



NAMASTE!

(Nah-mahs-teh) In a number of India's many languages (including Hindi), the word for hello greetings, good-bye, etc. Derivatives of this word include namaskar, namaskara & namaskaram.

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The Bible tells us of the beginnings of the various languages in the world. The Tower of Babel was an attempt by men to reach heaven, glorify themselves rather than Jehovah, and in general, show God that they did not need Him. There is more to this than meets the eye. To understand the Biblical account, we must understand the culture of where this took place and the background of the entire situation.

The setting was in Shinar, which was in the land of Babylonia. The Tower of Babel was made entirely of bricks because there was not sufficient stone in southern Mesopotamia. This tower was part of an idolatrous religion of a people who did not honor the God of heaven. Such towers as these were called "ziggurats". These were temple-towers. In other words, such towers were associated fully with the religion of the Babylonians. One such temple-tower has been found in Ur of the Chaldees.

One major aspect of these false religions, other than their blatant idolatry that God despises, was the use of sexual immorality in the name of religion. Most of the peoples of Mesopotamia were particularly involved in associating the fertility in their own bodies with nature, and thus the worship of their "gods" was also part of this sinful activity. The Babylonians were guilty of using prostitutes in their worship and places of worship in the name of religion and to appease their "gods".

The use of temple prostitutes was especially part of the Babylonian culture and religion. Thus, idolatry and sexual immorality in the name of worship to false deities, and all this being associated with the temple-towers was enough to incur the wrath of God. The fact that the Babylonians were arrogant in their determination to try to be equal with God (in addition to the other activities mentioned here) was too much for the Lord to bear.

So God confounded their languages. And did He ever! Today there are thousands of languages and dialects in the world—some of which have simply disappeared. Some (a few) are still studied (Latin, Koine Greek, Sanskrit) but are spoken only in academic terms and by few people.

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Before my dissertation about various languages, a few notes: First, about dialects. A dialect is a sub-heading of a language. Example: In Texas (my native state), they speak “Texican”; in Alabama (where I now reside), the folks speak Southern (by the grace of God, y'all)! In New York, they speak Yankee—but all of these are English. Since English is the business language of the world, and because many people throughout the world speak English, it is a safe to say that there may be more dialects of this language than any other in the world today.

Second, I must tell you that I have been truly enthralled by various languages for a long time. I wrote a paper in college about the origin of languages (many years ago). I believe the Biblical account of this amazing phenomena, and I study languages as I have time. I have worked to learn a little of several languages, and I can greet people in India (“hello!”) and ask about their well-being (“how are you?”) in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali and Urdu—and I am working on others. I learned how to say “please” and “thank you” in a number of different tongues. This is something I find extremely interesting. And when I greet an Indian in his native tongue, I have made a friend for life! Well, almost. Folks in general really appreciate the effort that any foreigner puts forth to learn anything about their language and culture.

Hindi

हिन्दी

Now having said all that, let me tell you that I think that the location of the Tower of Babel must have been in the middle of India! India has (officially) 845 different languages and dialects; and unofficially, more than 1,600. In fact, the census of 1961 listed a total of 1,652 different tongues and dialects.

Telugu

తెలుగు

In India, there are 2 national languages—Hindi and English. A total of 15 major languages are given constitutional recognition, and these (along with Hindi and English) are on every currency note.



The 15 are

found only in one place, to show the value of the currency note—they are listed on the back left side of the note (see next page), in sort of an oblong box placed between the numerical amounts of the note (example: 1000 on top, 1000 on the bottom and the box in-between the 2 numbers).

Assamese

অসমীয়া

Bengali

বাংলা

Gujarati

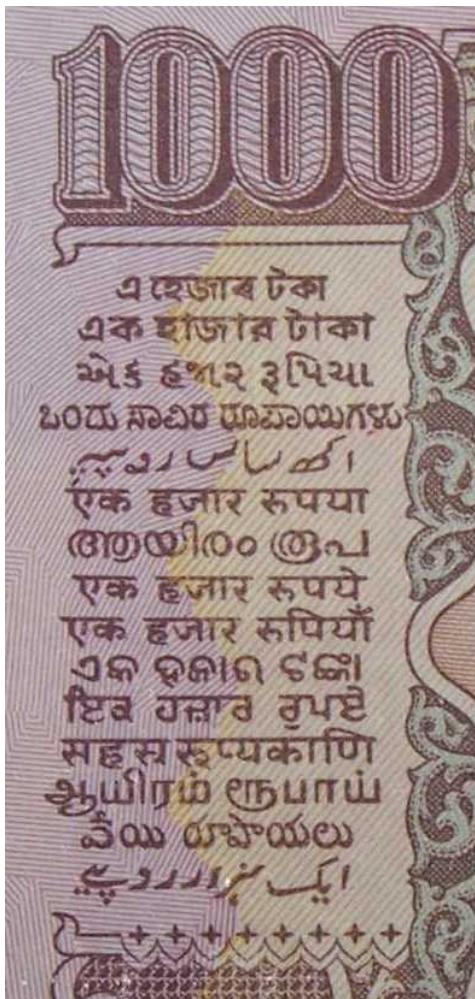
ગુજરાતી

Malayalam

മലയാളം

Urdu

اردو



These 15 languages are in alphabetical order on all Indian currency notes. From the top to the bottom, this is the listing of the states where they are spoken: Assamese (Assam); Bengali (West Bengal—in Bangladesh, this tongue is called “Bangla”); Gujarati (Gujarat); Kannada (Karnataka); Kashmiri (Jammu and Kashmir); Konkani (Goa—this was a Portuguese possession, and some of its inhabitants still speak Portuguese); Malayalam (Kerala and the Union Territory of the Lakshadweep Islands); Marathi (Maharashtra); Nepali (in various places of North India, as well as in the country of Nepal); Oriya (Orissa); Punjabi (Punjab); Sanskrit (not a spoken language as such, but

supposedly the “mother tongue” of all Indo-European languages); Tamil (Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Pondicherry, which was a French possession—some inhabitants of Pondicherry still speak French); Telugu (Andhra Pradesh and the Union Territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands); and Urdu (used by Muslims throughout the country).

Punjabi ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Tamil விக்கிப்

Remember that Hindi is the official language of the entire country, but English is the “unofficial” 2nd official language. It is considered an “associate” official language. English is spoken in every state and Union Territory of India, and is used by more than 100 million people—but very few would count English as their primary

language! Hindi is spoken by about 40% of all Indians (as a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or even as a 5th language). Hindi is the official language of several northern states (Uttar Pradesh; Uttarakhand; Himachal Pradesh; Madhya Pradesh; Rajasthan; Haryana; Bihar; Jharkhand; Chhattisgarh; and the nation’s capital—Delhi).

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Recently, the government officially declared another batch of languages as “officially recognized”. These are in the “languages of the 8th schedule”—a list of languages when the constitution was written that entitled them to official representation (status). The new languages on this list are: Bodo (spoken in Assam); Dogri (another language of Jammu and Kashmir {this state is usually just referred to as Kashmir}); Maithili (a tongue of Bihar); Manipuri (or Meithei, spoken in Manipur); Santhali (a tribal language) is spoken in several states in northeast India; Sindhi (spoken in parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh).

Of course, the people of India have scattered throughout the country, and many of these languages can be found in other states in addition to the official tongues of those states. An example is Bangalore, the state capital of Karnataka, where we have a rapidly growing work. The state language is Kannada; but only about 30% of the folks there use it as their primary tongue. Since Bangalore is positioned near the borders of both Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, about 30% speak Telugu and another 30% speak Tamil as their first language. Most Indians speak at least 2 languages—and in Bangalore, it is a necessity!

To add to all this confusion, there are 4 language families involved: Indo-European (in the north, west and central part of India); Dravidian (in the 5 southern states, including Goa); Austroasiatic (Austroasiatic—in the far northeastern part of India, called the “7 Sisters of India”; and Sino-Tibetan (in the region of the Himalayan mountain range and also in the area near Burma {Myanmar}).

Beginning in 1953, linguistic states were formed out of the states of India that had existed since independence from the British in 1947. The first linguistic state was Andhra (later renamed Andhra Pradesh in 1956). It was that year that brought about huge changes in boundaries of states, the shuffling of territories based on linguistic differences and renaming many of the old states of India. This reshuffling resulted in 13 other states—all based on differences in languages. Those 13 states were (in 1956)—Assam; Bihar; Bombay State (in 1960, divided into the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat); Jammu and Kashmir; Kerala; Madhya Pradesh; Madras State (renamed Tamil Nadu in 1969); Mysore State (renamed Karnataka in 1973); Orissa; Punjab; Rajasthan; Uttar Pradesh; and, West Bengal (so-named because it was the West Bengal province under British rule—East Bengal province became Bangladesh when India was divided in 1947, a division known as “the Partition”).

The languages for all of these linguistic states were: Andhra Pradesh (Telugu); Assam (Assamese); Bihar (Hindi); Bombay State (Maharashtra—Marathi, in Gujarat—Gujarati); Jammu and Kashmir (Urdu);

Marathi: *Modern Script & Modi Script*

मराठी

मराठी

Kerala (Malayalam); Madhya Pradesh (Hindi); Madras State (Tamil Nadu—Tamil); Mysore State (Karnataka—Kannada); Orissa (Oriya); Uttar Pradesh (Hindi); and, West Bengal (Bengali).

Since that time, these states have further subdivided (some for purpose of administration, some because of more differences in language. For instance, one Union Territory was Goa, Daman and Diu, all from Portuguese colonies established in the 1490's. Goa was granted statehood in 1987, while the other 2 remained a Union Territory (now called Daman and Diu). Sikkim was a tiny country in the northeast (Himalayan area) that joined the country in 1975 after a referendum passed in favor of that action—probably to avoid being overrun by the Chinese Communist government.

And 3 new states were carved out of larger states in 2000, each 2 weeks apart. Jharkhand was formerly the southern half of Bihar; Chhattisgarh was the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh; and, Uttarakhand (which was first named Uttarakhand) was taken from the top northwestern part of Uttar Pradesh.

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Assam was divided over a period years into 4 new states: Meghalaya (1972), Mizoram (1987), Arunachal Pradesh (1987), and Nagaland (1963). All of these had ethnic and linguistic causes for this separation of what had been a fairly large state. Meghalaya has at least 3 official languages (English, Garo and Khasi), while more than 50 different languages and dialects are spoken in Arunachal Pradesh.

Other states were formerly Union Territories (Manipur, Tripura in the northeast) and both Haryana and Himachal Pradesh in the northwest had been a part of the state Punjab. Again, a difference in language played a role in these divisions and the re-drawing of state boundaries. India began in 1953 with the reformation of the country into 14 states and now has a total of 28. And in most of the cases, the other 14 states were begun (at least in part) due to language differences with their next door neighbors.

An oddity is that English is at least one of the official languages in several states of the far northeastern part of India—Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. In addition to these 4 states that are a part of the “7 Sisters” of India, Uttarakhand has English as one of its 2 official languages. English also has official status as a state language (in a secondary sense) in Kerala, in the southwest part of India, as well as in 3 of the 7 Union Territories of India (Daman and Diu, Pondicherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands).

I found this interesting, too. Telugu (a language many have never heard of) is the 16th-most spoken language in the entire world. And Bengali (ever heard of it before this?) is the 6th-most widely spoken tongue in the world. Hindi comes in at #3, counting those who use it as a 2nd language, & that puts it behind English (an estimated 1 billion, 150 million world-wide, including those who speak it as a 2nd or 3rd language. Tamil is #19 on the list, Punjabi #22, Gujarati #26, Malayalam is #29, Kannada #30. Others are Maithili (#31), Oriya (#34), Bhojpuri (#37), Sindhi (#50), Nepali (#54), and Assamese (#56).

Oriya

ଓଡ଼ିଆ

Oriya is the state

language of Orissa. Here is a sample of that writing. Notice the mushroom shaped characters.

ପୁତ୍ରର ନାମ ଶଣିଭୂଷଣ ଓ କନିଷ୍ଠ ପୁତ୍ରର ନାମ ଗୁରୁଭୂଷଣ। ଗୁରୁଭୂଷଣର ବୟସ ଯେତେବେଳେ
ଦେଇ ବର୍ଷ ସେତେବେଳେ ତାହାର ପିତାଙ୍କର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ହେଲା; ଏଣୁ ତାହାର ମା ତାକୁ ବଡ଼ ମେହୁ
କରୁଥିଲେ। ତାହାର ବଡ଼ ଭାଇ ତାହା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ସାତ ଆଠ ବର୍ଷ ବଡ଼ ଥିଲେ। ସୁତରାଂ ଶଣିଭୂଷଣ
ବିଦ୍ୟାଶିକ୍ଷା କରୁଥିବା ସମୟରେ ଗୁରୁଭୂଷଣ କେବଳ ଖେଳରେ ସମୟ କଟାଇଥିଲା।

To put all of that into perspective, consider these facts: (1) Spanish, spoken throughout most of South and Central America, as well as in the Caribbean Islands, Spain and some in the Philippines, is #4 in the world; (2) Russian is #8, Japanese #9 and German #10 on the list; (3) French comes in at #11 and Italian at #20; (4) Thai ranks at #45, Dutch is #46 and Greek is #61.

This indicates just how little we may know about other parts of the world in terms of how widespread their languages are—and how many people there are in other places of the world. India has more than 1,100,000,000 souls and will soon overtake China as the country with the world's largest population. There are more people in India than all of North, South and Central America, and the Caribbean Islands combined! India would fit into Africa 9 times (in terms of land area), and yet all 50 countries of Africa combined have only about 65% of the population of India!

Karen and I have done some work for the Lord in Mexico. I love Mexico for a number of reasons, one of which is that they speak Spanish—perhaps the most beautiful language in the world! But we found out quickly that it is much easier to find someone in India who speaks English than in southern Mexico! Think about that a bit!

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How a country with so many different languages (and dialects) can function so well is a mystery to me. And remember that India is the world's largest democracy, and even though it may limp along (as opposed to running like a finely-tuned engine), it still functions remarkably well. So, welcome to India—and to the “Tower of Babel”!

—Ron Clayton—

YOUR HELP IS DESPARATELY NEEDED

If you believe in what we are trying to do in India, & you are willing to get involved, here is what you can do to help us:

1. Pray—fervently for us, for your Indian brethren & for the spread of the Gospel.
Please pray for those who are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus.
2. Help us get speaking appointments. Just call our office at 205/921-3737 or email us at rhindia2@gmail.com for more details.
3. Talk to your leadership about this work, and express how much we need and appreciate all who can support this mission effort.
4. Email this newsletter and the regular monthly newsletter to friends and family members, asking them to help us carry the Gospel to the lost.
5. Personally help us as much and as often as you can. Every dollar makes a difference.

Thank you for your love, your prayers, your support & for your interest in taking Christ to the world. Please call me if I can be of any service to you or if you have questions about this mission work. May God richly bless you.

PLEASE...PLEASE...PLEASE

Please do not send this or any of our newsletters or reports to ANYONE in India. This could cause us and/or our Indian brethren problems with those who want to disturb the Lord's work or bring harm to Christians.