



## भारतीय भाषा संस्थान

उच्चतर शिक्षा विभाग, शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, मानसगंगोत्री, मैसूरु

## CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES

Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education,  
Government of India, Manasagangotri, Mysuru

# CONFERENCE ON INDIA AS ONE LINGUISTIC AREA: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

11-12 April 2025



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Bharat, i.e., India, is unique among the world's ancient civilizations. It is easy to notice, when observed carefully that much of what we Indians have adopted as a way of life over the centuries have roots going back thousands of years. A great part of this philosophy of life that has continued from generation to generation is recorded in our earliest texts transmitted orally to us Indians. Bharat is a multilingual country since ages, each section of the society, each region, language, artistic forms and styles, is a piece in a kaleidoscope and yet there is a unity in Indian cultural ethos underlying this plurality.

The earliest documentation of anthropological, economic and political traits of a civilization within India is found in the Vedic compositions in the form of the Vedas. The Vedic hymns were composed and transmitted orally from 7000 BCE to around 2400 BCE before being reduced to writing around 2300 BCE. The language of the Vedas is thus an available resource for linguists to study. Later, various linguistic and cultural factors made the area unique in terms of language, culture, and artistic forms. The groundwork for the study of contacts amongst various groups residing in close proximity and their linguistic and cultural convergences was thus laid.

There is a long history of multilingualism, expansion and migration of different language communities, and changing sociolinguistic patterns in the region. Naturally, this situation led to a unity in languages and all areas of social life in this landscape. This diversity in unity created the Indian cultural ethos like a rainbow with multiple colours that have a typical gestalt. Indian masses, through sustained interaction and common legacies, have developed a common way to interpret, share experiences, and think. That which has emerged is a kind of organic plurality among the speakers of languages. Indian languages may have come to resemble one another as much as they do by virtue of the millennia of close cultural contact for which there is direct historical evidence and obvious manifestations in every sphere of life: religion, philosophy, music, cuisine, etc.

Culturally, Bharat can be seen as a single cultural area. Still, it's essential to recognize that this unity is multifaceted. An intricate tapestry woven from countless threads, each representing different aspects of life, be it spiritual, social, economic, or political even deeper layers of interconnectedness, traditions, and modern developments that contribute to its unique and multifaceted unity continuously which are shaped by historical legacies, modern developments, and the daily interactions of its people.

Linguistic unity in India is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon shaped by constitutional policies, educational systems, media, and the everyday practices of multilingual citizens. Work on India as a “language area” or “Sprachbund” dates back to earliest times. A much earlier manifestation of this view is to be seen in the



famous passage in Kumarila Bhatta's mimamsa text (Tantravarttika, composed around the seventh century) in which he gives two or three examples of the way in which his contemporaries derived Tamil words from Sanskrit. Since then, extensive literature on this topic has appeared, with different suggestions as to which features should be compared throughout the subcontinent and how to define these. These include features at all levels of linguistic analysis: phonological, vocabulary and word-formation, morphological, syntactic and discourse-level features. India's linguistic richness, with hundreds of languages spoken, is unified by the common practice of multilingualism. Many Indians speak multiple languages, this multilingualism enables communication across different linguistic communities, fostering a sense of shared identity. While other languages use different scripts, many share common origins, such as the Brahmi script. This shared linguistic heritage and the widespread use of Sanskrit in religious and cultural texts contribute to a sense of continuity in the Indian Linguistic area.

Bharat can also be considered one anthropological-sociological area characterized by its remarkable ability to integrate important cultural, social, linguistic, and religious practices into a cohesive whole. Shared practices, social structures, religious beliefs, and historical experiences unify the subcontinent.

Indian literature is a remarkable tapestry woven from the diverse languages that coexist within the country. Despite the vast array of languages in which Indian literature is written, a profound unity binds these literary traditions together, creating a shared linguistic and intellectual heritage. Indian literature, though manifested in many languages, represents a unified cultural and intellectual tradition that reflects the country's richness. The shared themes, mutual influences, and common historical experiences bind these diverse literary traditions together, creating a singular narrative that is distinctly Indian. Whether through translations, literary movements, or the blending of regional and national themes, Indian literature exemplifies the concept of diversity in unity, where the multiplicity of languages is seen as a source of strength and richness.


The genetic makeup of the Indian population also reveals significant similarities that point to shared ancestry and a long history of population mixing. India's genetic landscape has been shaped by thousands of years of migration, interaction, and integration among different groups, leading to commonality in the genetic makeup of its people. There are also deep genetic similarities that point to a shared ancestry and a long history of population interactions.

We believe this interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers from language and linguistics, genetics, anthropology, sociology and social sciences will facilitate a more in-depth understanding of Bharat as one unit.

This seminar aims to bring together a diverse set of scholars from around the disciplinary landscape to delve into questions related to language and linguistics, biological science, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and the theoretical interplay between the study of language and other fields.



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