

## **HINDI MOVEMENT IN INDIA: PROCESS OF MAKING ITS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE**

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### **Abstract**

The history of national language movement in India tells us more than the history of a language movement. The two trends of national language movement were expression of two ideas on Indian nationalism. The dominant idea of Indian nationalism was anti-colonial nationalism (expressed in the critique of colonial economy) which was accommodative and liberal. This idea was ready to accommodate cultural diversities, though it sometimes promoted syncretism but was ready to accept pluralism. On the other hand, the idea of cultural nationalism threatened to assimilate Indian diversities. It wanted to homogenise the nation into a single cultural community. Here, the cultural of the dominant community was projected as the culture of the nation. Hindi nationalism showed similarities with this second variety of nationalism. So in this article we study about the emergence of Hindi Movements in india in order to make it as a national language.

**Keywords:** *Hindi, Language, Movement etc.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The colonial studies on the language of north India, hence, remained inconclusive and sometimes contradictory. This can also be observed in the naming of the common language of north India interchangeably as Urdu, Hindi or Hindustani. This contradiction and ambiguity was also reflected in the colonial language policy. The official Hindustani written in Urdu script was adopted as the vernacular of the region from Bihar to Punjab in the third decade of nineteenth century. This official Hindustani was, however, written only in Urdu script, though the Fort William College had identified two literary styles of the language written in Nagari and Urdu. This decision of the Raj was contested by Hindi leaders in the late nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the Hindi movement did not simply emerge out of a greed for jobs in the colonial administration. It had certain cultural dimensions. It is noteworthy that the opponents of official

Hindustani seldom demanded de-Persianisation of the language. Rather, they emphasised on the use of Nagari script. Urdu script which had evolved from the Persian script which, in turn, had evolved from the Arabic script, was seen as Islamic, and Nagari which had evolved from Brahmi was seen as Hindu.

Hence, Persian-Nagari conflict, since its origin, had a tendency to evolve in Hindu-Muslim conflict.

In this early phase of Hindi movement, language was often equated with religion. In the late-nineteenth-century phenomenon of Hindu revivalism, culture was seen as closely associated with and derived from religion. The socio-religious reform movements of late nineteenth century created an atmosphere where culture and religion became coterminous. From this vantage point, we can argue that the Hindi movement from its inception was a Hindu revivalist movement.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the earliest supporters of Hindi, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Keshab Chandra Sen, Bhudev Mukherji and Naveen Chandra Rai, were associated with socio-religious reformist-revivalist movements in Bengal.<sup>187</sup> Their ideas were informed and guided by a desire to reviving the „glory“ of an imagined past. In Punjab, the western most part of north India, Hindi propaganda was carried out by the Arya Samaj and its founder Dayanand Saraswati. It is believed that Swami Dayanand was advised by Keshab Chandra Sen to propagate his ideas in Hindi and abandon Sanskrit. Ram Gopal observed that the Arya Samaj had prepared some principles for the organisation:

1. The promoters (*pracharak*) and members of the organisation should speak and write in Hindi;
2. Every propaganda work should be through Hindi publications;
3. Hindi should be established as the medium of education.

Some literary trends of the previous century might have contributed to the Hindi-Urdu conflict of late nineteenth century. It has been argued that Urdu was persianised in the eighteenth century. Historians and literary critics have offered many explanations for this trend in Urdu which was till eighteenth century known by multiple names.

Hence, we can conclude that till the mid-nineteenth century, when Hindi movement emerged, there are little evidences to suggest the formation of any clear identification of Urdu with Muslims. The arguments to made blame the Persianisation of Urdu do not help to understand the emergence of the Hindi movement and it only provide a justification to the Sanskritisation of Hindi in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, early activities and demands of Hindi leaders show that they attacked the prominence of official Hindustani or Urdu. Urdu was not attacked because it was Persianised a century ago but it did not carry Hindu cultural ethos. It was none but Hindi supporters who identified Urdu as Muslim language. They alleged Urdu for carrying Islamic cultural identities. Therefore, the period of Hindi movement, in the late nineteenth century, coincides with the formation of linguistic-religious identities i.e. Hindi-Hindu and Urdu-Muslim. This point will be further elaborated in the following pages.

In an organised form Hindi movement flourished in the late nineteenth century, however, it was roughly started in the 1860s. Salil Misra identified three pillars on which the movement was organised.

1. A number of applications and petitions (1868, 1873, 1898 being the major ones) submitted to the government to allow Nagari characters in the court language of UP;
2. creation of a number of literary works (plays, stories, etc.) written in favour of Hindi and popularising the need to preserve Hindi;
3. Formation of a number of organisations to propagate the cause of Hindi – Nagari Pracharini Sabha, formed in 1893 in Banaras and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, formed in 1910 in Allahabad, being the most prominent.

It must be noticed that these early attempts focussed on the acceptance of Nagari script for Hindi and propagated the use of Hindi. However, Hindi was not claimed as the national language. I would like to emphasise here that it was not before the opening of twentieth century Hindi was claimed as the national language. Nevertheless, it was mostly propagated as the mother-tongue of Hindus. To understand main political and academic activities of the Hindi movement in late nineteenth century, we should further analyse the abovementioned three “pillars” of Hindi movement. These political and academic trends will help us to understand nationalist and cultural aspirations of Hindi movement.

## **2. NAGARI – HINDI MOVEMENT IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

The earliest demands for the use of Nagari and Hindi started in Bihar, which was then part of Bengal Presidency. The implementation of Nagari in Bihar encouraged the presentation of a memorandum to Lieutenant Governor of North–Western Province, William Muir, demanding the recognition of Nagari script.<sup>206</sup> Muir, an Orientalist and expert on Islam, refuted their demands. Ram Gopal informs that the order in Bihar was not implemented either and government officers in Bihar continued the use of Urdu as earlier. However, some also opposition emerged against the order. Ram Gopal hints that the changewas opposed by Kayasthas and Muslims who had their command over the court language. Syed Ahmad Khan formed the Urdu Defence Committee in Allahabad to protect Urdu i.e. the official Hindustani. The Committee failed to avert the decision. There are, however, few weak evidences to show that Syed Ahmad Khan associated Urdu with Muslim identity at that time. Rather he saw Urdu as the generally understood in the public and widespread language in India.

There was correspondence between Syed Ahmad and Baboo Saroda Prosad Sandel, an Accountant General at Allahabad in 1868 on the introduction of the Nagari script in place of the Urdu script. This correspondence and other letters sent to Syed Ahmad are representatives to the views of Syed Ahmad and the Nagari supporters in the NWP and Oudh. Raja Sheoraj Singh of Kashipur favoured Nagari Characters and associated the Nagari with Hindu religion. He opposed Persian Characters associating them with the

slavery of Indian for centuries. The views of Syed Ahmad Khan on the Hindi and the Nagari were expressed in a letter to Baboo Saroda Prosad Sandel.

Interestingly, in order to counter Grierson, Mukherjee offered arguments similar to those used by the Urdu supporters in opposing Hindi (as we have seen Syed Ahmad called Hindi vulgar). Hindi supporters opposed Urdu or the official Hindustani on the ground that it was not the mother-tongue of people of Bihar. They demanded its replacement with Hindi. Simultaneously, they rejected Bhojpuri, Maithili and Magadhi as the media of education on the ground that these were mere dialects. Nevertheless, the petitions and memoranda presented to the Bengal government were fruitful. In April 1880, another directive was issued and Hindi in Nagari script was made the sole language in the courts of Bihar. Bengali intellectuals played very crucial role in securing the official recognition of Hindi as an administrative and educational language in Bengal Presidency. As Das Gupta points out, „the eminent Bengali writer Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay was largely responsible for the introduction of Hindi in the law courts and the schools in Bihar.

Till the mid-nineteenth century Hindi was not yet developed as a literary language. Indeed, there was paucity of Hindi publications in Nagari. The supporters of official Hindustani highlighted this lacuna. Hindi supporters were perplexed with their arguments when they projected Hindi as a serious rival to the official Hindustani. The official Hindustani was tilted, as we have discussed, towards Urdu in the absence of alternatives simple forms of the language. This Hindustani could only be replaced if either Hindi evolved as a literary language or a simple form of Hindustani evolved. Hindi supporters focussed on the construction of a standardised literary form of Hindi.

In order to achieve this goal, a group of Hindi writers worked very hard to write and publish works in Hindi language and Nagari script. In this field of Hindi movement, the name of Bharatendu Harischandra was the most prominent. He is revered as Babu Harischandra and called the father of modern Hindi. Harischandra was a zealous and enthusiastic writer of Hindi in Nagari script. He was, without doubt, one of the greatest poets, dramatists and essayists of his time. He was the editor of the earliest Hindi journals and magazines. He edited and managed *Kavivachansudha*, *Harischanra's Magazine* and *Harischandachandrika* from 1868 to 1884. He did not believe in working in isolation but tried to explore every possibility of working collectively with others for the growth of Hindi. Hence, he founded several associations and discussion forums to associate others in the work of Hindi promotion. He founded the *Kavivardhini Sabha* in 1870 for the improvisation of verse, the Penny Reading Club in 1873 for discussion and dissemination of „European culture of Reason“. About him,

Many journals, periodicals and magazines were founded to promote Hindi in Nagari script in the late nineteenth century. With these publications a new form of Hindi emerged, which was later called modern Hindi. Harischandra was also instrumental in the formation and standardisation of this modern literary Hindi. In his earlier approaches, he was not against purging Hindi of Urdu words, and favoured a simple Hindi.

A new literary Hindi was thus formed. Nevertheless, this new modern Hindi was not unintelligible, as a good number of readers were attracted to the emergent Hindi literature. The most unfortunate development in the Hindi movement, however, was its seemingly growing association with an imagined Hindu culture and Hindu religious identity. There were other contradictions too. The Hindi movement sometimes looked like a crude form of nationalism and sometimes a form of anti-colonialism with its critique of economic exploitation by the British. Nevertheless, Hindi leaders mostly spoke in a loyalist voice, expressing the British gratitude for bestowing modernity on Indians. Views expressed in the new Hindi literature were sometimes extremely traditional and sometimes rational and critical of superstitions.

Hindi was, thus, seen as the language of Hindus and, by implication, Urdu was targeted as the language of Muslims. Although the evolution of a new literary form of Hindi did not threaten the prevalence of official Hindustani, nevertheless it did considerably help in the growth of the Hindi movement. Hindi in Nagari which had developed a literature of its own, mostly prose form, was called modern Hindi. The literature of *Raso* poetry and medieval *Bhakti* poetry were subsequently imagined as the primary and medieval forms of Hindi. With the emergence of modern Hindi there was now a contender ready to claim the place of official Hindustani. Urdu was very close to the official Hindustani because of its script and vocabulary and, hence, was already privileged. The Hindi movement of the late nineteenth century fought to dethrone it from that position. What was the relationship of the Hindi movement with that of the making of Hindu religious identity and nationalism in the late nineteenth century? Dalmia in her study has provided insights that would help answer this crucial question.

Hence, it is difficult to conclude whether the Hindi movement, which was increasingly associating itself with Hindu identity, was categorically a communal movement in the late nineteenth century. And from this vantage point it was certainly not a nationalist movement either. Interestingly, in the late nineteenth century, while Hindi was associated with Hindu identity, seldom was the status of national language demanded for it. Indeed, the Hindi movement till the end of the century focused on its recognition as the language of courts and government offices and demanded education in through its medium in the Nagari script. In view of the available alternatives that is the persianized official Hindustani it was not a categorically wrong demand in principle. However, it was the association of the movement with Hindu identity formation that was problematic. What is also notable is that simplification of the official Hindustani was not being demanded either. Moreover, the Hindi lobby entered in a battle with Urdu, which was also an indigenous form and style of the common language of the eighteenth century. The Hindi movement's exclusionist tendencies determined its trajectory in the twentieth century. And it was this exclusionist strain that subsequently roused opposition to the movement's demand for making Hindi the national language in the twentieth century. Before exploring the second stage of the Hindi movement in the twentieth century, we will return to another pillar of Hindi movement, i.e., the Nagari Pracharni Sabha, an institution founded to promote publication in Nagari script and collection of Nagari manuscripts.

The arguments in the document prepared by Malaviya were sharp and democratic with an intellectual vigour, however, cleverly prepared in favour of Hindi. There were always contrary claims on the number of publication and their circulation. When the document was prepared a memorandum was also prepared with sixty thousand signatures. These signatures were collected from every district of the province and were bind in sixteen volumes to present to MacDonnell. A delegation of seventeen eminent people, under the leadership of Madan Mohan Malaviya, went to meet with lieutenant governor MacDonnell on 2 March 1898 in Allahabad. The deputation was received sympathetically. MacDonnell showed his favour to the demands but told that no decision could be taken immediately, as official Hindustani was used for a long time in the province and it had strong supporters. However, it was not the first occasion, Hindi leaders of the Nagari Pracharni Sabha, two years earlier, had prepared a felicitation letter when MacDonnell visited Banaras in November 1896 to felicitate him. When they failed to reach in time they posted the felicitation letter with their demands. MacDonnell replied happily and wrote that he would consider their demand at a right opportunity. Naresh Mehta argued that "Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya came to lead the Hindi movement because the Sabha and specially Shyam Sunder Das had already got some success".

After two years of Malaviya deputation, on 18 April 1900, the famous MacDonnell's Order was released. In the Order the use of Nagari script was permitted along with Persian in the courts and administration of the provinces. However, before the Order released, the departments of revenue and judiciary had been consulted by the governor. Actually after meeting with the deputation led by Malaviya, MacDonnell told them that a decision would only be taken after an inquiry and proper consultation. He consulted the head of three highest departments. They were the president of the revenue board, the registrar of the High Court and the Commissioner of justice administration. After proper consultation the government of NWP and Oudh passed a resolution.

Nevertheless, it was decided that there could be any arrangement by which people who knew none the script but only Nagari be helped. Finally, MacDonnell decided to allow the use of Nagari script along with the Persian script in the NWP and Oudh. This decision is known as the MacDonnell Order of 1900. The MacDonnell Order decided:

1. All persons may present their petitions and complaints either in the Nagari or in the Persian scripts as they wish.
2. All notices, announcements and other such papers which are issued in the courts and revenue offices would be in Persian and Nagari both the scripts.
3. In future only those people will be appointed as clerks or officers who are able to read and write both the Nagari and the Persian scripts.

Hindi organizations entered in another stage of Hindi Movement in the new century. Now, Hindi was gradually being called the national language of India. Hindi in Nagari had been recognized in Bihar, Central Province and the United Province.<sup>268</sup> Punjab was the only province where official Hindustani was

still the sole language of law courts and administration. Encouraged with the recognition in the United Province, Hindi, now, fought for the national status. Some of the earliest suggestions regarding Hindi should be made all India link language were emanated from Bengali intellectuals, notably Bankim Chandra and Bhudev Mukherji, Das Gupta observed. However, the Hindi lobby argued that Tilak was the first national leader who proposed Hindi as the national language.

### **3. HINDI NATIONALISM AND THE HINDI SAHITYA SAMMELAN (HSS)**

Nagari Pracharini Sabha organised a Hindi literary conference in 1910 called Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. Inauguration of the HSS was a major development in the Hindi movement. The idea was to consolidate every activity of Hindi movement which was carrying on by various organisations in various regions. In a meeting, held on 1 May 1910, Nagari Pracharini Sabha decided to organise an all India literary-conference, the *Sahitya Sammelan*, with the objective to make Hindi the national language and to propagate Devanagari script more extensively.

The conference was organized in October 1910 in Banaras and presided by Madan Mohan Malaviya. The first literary conference was very successful and enthusiastically attended by Hindi supporters. Malaviya had been instrumental to influence lieutenant governor Anthony MacDonnell to issue order to permit the use of "the Nagari character" in the courts of the NWP. Since then, Malaviya was revered as a great leader in Hindi movement. However, as we will notice P. D. Tandon emerged as the most powerful leader of Hindi politics in twentieth century. In this first literary-conference Tandon proposed that such literary conferences must be organized on a regular basis. His proposal was adopted. On Tandon's request it was also decided that next conference would be organised in *Prayag* (Allahabad). A committee with the name „Hindi Sahitya Sammelan“ was thus formed and P. D. Tandon was appointed its *Pradhanmantri*. The temporary office of the conference was also moved to Allahabad for a year as it was the hometown of Tandon as well as the President. Since then the HSS became a permanent and most influential organisation in the history of Hindi movement, headquartered in Allahabad.

A glimpse of the resolutions passed in the first Sammelan might acquaint us with its political strategy and ideology. In the first two resolutions grief and condolence was expressed on the demise of Emperor Edward VII. Also, Emperor George V was „heartily“ and „loyally“ congratulated for his enthronement. The fourth resolution, proposed by P. D. Tandon, expressed the main objective of Hindi movement.

In nineteenth century Hindi fought for the official recognition. In twentieth century, when this recognition had already gained, Hindi leaders still believed in the support of the State rather people for making Hindi the national language of India. Madan Mohan Malaviya, in his Presidential speech, also reflected similar views. In a series of other resolutions better implementation of the Order of 1900, publication of Hindi gazette, use of Nagari script in stamps and coins were demanded.

In some other resolutions Indian states were asked to work in Hindi, and caste-organisations, conferences, landlords and businessmen were advised to use Hindi alphabet in Nagari script. The Baroda king was thanked for implementing Hindi for education.<sup>286</sup> However, it must be noticed that explicit attacks were made against Urdu but not against regional languages. It does not, however, mean that Hindi leaders believed in the coexistence of the various Indian languages.

Someone lamented that “the people of other languages had organised themselves for the progress of their mother-tongues, Hindi supporters should also organise... till now Hindi people lagged behind to do this job”. Therefore, Hindi was not only seen as a better language than others including Bengali but was also projected above them. Malaviyaridiculed Saur seni and Maharashtri in his speech. He, however, proposed that there was actually no big difference among Maharashtri, Saur seni, Punjabi and Bangla. It was undoubtedly assumed that Hindi was the only candidate for the national language of India and, hence it should be accepted by all.

The second conference, it was decided, had to be organized by Nagari Pravardhini Sabha of Prayag, Allahabad. But Tandon disassociated the Sabha from the conference. When the new President of the Sammelan Govind Narayan Mishra arrived in the city, a procession was organized and people shouted slogans, ‘*Sabhapati Mahashaya ki jai*’. This session of the HSS was important for making a manual and formalising the organizing structure of the HSS. The main objectives of the HSS were stated in the manual, proposed in the 25<sup>th</sup> resolution of the second session. Some important objectives were read as:

1. To work for the progress of every aspect of Hindi literature.
2. To propagate Devanagari script all over India, and for making all India activities and works easier in Hindi to endeavour to make Hindi the national language.
3. To continue to propagate Devanagari script and Hindi language in government, Indian states, colleges, universities and other places, societies, and in public.

It was also decided that the HSS would exclusively work for the progress and propagation of Hindi. And no other issue, political, religious or social would be discussed. The HSS invited every organisation, working for the propagation of Nagari and Hindi, to join the HSS. By inviting every organisation to join it, the HSS wanted to evolve as the central organisation of Hindi nationalism, as no organisation was working at the national level. The most popular Nagari Pracharni Sabha of Banaras was still a regional organisation. There were many other such organisations working for the progress or propaganda of Nagari and Hindi. The HSS, now, assumed to evolve as an umbrella organisation. It has been argued that “as the [Indian National] Congress worked for the political independence, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, and the institutions and organisations established by it, worked to install Hindi at the level of national language.”

The eighth session of the Sammelan is very relevant in the history of national language movement as the session was presided by Gandhi. He was invited by Madan Mohan Malaviya. Gandhi had already

expressed his views that Hindi not English would be the national language of India. However, Gandhi suggested to allowing both scripts – Nagari and Urdu for writing the national language. In the Sammelan Gandhi shifted the centre of attack from Urdu to English. He defined Hindi as a language of masses, common language of Hindus and Muslims, neither too Sanskritised nor too Persianised and the language should be understandable to everyone. We will discuss the ideas of Gandhi about the national language in following chapter. It must be noticed here that Gandhi asked the members of the Sammelan not to indulge in Hindi-Urdu conflict. He, however, said that the question of script was complex, but concluded that both the scripts should be given space in the nation. Gandhi tried to convince the Hindi supporters that there was no competitor of Hindi, and if the Hindi-Urdu conflict was left, the question of the national language would be solved.

The HSS had become the most important organisation of Hindi movement. They apparently accepted Gandhi's view of the national language but did not work for Hindustani. Their activities remain centred on the promotion of Hindi. The support of Gandhi for the national language helped in the growth and expansion of the HSS. In 1935-37, when Gandhi was ready to expand the promotion of national language in all India, the HSS influenced Gandhi to agree to work for the national script too. The HSS argued that promotion of Sanskritised Hindi would be helpful in non-Hindi regions to teach the national language. Under the influence Gandhi was also ready to endeavour if Devanagari could be adopted by regional languages. Perhaps, the failures and opposition of Hindi promotion in the South encouraged Gandhi to take that course. The Sammelan clarified that for national purposes Hindustani style of Hindi would be the language. But, practically it was ready to promote Devanagari for regional languages with the perspective to make it the national script. Urdu lobby vehemently opposed these proposals. Gandhi, sensing opposition, returned to the concept of Hindustani in two scripts. But, the Sammelan was now ready to take different course.

In 1948-49, the Constituent Assembly decided the question of national language. Hindi leaders succeeded in getting recognition of Hindi as the Official language of independent India. They, now, evolved in another task to form a Sanskritised form of the official language Hindi.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

So it is concluded that this article argues that Hindustani was the national language of the national movement not Hindi. Hindi was, however, the national language in the view of Hindi nationalists. Hindi nationalists very cleverly projected Hindi as the national language of India after Independence. This article juxtaposing evidences from Gandhi and Nehru's writings argues that Nehru was complimentary to Gandhi in developing the idea of Hindustani. It can also be said that both the national leaders were against the adoption of Hindi in Devanagari as the national language in independent India. Rather, they wanted to evolve a simple mixed form of Hindi and Urdu, which they mostly called Hindustani. Hindustani in the world of defined languages, however, did not exist in the twentieth century but it was present in the form of the spoken language of north India.

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