CHAPTER - 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF

THE HINDI AND ASSAMESE LANGUAGES

This chapter will include brief descriptions of the background, origin, growth and development of both Hindi and Assamese languages.

02.01. The Origin and Growth of the Indian languages:

The history of the ancient form of speech from which the modern vernaculars of India sprang up can be reconstructed from materials supplied by the literature and written documents such as inscriptions on stone, copper-plates and such other relics began with the Vedas. But these were not existing before the Aryan invasion of India over the North-western passes.

The horders of Aryan settlers came over the north-western mountain passes into India and drove back the earlier inhabitants, the Kolarians and Dravidians, from their homes and introduced their language in the land they occupied.  

The language of all the earliest records of India, whether literary or inscriptional, is Indo-European in character. The Aryan tribes who continued, perhaps for generations or even for centuries, to swarm over the mountain passes into Southern Afghanistan and the Punjab, or through the plains of Beluchistan into Sindh and the valley of the Indus, must, no doubt, have spoken a variety of kindred dialects. The history of languages everywhere shows that this is invariably the case among primitive peoples. It shows, too, that, in the course of time, when a community becomes settled and civilization advances, the dialect of some particular region, which has won special importance as a centre of religion, politics, or commerce, gradually acquires an ascendancy over the others and is

1. Medhi, Kaliram; Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 2
eventually accepted by general consent as the standard language of educated people and of literature; and that when its position is thus established, its use tends to supersede that of the other dialects.

In India, such a standard or literary language appears first in the hymns of the Rig-Veda, the most ancient of which probably date from a period at least 1500 years before the Christian era. "This "Vedic" Sanskrit is the language of priestly poets who lived in the region now known as Southern Afghanistan, the North-Western Frontier Province, and the Punjab; and it differs from the latter "Classical" Sanskrit rather more, perhaps, than the language of Chaucer; from that of Shakespeare."2

The philologists have divided the Indo-Aryan languages of India into three groups according to their special linguistic characters - (1) Midland, (2) Intermediate and (3) Outer group.3

(1) The Midland group :- The Midland group comprises Western Hindi of the Gangetic Doab and the eastern part of the Punjab. It was in this region that the hymns of the Rig-Veda were composed.

(2) The Intermediate group :- Round this region there is a band of territory where mixed languages, the Intermediate group prevail. This includes Gujrati, Marwari, Central Punjabi, Nepali and Eastern Hindi of Awadh and the country to its south.

(3) The Outer group :- Round the Intermediate group is the belt of outer languages. This include on the North Kashmiri, Western Punjabi and Sindhi, on the south Marathi and on the east Bihari, Oriya, Bengali and Assamese.

02.02. The Vedic language:

The oldest specimen of the Indo-Aryan language has been preserved in the

2. Quoted from “Ancient India” by Rapson, pp. 9-10, in Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 2
3. Medhi, Kaliram; Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 3
hymns of the Rig-Veda which were composed about 1500 B.C.. Its subsequent development in the Vedic period, is marked by three stages:-

(1) the period of the *Vedic hymns*,
(2) the period of the *Brahmanas* and
(3) the period of the *Sutras*.

The Vedic hymns were in verse while the Brahmanas were in prose and the language underwent great changes from the one to the other. When it came to the stage of the Sutras the old Vedic forms were almost completely gone and the language came under somekind of grammatical rules of Api-sali and Panini.4

The Vedic hymns were preserved for centuries by oral tradition as writing was unknown till a little before the birth of Gautama, the Buddha, in the 6th century before Christ. The ignorance of the art of writing led to the devise of preserving the pronunciation of words in what is known as the *Pratisakshya*. In course of time the literary cultivation of a particular diletct produced the Vedic language of the priestly class.

02.03. The Primary Prakrits:

In any case we may accept the form of speech, particularly identical with, though somewhat simpler than, that of the Vedic hymns, together with its contemporary dialects, as the spoken Vedic language. These dialects may be regarded as the Primary Vernaculars of Prakrits. The word Prakrit is derived from Prakriti, meaning “nature”, “origin” and the Prakrit language signifies the “natural”, “original”, continuation of the ancient language of unmodified or real language of the people. It is the natural popular dialect as opposed to Sanskrit, which is a refined or purified or cultured language. This term “Prakrit” should not be confounded with the language of mediaval period known as “Prakrit”. It is used here in the wider sense of the spoken languages of the people, whether pre-Vedic,

4. Medhi, Kaliram; Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 4
Vedic or later vernaculars of Northern India.

02.04. The Sanskrit:

The artificial nature of the highly developed and cultured language, known as Sanskrit. The language of the Vedas merged in the course of time into that of the Brahmanas and the later into the language of the Sutras. These three kinds of literature are classed as "Vedic". Their language, mixed up with the local dialects, underwent an artificial but literary development as the result of scholastic study among the priests and educated people till it came under the iron sway of the grammatical rules formulated by the great grammarian Panini, about the fourth century before Christ. This language is known as Sanskrit. As the result of a long course of literary treatment and grammatical refinement it eventually gained the general acceptance as the correct form of literary language. But a literary language thus definitely fixed ceases to undergo any change. Thus, the Sanskrit language, has remained unaltered during the long period of about twenty-five centuries, although it is now quite dead and in a metamorphic state. The literature of this period is so varied and vast that one is simply struck with wonder at its extent. No nation in the world could compete with India in the richness and beauty of at least some specimens of this exhaustive lore. The major portion of this literature is, however, devoted to religious subjects.

02.05. The Secondary Prakrits:

In sharp contrast to the literary language of a country stand the local dialects. While the literary language is fixed, the local dialects still continue to have a life and growth of their own and to change in accordance with the laws of human speech. While the literary language, although, no doubt originally the dialect of some particular region, gains currency throughout the whole country among the educated classes, the local dialects continue to be spoken by the common people, who must have formed an overwhelmingly large proportion of the population. Thus the Vedic and pre-Vedic dialects of the Aryans and the corresponding Primary Prakrits...
Prakrits continued their life and growth and changed in the course of centuries into Secondary Prakrits. Their development may be divided into three distinct stages –
- 1) Pali, 2) Prakrit and 3) Apabhramsha.

02.05.01 The Pali:

It is evident that from at least the seventh century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. a vast literature in Pali, as the sacred language of Buddhism and Jainism, came into being. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism marks an important epoch in the religious and linguistic history of India. These two religions are revolt against Brahmanism and also against the supposed pretention of the Hindu literature about the universal use of Sanskrit as the only literary language of India. Vardhamana Jnataputra (also known as Mahavira), the founder of Jainism, probably lived from 599 to 522 B.C. and Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism from about 563 to 483 B.C. Before and after the rise of Buddhism there was a class of men as the Wanderers (paribrajaka) who were greatly respected throughout the country. “They were teachers or sophists, who spent eight or nine months of every year wandering about precisely with the object of engaging in conversational discussions on matters of ethics and philosophy, natures lore and mysticism.” These wanderers met one another in the halls and places set apart for them by the kings and noblemen as well as in the sheds erected by the villagers on the roadside for travellers. In their wanderings they used also to call on the local wanderers and learned men to discuss such matters and for interchange of opinion.

It is clear, that there was no obstacle, arising from diversity of language, to interprete. That not merely as regards ordinary conversation about the ordinary necessities of daily life, but as regards philosophical and religious discussions of a subtle and earnest kind. The common language thus widely understood – used from the land of the Kurus in the west, in Magadha in the east, northwards at Savatthi

and Kusinara in the Nepal hills, and southwards in one direction as far as Ujjain—could not have been Sanskrit. Because Classical Sanskrit was not yet in existence and the languages used in the Brahmanas was neither sufficiently known outside the widely scattered schools of Brahmans, nor of a nature to lend itself easily to such discussions.

"The only reasonable and probable explanation is that the wanderers talked in a language common among the cultured laity (officials, nobles, merchants and others) which bore to local dialects much the same relation as the English of London in Shakespeare's time bore to the various dialects spoken in Somersetshire, Yorkshire and Essex." The rise and development of this language of the Wanderers is due to two causes—(1) political and (2) religious.

02.05.01.01. Political Cause: Before the rise of Buddhism in the seventh and sixth centuries there were four monarchies in power—(i) Magadha with its capital at Rajagriha (afterwards Pataliputra) and King Bimbisara, (ii) Kosala with its capital at Savatthi and and King Pasenadi and later his son Vidudabha. (iii) Vatsas with capital at Kosambi on the Jumna and King Udena son of Parantapa and (iv) Avanti with capital Ujjaini and King Pajjota. In the course of time the Kingdom of Kosala came to be of immense power extending over the whole of the United Province and the surrounding country. Just before the rise of Buddhism this mighty kingdom gave peace and security to the people and prosperity to trade and commerce. Under the patronage of Kosala king the growth of the institution of the Wanderers became very rapid and the development of the common language marked. The Magadha kingdom with its capital at Pataliputra was next in importance at this time. But later fifth century B.C. it rose to be of importance, and in the third and fourth centuries B.C., under the Mauryan dynasty it brought the Kosala

6. Quoted from "Buddhist India" by Rhys Davids, p. 146-147, in Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 7.
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kingdom under its sway. Then also the common language of that vast country was cultivated on its intellectual side. But in later times it underwent some changes.8

02.05.01.02. Religious Cause: It should not be supposed that the Vedic Sanskrit was in common use in Northern India just before or after the rise of Buddhism, and the classical Sanskrit was born several centuries afterwards.

In the second century after Christ there were records of grants of land to Brahmans. In the third century there are also a few instances. From the fourth century onwards there are quite numerous inscriptions showing a marked rise in Brahmanical influence. The Gupta kings are then stated to have carried out the most complicated and expensive sacrifices, such as Horse-sacrifice (Ashwamedha yajna). Two inscriptions reveal the records of the erection of a sacrificial post, another an endowment for lighting lamps in a temple to the sun. There are grant of villages for the performance of sacrificial rites; and numerous grant of lands to Brahmans, and to the temples in their charge. But for the four centuries before that (from 300 B.C. to 100 A.D.) no Brahmin, no Brahmin temple, no Brahmin god, no sacrifice or ritualistic act of any kind is ever referred to. There is a very large number of gifts recorded as given by Kings, princes and chiefs, by merchants, goldsmiths, artisans and ordinary householders; but not one of them is given in support of anything - of any opinion or divinity or practice - with which the Brahmans had anything to do. And whereas the later inscriptions, favouring the Brahmanas and their special sacrifices, are in Sanskrit, these earlier ones, in which they are not mentioned, are in a sort of Pali - not in the local vernacular of the place where the inscriptions are found, but in a dialect similar in many essential respects, to the dialect for common intercourse, based on the vernacular, which the Wanderers must have used in their discussions at the time when Buddhism arose.9

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8. Medhi, Kaliram; Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 8
9. Quoted from “Buddhist India” - by Rhys Davids, pp. 150-151 in Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p. 8

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Dr. Bhandarkar has come to the conclusion that from 200 B.C. to 400 A.D. there was no monument or inscription of any kind devoted to Brahmonic religion. Of course, the Brahmans and the Brahmanic religion, he says, existed during this period. But the inscriptions of this period showed greater respect for the people than for the Brahmanic learning. And almost the whole population from king to the humblest subjects professed Buddhism.

"Brahmanism has always been an island in a sea. Even in the Brahmanic age there is evidence to show that it was the isolated belief of a comparatively small group of minds. It did not even control all the Aryan population."  

From such observations it will be clear that since before the rise of Buddhism the common language of Kosala, referred to above, was, to a greater extent than the Hindi language at the present time, the *lingua franca* of India. It was adopted by the Wanderers for their discussions and from it the secondary Prakrit, known as Pali, was derived. Gautama, the Buddha, who was himself a Kosalan, adopted the language for the propagation of his faith. The Brahmanic language, as preserved in the Vedas, was not the language then in common use although the common language we are speaking of was derived from it and from its innumerable dialects. Pali retained many Vedic and pre-Vedic forms which were wholly absent from the later classical Sanskrit.

In the course of time this common language, Pali, also came under the grammatical sway of Kachchhayano whose probable date was about 350 B.C.. Among the Buddhist it became a fashionable literary language. The Buddhist scriptures compiled and arranged by his disciples were written in Pali. The canonical texts divided into three *Pitakas* (or baskets) were in Pali. From this

11. Webber's History of Indian Literature, p. 223, quoted from Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, Kaliram Medhi, p. 9
arose the name of “Pali” (i.e. series). When the Buddhist empire broke up with the fall of the Mauryan dynasty and the Gupta Kings came into power the influence of the Brahmans and Brahmanical religion, under their patronage, gradually spread and this was followed by the extension and diffusion of classical Sanskrit as the literary language of Buddhist India.

Professor Rhys Davids has arranged the gradual change of form of the Indo-Aryan language in the following chronological order:

1. The dialects spoken by the Aryan invaders of India and by the Dravidian and Kolarian inhabitants they found there.
2. Ancient High Indian, the Vedic.
3. The dialects spoken by the Aryan, now often united by marriage and political union with the Dravidians, in their settlements either along the spurs of the Himalaya range from Kasmir to Nepal, or down the Indus valley and then accross to Avanti, or along the valley of the Jumna and the Ganges.
4. Second High Indian, Brahmanic, the literary language of the Brahmanas and Upanisads.
5. The vernaculars from Gandhara to Magadha at the time of the rise of Buddhism, not so divergent probably as not to be more or less mutually intelligible.
6. A conversational dialect, based probably on the local dialect of Sabatthi, the capital of Kosala, and in general use among Kosala officials, among merchants and among the more cultured classes, not only throughout Kosala dominions, but east and west from Delhi to Patna, and north and south from Savatthi to Avanti.
7. Middle High Indian, Pali, the literary language based on No. 6, probably in the form in which it was spoken in Avanti.
8. The Ashoka dialect, found on No. 6, especially as spoken at Patna but much influenced by the aim at approximation to Nos. 7 and 11.
9. The Ardha-Magadhi, the dialect of the Jain Angas.
10. The Lena dialect of the cave inscriptions, from the second century B.C.
onwards, based on No. 8, but approximating more and more to the next, No. 11, until it merges altogether into it.

11. Standard High Indian, Sanskrit - elaborated as to form and vocabulary, out of No. 4: but greatly enriched by words first taken from No. 5 to 7 and then brought back, as to form, into harmony with No. 4. For long the literary language only of the priestly schools, it was first used in inscriptions and coins from the second century A.D. onwards: and from the fourth and fifth centuries onwards became the literary *lingua franca* for all India.

12. The vernaculars of the India of the firth century A.D. and onwards.

13. Prakrit, the literary form of these vernaculars and especially of Maharastri. These are derived not from No. 11 (Sanskrit) but from No. 12, the later forms of the sister dialects to No. 6.(i.e. conversational dialects).12

The second stage of development of the secondary Prakrit is what is known as the *Prakrit par excellence*. This was the language adopted for the propagation of Jainism and for writing the sacred books of the followers of Bardhamana Jnataputra, (Mahabir), the founder of the faith, till 1000 or 1100 A.D.. After that time Sanskrit was adopted for that purpose. A collection of Jaina sacred texts compiled by Hala between third and seventh centuries A.D. testifies to the existence of a rich Prakrit literature. The Prakrit dialects also occupied a literary position in the Sanskrit plays where female characters, both high and low, as also domestic servants and persons in inferior position, are introduced as speaking Prakrit, instead of Sanskrit employed by Kings, noblemen and priests.

Vararuchi (1st century B.C.) the oldest Prakrit Grammarian, in his Prakrit Prakasa mentions four varieties of Prakrit, viz.- the real Prakrit, Sauraseni, Magadhi

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and Paisaci. Another Prakrit Grammarian of a later date, Hemachandra, in his Siddha Hemacandra Adhyaya VII, enumerates six varieties of Prakrits, viz. - Prakrit proper, Sauraseni, Magadhi, Paisaci, Culika-Paisaci and Apabhramsa. Pandit Mukunda Sarma, in his introduction to Prakrit Manjari of Katyayana, also follows the division of Hemacandra. He names the language of Maharastri, that of Sauraseni, of Magadha Magadhi, of demons Paisaci, and that of the barbarians Culika-Prakrit. In the epic the language of Abhirs and such other people are called Apabhramsa. In the sacred books the language derived from Sanskrit is styled Apabhramsa.¹³

Hemacandra defines Prakrit as of the nature of Sanskrit.¹⁴ It is the Prakrit par excellence. In one place Vararuci calls it Maharastri when after giving a few rules of Sauraseni he says - “The rest is like Maharastri.”¹⁵ But Hemacandra after giving a few special rules of Sauraseni says - “The rest is like Prakrit.”¹⁶ On the other hand Vararuci speaks of Sauraseni as “of the nature of Sanskrit.”¹⁷ just as Hemacandra describes Prakrit as “of the nature of Sanskrit.”. The latter never uses the word Maharastri at all. It seems the two grammarians make little difference between Prakrit or Maharastri and Sauraseni. In fact from the literary standpoint the difference is negligible. Maharastri was used in poetry and Sauraseni in prose. Again, neither grammarian says in which countries Maharastri and Sauraseni were used although Vararuci speaks of Magadhi as the language of Magadhas.¹⁸ From the names themselves it may be inferred that Maharastri is the language of

¹⁴. “Prakritih Sanskritam” – Hemacandra, 1.1 note; quoted from “Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language” by Kaliram Medhi, p.11.
¹⁵. “Sesam Maharastrivat” – Vararuchi, 12.32.; ~ ibid ~
¹⁶. “Sesam Prakritvat”– Hemacandra, 4.286.; ~ ibid ~
¹⁷. Prakritih Sanskritam – Vararuchi, 12.2.; ~ ibid ~
Maharastra, the country on the Upper Godavari, where modern Marathi is spoken, viz. Bombay and Hyderabad: Sauraseni, the language of Surasena, the country round Mathura and Broja having the Gangetic Doab as its centre, Magadhi that of Magadha or modern Bihar and Paisaci that of Pandya (Deccan), Kekaya, Vahlika, Nepal and some other places. Dr. Hoernle is of opinion that Prakrit or Maharastri was never the language of the Maratha country as the language of the place, Marathi, had not a single point in common with it. He maintains that the term Maharastri has no reference to a proper name but that it is a laudatory or descriptive word meaning “the Prakrit of the great kingdom.” (i.e. of the famed country of the Doab and Rajputana) and therefore the Prakrit par excellence. It means Sauraseni, the language of the Doab and Rajputana, from which the modern western Hindi has been derived. According to him there are only two Prakrits—i) Maharastra-Sauraseni and ii) Magadhi. The Prakrit grammarians include in the Maharastra-Sauraseni group Maharastri, Sauraseni, Avanti, Pracya and Sakki. Maharastri and Sauraseni gave birth to Western Hindi. viz. Maharastri to Braja and Kanauji and Sauraseni to Marwari and Gujrati. From Avanti the speech of Ujjain and Eastern Rajputana, from Pracya Baiswari and from Sakki the speech of south and western Punjab were probably derived. In the Magadhi group the Prakrit grammarians included Magadhi, Ardha-Magadhi, Dakshinatya, Utkali and Sabari. Magadhi represents the modern Maithili, Bengali and probably in part Assamese. It should, however, be remembered that Assamese in part at least is derived from Sauraseni now represented by Gujrati and Marwari. From Dakshinatya the language of Berar and Marathi and from Utkali, Oriya and Sabiri, the speech of the country lying within the borders of Utkali and Dakshinatya, were derived. Mr. Kaliram

Medhi considers that *Assamese is a mixture of Sauraseni and Magadhi* like Ardha-Magadhi which is represented by modern Bhojpuri and Eastern Hindi proper.\(^{21}\)

Paisaci was the Aryan language as spoken by non-Aryans with perhaps an admixture of their own speech. Dr. Hoernle describes it as low or Vulgar Prakrit\(^{22}\) in contradistinction to High Prakrit. which was a literary and not a spoken language. The later was always an artificial and grammatic language developed by literary cultivation like Sanskrit and literary Pali. The term Paisaci is derived from the word Pisac (demon). The aboriginal tribes - Dravidians, Kolarians and others - who came in contact with, or under the subjection of the Aryans used a distorted form of the Aryan vernacular. It was called Paisaci. It was, however, never the language of the demons. The champions of the Aryan exclusiveness and Hindu orthodoxy despised, abominated, hated and cursed the aborigines, the native foes or religious antagonists from the very beginning of Aryan immigration into India and described them as demons or cannibals (Pisac or Raksas). In any case Paisaci was a language of men. As time went on with long intercourse with the aryan immigrants the aborigins gradually improved this language till at last their speech and the Aryan Vernacular, each assimilating the speech or the other gave rise to the common vernacular of each particular place. Thus the Paisaci was eventually assimilated in the Maharashtra-Sauraseni and Magadhi Prakrits.\(^{23}\)

02.05.03 The Apabhramsa :

With literary cultivation and under rigid rules of grammar Prakrit ceased, in the course of time, to grow and became stereotyped like Sanskrit. But during all this time the spoken language of the Aryans and of those who came under their influence continued to grow and develop. This growth of Aryan language mixed,
to some extent, with the speech of the aborigines was considered by Prakrit grammarians to be a corruption of the literary Prakrit, Sauraseni and Magadhi. This is Apabhramsa. In point of fact it was the language current among the mass people by the side of the grammatical Prakrit. Apabhramsa contains some elements of Vedic and pre-Vedic languages like Pali which are not to be found in the grammatical Prakrit. Max Muller treats the language of the inscriptions as well as that of the Northern Buddhist canons as the old Apabhramsa. 24 Hemchandra mentions as of the nature of Sauraseni. 25 He at the same time maintains that it may be of Magadhi and Paisaci groups as well. 26 On the other hand Markandeya arranges the vernacular of the eastern country under the Magadhi Apabhramsa. Thus the Prakrit grammarians broadly divide the vernaculars of India into two main groups of Apabhramsas — i) Western or Maharashtra-Sauraseni and ii) Eastern or Magadhi Apabhramsa. 27

02.06. The Tertiary Prakrits:

The Apabhramsas developed, in the course of time, as vernaculars into the Indo-Aryan languages of modern India. This may be regarded as the tertiary stage. Max Muller arranges the modern vernaculars under the following groups:

1. “The spoken languages of India which have been called Neo-Aryan, Neo-Sanskrit or Gaudian, seem to me to have a perfect right to the common name of Prakritic, which would at once distinguish them from the old Prakrits, and would at the same time indicate their real origin. They are not derived from Sanskrit but from the old Prakrits, or more truly still from the local Apabhramsas.”

2. “The living Prakritic languages have now been arranged under four

25. Hemchandra — IV. 446
26. Hemchandra — IV. 447
27. Medhi, Kaliram; Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p.13
heads, as Western, Northern, Southern and Eastern.”
3. “The Western class comprises Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Western Hindi.”
5. “The Southern class comprises Marathi.”
6. “The Eastern class comprises Bihari (or Eastern Hindi), Bengali, Uriya and Asami.”
7. “The Northern and Western classes on one side, and the Southern and Eastern on the other, show certain traces of affinity.”
8. “All these languages and dialects must be considered as the descendants, not of grammatical Sanskrit, not of the grammatical Prakrit, but of the various Apabhramsas, spoken in different parts of India, and reduced to some kind of grammatical order, partly by native school masters, partly by literary cultivation.”

The table of affinities may be shown as follows:

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Observing the distinguishing characteristics of Assamese language Mr. Kaliram Medhi says, “With all deference to the great philologist it may be pointed out that Assamese though classed as a member of the Magadhi group, still retain some important peculiarities of the Western group to which Sindhi and Gujrati also belong. Nay, it retains also a few peculiarities of the language of the Zend-Avesta. I am in the circumstances tempted to class Assamese as a mixture of Eastern and Western group.”

02.07. The Origin and Growth of the Hindi language:

Hindi is the name given to various Indo-Aryan languages, dialects, and language registers spoken in northern and central India, Pakistan, Fiji, Mauritius, and Suriname. Standard Hindi is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India, one of the official language of the Indian Union Government and that of many states in India.

In the broadest sense of the word, "Hindi" refers to the Hindi languages, a culturally defined part of a dialect continuum that covers the "Hindi belt" of northern India. It includes Bhojpuri, an important language not only of India but of Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Mauritius, where it is called Hindi or Hindustani; and Awadhi, a medieval literary standard in India and the Hindi of Fiji. Rajasthani has been seen variously as a dialect of Hindi and as a separate language, though the lack of a dominant Rajasthani dialect as the basis for standardization has impeded its recognition as a language. Two other traditional varieties of Hindi, Chhattisgarhi and Dogri (a variety of Pahari), have recently been accorded status as official languages of their respective states, and so at times considered languages separate from Hindi. Despite the fact that it is in many ways indistinguishable from local Hindi, Urdu, as the principal language of India's large Muslim population and an official language of Pakistan, is often excluded from the purview of the label "Hindi" in India and Pakistan, though the language of Muslims may be included as Hindi or Hindustani in other countries where the language is spoken. As the

official language of a separate country, Nepali has always been excluded from this con
tception of Hindi, despite the fact that it is one of the Pahari languages which are other
wise included.

A narrower conception of Hindi, excluding all of specific varieties mentioned
above, may be specified as Western Hindi. This includes Braj Bhasha, a medieval Hindu
literary standard language. The current prestige dialect of Western Hindi, Khariboli, had
been a language of the Moghul court, of the British administration, and is the basis of the
modern national standards of South Asia, Standard Hindi and Urdu. Indeed, Khari boli is
sometimes used as an alternate term for Hindi. Again, Urdu is sometimes excluded from
consideration, despite being one of the Western Hindi languages, though in Malaysia,
Pakistani immigrants are said to speak "Hindi". The colonial term Hindustani, though
somewhat dated, is still used to specifically include Urdu alongside Hindi as spoken by
Hindus.

In its narrowest conception, "Hindi" means Standard Hindi, a Sanskritised form
of Khariboli purged of some of the Persian influence it picked up during Moghul rule,
vocabulary which is replaced with loans from Sanskrit. The Constitution of India ac
cords Hindi in the Devanagari script status as the official language of India, with Urdu,
retaining the Perso-Arabic script, and the three other varieties of broad Hindi mentioned
above among the 22 scheduled languages of India. Standard Hindi, along with English,
is used for the administration of the central government, and Standard Hindi is used,
often alongside scheduled languages, for the administration of ten Indian states. How-
ever, despite divergence of vocabulary in the academic registers of Standard Hindi and

30. The 22 scheduled language of India are as follows: 1. Assamese, 2. Bengali, 3.
[ Source : Constitution of India, Eighth Schedule, Articles 344(1) & 351; cited from
"Language in India, vol.2 : 2nd April, 2002." and "Languages of India (Article),
www.iloveindia.com." ]

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Urdu and the use of distinct scripts, common speech remains Persianised and is largely indistinguishable whether it is called "Hindi" or "Urdu". Much of Hindi cinema, for example, might be described as Urdu, and is extremely popular in Urdu-speaking Pakistan despite language politics.

Thus, the conception of Hindi is informed not just by external criteria of mutual intelligibility, but by ethnicity, history, literacy, nationalism, and religion. These issues are especially acute when differentiating Hindi from Urdu, which are generally considered independent languages by their speakers but different formal registers of a single dialect by linguists. However, such issues also arise in debates over whether Rajasthani, and other members of the continuum are "languages" in their own right, or "dialects" of Hindi.

02.07.01 Origin of Hindi:

According to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattarjee Hindi is evolved from the Sauraseni Prakrit.\(^{31}\) Though there is no consensus for a specific time, Hindi originated as local dialects such as Braj, Awadhi, and finally Khadi Boli after the turn of tenth century (these local dialects are still spoken, each by large populations). During the reigns of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, which used Persian as their official language, Khadi Boli adopted many Persian and Arabic words. As for the ultimately Arabic words, since almost every one of them came via Persian, their form in Hindi-Urdu does not preserve the original phonology of Arabic.

02.07.02 Growth of Hindi:

Hindi is a modern Indo-Aryan language (belonging to the family of greater Indo-European languages) and is a descendent of Sanskrit, the earliest speech of the Aryan settlers in the north-west frontiers of India. Passing through various stages of evolution over the period of time – from Classical Sanskrit to Pali-Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa, the emergence of Hindi in its earliest form can be traced back to the 10th century A.D. \(^{32}\)


\(^{32}\) Ibid. ~, p.182.
Hindi, sometimes, is also referred to as Hindavi, Hindustani and Khadi-Boli. Hindi written in Devanagari script (which is the most scientific writing system among the existing writing systems of the world) is the National Official Language of the Republic of India and is ranked as the third most widely spoken languages of the world. In addition, Hindi is also the state language of the state of Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Approximately six hundred million people across the globe speak Hindi as either a first or second language. The literary history of Hindi can be traced back to the twelfth century and in its modern incarnation Hindi has an approximately three hundred year old, well attested rich literary and grammatical tradition.

Three distinct phases in the development of Indo-Aryan languages have been suggested by the scholars. They are:

(a) the Ancient period (1500 BC - 500 BC),
(b) the Medieval period (500 BC - 1000 AD) and
(c) the Modern period (1000 AD - till now).

The ancient period is the period of the Vedic and Classical Sanskrit which resulted in the evolution of Pali, Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa languages during the medieval period. Most of the modern Indo-Aryan languages of south Asia, like Hindi, Bangla, Oriya, Gujarati, Nepali, Marathi, Panjabi, evolved in the 'modern' period.

It is very difficult to say as to when exactly Hindi as a language came into picture and scholars are divided in their opinion on this issue. But the trace of Hindi is obvious in the language of the Siddh saints of century 8 - 9 AD. In order to make their teaching easily understandable to the common ordinary people, the kind of language Siddha saints used is can undoubtedly be called the one of the authentic earliest forms of Hindi. We can also find the glimpse of early Hindi in the language of the Jain poets (like Hemchandra

34. Tiwari, Dr. Bhola Nath; 'Hindi Bhasha', p.07.
35. Shukla, Acharya Ramchandra; 'Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas', pp. 05-08.
and Dharma Suri), Vidyapati, Abdurrehman Khankhana and Swayambhu. The more established form of Hindi (the 'khari boli') is visible in the creations of Sharfuddin, Khusro, Banda Niwaz Gaihurdaz, Wjahi Ali, Sultan Kuli Qutabshah, Shah Turab etc.

The modern Hindi and its literary tradition evolved towards the end of the 18th century. Fort William College was established in Calcutta by the British East India Company. The principal of this college John Gilchrist wrote a grammar of Hindi and also compiled a dictionary of Hindi to teach and train the BEIC employees the Hindi language. Some newspapers and journals were published in Hindi around that time, many of them were confiscated by the British government (for alleged anti British propaganda). The first Hindi newspaper 'Udant Martanda' was published in 1826 from Calcutta.36 At the same time, authors like Raja Shivprasad 'Sitare Hind' and Raja Lakshman Singh had established new trends in Hindi literature. Later on, Hindi became the national symbol in the fight against the British colonial rule. Many Indian leaders, revolutionaries, poets and reformists resorted to Hindi to propagate their ideology.

After independence (Aug 15, 1947), the new constitution was adopted in India on January 26, 1950 which granted to Hindi the status of the Official Language of the Republic of India.37 Today Hindi is world's third most spoken language38 and is spreading all over the world. In the era of technological advancements and the 'global village', Hindi assumes much importance as it is spoken by a large number of people all across the globe. With liberalized economy and opening of the Indian frontiers to the world market, there is increased interest in the learning and teaching of Hindi.

02.07.03 Current use of Hindi:

Standard Hindi is the official language of India and is the most widely spoken of India's scheduled languages. It is spoken mainly in northern states of i) Rajasthan, ii) Delhi, iii) Haryana, iv) Uttarakhand, v) Uttar Pradesh, vi) Madhya Pradesh, vii)

37. Mohammad, Dr. Malik; 'Rajbhasha Hindi', p.137.

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Chhattisgarh, viii; Himachal Pradesh, ix; Jharkhand, and x; Bihar. It is the second major language in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and it is also spoken alongside regional languages like Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi or Bengali throughout north and central India. Standard Hindi is also understood in a few other parts of India as well as in the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Hindustani is spoken by all persons of Indian descent in Fiji. In Western Viti Levu and Northern Vanua Levu, it is a common spoken language and a link language spoken between Fijians of Indian descent and native Fijians. The latter are also the only ethnic group in the world of non Indian descent that includes majority Hindi speakers. Native speakers of Hindi dialects account for 48% of the Fiji population. This includes all people of Indian ancestry including those whose forefathers emigrated from regions in India where Hindi was not generally spoken. As defined in the Constitution of Fiji Hindi is one of the three official languages of communication (English and Fijian being the others). Section 4(4)(a)(b)(c)(d) of the constitution also states that, "(4) Every person who transacts business with: (a) a department; (b) an office in a state service; or (c) a local authority; has the right to do so in English, Fijian, or Hindustani, either directly or through a competent interpreter."

02.07.04 Hindi and Urdu:

Standard Hindi and Urdu are understood from a linguistic perspective to indicate two or more specific dialects in a continuum of dialects that makeup the Hindustani language (also known as "Hindi-Urdu"). The terms "Hindi" and "Urdu" themselves can be used with multiple meanings, but when referring to standardized dialects of Hindustani, they are the two points in a pluricentric language.

The term Urdu arose as far back as the 12th century and gradually merged to-


[Source : www.wikipedia.org, Article-Hindi.]
together with kharhiboli (the spoken dialect). The term Hindawi was used in a general sense for the dialects of central and northern India. Urdu is the official language of Pakistan and is also an official language in some parts of India. 

Linguistically, there is no dispute that Hindi and Urdu are dialects of a single language, Hindustani/Hindi-Urdu. However, from a political perspective, there are pressures to classify them as separate languages. Those advocating this viewpoint point to the main differences between standard Urdu and standard Hindi:

♦ the source of borrowed vocabulary;
♦ the script used to write them (for Urdu, an adaptation of the Perso-Arabic script written in Nasta'liq style; for Hindi, an adaptation of the Devanagari script);
♦ Urdu's use of five consonants borrowed from Persian script.

Such distinctions, however, are insufficient to classify Hindi and Urdu as separate languages from a linguistic perspective. For the most part, Hindi and Urdu have a common vocabulary, and this common vocabulary is heavily Persianised. Beyond this, Urdu contains even more Persian loanwords while Hindi resorts to borrowing from Sanskrit. It is mostly the learned vocabulary that shows this visible distinction.

Some 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.

With regard to regional vernaculars spoken in north India, the distinction between Urdu and Hindi is insignificant, especially when little learned vocabulary is being used. Outside the Delhi dialect area, the term "Hindi" is used in reference to the local dialect, which may be different from both standard Hindi and standard Urdu. With regard to the comparison of standard Hindi and standard Urdu, the grammar (word structure and sentence structure) is identical.

The word Hindi has many different uses; confusion of these is one of the primary


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causes of debate about the identity of Urdu. These uses include:

1. standardised Hindi as taught in schools in North India
2. formal or official Hindi advocated by Purushottam Das Tandon and as insti­tuted by the post-independence Indian government, heavily influenced by Sanskrit,
3. the vernacular nonstandard dialects of Hindustani/Hindi-Urdu as spoken throughout much of India and Pakistan, as discussed above,
4. the neutralised form of the language used in popular television and films, or
5. the more formal neutralized form of the language used in broadcast and print news reports.

The rubric "Hindi" is often used as a catch-all for those idioms in the North Indian dialect continuum that are not recognised as languages separate from the language of the Delhi region. Bihari and Chhattisgarhi for example, while sometimes recognised as being distinct languages, are often considered dialects of Hindi. Many other local idioms, such as the Bhili languages, which do not have a distinct identity defined by an established literary tradition, are almost always considered dialects of Hindi. In other words, the boundaries of "Hindi" have little to do with mutual intelligibility, and instead depend on social perceptions of what constitutes a language.

The other use of the word "Hindi" is in reference to Standard Hindi, the Khari Boli register of the Delhi dialect of Hindi (generally called Hindustani) with its direct loanwords from Sanskrit. Standard Urdu is also a standardized form of Hindustani. Such a state of affairs, with two standardized forms of what is essentially one language, is known as a pluricentric language.

The term "Urdu" (which is cognate with the English word "horde") descends from the phrase Zaban-e-Urdu-e-Mu’Allah, lit., the "Exalted Language of the [military] Camp". The terms "Hindi" and "Urdu" were used interchangeably even by Urdu poets like Mir and Mirza Ghalib of the early 19th century (more often, however, the terms
Hindvi/Hindi were used); while British officials usually understood the term "Urdu" to refer solely to the writing system and not to a language at all. By 1850, there was growing use of the terms "Hindi" and "Urdu" to differentiate among different dialects of the Hindustani language. However, linguists such as Sir G. A. Grierson (1903) continued to recognize the close relationship between the emerging standard Urdu and the Western Hindi dialects of Hindustani. Before the Partition of India, Delhi, Lucknow, Aligarh and Hyderabad used to be the four literary centers of Urdu.

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).

02.07.05 Writing system of Hindi:

Hindi is written in the Devanagari script. To represent sounds that are foreign to Indic phonology, additional letters have been coined by choosing an existing Devanagari letter representing a similar sound and adding a dot (called a 'nukta') beneath it. For example, the sound [z], which was borrowed from Persian, is represented by 'ज', which is a modification of the letter which represents the sound [dʒ] (j). The dot (nukta) is also used to represent native sounds, such as 'श' and 'श्र', modifications of the characters 'श' and 'श्र' respectively. These modify the voiced retroflex plosive characters 'श' and 'श्र' to retroflex flap sounds.

Hindi phonology differs from exactly following Devanagari in some respects, the most important of which is the phenomenon called schwa syncope or schwa deletion. The schwa (ə, sometimes transcribed 'a') implicit in each consonant of the script is "obligatorily deleted" at the end of words and in certain other contexts. For instance, रम is Ram (incorrect: Rama), रचना is Rachna (incorrect: Rachana), वेद is Véd (incorrect: Véda) and नमकीन is Namkeen (incorrect Namakeen).

02.07.06 Hindi Literature:

The Hindi literature, is broadly divided into four prominent forms or styles, being Bhakti (devotional - Kabir, Raskhan); Shringar (beauty - Keshav, Bihari); Veer-Gatha (extolling brave warriors); and Adhunik (modern).

The medieval Hindi literature is marked by the influence of Bhakti movement and composition of long, epic poems, and written in Avadhi and Brij Bhasha dialects. During the British Raj, Khadiboli became the prestige dialect of Hindi. Khadiboli with heavily Sanskritized vocabulary or Sahityik Hindi (Literary Hindi) was popularized by the writings of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Bhartendu Harishchandra and others. The rising numbers of newspapers and magazines made Khadiboli popular among the educated people. Chandrakanta, written by Devaki Nandan Khatri, is considered the first authentic work of prose in modern Hindi. The person who brought realism in the Hindi prose literature was Munshi Premchand, who is considered as the most revered figure in the world of Hindi fiction and progressive movement.

The Dwivedi Yug ("Age of Dwivedi") in Hindi literature lasted from 1900 to 1918. It is named after Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, who played a major role in establishing modern Hindi language in poetry and broadening the acceptable subjects of Hindi poetry from the traditional ones of religion and romantic love.

In the 20th century, Hindi literature saw a romantic upsurge. This is known as Chhayavaad (shadowism) and the literary figures belonging to this school are known as

Chhayavaadi. Jaishankar Prasad, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', Mahadevi Varma and Sumitranandana Pant, are the four major Chhayavaadi poets.44

_Uttar Adhunik_ is the post-modernist period of Hindi literature, marked by a questioning of early trends that copied the West as well as the excessive ornamentation of the Chhayavaadi movement, and by a return to simple language and natural themes.

02.07.07 **Hindi in Popular Media:**

Hindi films play an important role in popular culture. The dialogues and songs of Hindi films use Khari Boli and Hindi-Urdu in general, but the intermittent use of various dialects such as Awadhi, Rajasthani, Bhojpuri, and quite often Bambaiya Hindi, as also of many English words, is common.

Alam Ara (1931), which ushered in the era of "talkie" films in India, was a Hindi film. This film had seven songs in it. Music soon became an integral part of Hindi cinema. It is a very important part of popular culture and now comprises an entire genre of popular music. Film music is so popular that songs filmed even 50–60 years ago are a staple of radio/TV and are generally very familiar to an Indian.

Hindi movies and songs are popular in many parts of Northern India, such as Punjab, Gujarat and Maharashtra, that do not speak Hindi as a native language. Indeed, the Hindi film industry is largely based at Mumbai, in the Marathi-speaking state of Maharashtra. Hindi films are also popular abroad, especially in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran and the UK. These days Hindi movies are released worldwide and have good viewership in the Americas, Europe and Middle Eastern countries.

The role of radio and television in propagating Hindi beyond its native audience cannot be overstated. Television in India was introduced and controlled by the central government until the proliferation of satellite TV made regulation unenforceable. During the era of control, Hindi predominated on both radio and TV, enjoying maximum air-

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44. Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas, Ed. Dr. Nagendra, p. 443.
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Time than any other Indian language. After the advent of satellite TV, several private channels emerged to compete with the government's official TV channel. Today, a large number of satellite channels provide viewers with much variety in entertainment. These include soap operas, detective serials, horror shows, dramas, cartoons, comedies, Hindu mythology and documentaries.

02.08. The origin and growth of the Assamese language:

Assamese is the easternmost Indo-Aryan language spoken mainly in Brahmaputra Valley in the State of Assam with Lakhimpur district in the extreme east and Goalpara district in the extreme west. It meets Bengali in the west and is surrounded on all sides by speeches belonging to altogether different language families of Tibeto-Burman and the Khasi of the Mon-Khmer family. Assamese is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India. It is also the official language of Assam. It is used mainly in the state of Assam in North-East India. It is also spoken in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and other northeast Indian states. Nagamese, an Assamese-based creole is widely used in Nagaland and parts of Assam. Small pockets of Assamese speakers can be found in Bhutan. According to the 2011 Census report Assamese language is spoken by over 13 million people.

The English word “Assamese” is built on the same principle as “Japanese”, “Taiwanese”, etc. It is based on the name “Assam” by which the tract consisting of the Brahmaputra valley was known. The people of Assam call their state Ḫxôm and their language Ḫxômiya. Assamese has derived its phonetic character set and its behaviour from Sanskrit. It is written using the Assamese script. Assamese is written from left to right and top to bottom, in the same manner as Hindi.

02.08.01 The Origin of Assamese Language:

Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language originated from the Vedic dialects, and therefore, a sister of all the northern Indian languages of the country. But the exact nature of the origin and growth of the language is not very clear as yet. Some
scholars think that it is a daughter of Sanskrit. But its origin is to be found in the popular dialects of Assam. It is a branch of the living speech of India springing from the same source from which Sanskrit itself sprang when it first assumed its literary independence. Like Hindustani Assamese is Vedic or pre-Vedic Sanskrit in a new form although it has greatly assimilated various other elements into its body notably of the Bodo group of the Tibeto-Burman family.

It is supposed that like other Aryan languages Assamese was also born from Apabhramsa dialects developed from Magadhi Prakrit of the eastern group of Sanskritic languages. Magadhi Prakrit gave rise to four Apabhramsa dialects, viz, Radha, Vanga, Varendra and Kamarupa. The first three dialects directed their course to the south and south-east in Bengal, and developed into the various dialects of Bengali. The Kamarupa dialect spread to the east keeping north of the Ganges and is represented in North-Bengal at present by North-Bengali and in the valley of Assam by Assamese. North-Bengal and Assam did not get their language from Bengal proper but directly from the west. In early times the language of North-Bengal and Assam constituted a single dialect group which continued to be the same even when the different dialectical offshoots penetrated far into the eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachala. The Koch kings of Koch-Behar in North-Bengal patronized Assamese language and literature during the time of Maharaja Naranarayana and his brother Chilaraya in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries A.D.

The history of Assamese can be traced back to very early times. It has, to its credit, an indirect reference by Hiuen T’sang, the great Chinese traveller of the seventh century A.D. Hiuen T’sang visited Kamrupa, the ancient name by which

45. Chatterji, Dr. S. K.; Origin and Development of Bengali Language, 1926, p.140.
46. Kakati, Dr. Bani Kant; Assamese : Its Formation and Development, 1962, p.03
47. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p. 03
Assam was referred to, in 643 A.D. during the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Varma. He recorded that the language of Kamrupa 'differed a little from that of mid-India'.

Bhaskar Varma, was a Hindu king who patronized Sanskrit learning and culture. Therefore, by the seventh century A.D. the great kingdom of Bhaskar Varma, that extended to a considerable part of Bengal, must have been populated by the Aryans who, by virtue of their superiority, spread their language among the aboriginal people speaking Austric and Tibeto-Burman languages. The native population started giving up their unwritten and undeveloped language for a much more developed Aryan tongue and thereby the number of speakers kept on increasing as the language penetrated deeper and deeper into the Brahmaputra Valley and the neighbouring hills. Thus, the entirely different speech habits of the local population must have moulded the Kamrupa Apabhramsa (for those were the days of Apabhramsa stages of Aryan languages all over the country), into a unique shape, and attributed such a distinct character as the great Chinese traveller could not pass over it unnoticed.

02.08.02 Individualization of the speech:

The Assamese language is distinguished by many characteristics of its own. It presents tremendous modifications in all the departments, viz., in phonology, i.e., pronunciation, in morphology, i.e., derivation, conjugation, declension, etc., in syntax, i.e. structure of phrases, clauses and sentences, and in vocabulary. In phonology the Sanskrit cerebral and the dental series of stop consonants totally disappeared and a completely different set of alveolar stop consonants evolved instead. This means both the cerebral and the dental series phonemically merged into an alveolar series of stops not found in any of the Aryan languages of the country. Similarly, palatal “ə” and “θ” merged into alveolar “s” (as ‘s’ in English

49. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p. 04
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'sin') and “ज”, “झ” and “च” into alveolar “ज़” (as ‘z’ in English ‘zoo’). All the Sanskrit sibilants, “श”, “ठ” and “ट” changed their points of articulation and merged into a velar voiceless spirant ‘x’. This feature appears to be a unique development, an innovation in the language, which, along with the other changes discussed above make the phonological structure of Assamese entirely different from any of her sister languages.50

To come to morphology and syntax, the old Indo-Aryan languages from which Assamese originated, was a very highly synthetic language. Its later developments in Pali, Prakrit and Apabhramsa also retained their synthetic character, even though in some simplified form but Assamese retained only a minimum of inflections and became much more analytical. For example, number and gender categories no longer remained as grammatical; that means the subject and verb agreement in number, unlike in Sanskrit or Hindi, has become irrelevant. Likewise, the gender agreement between the adjunct and the substantive qualified is lost. There are two more distinguishing features in Assamese, which have been ascribed to non-Aryan influences: the use of enclitic definitives and the inflections of four persons of the nouns of relationship. The vocabulary has been saturated to a great extent by incorporation of indigenous elements.51

02.08.03 Different elements in Assamese language :-

The far reaching changes and innovations of the Aryan tongue were the results of a fusion of Aryan and non-Aryan speakers into Assamese and that this fusion was evidenced by Hiuen T’sang in his remarks on the language. Subsequent events of historical times bear clear evidence of this. As an example, the Ahoms, who are responsible for the present name Assam of the state, left their own Tai speech and accepted Assamese as the state language for consolidation of the Ahom kingdom spread far into the tribal areas in the fifteenth century A.D. The important

50. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p. 04
51. Ibid., p. 05
point to be noted here is that they changed over to Assamese after more than two hundred years of administrative experiences. In the same way the Austric people and the speakers of various Tibeto-Burman languages also had their share in this fusion.  


02.08.04 The Earliest specimen of Assamese:

The trace of the Assamese language in a recorded form is found in many copper plate inscriptions done in the reigns of various kings who ruled over the kingdoms established in the Brahmaputra valley beginning from the Kumar Bhashkar Verma, the king of Kamrupa.

The earliest specimen of recorded literature of Assamese is available in the mystic dohas of the Buddhist Siddacharyas. These dohas, better known as caryapadas, were discovered in Nepal by Haraprasad Shastri who edited and published them under the title 'Bouddha Gan O doha'. The caryas were written between eighth and twelfth centuries A.D. by tantric Buddhists hailing from different parts of eastern India; and some of these people were recognized as

52. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p. 06
53. Medhi, Kaliram; Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, p.16
54. Nidhanpur plate of Bhaskara Varma (7th century A.D.), Tezpur plate of Banamala (9th century A.D.), Tezpur rock inscription of Harjara Varma (9th century A.D.), Nowgaon plate of Balavarma (10th century A.D.), The Bargaon plate of Ratnapala (10th century A.D.), The Sualkuchi plate of Ratnapal (11th century A.D.), The Guakuchi plate of Indrapala (11th century A.D.), Gauhati plate of Indrapala (11th century A.D.), Subhankara Pataka plate of Dharmapala (12th century A.D.), Pussphabhadra plate of Dharmapala (12th century A.D.) etc.

— Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, Kaliram Medhi, p. 57
55. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p.06
belonging to Kamrupa of ancient times.

The language of the Caryas is late Apabhramsa, and therefore, represents the formative period of the modern eastern group of Aryan languages including Assamese. There are many features both in phonology and grammar that have been identified as typically Assamese to be carried over to the modern language. Some of the idiomatic expressions are quite homely even today among the Assamese people. Besides the linguistic features, the literary form, viz., the doha is also the precursor of Assamese Borgita, the song celestial composed by the early Vaishnavite poets of Assam.

The earliest literary work available so far, which may be claimed as distinctly Assamese is the Prahlada Carita\(^{56}\) written by a court poet named Hema Sarasvati in the latter half of the thirteenth century. The language of this short poem seems to of later Apabhramsa period. Ever since the fourteenth century onwards there has been a continuous stream of literature to the modern times.

02.08.05 Distinctive periods of Assamese language:

Dr. B. K. Kakati has divided the history of the language into three periods\(^{57}\) as follows:

(i) Early Assamese (from the 14th century to the end of the 16th century), which again has been split into (a) the Pre-Vaishnavite and (b) the Vaishnavite sub-periods.

(ii) Middle Assamese (from the beginning of the 17th century to the beginning of the 19th century)

(iii) Modern Assamese (from the early part of the 19th century till now.)

02.08.05.01 Early Assamese: In the early Assamese period the language became mature enough in the hands of quite a few distinguished court poets of the time. It emerged as the most powerful vehicle of expression in the Ramayana

56. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p.06
rendered into Assamese by Madhava Kandali, the greatest wizard of the Assamese idiom of early times, whom the saint poet Sankaradeva paid respectful homage as *Adikavi apramadi* (unerring predecessor). The language of this period is marked by the use of some archaic forms and conjunctive particles which are absent in the Vaishnavite sub-period.\(^{58}\)

Sankaradeva brought about a Vaishnavite revival during the 15th-16th centuries accompanied by a revival of the language and literature as well. Brajabuli form and expressions were introduced into the language by Sankaradeva himself in his one-act plays and in the *Bargita*, which was carried on by his followers. And again Sankaradeva was the first to create a prose style of writing in his *Ankiya Nata*.\(^{59}\)

Early Assamese prose introduced by Sankaradeva developed to fuller strength and glory in the works of Vaikunthanatha Bhattacharya who is better known and famous as Bhattadeva, translated the entire *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Gita*, besides many other scriptures into a masterly prose.\(^{60}\) He made plenteous use of Sanskrit forms and expressions harmoniously blended with Assamese syntax. His supreme command over both Sanskrit and Assamese helped him achieve brevity and clarity all at once.

**02.08.05.02 Middle Assamese:** Middle Assamese is the period of secular prose. Verse form marked a decline while prose became the main vehicle of expression for all purposes. Different style of prose developed, such as the colloquial prose style of the *Katha Guru Carita* and other prose biographies of the religious gurus, the archaic prose of the *mantra puthis* (books on charms), the conventional prose of utilitarian literature, such as medicine, astrology, arithmetic, dance and music, and of the commentaries on religious scriptures), and above all,

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58. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p.07  
59. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p. 08.  
60. ~ Ibid ~
standardized literary prose of high standing of the diplomatic letters, administrative records and of the buranjis (regular history or chronicles) in Assamese. The colloquial prose is a live style with all the verve and vitality of a spoken syntax; but the prose of the buranjis is a standardized literary prose in true sense of the term. It is through this prose that Arabic and Persian elements entered the language in abundance. This prose that broke away from the classical school developed by Bhattadeva and others, approaches very near to the literary language of the modern period.

02.08.05.03 Modern Assamese: The modern Assamese period begins with the translation and publication of the Bible in Assamese in 1813 A.D. It was the American Baptist Missionaries who laid the foundation of the modern Assamese literary idiom. The present day standard literary language, based on the eastern dialect of Sibsagar, did not evolve from the early Assamese literary standard. With entire change in the political set up of the region brought about by the coming of the British in 1826, the academic, or better the earlier literary trends as also the age old tradition of early and middle Assamese developments were totally snapped, and a new literary language and idiom originated in the middle of the nineteenth century when the missionaries established the first printing press in 1836. They started publishing the first Assamese journal, the Arunodaya in 1846, wrote volumes of Christian literature, and thus created a tempo of producing a new literature in Assam. The missionaries learnt and used for writing proposes the dialect of the area round about Sibsagar in eastern Assam where they established headquarters for their activities in north-eastern India. They wrote as they heard the speech in a new orthography. But this new idiom lost all the vigour and vitality of the well developed standard literary language that has grown during its long history of evolution. The language became almost effeminate, soft and delicate.

61. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p.08.
62. ~ Ibid ~
relying entirely on indigenous *tadbhava* elements. This was evident in the language of the *Arunodaya* and other Christian literature of the time.

According to the treaty between the British and Burmese at Yandabu in 1826, the land of Assam came under British rule. Under the British rule a black hole tragedy for the Assamese language perpetrated by some cunning native officials brought by the Britishers from Bengal. These officials conspired and explained away Assamese as a local variant of the Bengali language, and hence it was resulted in expulsion from schools, offices and courts in 1836. The Assamese elite of that time began the struggle for existence of Assamese language, the Christian missionaries fully supported them realizing the fact and after a long battle Assamese could stand the ordeal at last. The British administrators realized their mistake and corrected it by reinstating Assamese in its own place in 1872. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phookan, his daughter Padmavati Devi Phookanani and many others unhesitatingly accepted the language and enriched the literature.

Coming of the British and their English language heralded a new era of renaissance in Assam as in other parts of the country. Waves of modern thoughts, ideas and literary forms swept the land through the English language and literature. Assamese scholars acquainted with English found the Missionary idiom wanting in all respects; it was hardly capable of standing the stress and strain of the western impact. Confronted with such a situation they realized what was amiss. They looked back into the fully mature prose of the chronicles of the earlier period, that possessed all the strength and vitality to accept the new challenge. Hemchandra Barua and his followers immediately reverted to the syntax and style of that prose and Sanskritized entirely the orthography and spelling, which was accepted by all including the Missionaries themselves in their later day literature. And thus, the solid plinth of the modern literary standard language was founded and accepted as the norm all over the state.

63. Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; *Structure of Assamese*, p.09.
64. ~ Ibid ~
02.08.06 The Vocabulary:— The largest percent of the Assamese words are tadbhavas, i.e., derived from Sanskrit through Prakrit and Apabhramsa stages, besides a fairly large number of tatsama, semi-tatsama, and desiya words. Assamese has been a borrowing language, and during its long history of evolution it had enriched its vocabulary by acquisition from all the non-Aryan languages and dialects spoken in and arround Assam. Ever since the middle Assamese period, it started borrowing, not very frequently through, from Hindi and other northern Indian languages; and the process of borrowing gained momentum with the conflict and contact of the Mughals and the Ahoms, when many words of Persian and Arabic origin entered through the Hindi language.\textsuperscript{65} Foreign words from the European languages, such as English, Portugese, etc., began their journey even before the British made an entry into Assam. Many early borrowings have been assimilated and naturalized beyond recognition. But coming of the British open the flood-gate of English words and expressions in the early part of the nineteenth century. Words used in the courts are almost all foreign — English, Persian or Arabic. With spread of knowledge and contact with foreign countries, words from many foreign languages are almost daily creeping in and adding to the vitality of the language.

After independence, there has been a move for return to the native resources, with the raising of the status of the regional languages by making them the media of administration and higher education in the country. Consequently, administrative terms and technical terminologies have been coined anew as far as practicable. But, here again, we have to return to Sanskrit quite frequently for which Sanskrit words are having easy flow into the Assamese vocabulary.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{65} Goswami, Dr. Golokchandra; Structure of Assamese, p.10.
\textsuperscript{66} ~ Ibid. ~
02.09. Conclusion:

Hindi is the language spoken in northern and central India, Pakistan, Fiji, Mauritius, and Suriname. Standard Hindi is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India and one of the official language of the Indian Union Government and that of ten states in India. The conception of Hindi is informed not just by external criteria of mutual intelligibility, but by ethnicity, history, literacy, nationalism, and religion. These issues are especially acute when differentiating Hindi from Urdu, which are generally considered independent languages by their speakers but different formal registers of a single dialect by linguists. It is very difficult to say as to when exactly Hindi as a language came into picture and scholars are divided in their opinion on this issue. But the trace of Hindi is obvious in the language of the Siddh saints of century 8-9 AD. We can also find the glimpse of early Hindi in the language of the Jain poets (like Hemchandra and Dharma Suri), Vidyapati, Abdurrehman Khankhana and Swayambhu. The more established form of Hindi (the 'khari boli') is visible in the creations of Sharufuddin, Khusro, Banda Niwaz Gailurdaz, Wjabi Ali, Sultan Kuli Qutabshah, Shah Turab etc. The modern Hindi and its literary tradition evolved towards the end of the 18th century. Fort William College was established in Calcutta by the British East India Company and Hindi was taught there as a vernacular language. The first Hindi newspaper 'Udant Martanda' was published in 1826 from Calcutta. At the same time, authors like Raja Shivprasad 'Sitare Hind' and Raja Lakshman Singh had established new trends in Hindi literature. Later on, Hindi became the national symbol in the fight against the British colonial rule. Many Indian leaders, revolutionaries, poets and reformists resorted to Hindi to propagate their ideology.

After after independence (Aug 15, 1947), the new constitution was adopted in India on January 26, 1950 which granted to Hindi the status of the Official Language of the Republic of India. Today Hindi is world's third most spoken language and is spreading all over the world. In the era of technological advancements and the 'global village', Hindi assumes much importance as it is spoken by a large number of people all across the globe. With liberalized economy and opening of the Indian frontiers to the world market, there is increased interest in the learning and teaching of Hindi.
Assamese is the major language spoken in Assam and serves almost as a lingua franca among different speech communities in the whole area. It is spoken in all the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Arunachala. In Assam it is spoken in the districts of Brahmaputra Vally extending from Lakhimpur in the east, to Dhubri bordering Bangladesh and West-Bengal in the west. Assamese is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India and one of the official language of the state of Assam. Thus, the importance and status of Assamese language in the northern states of the Indian Union may be realized. Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language originated from the Vedic dialects, and therefore, a sister of all the northern Indian languages of the country. It is supposed that Assamese was born from Apabhramsa dialects developed from Magadhi Prakrit of the eastern group of Sanskritic languages. Magadhi Prakrit gave rise to four Apabhramsa dialects, viz., Radha, Vanga, Varendra and Kamarupa. The Kamarupa dialect spread to the east keeping north of the Ganges and is represented in North-Bengal at present by North-Bengali and in the valley of Assam by Assamese. North-Bengal and Assam did not get their language from Bengal proper but directly from the west. Because of this reason Assamese has rather some affinity with Hindi. In fact the affinity between Assamese and Hindi is much greater than between Assamese and Bengali. The trace of the Assamese language in a recorded form is found in many copper plate inscriptions. The earliest specimen of recorded literature of Assamese is available in the mystic dohas of the Buddhist Siddacharyas. These dohas, better known as Caryapadas which were written between eighth and twelfth centuries A.D. Sankaradeva brought about a Vaishnavite revival during the 15th-16th centuries accompanied by a revival of the language and literature as well. Brajabuli form and expressions were introduced into the language by Sankaradeva. The modern Assamese period begins with the translation and publication of the Bible in Assamese in 1813 A.D. Comming of the British and their English language heralded a new era of renaissance in Assam as in other parts of the country. Waves of modern thoughts, ideas and literary forms swept the land.
through the English language and literature. The first Assamese newspaper 'Aronoday' was published in 1846 from Sibsagar by the effort of the Christian Missionaries. Later on the Assamese elite group developed the language further to sustain in the age of globalization.

Many similarities can be observed between Hindi and Assamese. The origin of both Hindi and Assamese is marked from the seventh century A.D. and their earliest evidence in literature found since the emergence of the literary writings of the Siddhacharyas. Both the language flourished in the medieval period primarily by the Vaishnava saints and secondarily by the other writers. The modern Hindi and Assamese differ from the old and medieval forms and its beginning is marked by the coming of the British rulers and the Christian missionaries in India. The present form of Hindi as well as Assamese have taken shape after the independence of our country. In both the languages there is a tendency of tadbhabikaran of Sanskrit elements in the modern period. At present both the languages are developing in various folds to cope with the various trends introduced by the concept of globalization.

For differences it can be stated that the Hindi evolved from the Saurseni Apabhramsha and the Assamese from Magadhi Apabhramsha, thus, the immediate origin of both the languages are different. Moreover, the influence of the elements of neighbouring dialects, both of Aryan and non-Aryan origin, over Hindi and Assamese are remarkable.

Thus, it is now clear that Hindi and Assamese are two important living languages of our country and a comparative study of both the languages will reveal similarities as well as the differences which would be utilized in language teaching-learning process, in translation process from either languages, in formation of terminology etc. The common elements found in this study would be very much useful in learning of the languages by the people of either language community as it would be very much easier to understand and be used unhesitatingly. Moreover, these elements would make the people of each language community closer to each
other contributing a lot to the national integrity. At the same time by discovering the differences between these two languages this study would focus on the unique identification elements of both the languages and at the same time would help the learner as well as the translator etc. by saving their time by helping them to concentrate on those significant elements with emphasise rather than the common components.