



## ḌU'L-LESĀNAYN

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**ḌU'L-LESĀNAYN** “possessor of two tongues,” epithet often bestowed upon bilingual poets. It appears to have originated in Arabic as an honorific indicating unusual eloquence in a single language, Arabic, as was the case with Mowallah b. Kaṭīf, a Companion of the Prophet (Sami, p. 2228). Poets writing in both Arabic and Persian were fairly numerous in Transoxania and Khorasan in the tenth century, a circumstance easily explained by the persistence of Arabic as a major literary idiom in Persian-speaking lands (Zand). So common was the phenomenon of bilingual literary composition in that period that by no means all poets writing in the two languages were designated Ḍu'l-Lesānayn; the example of [Ḥosayn b. Ebrāhīm Adīb Naṭanzī](#) (d. 497/1103-04), who did bear the epithet, appears to have been unusual (Modarres, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, II, p. 271). Most prominent classical Persian poets tried their hands at composing Arabic verse (e.g., Sa'dī's Arabic *qaṣīdas*, pp. 73-90), in addition to which acrostic verses may occasionally be encountered in their *dīvāns*. None of these poets can, however, be said to have been truly bilingual in the sense of contributing in comparable measure to both Arabic and Persian literature or composing approximately similar quantities of verse in the two languages.

Significant instances of poets writing in Persian and one other language are to be found chiefly outside Persia. Many were products of the bilingual urban environment of Timurid and, more especially, post-Timurid Central Asia, where both Persian and [Chaghatay](#) were current; examples include the illustrious 'Alī-Šīr Navā'ī (d. 907/1501) and Allāhyār Šūfī (d. 1136/1724), who



wrote didactic *matnawīs* that are less familiar to scholars but more widely read than the works of Navā'ī. The poetic works of the Mughal general Bayrām Khān (d. 968/1561) may be regarded as a short-lived extension on Indian soil of this joint cultivation of Persian and Chaghatay.

Other bilingual poets flourished in areas where Persian was not spoken to any appreciable extent but enjoyed great cultural prestige, for example, pre-Ottoman Turkey and India. The earliest important Turkish poet in this category was Solṭān Walad (Sultan Veled; d. 711/1312), who, in addition to a Persian *dīvān* and *matnawīs*, composed a slender but valuable *dīvān* in Turkish. The rise of Ottoman Turkish brought such bilingualism to an end; although many Ottoman poets wrote verse in Persian, they did so more as a type of literary exercise, comparable to Persian poets' composing Arabic verse. The Indian tradition of bilingual Persian and Urdu poetic expression was far more fecund and lasted longer than its Ottoman counterpart, presumably because of the relatively late and slow maturation of Urdu as a literary medium. Among the principal exemplars of this tradition were Mīrzā Maḥzar Jānjānān (d. 1195/1781), K̄vāja Mīr Dard (d. 1199/1785), Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Ġāleb (d. 1286/1869), and Muhammad Iqbal (d.1357/1938).

A third category of bilingual poets lived in regions where poetic expression in vernaculars belonging to the Iranian language family was overshadowed by the appeal of Persian, the prime example being Kurdistan, where all poets of significance have cultivated Persian at least as much as Kurdish (Şafizāda). Finally, Azarbaijan, where the Turkish and Persian worlds overlap, has also produced many poets at home in two languages, including such diverse figures as the Safavid shah Esmā'īl I "Kaṭā'ī" (d. 930/1524), Foḏūlī (d. 963/1556), Mīrzā Şafī' Wāzeḥ (d. 1268/1852), and the contemporary poet Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Şahrīār (d. 1367 Š./1988).

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