



The World of Languages
and Languages of the World

Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu

Today we will learn about three South Asian languages that belong to the the Indo-European language family.

Get your thinking caps on...

Objectives

- We will learn about three languages in the Indo-European language family that are used in South Asia
- We can examine their scripts, which are very different from the Latin script we use in English
- We can observe connections and similarities between these languages



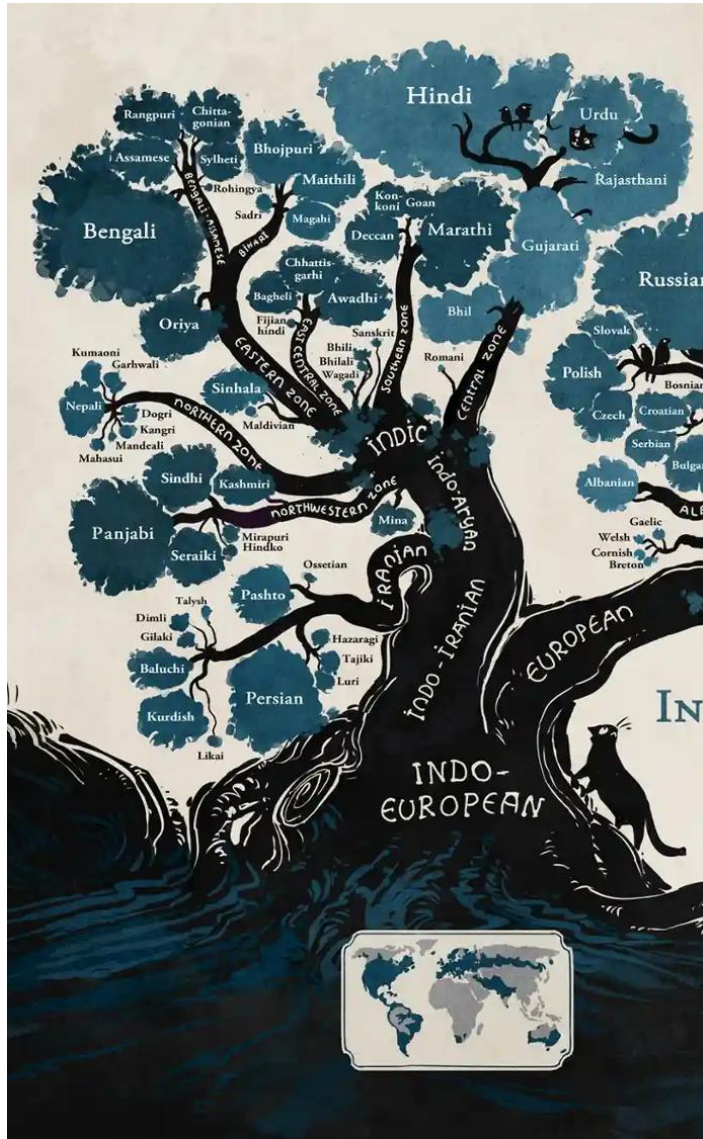
ἵπποπόταμος
WoLLoW the HiPPo

Let's go!

- How often do you use the following words in your daily life? Can you guess their origin?

candy *jungle* *shampoo* *chutney*
yoga *cot* *pyjamas* *bungalow*

- Look at the *Indo-Aryan* languages branch in Minna Sundberg's illustration and find Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu.
- Which place do they occupy? How many speakers do you believe they have (based on the size of the leaves)?



Let's travel to... South Asia!

- How are Latin and Romance languages related? And Proto-Germanic and Germanic languages?
- What is the difference between classical and modern languages?
- So, what's Sanskrit?
- **Hindi** and **Urdu** are two modern languages in South Asia. Together, **Hindi-Urdu** has the 4th biggest number of speakers in the world.
- Does anyone know any words in Hindi or Urdu?



Sanskrit

- **Sanskrit** is the classical language of South Asia. It had a similar role to that of Latin in Medieval Europe.
- The earliest writings in Sanskrit are **Vedas** (*veda* means knowledge): four collections of hymns dating back to 1500-1200 BCE.
- The oldest Veda is **Rigveda** (“The Knowledge of Verses”), one of the sacred books of Hinduism.
- There are also many works of poetry, philosophy and drama in Sanskrit.
- And one of the first grammar books! It was composed by Pāṇini and called **Aṣṭādhyāyī** (“Eight Chapters”).





Here is some of
the Rig Veda.
This version is
housed in the
British Library.

Does anyone know more about
the Vedas?

Hindi and Urdu

These two modern languages are so similar when spoken that they are sometimes considered to be dialects of a single language (**Hindi-Urdu** or **Hindustani**).

Even though their speakers can understand each other, they use completely different writing systems!

| Language | Derived from... | National language of... | Speakers | Writing system |
|----------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Hindi | Sanskrit | India | 250 million | Devanagari |
| Urdu | Persian and Arabic | Pakistan (also official in India) | 69 million | Urdu alphabet/Nastaliq script |

Language detectives... are you ready?



Observe the word ‘**Hindustani**’ written in the Devanagari and Urdu scripts.

What shapes can you see? What are the main similarities and differences between the two?



The Devanagari Script

- Written from left to right
- 47 characters: 14 vowels and 33 consonants
- Used for over 120 languages
- A horizontal line runs along the top of each letter
- Here is an example of vowels and consonants in the *Chandas* font of this script...

Chandas

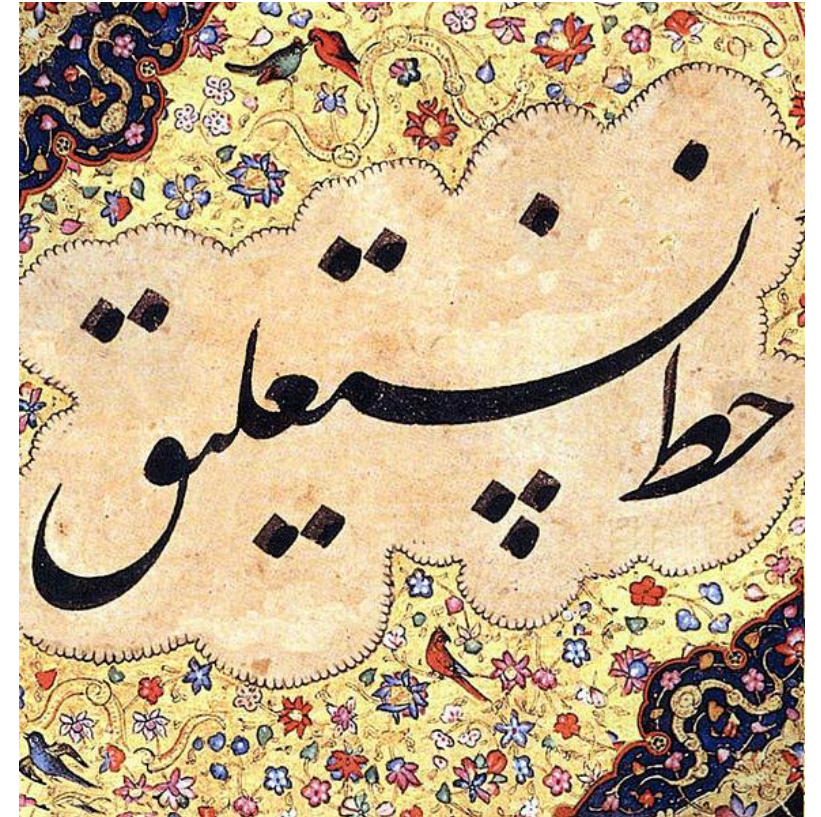
अ आ इ ई उ ऊ
ऋ ॠ लृ लृ ए ऐ
ओ औ तत् त्वम् असि

क ख ग घ ङ च छ ज झ ञ ट
ठ ड ढ ण त थ द ध न प फ



The Urdu Alphabet

- Similar to Arabic and Persian alphabets, but also contains some sounds from Sanskrit
- Written from right to left in the *Nastaliq calligraphic style* (this image says 'Nastaliq script')
- 39 letters and 13 additional characters
- 3 short and 7 long vowels
- Dots are very important and can change one letter into a different one depending on their position



हिन्दी

‘Hindi’ written in the
Devanagari script

اردو

‘Urdu’ written in the
Nastaliq script

A final challenge...

How fast can you learn new
systems of writing?

Look at these words in Hindi
and Urdu and try copying
them.



WoLLoW would like to know...

What is the name of the language branch that Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu belong to?

What are the earliest writings in Sanskrit called?

What are the main similarity and difference between Hindi and Urdu?



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