

**LANGUAGE IN INDIA**  
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**RESURGENCE OF HINDI IN THE WAKE OF GLOBALISATION**

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## **THE TOPSY-TURVY JOURNEY OF HINDI**

Modern India is a multilingual nation. Hindi has come a long way since its adoption as an official language by Indian constitution in 1951. It is recognised as a national language in India and it knits the different mother tongue speakers together. In fact, Hindi doesn't have much success stories in the past. Its adoption as an official language sent a ripple of resentment through the southern part of the country. The topsy-turvy journey of Hindi as a national language has come to an end and it has fitted in with the requirement of today's generation and market.

It is only after 1990 that revival of Hindi started taking place with globalization and media revolution in India.

## **THE TOUCH OF "MARKETIZATION"**

In today's highly competitive scenario, globalisation is less a choice and more a compulsion. The term 'globalisation' is not merely confined to economics; it has also extended to our inner self i.e., our culture and society. Consequently, the winds of globalisation are bringing about a sea of changes in society and economy. Language and society go hand in hand. While societies undergo transition, so does language, both in its popular and in its purest form. The touch of marketisation has not left the linguistic scenario of India untouched.

## **RESURGENCE LINKED WITH AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA**

The paper illustrates how Hindi has come out of its shell and carved its place as a market friendly and popular language. The positive impact is that, due to the expansion of media network in the past decade, pan-Indian Hindi is developing mainly through the audio-visual media. During this period, Hindi is able to make greater impact on non-

Hindi speaking states. Non-Hindi speakers in India are like passive smokers of Hindi. Impact of media like television, radio and films is enormous (Mallikarjun.B: 2004)

## **SAY HELLO TO HINDI**

The rebirth of Hindi as the new power language and the Hindification of India has left the brown sahibs baffled. For decades, they were brought up to believe that *firangi* education, *angrezi* accent and western *nakhras* were the passport to social acceptance. Suddenly, it is the other way round. The language has become desirable as it sells. From the morning cup of tea (*chai hoto aisi*) to hoardings (*Mujhme hai woh baat*), from SMS messages (*aati kya?*) to TV commercials (*Thanda Matlab Coca-Cola*) from Hindi Archies cards to children's cartoons and full pages ads in English publications that have slogans in Roman Hindi, from Hindi classes in finishing schools to Hindi folk songs blaring in the discos, there is an entire Hindustan thriving out there. (Shafalee V: 2004) Even USA's George Bush loves it and that's why recently Hindi became one of the languages to be taught in American schools.

## **INDIAN TELEVISION**

It was TV that made Hindi a *raapchik* phenomenon. Today, the Indian TV cable covers over 50 millions homes and provides most of these with almost 100 television channels, both pay and free to air. Welcome to the changing world of News channels. With more than two-dozen news channels in languages as varied as multi-cultural India-Indian television industry is set for a sonic boom. When Hindi news channels went 24 hours, MTV turned desi and Hindi serials *Kyuki...* and *Kahani...* became a pre-sleep ritual in every bedroom, no one realized that language of *behenjis* and *babus* are here to stay for a long. The Hindi news channel Aaj Tak is amongst the most popular news channel in the country today and we feel that there is little doubt in the channel's claim that it has changed the way news is delivered to Indian audiences. Aaj Tak has proved that instead of speaking like a pandit, if an anchor uses simple language, he can reach all the sections of society. The importance of Hindi is known from the fact that STAR TV,

once an-all-English channel, is now rich in Hindi Programming. Star Plus has not only redefined Hindi television entertainment but also promoted Hindi extensively by snatching the No.1 position as the most popular and watch able Hindi channel.

When Star Plus launched '*Kaun Banega Crorepati?*' (KBC) the Indian version of 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' the show quickly became the biggest hit on the Indian Television. Hosted by the megastar of Hindi cinema Amitabh Bachchan, most of its catch phrases such as '*lock kiya jaye*', '*computerji*', '*pucca*' and '*fifty-fifty*' became the part of common Hindi in India. Vividh Bharti is no longer a sole Hindi Radio station. Radio Mirchi and Red FM are gaining momentum as they speak the language of the heart that young generation loves most.

### **BLOCK-BUSTER MOVIES, TV PROGRAMS, AND HINDI**

It is not strange that Hindi enjoyed unprecedented popularity, even in South, thanks to blockbuster Hindi movies and the universal appeal of Hindi TV programmes like KBC, Indian Idol, Saregama, and Aantkashree. The Hindi speaking market is the biggest and no foreign channel can afford to ignore it. That's why Walt Disney Television International is ready to cater the larger audiences, especially, kids. Now *Mickey Mouse & Donald Duck* are aspiring to learn Hindi language as Disney Toon is available in Hindi besides Tamil, Telugu and English. Even BBC is reportedly toying with idea of airing Hindi programmes.

### **HINDI PRINT MEDIA**

Those who predicted the fading away of the print media will have to wait slightly longer. Hindi print media is alive kicking, and expanding. Hindi continues to be the only language with the largest number of newspapers, journals and periodicals in India. According to 2005, National Readership Survey, among the top ten dailies, there is only one English daily at No.10 (Times of India). *Dainik Jagran* snatched the No.1 position from *Dainik Bhaskar*, is now India's most read newspaper. Despite the noisiest my-

circulation-is-longer-than-yours campaigns being waged by English dailies, it is the only one, which finds itself in the top ten bracket. The rest in the elite ten are all language dailies with as many as five of them being published in Hindi. In magazine section too, *India Today* (Hindi) overtakes *Saras Salil* as the most read magazine (urban plus rural) in the country. Here again all the regional magazines dominate the scene with *India Today* (English) as the only magazine in the top ten.

## **HINDI ADVERTISING**

Gone are the days, when advertisers would think that this particular brand is only for English newspapers. Today, Hindi and other regional newspapers hold an equal importance in the media plan for any brand. The entire Hindi newspaper business has grown in terms of readership and advertising revenue. Today, even brands like Mercedes Benz are advertised on Hindi newspapers. Apart from these, there are lots of other high-end products like expensive watches, luxurious cars and other life-style products that are marketed in Hindi language.

## **THE HINDI-WALLAH IMAGE IS NOW CHANGED**

The image of Hindi speaking person too is breaking boundaries. It is no longer associated with those who wear *Saris* and *Dhotis*. Now even the social elite accept that Hindi is the '*lift Kara de*' language. It is boom time for Hindi copywriters and advertising professionals. With this Hindi high trend, all the global brands want local flavour and local language. This is recognition of the fact that to stay in Indian Markets, the multinationals need to use a language that overcomes linguistic barriers and cultural differences.

Priti Nair Chakravarthy, executive creative director, Lowe, is quite upfront in saying that she favours Hindi. She says, "Hindi rocks because it has the capacity to touch the pulse of the nation. When one uses Hindi or any other local lingo, one can add a lot more insight that is intrinsically Indian." She cites an interesting example; '*Enjoy Coca-*

*Cola*’ is insipid when compared to *‘Thanda Matlab Coca-Cola’*. Praseon Joshi, the leading ad man, explains why he supports Hindi vis-à-vis English. He says, “Attitudes are best expressed in Hindi as people understand and immediately connect with the language. Hindi is our street language and it delivers the punch that is required when communicating with the masses. In comparison, English, for most of us, is still a formal language. It is not a street language, like it is in New York”. (Anand T 2005).

## **BOLLYWOOD**

It is not an exaggeration that if you think of Hindi you think of Bollywood. Today, there are two kinds of Hindi prevailing in India. The first is the ‘official language’ that is literary and complex and the second is common Hindi. Thanks to Bollywood for promoting and patronizing common Hindi in the entire world. Hindi films are quite popular throughout India. Indian audiences expect full value for their money with a good entertainer referred to as *‘Paisa Vasool’* (literally money’s worth). Hindi movies don’t have language boundaries.

## **POPULARITY OF HINDI MOVIES OVERSEAS**

The popularity of Hindi movies is not restricted to Indian subcontinent only. From Bhangra music in Bangkok bars to weepy soap operas in London living room and Bollywood star power on European TV-Hindi entertainment is rocking the world. Once again, it is Bollywood that made *Bhailog Ki Bhasha* hit and hot. Even people don’t hesitate to speak slang at hip parties in urban societies. “We don’t watch Hindi movies,” is no longer the urban snob’s punch line. The credit goes to some imaginative filmmakers like Yash Chopra, Karan Johar, Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Ashustosh Gowarikar who altered the downmarket appeal of Bollywood and offered the sugar coated Hindi to the world. The jadoo has worked and Hindi is hip. It spells glamour, cheer and success.

## **NEW LANGUAGE OF MOBILE & COMPUTER**

Although the Hindi is not technical savvy language but the globalization makes it possible to some extent. Targeting the 43 percent of Indian population that understands Hindi, Nokia recently showcased three handsets with predictive text input to enable users to send and receive messages (SMS) in Hindi besides announcing a Hindi mobile portal. With this initiative on localization, now SMS becomes *Saral Mobile Sandesh* with text in Hindi. Now Hindi is the new language of mobile phones.

Many more companies are planning to extent the benefit of mobile revolution to a larger consumer base of Hindi heartland. Hindi is also becoming computer friendly. Microsoft Corporation India Ltd has launched 'Office Hindi' its first offering developed specifically, for the Indian market, which combines computing experiences with familiarity of Hindi language. The package includes a Hindi language interface and support nine Indian languages, empowering Indian users to create documents and communicate with others in the language of their choice. It also makes computer function easy by producing menus and toolbars in Hindi.

## **HINDI ACROSS INDIA**

The new avatar of Hindi is not limited to Hindi belt. A vernacular highbrow attitude is sweeping across India. In extreme northeast, people love to enjoy watching and singing Hindi movies and Hindi songs. Instead of repeated militants' threats and calls for ban on screening of Hindi movies, the cinegoers don't budge on visiting cinema halls. In the entire seven states of northeast, Hindi functions as a link language and commands unparalleled public support.

The southern part of the country is not left untouched. In sharp contrast to anti-Hindi move of 1960s, the linguistic divide between north and south is shrinking. Chennai today is one of the cities, besides Bangalore and Hyderabad, where Hindi films are doing better than ever. South has its own Hindi ambassadors, who did great job to promote

Hindi and synthesize north flavour and taste into south Indian films. South Indian film makers Mani Ratnam, musician A R Rahman, playback singer, Yasudas, Balasubramaniam, Shankar Mahadevan and Kavita Krishnmurti are saleable artists of Hindi entertainment industry. Our MPs from south, once elected to national parliament, may be more inclined to speak in new Hindi for practical reasons, thus reducing the tension between Hindi and non-Hindi speakers. (Shankar S 2005) At Bangalore's high fashionable nightclub Zero G, the weekly Bollywood night when non-stop Hindi Film hits are played, pulls in maximum crowd. The Gujratis and Mumbai Bhais too find it as a trendy option.

### **NEW BHASHA – HINGLISH**

In all this time, the importance of English has never diminished. The advent of the Internet and the globalization only strengthened English. But it has changed the chemistry of relationship between English and Hindi. I think, it is 'BUY ONE, GET ONE FREE' syndrome that these two languages enjoy in India. Hindi no longer considers English as its archrival. Globalisation has changed the equation. English and Hindi have come closer and they deliver just perfect, when they work in tandem. Now, it is a winning blend.

This blend becomes a new mantra in social acceptance, prestige, and success. Right from the Dabar Chawanprash slogan, '*Banaye Ander Se Strong*' to Coke's '*Life Ho To Aisi*'. The main part is predominantly in Hindi. It is true that this blend of Hindi and English has also flowered on the Internet. Hindi lost its tag of being down market and unfashionable. When I do my yoga lesson with morning Astha channel, Baba Ramdev used to instruct in this new bhasha: '*Pranayama se Hypertension Cure Hota Hai*'. And the rural folk will say "*Life Main Aaj Kal Bahut Tension Hai*". (There is a lot of tension in life these days).



## **HINDI GOES TO OXFORD:**

So what if Prince Charles has added Bollywood to his lingo? The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of *Oxford Concise Dictionary* has come out with 900 words of Indian origin. Needless to say, a lot is happening in Hindi, Hindustani, Hinglish, and Pinglish, which is making the world sit back and take stock. But more importantly, there are greater dramatic twists and turns in *desi* lingo itself.

## **DIFFERENT BHASHAS FOR DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS, LOCALES, AND ROLES**

Urban India doesn't believe in expressing itself in one form of English anymore. There is a separate bhasha for College, Corporate, Geeky, Tapani and Yuppier India. The uniqueness of this lingo is that it seems Latin and Greek for anybody who does not belong to that particular group. (Nikhat Kazmi 2004) "A surge in the use of Hindi in communication is a reflection of the confidence of New India". Says Piyush Pandey, executive Chairman and national creative director, Ogilvy and Mather Ltd, which has come out with a slang dictionary in which maximum words are in Hindi. *Bole Toh*, it's the staple diet of Hindi movies or we can say *Bhailog Ka Bhasha*. In this slang dictionary, a Tapani is known as 'street smart guy'. When something goes wrong- 'Life Hai Mamoo'. A happy-go-lucky guy is known as 'Bindaas'. Something went terribly wrong- 'Bamboo Lag Gaya'. A major happening- 'Raapchick'. A very thin guy is called 'Agarbatti' and a cool girl is 'Chhamiya'. Maximum means 'Fulltoo' and General Knowledge means 'Global Gyan'. So the list is too long and it is increasingly becoming a part of the Queen's language.

## **Conclusion**

Pushing this trend are three M's: media, marketing and money. The stylish new Bollywood, FM Radio and Satellite Television have not just made Hindi hot but have also redefined the cosmetic DNA of the global Indian. As a reflection, the entire vernacular has become dandy- kurta pyajama, lehanga choli, dhaabe ka khana, the Gujrati

dandiya, religious tattoos or the remixed version of Om Jai Jagdish Hare. (Shafalee V: 2004).

Hindi is accommodated everywhere. So a language that has survived through the centuries by marrying with different dialects and masters, is bouncing back again in India. But I fear a doubt that the way Hindi is being used today may not be the same in the next 50 years or so. The structure of Hindi is likely to change as it happened with English. Only time can speak how Hindi would hold a balance between the need of the market and the expectation of the purists. May God save the language and its speakers! Amen!

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