



A Virtual Exhibition on Languages of India



Assamese
Sindhi
Telugu
Maithili
Sanskrit
Hindi
Gujarati
Tamil
Nepali
Dogri
Kannada
Oriya
English
Manipuri
Bodo
Malayalam
Kashmiri
Bengali
Marathi
Santhali
Urdu
Punjabi
Konkani

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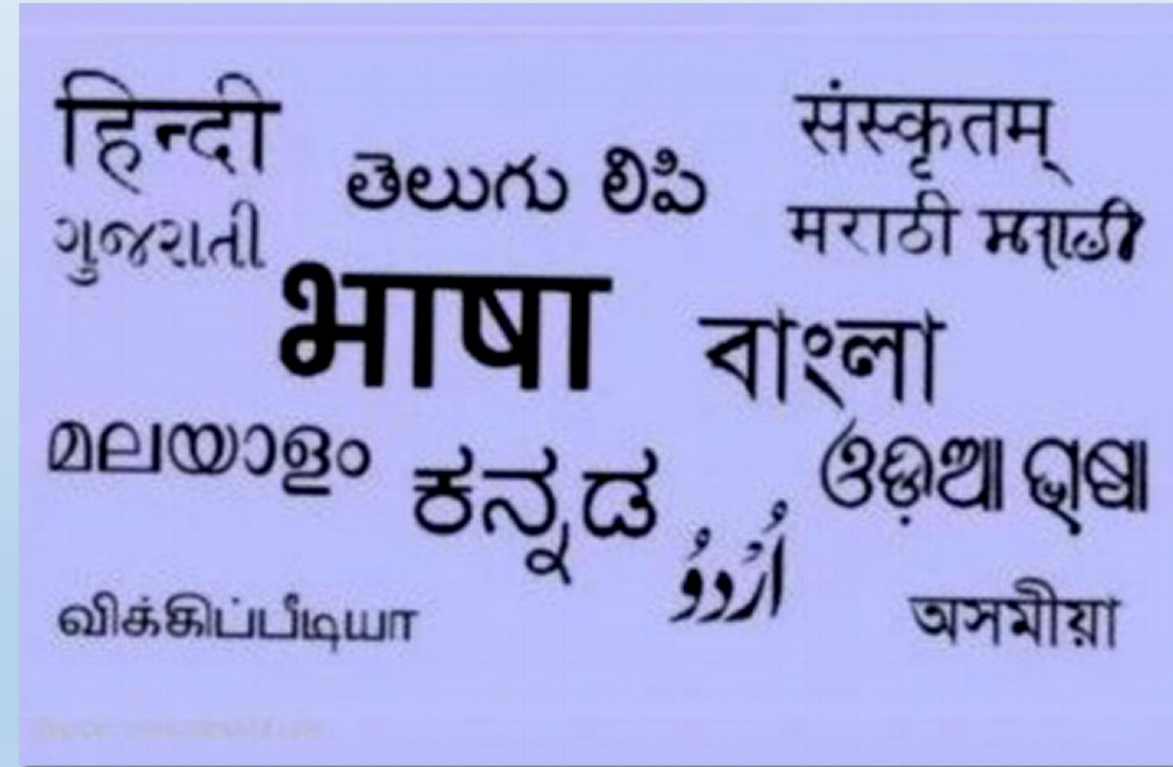


Languages of India



The languages of India primarily belong to two major linguistic families, Indo-European (whose branch Indo-Aryan is spoken by about 74% of the population) and Dravidian (spoken by about 24%). Other languages spoken in India come from the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burmese linguistic families.

According to the census analysis, there are 121 languages spoken by 10,000 or more people in India, whose population is almost 121 crores i.e. it would not be wrong to say that India is home to many major languages. Let us study about the 10 most spoken languages in India, according to the 2011 census of languages.





History of Languages of India



The Southern Indian languages are from the Dravidian family. The Dravidian languages are indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. Proto-Dravidian languages were spoken in India in the 4th millennium BCE and started disintegrating into various branches around 3rd millennium BCE. The Dravidian languages are classified in four groups: North, Central (Kolami–Parji), South-Central (Telugu–Kui), and South Dravidian (Tamil-Kannada).

The Northern Indian languages from the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family evolved from Old Indic by way of the Middle Indic Prakrit languages and Apabhraṃśa of the Middle Ages. The Indo-Aryan languages developed and emerged in three stages — Old Indo-Aryan (1500 BCE to 600 BCE), Middle Indo-Aryan stage (600 BCE and 1000 CE) and New Indo-Aryan (between 1000 CE and 1300 CE). The modern north Indian Indo-Aryan languages all evolved into distinct, recognisable languages in the New Indo-Aryan Age.



History of Languages of India



Persian, or Farsi, was brought into India by the Ghaznavids and other Turko-Afghan dynasties as the court language. Culturally Persianized, they, in combination with the later Mughal dynasty (of Turco-Mongol origin), influenced the art, history and literature of the region for more than 500 years, resulting in the Persianisation of many Indian tongues, mainly lexically. In 1837, the British replaced Persian with English and Hindustani in Perso-Arabic script for administrative purposes and the Hindi movement of the 19th Century replaced Persianised vocabulary with Sanskrit derivations and replaced or supplemented the use of Perso-Arabic script for administrative purposes with Devanagari.

Each of the northern Indian languages had different influences. For example, Hindustani was strongly influenced by Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, leading to the emergence of Modern Standard Hindi and Modern Standard Urdu as registers of the Hindustani language. Bangla on the other hand has retained its Sanskritic roots while heavily expanding its vocabulary with words from Persian, English, French and other foreign languages.



8th Schedule of Indian Constitution Official Languages



There are a total of 12 Schedules in the Indian Constitution and each one is important. The Constitutional provisions relating to the 8th Schedule are in articles 344(1) and 351 of the Indian Constitution:

- **Article 344 - Committee and Commission of Parliament on official language**
- **Article 344(1) - establishment of a Commission by the President on the expiration of 5 years from the commencement of the Constitution and afterwards at the expiration of 10 years from such commencement It should comprise of a Chairman and other members representing the various languages specified in the 8th Schedule to make recommendations to the President for the dynamic use of Hindi for official purposes of the Government of India.**
- **Article 351 - The duty of the Union to encourage the spread of the Hindi language to advance it so that it may serve as a medium of communication for all the components of the composite culture of India and to safeguard its enhancement by integrating without interfering with its genius, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the 8th Schedule, and by drawing, anywhere essential or required, for its terminology, mainly, on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.**



Languages of India

Initially, there were 14 official languages. Now, there are 22 official languages in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution. Check the list of languages below:

- **Assamese - Assam 1950**
- **Bengali - West Bengal 1950**
- **Gujarati - Gujarat 1950**
- **Hindi - North India 1950**
- **Kashmiri - Jammu & Kashmir 1950**
- **Kannada - Karnataka 1950**
- **Malayalam - Kerala 1950**
- **Marathi - Maharashtra 1950**



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- Odia - Odisha 1950
- Punjabi - Punjab 1950
- Sanskrit - Karnataka (Shivamogga District) 1950
- Tamil - Tamil Nadu 1950
- Telugu - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana 1950
- Urdu - Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh 1950
- Sindhi - Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh 1967
- Konkani - Goa 1992
- Manipuri - Manipur 1992



Languages of India



- **Nepali - Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh 1992**
 - **Bodo - Assam and Meghalaya 2003**
 - **Dogri - Jammu and Himachal Pradesh 2003**
 - **Maithili - Bihar and Jharkhand 2003**
- **Santhali - West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha 2003**



Brahmic Script



Brahmic scripts are descended from the Brāhmī script of ancient India, which may have had a common ancestor with European scripts. However, some academics (see references in Rastogi 1980:88-98) believe that the Vikramkhola inscription is conclusive evidence that Brahmi had indigenous origins, probably from the Indus Valley (Harappan) script.

The most prominent member of the family is Devanagari, which is used to write several languages of India and Nepal, including Hindi, Konkani, Marathi, Nepali, Nepal Bhasa and Sanskrit. Other northern Brahmic scripts include the Eastern Nagari script, which is used to write Bengali, Assamese, Bishnupriya Manipuri, and other eastern Indic languages, the Oriya script, the Gujarāti script, the Ranjana script, the Prachalit script, the Bhujimol script and the Gurmukhi script. The Dravidian languages of southern India have Brahmic scripts that have evolved making them suitable to southern needs. The earliest evidence for Brahmi script in South India comes from Bhattiprolu in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Bhattiprolu was a great centre of Buddhism during third century C.E. and from where Buddhism spread to east Asia. The present Telugu script is derived from 'Telugu-Kannada script', also known as 'old Kannada script', owing to its similarity to the same. Initially minor changes were made which is now called Tamil brahmi which has far fewer letters than some of the other Indic scripts as it has no separate aspirated or voiced consonants. Later under the influence of Granta vatteluthu evolved which looks similar to present day Malayalam script. Still further changes were made in nineteenth and twentieth centuries to make use of printing and typewriting needs before we have the present script.



Language Families



The languages of India may be grouped by major language families. The largest of these families in terms of speakers is the Indo-European family, predominantly represented in its Indo-Aryan branch (accounting for some 700 million speakers), but also including minority languages such as Persian, Portuguese or French, and English spoken as lingua franca. The second largest is the Dravidian family, accounting for some 200 million speakers. Minor linguistic families include the Munda with approximately nine million speakers, and Tibeto-Burman families with approximately six million speakers. There is also a language isolate, the Nihali language.

The languages of South Asia, echoing the complex history and geography of the region, form a complex patchwork of language families, language phyla and isolates. Languages spoken in India belong to several language families, the major ones being the Indo-Aryan languages spoken by 78.05% of Indians and the Dravidian languages spoken by 19.64% of Indians. The languages of India belong to several language families



Language Families



Rank	Language family	Population (2018)
➤ 1	Indo-Aryan language family	1,045,000,000 (78.05%)
➤ 2	Dravidian language family	265,000,000 (19.64%)
➤ 3	Austroasiatic language family	Unknown
➤ 4	Sino-Tibetan language family	Unknown
➤ 5	Tai-Kadai language family	Unknown
➤ 6	Great Andamanese languages	Unknown
Total	Languages of India	1,340,000,000



Classical Languages of India



In 2004, the Government of India declared that languages that met certain requirements could be accorded the status of a "Classical Language" of India. Over the next few years, several languages were granted the Classical status, and demands have been made for other languages, including Bengali and Marathi. In a 2006 press release, Minister of Tourism and Culture Ambika Soni told the Rajya Sabha the following criteria were laid down to determine the eligibility of languages to be considered for classification as a "Classical Language"

Languages thus far declared to be Classical:

- **Tamil (in 2004)**
- **Sanskrit (in 2005)**
- **Kannada (in 2008)**
- **Telugu (in 2008)**
- **Malayalam (in 2013)**
- **Odia (in 2014)**



Classical Languages of India Criteria



According to Article 343, the official language of the India should be Hindi in Devanagari script. As per Eight schedules of the Indian constitution, we have 22 languages. In 2004 it was decided by the Indian Government to proclaim Indian Languages meeting certain requirements as “Classical Language”.

The idea of Classicism had its origin in Europe. The Government tracks the following criteria to define the eligibility of language to be considered for classification as “classical language”:

- **Extraordinary antiquity of its early transcripts or verified history over a period of 1500-2000 years.**
- **A body of ancient literature or texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.**
- **The literary tradition should be unique and not hired from another language community.**
- **The classical language and literature being diverse from modern, there may also be a discontinuity**
- **among the classical language and its later forms or its sprouts.**



Classical Languages of India Criteria



- In 2004, Government of India declared Tamil as the Classical Language of India.
- In 2005, right after Tamil, the government declared Sanskrit as Classical Language of India. These two languages are undeniably parental sources for several languages belonging to the Indo-European family and the Dravidian family of language groups.
- The government gave the classical language status to Kannada and Telugu in 2008.
- Malayalam was declared as a classical language in 2013 and in 2014, Odiya was also given the status of the Classical language.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



The most pivotal feature of human existence is the language that helps humans to communicate with each other and develop relations between them.

We know that India is the world's seventh-largest country by area as well as the world's second-most populous country. The country has a population of more than 1.2 billion people. There are several religions practised in the country. It consists of diverse languages and cultures and people speaking different languages are scattered in different parts of the country.

Do you know that there are 121 languages which are spoken by 10,000 or more people in India, which has a population of 121 crores, according to a census analysis? More than 19,500 languages or dialects are spoken in India as mother tongue, according to the latest analysis of a census



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



1. Hindi - 52.83 crore speakers

Hindi is the most spoken language in India. It is one of the official languages of the country. According to the 2011 census, the number of people who speak Hindi as a mother tongue has increased in 2011 as compared to the 2001 census. In 2001, 41.03% of the people speak Hindi as mother tongue, while in 2011 it is increased to 43.63%. After Mandarin, Spanish and English, Hindi is also the fourth most spoken language in the world. At present, there are 52, 83, 47,193 Hindi speakers in India. It is spoken in almost all the states of the country including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi.

Hindi is a descendant of Sanskrit language and is influenced by Dravidian, Arabic, Portuguese, English, Persian and Turkey languages. Languages spoken in Hindi include Awadi, Braj and khadi bhasha. Did you know that the Hindi word is divided into five categories, such as Tatsama Ardhatasama, Tadbhav, Deshaj and Videshi?



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



2. Bengali - 9.72 crore speakers

India's second most spoken language is Bengali, which is spoken by 9.72 crore citizens i.e. 8.03 percent of the total population.

Bengali is an Indian-Aryan language spoken mostly in South Asia. It is the most prominent language in most of the states, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the northeast of India. Bengali was a secular language of old Indo-Aryans in the beginning and was influenced by Persian and Arabic. This language varies in different states, especially in usage, pronunciation, words and phonetic form. The National anthem of India was written in the Bengali language. In India, Bengali is mostly spoken in the eastern states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam and Tripura. This language is also spoken in the Middle East, America, Australia, Japan, UK and Canada. Bengali is also a part of the programs offered by Karachi University.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



3. Marathi - 8.30 crore speakers

A total of 8.30 crore people speaks Marathi in the country, which is 6.86 percent of the total population.

Marathi is an Indo-Aryan language which is spoken as the official language of the states in the western part of the country, including Goa and Maharashtra. There are about 42 different dialects spoken in Marathi. Do you know that there are three genders in Marathi grammar?



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



4. Telugu - 8.11 crore speakers

Telugu is a Dravidian language which is widely spoken in India in many states of the country. This language is mainly spoken in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Yanam states. Among the other dialects in its speech include the Beraad, Wadaga, Domara, Salavari, Nellore, Comtao and Kamathi. This language is also spoken in many countries including the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, United Arab Emirates and South Africa.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



5. Tamil - 6.90 crore speakers

The roots of the Tamil language are associated with the Dravidian language. Although, it is the official language of both Singapore and Sri Lanka and is also widely spoken language in India. 6.90 crore people speak Tamil in the country. Do you know that Tamil is remarkably known as one of the oldest surviving languages of the world? Its literary tradition has been for more than 2,000 years. Most of the Tamil language is spoken in southern India near the coast of Sri Lanka.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



6. Gujarati - 5.54 crore speakers

Gujarati is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by 5.54 crore people in India. This is the official language of Gujarat, which is a state located in north-west India. Let us tell you that the Gujarati language has evolved from Sanskrit.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



7. Urdu - 5.07 crore speakers

There are about 5.07 crore Urdu speakers in India. Urdu is also one of the official languages of the country. It is listed as an official language in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana and Jharkhand. Let us tell you that Urdu is also the official language of Pakistan.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



8. Kannada - 4.37 crore speakers

Kannada Like Tamil, Kannada is also a Dravidian language. It is spoken by 4.37 crore people in India. Do you know that Kannada is one of the oldest surviving languages of the world? This language is also spoken outside of India, in places like Australia, the United States and Canada. Many of these speakers are also members of the Indian Diaspora. It is estimated that there are about 20 different dialects in Kannada.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



9. Odia - 3.75 crore speakers

Odia is the official language of India and most of the speakers are centered in Odisha state. This language is spoken by 3.75 crore speakers across the country.



10 Most Spoken Languages in India by Number of Speakers



10. Malayalam - 3.48 crore speakers

Approximately, 3.48 crore speakers in India speak Malayalam, which is spoken in the states of Kerala, Puducherry and Lakshadweep. The roots of this language are also from Dravidian language.



English Language



English language - 2,59,678 speakers

With Hindi, the English language is also one of the official languages of India's federal government. In some states of India like Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, English is an official language. From the days of the East India Company in the 1800s, English was taught in schools in India.

As various types of languages are spoken in India and there is no hindrance in the medium of communication between the speakers because most Indians are multi-lingual. It has been seen that most people of India speak English, Hindi and one mother tongue. Now, English is no longer considered a foreign language because it is popular as the most common way of communication between people in the south and the north of India. So, now you may have come to know about the most spoken languages in India by the number of speakers.



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