



Legacy Building for Hindi Learning in the Indian Diaspora By Ashok Ojha

As a Hindi professional, who has worked as a journalist in India and as a teacher in the United States for decades, I would like to comment that the status of Hindi as a world language hasn't been fully appreciated in India. Considering the decreasing use of Hindi in day to day educational, business and official activities in India as well as my own experience interacting with a wide cross section of professionals, officials and the common public in India, it is safe to conclude that Hindi lacks the support it deserves from educators, policy makers and the people at large in India. At the same time I have experienced a very fertile atmosphere for teaching and promotion of Hindi in USA during the past decade.

It is sad that the work done by language experts and scholars in India is not fully recognized. Hindi departments of many educational institutions and government agencies in India are manned by competent educators and professionals. They belong to a pool of young experts in respective fields of work. These experts are full of energy and enthusiasm to take Hindi learning to a new level. I know many young professionals in USA who are proud to using Hindi in day-to-day communication. A number of universities have already switched to using Hindi as medium of instruction of various disciplines, such as, management and information technology. A considerable number of medical professionals including doctors of Indian and non-Indian origins in USA have privately supported developing Hindi courses for their staff. Many US based accounting and law firms advertise that they can communicate in languages other than English in order to attract customers of diverse background.

In India it is very common for companies to reject students on the basis of 'mother tongue is your problem'. The public and private sectors in India treat Hindi professionals and scholars no more than second-class citizens in the country and have been getting away with this kind of discriminatory attitude. It is time for the Government of India to treat discrimination at work place on the basis of linguistic background an offence. Ignore the lip services offered by politicians praising Hindi, (which doesn't really help raising the status of Hindi), and we can view a scenario where the younger generation of Hindi professionals demonstrate concern and commitment for changing the linguistic landscape in India.

India is currently experiencing a digital revolution which offers a glimpse of hope that students and professional with Hindi background, who are well versed in using web-based tools and digital transactions, are employed in a wide range of businesses, such as, travel industry, banking, investment, agriculture and in establishments owned by central and state governments. Someone must watch over the businesses that don't think twice before discriminating against candidates, 'whose mother tongue is a problem'. The real problem lies with the attitude of employers who throw recommendations from colleges and universities requesting them to employ new graduates. Such employers should be taken to task.



चतुर्थ अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हिन्दी सम्मेलन 2017

Fourth International Hindi Conference

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GITAM UNIVERSITY, Gandhi Nagar Campus, Rushikonda, Visakhapatnam - 530045, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA



Talking about the Hindi speaking regions of India, it is really disheartening to see the lack of pride that people, whose mother tongue is Hindi, demonstrate for their language. Proliferation of so-called English medium schools in Northern India is a great proof of this situation. When are we going to accept the fact that if our children learn English in English media schools and do not learn and use local languages their identity development and expression will be placed outside of the Indian cultural context? Global professionals are needed and they can function in English, but no individual is global on a personal level - why communicate in English then?

Proponents of Hindi have failed to change the mind set of policy makers who think that reverting to Hindi will create a backlash from the elite of India as well the people from the non-Hindi belt, which would ultimately threaten the regime. There can be some other occasion to discuss this situation, which is one of many lies floating around in India since its independence.

The idea that the non-Hindi region of India is averse to Hindi learning is not only false but misleading too. The aim of learning a language is to empower us with tools to succeed. The new generation of India can do a better job if they get education in Indian languages starting with Hindi. The Fourth International Hindi Conference at Vishakhapatnam, where mostly non-Hindi speaking professionals are going to be deliberating upon a wide variety of issues, will prove that Hindi doesn't belong to a specific region. It is truly a world language waiting to be strengthened to an extent it could be used to teach many disciplines in colleges, universities and specialized institutions.

Hindi needs the recognition that English, Spanish and Chinese receive as a widely spoken language that can serve successfully and efficiently personal, professional and academic goals on global scale. Because of social technologies there is a more shared understanding of the common (or shared) aspects of the world because of more exchange of information and interconnectivity, where Hindi is fully functional, i.e. globally, but at the same time there is a necessity of each community to define the different and unique and exercise it locally, where Hindi is also fully functional. In the age of global economy and communication it has been demonstrated by institutions and agencies all over the world that Hindi can serve the professionals of the global world successfully and efficiently and it needs to be recognized as such!

For the three days in January (6-8) participants of International Hindi Conference will immerse themselves into healthy discussions on Hindi learning and teaching in non-Hindi regions of India and abroad. The committed scholars from Europe and USA will present their accomplishments teaching and promoting Hindi at respective institutions. "The Fourth International Hindi Conference aims to create a bridge between the pedagogical experts of the Hindi language taught to speakers of other languages (THSOL) in India and particularly in the non- Hindi speaking areas of India, and the pedagogical experts and instructors in the

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Ashok Ojha, International Coordinator,

HINDI SANGAM FOUNDATION, 4 Melville Road, Edison, NJ 08817

India Phone: [011-91-88-6054-6791](tel:011-91-88-6054-6791). USA phone: [001-732-318-9891](tel:001-732-318-9891)

Email: hindicferencenyc2014@gmail.com



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USA and the rest of the world, including the South Asian diaspora (Canada, England, Mauritius, Fiji, etc.), where Hindi is mostly taught as a heritage language as well as a foreign language. “The Conference is poised to setting a new trend of collaborations among Hindi professionals working around the world.

One of the goals of Hindi Sangam Foundation, which was set up in New York Metro area in 2014 under the guidance of the then Consul General Shri Dnyaneshwar Mulay, currently Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, is to set up an umbrella body, Hindi Center of America, for coordinating international collaborations and exchanges of professionals, scholars and ideas.

We hope that a the network of professionals created at previous conferences is further strengthened at Vishakhapatnam. Hindi Sangam Foundation continues to gain strength with involvement of supporters and stakeholders from a diverse field of professionals in medicine, Information Technology and public policy. We hope to convince the politicians of India that they can no longer shy away from their roles of reshaping the language policy, where Hindi is used as a medium of communication and instruction for various disciplines, such as, politics, medical and engineering sciences. Hindi can compete with other languages if its teaching resources and materials are enriched by engaging various institutions that survive with government support.

We, in the United States, not only feel the rising power of Hindi as a world language with every passing year, we continue to work in educational settings enriching our teaching resources. More and more language educators are investing time and energy developing resources and preparing the next generation, both heritage and non-heritage learn and use Hindi and their daily lives.

(Ashok Ojha, the chief coordinator of International Hindi Conference, Vishakhapatnam, is a New Jersey based journalist and teacher, who directs US- funded STARTALK Hindi programs during the summer. He is working towards establishing a charter school in New Jersey, where Hindi will rule as a medium of instruction and communication.)

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