Wisdom is better than aught else which God has granted to you. Wisdom is the guide and is the heart's enlivener; wisdom is your helper in both worlds. From it comes happiness and all human welfare; from it you gain increase and without it you experience loss. Thou, Wisdom, art the creation of the Creator of the world and knowest all things patent or hidden. Do thou, O man, ever keep wisdom as your counsellor, whereby you may preserve your soul from all unworthiness. When you have acquired an insight into any branch of a matter, you will understand that science does not reach down to the root.

Firdawsī, Shāhnāmah

The Persian language was, and still is, a major carrier of Islamic civilization, and is second only to Arabic. In the eastern Muslim

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lands, in Iran proper, on the Indian subcontinent, in Central Asia, and even in Southeast Asia, Persian remained for centuries, the *lingua franca* of the educated classes, particularly in poetry and/or mysticism.

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