

JOURNEY OF PUNJABI LANGUAGE

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All living creatures have consciousness. This consciousness impels the living organisms to communicate with members of their kind, their peer group, or their own children. This gives rise to language. Human beings are the most developed form of life on earth and have a developed language, whereas the other creatures communicate only through gestures or other means, unintelligible to humans. Human language is not one man's job. It is a social tool and requires societal efforts to invent it and keep it alive. When the societies disappear, their languages are also lost or forgotten. It is for this reason that we do not have any records of the spoken languages of the pre-Aryan people. A language has no final shape and is never complete but it does have a history and a geographical location. Language is a very powerful instrument of socialization. Although as a tool for communication, language is pre-eminent but there are other ways as well through which living creatures contrive to convey their feelings and intentions to one another

Punjabi is a vernacular language of Punjab. A vernacular is the native language or native dialect of a specific population. Vernacular language has an added importance. It is the language the child learns from home, society or other social institutions. It is the language which serves as a source of his future intellectual, mental and cultural growth. Vernacular language occupies a unique position in the life of an individual. Dante as quoted by Gurrey in his book rightly stated that a Man's proper vernacular is nearest unto him, In as much as it is more closely united to him, for it is singly and alone in his mind before any other." (Singh, 1999) Three reasons can be put forward to explain the importance of vernacular language: (i) It is the medium of instruction for most of the school subjects, (ii) it is the medium in which much of our thinking is carried on, (iii) it plays an important role in facilitating the child in sharing experiences with those around him.

Punjabi is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by inhabitants of the historical Punjab region both in India and Pakistan as well as in their Diasporas. Punjabi is spoken by approximately 108 million native speakers, making it the 10th most widely spoken language in the world (Sanghera and Dido 2013). Punjabi is a significant language for the Sikhs

and Punjabi speaking population is one of the greatest of the Indian subcontinent and, indeed, the world. Ancestors of the Punjabis are thought to have inhabited the Indus Valley at least as far back as 2,500 BC. The area suffered numerous invasions by Indo-Aryan, Persian, Greek, Arab, Afghan, and British invaders. Indo-Aryan invasions impacted the language of the ancient Punjabis with the result that, like other Indo-Aryan languages (Thompson, 2013; Philips 2013). It evolved out of the Apabhramsa of the region. It is said that the characteristics of Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsa can be found in the Punjabi language (Kasal et al 2000.)

The Vedic language has been called the oldest Punjabi. Classical Sanskrit evolved from the Vedic is the main source of Punjabi vocabulary. Sauraseni Prakrit is nearest to Classical Sanskrit. It was Sauraseni Apabhramsa that gave birth to Punjabi (Nandra 2008). It was also the mother of the saint's language, known as sant-bhasa. A successor of Sauraseni Prakrit, the chief language of medieval northern India, Punjabi emerged as an independent language in the 11th century from the Sauraseni Apabhramsa. Many ancient Sufi mystics and later Guru Nanak Dev ji, the first Guru of the Sikhism started the literary tradition in Punjabi. The early Punjabi literature has had a very rich oral tradition and was principally spiritual in nature. Muslim Sufi, Sikh and Hindu writers composed many works in Punjabi between 1600 and 1850. Baba Bulleh Shah was the most famous Punjabi Sufi poet. With the advent of British rule came the missionaries and adoption of English language as the medium of instruction in schools/teaching of literature came into being. This led to a great social awakening amongst the people of Punjab. Taking advantage of the British rule several religious missions started criticizing Punjabi people. A few intellectuals decided to take the task to awaken the community. This led to the commencement of the Singh Sabha movement. An organization named Khalsa Tract Society was established with Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) as one of its founder members. Modern Punjabi literature begins with the works of Bhai Vir Singh. He made important contributions to the study of the Guru Granth Sahib, wrote short poems and lyrics. Bhai Pura Singh (1882 - 1932) has been called the Tagore of Punjab. He is well known by his

'Sisters of the Spinning Wheel' and 'Unstrung Beads' the work exhibits his intense love for the beauty and the good in Indian village life. Another important poet Kirpa Singh(1879 - 1939) is well known for his romantic poem with a historical background, the 'Lakshmi Devi'. His poetic qualities of imagination and his ability to describe nature is really high order. Dhani Ram Chatrik (1876 - 1954) is a poet of nature. Other poets include Mohan Singh, Amrita Pritam, Shiv Kumar Batalvi, Pritam Singh Safir, Gopal Singh Dardi, S.S.Misa, Surjeet Patar ,Harbhajan Singh Hundal have also given their significant contribution in Punjabi literature and made Punjabi language rich . There is along list Punjabi writers in other departments of modern literature like the novel and the short story, the drama and general prose writing. Early in the 20th century drama in Punjabi came to the front. Nanda and Gurbaksh Singh came forward with a number of plays of which the former's 'Subhadra 'and the latter's 'Purab te Pascham' are social plays with criticism of modern ways. Nanak Singh is the most popular novelist and short story writer. All his writings have a great sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden. There is a long list of contributors who are making Punjabi language proud & rich by their verses.

Present Status of Punjabi Language: According to the 2011 Census of India, there are 27,704,236 Punjabi speakers in India. Punjabi speakers are mainly found in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Punjabi is the preferred language of the Sikh people and it is also the language of their religion. The Indian state of Punjab is 60% Sikh and 37% Hindu. There is a small Muslim population still living there, especially in Malerkotla. The literacy rate in Punjab is 75%, with male literacy at 80.23% and female literacy at 68.36%. Since Punjab is an agricultural state, a large part of the population lives in the rural areas.

Census history of Punjabi speakers in India

Year	Population of India	Punjabi Speakers in India	Percentage
1971	548,159,652	14,108,443	2.57%
1981	665,287,849	19,611,199	2.95%
1991	838,583,988	23,378,744	2.79%
2001	1,028,610,328	29,102,477	2.83%
2011	1,210,193,422	33,038,280	2.73%

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjabi_language

Punjabi is one of the most spoken languages in the world. It is widely spoken over the globe. Recently the

president of Punjabi Language Education Association (PLEA) said that Punjabi is the third most spoken language in Canada with at least 460,000 speakers. In the Metro Vancouver area, Punjabi is the third most spoken language after English and Chinese (Sanghera & Kamal, 2011) It has always been an integral part of Indian cinema. Punjabi pop and folk songs are more acceptable around the globe. A number of television dramas based on Punjabi characters are telecast by different channels all over the world. The number of students opting for Punjabi literature has increased in Indian and Pakistani Punjab. Punjabi cinema has also seen a revival and more and more Punjabi movies are being produced. In India, number of student opting for Punjabi Literature as optional subject in civil services and other competitive examinations has increased along with success rate of the students.. A report has stated that approximately 150 million Punjabi speakers are spread out in about 161 countries around the globe. Punjabi ranks 10th from top out of a total of 6,900 languages recognized internationally by the United Nations.

Punjabi is the primary language of the Indian state of Punjab. Punjabi is the official language of Punjab in India. It is one of the official languages of Delhi and the second language of Haryana. It is also medium of instruction of State board schools. Govt. of Punjab made it compulsory to teach Punjabi as compulsory subject in all schools situated in Punjab. Online Punjabi learning course is started by Punjabi university, Patiala. Many websites are made in Punjabi language to disseminate the knowledge of Punjabi language, history and culture of Punjab. Many newspapers and magazines are published in Punjabi language at national and international level. With efforts Government of Punjab and lovers of Punjabi language ,Punjabi got its place in Chandigarh also. Now the administration in Chandigarh used Punjabi language along with Hindi and English Language.

A report has said that there are over 6,000 languages in use today and roughly 30% are spoken by 1,000 people or less. The number of individual languages listed for India is 461. Of these, 447 are living and 14 are extinct. Of the living languages, 75 are institutional, 127 are developing, 178 are vigorous, 55 are in trouble, and 12 are dying (Dido 2013). As far as having global influence, Punjabi hardly compares to some of the other languages on this list.

But In this tech-era, Punjab's mother tongue Punjabi is losing its importance not only at the global level but in its own country. Punjabi people prefer English language. They feel pride to speak in other language instead of Punjabi. They prefer English as medium for their children. Attitude of

Punjabi people has changed towards their own language. They consider English Language as the key to success. No-doubt English is an international language and is imperative at global, but one cannot have mental growth without knowing the mother-tongue which one learns at home right from his birth from one else than the mother.

Though Punjabi language is one of the most spoken languages in the world and has millions speaker yet it has to make its place . Punjab Government and Punjabi lovers have to work meticulously to make the Punjabi a language of Punjab and also at global level in this era of technology. But its survival in Punjab itself is most important, which is in danger and every Punjabi has to put his contribution, by speaking in Punjabi, Punjabi based education, doing official work, research at doctrol level, publications especially the science and technical books, and to start with making it mandatory for all Punjabis to use Punjabi language at all levels.

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