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## The Influence Of Hindi On The Malayalam Language A Comprehensive Study In The Context Of History, Culture, Politics, And Society

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### Introduction

Language is a living social system that reflects the thoughts, culture, history, and lifestyle of a people. No language grows in isolation; rather, it evolves through continuous interaction with other languages and cultures. The growth of the Malayalam language is no exception. Belonging to the Dravidian language family, Malayalam attained its current rich form through centuries of contact with languages such as Sanskrit, Tamil, Arabic, Portuguese, English, and Hindi.

After Sanskrit, Hindi is one of the Indo-Aryan languages that has influenced Malayalam the most. However, this influence did not happen overnight. Hindi became a part of Malayalam as a result of long-term cultural interactions through trade relations, administrative systems, the freedom struggle, educational policies, cinema, literature, labor migration, media, and social engagements.

Today, Hindi words have naturally found a place in the daily conversation of an average Malayali. When Malayalis use words like “*Bhai*,” “*Yaar*,” “*Shukriya*,” “*Sarkar*,” “*Kacheri*,” “*Masala*,” “*Mithayi*,” “*Jamyam*,” and “*Paisa*,” they often do not realize their linguistic roots. Similarly, Bollywood movies, Hindi songs, and social media trends have taken the linguistic consciousness of Malayalis to a new level.

While the influence of Hindi has paved the way for cultural growth in Malayalam, it has also raised controversies related to linguistic politics. The criticism of “Hindi imposition” and the argument for a “language for national unity” remain key issues in Indian federal politics. Kerala has adopted a balanced approach between these two positions. While accepting Hindi as a link language, Kerala has strongly maintained that the identity and importance of Malayalam must be protected.

This article analyzes the influence of Hindi on Malayalam historically, socially, culturally, and politically. The aim of this study is to comprehensively examine how Hindi interacted with Malayalam from the pre-independence era to the modern digital age and the changes that occurred in the form and nature of Malayalam through this interaction.

## 1. Historical Background

To understand the influence of Hindi on Malayalam, one must first examine the linguistic history of India and the social background of Kerala. Since ancient times, Kerala has been a center of trade and cultural interactions. Various groups such as Arabs, Persians, Gujaratis, Marwaris, and Europeans were associated with Kerala. These interactions paved the way for linguistic exchanges.

Hindi influence reached Malayalam primarily through two routes: first, through the interactions of North Indian traders and administrative systems; second, through political-cultural interactions related to the national movement and the freedom struggle.

### The Influence of Trade Relations

North Indian traders, including Gujaratis and Marwaris, have been active in the port cities of Kerala for centuries. They exerted significant influence in trade centers like Kozhikode, Kochi, and Alappuzha. Their language of communication was often Hindi or Urdu. Many trade-related terms thus entered Malayalam, such as “*Paisa*,” “*Lelam*” (Auction), “*Commission*,” “*Budget*,” and “*Mathruka*” (Model). Later, these spread into common parlance.

### Mughal-Urdu Administrative Influence

Although Kerala was not directly under Mughal rule, the administrative vocabulary used by the British government in India had a strong Hindustani-Urdu influence. Consequently, many administrative and legal terms entered Malayalam, including “*Sarkar*” (Government), “*Darbar*,” “*Kacheri*” (Office/Court), “*Vakkalath*,” “*Jamyam*” (Bail), “*Harji*” (Petition), “*Tahsildar*,” “*Jilla*” (District), and “*Khajanavu*” (Treasury).

### Military Influence

Through Malayalis who served in the British Indian Army, terms like “*Shipayi*” (Sepoy), “*Havildar*,” “*Bahadur*,” and “*Pattalam*” (Army) became popular in common language. Military service acted as a major platform for contact between India's various languages.

## 2. The Freedom Struggle and the Spread of Hindi

The Indian national movement played the most significant role in spreading the influence of Hindi in Kerala. Mahatma Gandhi believed that a common language was necessary for India's national unity and saw Hindi as the means for it.

### Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

Established in 1918, the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha laid the foundation for Hindi learning in Kerala. Hindi learning centers spread even to villages. Examinations like “*Parichaya*,” “*Prathamik*,” “*Madhyama*,” and “*Praveen*” became popular among Malayalis. During that time, learning Hindi was not just language acquisition; it was an act of nationalism.

### National Slogans

During the independence struggle, Hindi-Urdu terms like “*Inquilab*,” “*Zindabad*,” “*Azadi*,” and “*Dilli Chalo*” became part of the political lexicon and eventually found a place in the general vocabulary of Malayalis.

## 3. Post-Independence India and Hindi Policies

With India gaining independence in 1947, Hindi was declared the official language of the country, giving it new importance.

- **Constitutional Provisions:** Article 343 recognized Hindi in the Devanagari script as the official language of the Union. Article 351 declared the promotion and development of Hindi as a duty of the Central Government.
- **Official Languages Act, 1963:** This Act decided that Hindi could be used alongside English for central administrative purposes, increasing its use in institutions like banks, railways, and post offices.
- **The Three-Language Formula:** As part of the 1968 National Policy on Education, Hindi began to be taught as a third language in Kerala from Class 5 to Class 10. The ability of most people in Kerala today to understand basic Hindi is a result of this policy.

#### 4. Influence of Hindi Vocabulary in Malayalam

The most visible form of Hindi influence is in the vocabulary. Many words used by Malayalis today came via Hindi or Urdu:

Category	Examples
<b>Food</b>	Poori, Chappathi, Masala, Mithayi, Achar, Halwa, Paneer
<b>Admin/Legal</b>	Kacheri, Jamyam, Vakkalath, Sarkar, Darbar, Harji, Khajanavu
<b>Clothing</b>	Kuppayam, Pyjama, Kameez, Rumal
<b>Military</b>	Shipayi, Havildar, Pattalam, Bahadur

#### 5. Influence on Literature

There have been strong interactions between Hindi and Malayalam literature.

- **Translation Literature:** The translation of works by writers like Munshi Premchand deeply influenced Malayalam literature, familiarizing Malayali readers with the realities of rural India.
- **Influence on Malayali Writers:** Works by Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, Kakkanadan, and M. Mukundan feature Hindustani words and North Indian backdrops. Basheer's language, in particular, shows a clear Urdu-Hindi influence, reflecting the diversity of India.

#### 6. Cinema and Popular Culture

Hindi cinema is one of the biggest factors that increased Hindi influence in Kerala.

- **Bollywood Influence:** Since the 1970s, Hindi films have found great acceptance in Kerala. Films like *Sholay* ran for long periods.
- **Music:** The songs of Mohammed Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar, and Kishore Kumar became part of the musical appreciation of Malayalis.

- **Social Media:** In today's digital culture, Hindi phrases like "Kya hua?", "Tu kaun hai?", "Bhai," and "Yaar" have become the language of humor and friendship.

## 7. Labor Migration and Linguistic Shifts

- **Malayali Migration North:** Malayalis who migrated to cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata brought Hindi linguistic styles back to Kerala, popularizing words like "Tankha" (Salary), "Haajari" (Attendance), and "Chutti" (Leave).
- **Inward Migration:** Today, the presence of North Indian workers in Kerala's construction and service sectors is very strong. To communicate with them, Malayalis are often compelled to speak Hindi, leading to a form of "Pidgin Hindi" or "Hybrid Hindi."

## 8. Anti-Hindi Agitations

As the influence of Hindi grew, so did criticisms against it.

- **1965 Protests:** Anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu influenced Kerala. Student organizations and political parties protested against making Hindi mandatory.
- **Protection of Linguistic Identity:** As the awareness of Malayalam being a Classical Language grew, the stance that Hindi should not take a position above Malayalam strengthened. Kerala accepted Hindi as a subject of study but opposed the idea of "linguistic imposition."

## 9. Role of Hindi Promotion Organizations

Organizations like the **Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha**, the **Kerala Hindi Prachar Sabha** (Trivandrum), and the **Central Hindi Directorate** have played significant roles through teacher training, book publishing, and the creation of Malayalam-Hindi dictionaries.

## 10. Social and Cultural Analysis

Hindi influence is visible today not just in language but in lifestyle:

- **Food Culture:** North Indian dishes like Roti, Tadka, Paneer, and Kachori have entered common dietary habits.
- **Urban Culture:** Hindi signboards and advertisements have increased in Kerala's cities.
- **Code-Switching:** Many young people now speak a mix of Malayalam, English, and Hindi, a sociolinguistic phenomenon known as code-switching.

## 11. Malayalam's Identity and Hindi's Influence

Despite the influence of Hindi, Malayalam has not lost its basic identity. Instead, it has become richer by absorbing new words and concepts. The strength of Malayalam lies in its inclusive nature. Like Arabic, Portuguese, and English, Malayalam has assimilated Hindi.

### Conclusion

The influence of Hindi on the Malayalam language is historically, culturally, and socially profound. What began with trade relations expanded through the freedom struggle, educational policies, cinema, and labor migration.

Hindi has been both a challenge and a help to Malayalam. On one hand, it paved the way for national communication and employment opportunities; on the other, it sparked debates about linguistic identity. Kerala's uniqueness lies in adopting a middle path—neither completely rejecting Hindi nor surrendering to it.

Today, Hindi is not a foreign language in the life of a Malayali. It is present in cinema, music, politics, workplaces, and social media. At the same time, Malayalam continues to advance while maintaining its uniqueness, grammatical structure, and literary tradition. The contact between languages is a natural process of human society. One language influencing another does not signal its destruction; rather, it indicates its vitality and growth.

