jagannathavijaya** in **champu** genre. This work was an adaptation from the Sanskrit work **Vishnu Purana**. The period between 14th and 16th centuries saw further growth of the Kannada literature under the patronage of the Vijaynagar kings and their feudatories. One of the greatest poets of this period was Kumara Vyasa who composed the Kannada version of **Mahabharata** in the middle of the 15th century.

33.8.4 Malayalam Literature

Malayalam is the youngest of the South Indian languages. It originated as a dialect of Tamil in the Malabar region. Gradually, it separated itself from Tamil and acquired an independent status in the fourteenth century. Political isolation of the Malabar region from Tamilnadu and the introduction of new linguistic forms by foreigners contributed to the development of Malayalam as an independent language. The earliest literature was in oral form consisting of songs and ballads. The earliest literary composition was the **Rama Charitam**, produced in the 14th century. From sixteenth century onwards, Malayalam began to come under the dominant influence of Sanskrit and borrowed a great deal from the latter.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the social background of the rise of regional languages.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Explain the origin and growth of Urdu language.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) Mark ✓ or × against the statements given below:

- The second phase of growth of Hindi Literature is characterised as **Bhakti kala**
- Kabir was a **saguna** poet who believed in a God with human form and attributes.
- Krishnadevaraya wrote **Amukta Malyada** in Telugu.
- The religious-literary works of Basava in Kannada are known as **Vachanas**.

33.9 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have traced the growth of language and literature during the Sultanate period. The decline in the quality of Sanskrit works produced in this period has been emphasized. The Unit takes into account the growth of Persian language and literature during the Sultanate period. The factors responsible for the growth of regional languages and literature have been stressed. The nature of Sanskrit, Persian and regional literature produced during this period has been analysed. This analysis points to the cultural synthesis which was achieved as a result of interchange between Sanskrit and Persian that was evident from the origin and growth of Urdu during this period.

33.10 KEY WORDS

Allegorical : style of writing in which the characters and events extoll virtues such as

Hagiographical : a biographical account which is full of praise for the subject with which it deals

Imagery : use of figurative language as a literary form

Prosody : science of verse and poetical form

33.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- See Sub-sec. 33.4.2.
- a) × b) ✓ c) × d) ✓

Check Your Progress 2

- See Section 33.6
- See Sub-sec. 33.7.2
- a) ✓ b) × c) ✓ d) ✓