

## Official Languages of India: An Overview

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Available online at: [www.xournals.com](http://www.xournals.com)

Received 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017 | Revised 18<sup>th</sup> February 2018 | Accepted 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018

### Abstract:

*To understand and communicate with the peoples in their region a set of vocal is produced by human which is known as language. India is a multilingual country, in terms of language India has a very ironic heritage. Constitution of India felt need to specify the language to be used in state function. The proposal of making Hindi language as an official language of the country should be made because more than 40% of people living in India uses Hindi as a language. Consequently Part XVII of the Indian Constitution came into existence which not only provides the official language of the Union (Article 343-344) but also official languages of the states (Article 345), interstate-communication (Article 346-347), and the language used in the courts and in legislative processes (Article 348). This paper gives a study of language with the history or origin of language which are specified as official scheduled languages in Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution.*

**Keywords:** Schedule, Constitution, Languages, India

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## Introduction

In term of languages India has a very rich heritage and every language which is spoken by the people is respected by Indian constitution, even the language spoken by the most remote areas is also respected by the Constitution through the likes of Article 29 and Schedule VIII. In Indian constitution, total number of schedules are 12, in which each schedule deals with different topics with different rules and laws. The 8th Schedule of Indian constitution deals with languages, in which it contain a list of 22 officially scheduled languages (originally 14 languages).

When the time the constitution was passed presence of language in the list means that the language was permitted to represent the official language commission and that the language would on the basis of that would be strained upon to augment Hindi, the official language of country. The list also have further acquired significance. To take actions for the improvement or development of these languages such that “they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge”.

According to the rule examination conducted for public service at a higher level, the candidate can choose any of the language as a medium in which he/she want to answer the paper. According to 92 constitutional amendment 2003, languages- Bodo, Maithali, Dogri and Santali were also added to the schedule of Indian constitution.

There are 4 main groups of Indian languages which are as:

1. Indo- Aryan: Hindi, Sanskrit, Oriya, Bengali, Punjabi, Assamese, Nepali, Konkani, Kashmiri, and Urdu.
2. Dravidian: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tulu.
3. Mongoloid: Garo, Tripura, Manipuri, and Bodo.
4. Tribal Language and Dialects: Mundari, Oraon, Santal, Gond, etc.

“From the ancient times history proves that, India has been a multilingual country, each language have their own certain region in which it supreme, but none of these regions truly constituted unilingual kingdom or territory.”

According to the VIII schedule of the constitution of India the official languages and language policy of India, defines and bounds the status of Hindi and other Indian languages.

The major 22 languages specified in the VIII schedule of Indian constitution are

1. ASSAMESE
2. BENGALI
3. GUJRATI
4. HINDI
5. KANNADA
6. KASHMIRI
7. MANIPURI
8. MALAYALAM
9. KONKANI
10. MARATHI
11. NEPALI
12. ODIYA
13. PUNJABI
14. SANSKRIT
15. SINDHI
16. TAMIL
17. TELUGU
18. URDU
19. SANTALI
20. BODO
21. MAITHALI
22. DOGRI

\* Sindhi was added in 1967 by 21 Amendment

\* Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were added in 1992 by 71 amendment Santhali, Maithali, Bodo and Dogri were added in 2003 by 92 amendments.

Details of 22 Schedule languages of India are as follows:

1. **Assamese:** It is the official language of state Assam. It is an Indo-Aryan language. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century Assamese language has developed as a literature language. The script of this language is derived from the brahmi script. The evolution of the Assamese script is shown by the copper plate and rock inscription from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century. Assamese contain eight vowel phonemes and twenty-one consonant with two semi-vowel phonemes in the Standard Colloquial Assamese. 57% of Assam state speaks in Assamese language. In many north eastern states mainly in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh this language is used as an interstate communication language.
2. **Bengali:** It is the official language of west Bengal, which is also a leading Indo-Aryan language Bengali is one of the most advanced language of India. Bengali emerged as a separate language

around 1000 A.D. it is spoken by more than 175 million people in Bangladesh and in eastern India.

**3. Gujarati:** It is the official language of the state of Gujarat and also a member of Indo-Aryan family, it was adopted from Devanagari script. Gujarati is one of the most developed language of India and more than 50 million people speak Gujarati language. It started out as an independent language around 1200 A.D. it is one of the most developed Indian language. Around 1200 A.D. this language started out as an independent language and the development of this language starts in three distinct phases - 10th to 15th century, 15th to 17th century and 17th to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**4. Hindi:** It is the official language of the government of India it is the biggest member of Indo-Aryan family Hindi language is written in Devnagri script. The language Hindi begins with the Aryan. Hindi is regarded as the successor of Aryan languages. The development of Hindi can be divided into three periods:

- a. Old Indo-Aryan Languages.
- b. Mid Indo-Aryan Languages.
- c. Modern Indo-Aryan Languages.

It is a great fictional language. This language is originally spoken in Delhi, UP, Haryana, Bihar district and mostly speak in all over India more or less.

**5. Kashmiri:** Kashmiri is a state language of Jammu and Kashmir, It is also a member of Indo-Aryan. Kashmiri language is also known as Kashur, by its native people or speaker. Kashmiri language is called Kashur, it is written in Perso-Arabic script. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Kashur and its dialects are spoken in an approximately 10,000 square mile area in the bowl-shaped valley

**6. Konkani:** Konkani is the official language of Goa, It is a member of Indo-Aryan family. The real ancient times of Konkani would be discovered by an organized and systematic anthropological effort directed at the linguistic islands of Konkani speaking communities outside Goa. Konkani language contains 47 characters (14 vowels and 33 consonants).

**7. Marathi:** It is a member of Indo-Aryan family and is the official language of Maharashtra. Its literary career began only in 13th century. The modern Marathi has evolved from languages Prachina Maharatthi, Marahatthi, and apabhramsa Marathi, which are the form of a single language. Before the jnanesvari and lilacaritra, Marathi was a rich

language with an earlier history of 1200 to 1500 years. Old religious text, number of stone inscriptions, copper plates, and manuscripts authenticate the antiquity of the Marathi language.

**8. Odiya:** the language Odiya belongs to the Aryan family of languages. It is an official language of the state Orissa. This language is written in the script of Odia. It is one of the major spoken languages of India nearly 33 million people speak this language. During the rule of king Ganga dynasty (1077 to 1435 A.D.) The main development of the Odia took place. Odiya was fully developed at the time of king of Odisha Suryavanshami (1435-1540 A.D.) The Odia language closely related to the languages Assamese, Bengali and Maithili.

**9. Punjabi:** Punjabi is the official language of state Punjab. Punjabi belongs to Indo-Aryan family with roots in the ancient Sanskrit language. Baba Farid (1173-1266) The Sufi poet can be considered as the more reliably literary creations of Punjabi language. Further Guru Nanak (1469-1539) uses Punjabi to communicate his ideas and raised the status of language. Punjabi is written in Gurumukhi Script. Ranjit Singh make serious efforts to encourage the teaching of Punjabi when he established a sovereign Punjabi kingdom in 1799. To start the first Punjabi printing press in 1835 a Christian mission in Ludhiana was launched and the first Punjabi dictionary was published in 1854.

**10. Sanskrit:** Sanskrit is the classical language of India and is also one of the oldest language of the world. It is the oldest member of Indo-European family of languages. Classical Sanskrit covers the period between 5000 B.C. and 1000 A.D. Acknowledged by Sir William Jones as being "more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin and more exquisitely refined than either", Sanskrit occupies the pride of place in our cultural life. Sanskrit is the mother language of all the north Indian languages. Its status, influence and authority among other languages of the world are quite unique and undeniable.

**11. Sindhi:** It is a branch of the Indo-Aryan family. Sindhi uses Perso-Arabic script in Pakistan and Devnagri script in India. It is one of the most ancient languages of India. Sindhi is a language which came in India with when Muslims (Arabs) came in contact. By Arab historian who failed to distinguish between the different languages of India they called the language 'Hindi'. Syed Salman Nadwi, suggested this language might be Sindhi, who calls this the first translation of the

Quran into any Indian language. (Nadwi 1972: 241-242).

12. **Urdu:** Urdu is a state language of Jammu and Kashmir. It is written in Perso-Arabic Script. Urdu and Hindi proceeded from the same source. In the development of Urdu the earliest influence probably began with the Muslim conquest of Sindh in 94 AH/ 712 AD particularly with the defeat of Muhammad Bin Qasim. But during Delhi sultanate (1206-1526) and the Mughal Empire (1526-1858) the Urdu develops more conclusively. During 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, literature and poetry instigated to be written in Urdu and the golden period of Urdu poetry was the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
13. **Kannada:** It is a member of Dravidian language family and it is the official language of the state of Karnataka. The earliest Kannada inscription found at Halmidi in Belur taluk of Hassan district is dated 450 A.D. it is spoken as a native language by about 66.26% of the people as of census (2001).
14. **Malayalam:** Malayalam language is a branch of Dravidian language family and is the official language of the state of Kerala. The term Malayalam was the originally a name of a place. There was a time when the land was known as Malayalam and the language 'malayaanma' or 'malayaayma' (Roy, 1999). The malayaalam refers to the word "Malaya" is not the Sanskrit Malaya, a range of mountains, but the Dravidian mala, a mountain. The word "alam" is an abstract neuter noun (Caldwell, 1987). It is with the arrival of modern Malayalam period, for the language the place name began to be used.
15. **Tamil:** Tamil language is the oldest member of Dravidian language family and is the state language of Tamil Nadu. Tamil is one of the classical languages of the world with a literary of more than two millenniums. The earliest Tamil literature dates to the Cankam period (300 BC – 200 AD). Traditionally, on palm leaves Tamil was written which is one of the oldest medium of writing in ancient India. By the introduction of print medium in the late sixteenth century the traditional palm leaf manuscript writing gradually got displaced.
16. **Telugu:** Telugu is the state language of Andhra Pradesh and the second largest language in India. It is one of the biggest member of Dravidian language family. In between 1500-1000 BC it was divided from the Proto-Dravidian language, which is the Mother Language of south Indian languages. Telugu Language recognized as official language of Andhra Pradesh State of India and spoken by about 200 Million people throughout the world.
17. **Manipuri:** It is the state language of Manipur and also a part of Tibeto-Burman family. According to the census of India (2001) the population of Manipuri speakers is 1,466,705. Until the eighteenth century the Meitei Mayek script was used before it was replaced by the Bengali script. Recently, the Meitei Mayek script was reintroduced as the writing system of the Manipuris.
18. **Nepali:** Nepali language is a part of Tibeto-Burman family. It is an official language of Nepal. On 1038 BS the linguists have taken the stone inscription of Adityabanshi king Damupal, as the official source of Nepali language. For the unification of Nepal, the rulers and king of the nations in this region trusted on Nepali language for inter-state use as in sending letters, treaties and agreements
19. **Bodo:** Bodo a language of the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan languages, which have several dialects. In the northeastern Indian states of Meghalaya, Assam and in Bangladesh Bodo is spoken. It is related to Tripura, Dimasa, and Lalunga languages, and written in Bengali, Devanagari, and Latin scripts.
20. **Maithali:** In Nepal and northern India the language spoken by 34.7 million people as of 2000, of which 2.8 million were in Nepal is Maithili. It is an Indo-Aryan language and written in the Devanagari script. Maithili was written in Mithilakshar in past. But In 2002, Maithili was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is recognized as one of the largest languages in India, and is the second most widely used language in Nepal.
21. **Dogri:** Dogri language is mainly spoken in Jammu Kashmir region, it is a part of Indo-European family. Dogri language is also classified as one of the pahari languages. In December 2003, the Dogri language was officially recognized on the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian constitution. It is the language which has been rapidly developing as a literary language in recent years.
22. **Santhali:** In the Munda subfamily of Austroasiatic languages Santali is a language which is related to Ho and Mundari. In the states of Assam, Tripura, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal it is spoken by around 6.2 million people in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

## Conclusion

India is always been a knowledge super-power, it always make both knowledge that is beneficial for the Indian society the knowledge that has universal relevance as well as knowledge that needs to be differentiated by cultural specificity.. India writes in many languages and speaks in many more voices. Today, the Indian constitution recognizes 22 major official languages of India which is known as “the 8th

Schedule” of the Constitution. These languages also happen to be the major fictional languages in India. The officially recognized 22 major languages has their own history and heritage. The variations in languages make them different from each languages and every language came with their own history. Indian States have power and liberty, in which they specify their own official language(s) through legislation.

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