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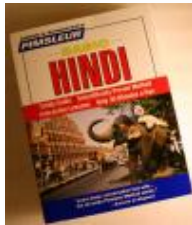
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About the Hindi Language

Hindi is the name given to an **Indo-Aryan language**, or a dialect continuum of languages, spoken in northern and central India (the Hindi belt), The native speakers of Hindi dialects between them account for 41% of the Indian

population. More than 180 million people in India regard Hindi as their mother tongue. Another 300 million use it as second language. Outside of India, Hindi speakers are 100,000 in USA; 685,170 in Mauritius; 890,292 in South Africa; 232,760 in Yemen; 147,000 in Uganda; 5,000 in Singapore; 8 million in Nepal; 20,000 in New Zealand; 30,000 in Germany. Urdu, the official language of Pakistan, spoken by about 41 million in Pakistan and other countries, is essentially the same language. **Dakhini** is an older, southern form of Urdu that uses fewer Persian or Arabic words. As defined in the Constitution, Hindi is the official language of India and is one of the 22 scheduled languages specified in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. Official Hindi is often described as Modern Standard Hindi, which is used, along with English, for administration of the central government. Standard Hindi is a sanskritised register derived from the khari boli dialect. Urdu is a different, persianised, register of the same dialect. Taken together, these registers are historically also known as Hindustani.

The word hindi is of **Persian** origin. It literally means Indian , comprising hind India , and the adjectival suffix -. The word was originally used by Muslims in north India to refer to any Indian language: for example the eleventh-century writer used it to refer to Sanskrit. By the 13th century, Hindi , along with its variant forms Hindavi and Hindui , had acquired a more specific meaning: the linguistically mixed speech of Delhi, which came into wide use across north India and incorporated a component of Persian vocabulary . It was later used by members of the Mughal court to distinguish the local vernacular of the Delhi region where the court was located from Persian, which was the official language of the court. Hindi first started to be used in writing during the 4th century AD. It was originally written with the **Brahmi** script but since the 11th century AD it has been written with the Devan gar alphabet. The first printed book in Hindi was John Gilchrist's *Grammar of the Hindoostanee Language* which was published in 1796.

Evidence from the 17th century indicates that the language then called Hindi existed in two differing styles: among Muslims it was liable to contain a larger component of Persian-derived words and would be written down in a script derived from Persian, while among Hindus it used a vocabulary more influenced by Sanskrit and was written in **Devanagari** script. These styles eventually developed into modern Urdu and modern Hindi respectively. However the word Urdu was not used until around 1780: before then the word Hindi could be used for both purposes. The use of Hindi to designate what would now be called Urdu continued as late as the early twentieth century. Nowadays Hindi as taken to mean Indian is chiefly obsolete; it has come to specifically refer to the language(s) bearing that name.

Hindi as the term for a language is used in at least four different but overlapping senses:

1. defined regionally, Hindi languages, i.e. the dialects native to Northern **India**

in a narrower sense, the Central zone dialects, divided into Western Hindi and Eastern Hindi

in a wider sense, all languages native to north-central India, stretching from Rajasthani in the west and Pahari in the northwest to Bihari in the east.

2. defined historically, the literary dialects of Hindi literature, that is, historical regional standards such as Braj Bhasha and Avadhi.

3. defined as a single standard language, Modern Standard Hindi, or High Hindi, that is, highly Sanskritized Khari boli

4. defined politically, Hindi is any dialect of the region that is not Urdu. This usage originates in the Hindi-Urdu controversy in the 19th century, and is that adopted by the official Indian census (as of 1991), which includes as Hindi a wide variety of dialects of the Hindi belt (adding up to a fraction native speakers of 40% of the total population), but lists Urdu as a separate language (with 5.8% native speakers).

History

Like many other modern Indian languages, it is believed that Hindi had been evolved from Sanskrit, by way of the Middle Indo-Aryan Prakrit languages and Apabhramsha of the Middle Ages. Though there is no consensus for a specific time, Hindi originated as local dialects such as Braj, Awadhi and finally Khari Boli after the turn of tenth century. In the span of nearly a thousand years of Muslim influence, such as when Muslim rulers controlled much of northern India during the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, many Persian and Arabic words were absorbed into khari boli and was called Urdu or Hindustani. Since almost all Arabic words came via Persian, they do not preserve the original phonology of Arabic.

Hindi is contrasted with Urdu in the way both are written, and the use of Sanskrit vocabulary in higher registers. Urdu is the official language of Pakistan and also an official language in some parts of India. The primary differences between the two are the way Standard Hindi is written in Devanagari and draws its vocabulary with words from (Indo-Aryan) Sanskrit, while Urdu is written in **Urdu** script, a variant of the (Semitic) Perso-Arabic script, and draws heavily on Persian and Arabic vocabulary. Vocabulary is in quotes here since it is mostly the literary vocabulary that shows this visible distinction with the everyday vocabulary being essentially common between the two. To a common unbiased person, both Hindi and Urdu are same (Hindustani) though politics of religion and ethnicity portrays them as two separate languages since they are written in two entirely different scripts Hindi-Urdu controversy. Interestingly, if Urdu is written in Devanagiri script, it will be assumed as Hindi and vice versa. The popular examples are Bollywood songs and gazals.

Hindi languages

Modern Standard Hindi

Main article: Modern Standard Hindi

After independence, the Government of India worked on standardizing Hindi, instituting the following changes:

* standardization of Hindi grammar: In 1954, the **Government of India** set up a committee to prepare a grammar of Hindi; The committee's report was released in 1958 as A Basic Grammar of Modern Hindi

- * standardization of Hindi spelling
- * standardization of the Devanagari script by the Central Hindi Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Culture to bring about uniformity in writing and to improve the shape of some Devanagari characters.
- * scientific mode of transcribing the Devanagari alphabet
- * incorporation of diacritics to express sounds from other languages.

Khari boli

Main article: Khari boli

Khari boli or standing dialect is the term for the Western Hindi dialect of the Delhi region, which since the later 17th century (Mughal period) has emerged as the prestige dialect. Khari boli includes several standardized registers, including:

- * Urdu, historically the language of the court , a Persianized register
- * Rekhta, a heavily Persianized and Arabized register used in Urdu poetry
- * Dakhni, the historical literary register of the Deccan region
- * Standard Hindi, a heavily Sanskritized register created in the 19th century (colonial period) as a counter-proposal contrasted to Urdu in the Hindi-Urdu controversy.

The colloquial language spoken by the people of Delhi is indistinguishable by ear, whether it is called Hindi or Urdu by its speakers. The only important distinction at this level is in the script: if written in the Perso-Arabic script, the language is generally considered to be Urdu, and if written in devanagari it is generally considered to be Hindi. However, since independence the formal registers used in education and the media have become increasingly divergent in their vocabulary. Where there is no colloquial word for a concept, Standard Urdu uses Perso-Arabic vocabulary, while Standard Hindi uses Sanskrit vocabulary. This results in the official languages being heavily Sanskritized or Persianized, and nearly unintelligible to speakers educated in the other standard (as far as the formal vocabulary is concerned).

These two standardised registers of Hindustani have become so entrenched as separate languages that many extreme-nationalists, both Hindu and Muslim, claim that Hindi and Urdu have always been separate languages. The tensions reached a peak in the Hindi-Urdu controversy in 1867 in the then United Provinces during the **British Raj**. However, there were and are unifying forces as well. For example, it is said that Indian Bollywood films are made in Hindi , but the language used in most of them is the same as that of Urdu speakers in Pakistan.

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