

The Making of Haryanvi: Orality, Linguistic Identity, and Cultural Expression

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Abstract

Haryanvi occupies an unusual position in the linguistic landscape of northern India. It belongs to a region with a strong sense of cultural identity and a remarkably rich tradition of oral expression, yet it has often appeared in linguistic surveys and administrative classifications under larger categories such as Western Hindi or Hindi. Historically known through such names as Haryani, Hariani, Bangaru, Bangru and Jatu, it has developed in a geographical zone where Punjabi, Rajasthani, Braj and Khari Boli meet and continually interact. Its linguistic character therefore cannot be adequately understood through the idea of a sharply bounded and internally homogeneous dialect. Haryanvi is better approached as a historically layered speech tradition formed through inheritance, regional differentiation and sustained linguistic contact.

The paper traces Haryanvi from its conventional location within the Shauraseni–Western Hindi genealogy to its complex relationship with neighbouring speech communities. Particular attention is given to the interaction of speech and writing, linguistic borrowing, phonological and grammatical correspondences with Punjabi, the changing prestige of literary languages around Delhi, and the consequences of standardisation for Haryanvi cultural expression. The argument also revisits the older claim that Haryanvi suffered from a lack of literary creation. Once literature is understood beyond the printed book, the apparent absence becomes difficult to sustain. *Sāṅg*, *rāṅṇī*, folktales, proverbial speech, women's songs, ritual narratives and other oral genres reveal a vigorous literary culture whose principal medium was often performance rather than print.

The paper argues that Haryanvi should neither be reduced to a “corrupt” or rural form of standard Hindi nor isolated from the larger Indic continuum to which it belongs. Its distinctiveness lies precisely in the dynamic relationship between locality and contact, speech and writing, continuity and change. Haryanvi survives not because it has remained linguistically untouched, but because generations of speakers have continually remade it in everyday life.

Keywords: Haryanvi, Haryani, Bangaru, Western Hindi, Shauraseni, language contact, Punjabi, Rajasthani, oral literature, *sāṅg*, *rāṅṇī*, standardisation, dialect continuum, Haryana

Introduction:

A language is not born in a grammar book. Long before someone attempts to classify its verbs, record its vocabulary or decide whether it should be called a language or a dialect, it is already living among people. It is heard in greetings exchanged across a village lane, in disagreement at the *chaupal*, in affection within a family, in songs sung at weddings, in teasing between relatives, in stories told after the day's work is over, and in the unmistakable rhythm through which speakers recognise one another.

Linguistic history has often been reconstructed backwards from written texts. A language with old manuscripts, dictionaries and an established literary canon appears to possess a long and visible past, whereas languages transmitted predominantly through speech can seem historically younger or culturally poorer. But this appearance is deceptive. Writing preserves certain forms of language; it does not create linguistic life itself.

The same argument is developed further in the striking assertion that “वाणी का स्वतंत्र प्रसार और विकास हुआ है”—speech has enjoyed an independent circulation and development of its own. Such a formulation is particularly appropriate to Haryanvi. Its history has never depended entirely upon formal writing. It has travelled through memory, performance, conversation, migration, marriage networks, agricultural labour, markets, military service, pilgrimage and popular entertainment. The written archive captures only a portion of that movement.

This distinction between *vāṇī* and *lekhanī*, speech and writing, provides a useful starting point for understanding Haryanvi linguistically as well as culturally. It immediately warns us against measuring the vitality of a speech tradition merely through the size of its printed canon. It also encourages us to look beyond political borders and formal language labels. Haryanvi emerged in a part of northern India where languages have met one another for centuries. Its character is therefore inseparable from contact.

Haryanvi within the Indic Linguistic Continuum

Traditional Hindi linguistics generally places Haryanvi within the Western Hindi group. One familiar formulation describes the development of five major speech varieties from the Shauraseni Apabhraṃśa tradition

The corresponding eastern grouping was conventionally connected with Ardhamagadhi Apabhraṃśa and included Awadhi, Bagheli and Chhattisgarhi. Within this older scheme, Haryanvi was regarded as the westernmost variety of Western Hindi

The classification has a long scholarly history. George A. Grierson likewise placed the speech of the Haryana region within Western Hindi. Writing of the speech then found in the south-eastern Punjab, he recorded names including *Hariani*, *Bangaru* and *Jatu*. He described Western Hindi as its structural basis while emphasising its relationship with Punjabi to the north and west and Rajasthani varieties toward the south. (Census India)

The older genealogy remains useful, but it requires some qualification. Modern historical linguistics is much more cautious about imagining a simple family tree in which a standardised language called Shauraseni suddenly divides into clearly defined descendants. Literary Prakrits and Apabhraṃśas existed alongside numerous regional spoken varieties. The transition to the modern Indic languages took place gradually, unevenly and through constant interaction.

Colin Masica's treatment of Indo-Aryan is especially useful here because it reminds us that the language map of northern India is often better understood as a continuum than as a collection of neatly separated linguistic territories. Languages shade into one another. A grammatical construction does not necessarily disappear at a state border; a pronunciation may weaken gradually over several districts; vocabulary travels with people.

Haryanvi is a particularly clear example of this process.

Its importance within Indo-Aryan history lies not merely in the question of what earlier language it descended from, but in what happened to that inherited linguistic material as speakers lived for centuries beside Punjabi, Rajasthani, Braj and Delhi-area speech communities.

Genealogy tells one part of the story. Contact tells another.

Haryanvi, Hariani, Bangaru and Jatu: What Is in a Name?

The changing names of Haryanvi reveal something important about its history.

Grierson encountered the same or closely related speech under several designations. In the Haryana tract of Hisar and Jind it was known to colonial observers as *Hariani*. Elsewhere, including Rohtak and the countryside surrounding Delhi, outsiders might simply call similar speech "Hindi." Local terms included *Jatu* and *Bangaru*, with naming varying according to region and community. Grierson ultimately preferred *Bangaru*, connecting it with the Bangar tract. (Census India)

These names were never entirely interchangeable in social meaning. *Bangaru* or *Bangru* is geographical. It evokes the Bangar tract. *Jatu* historically carries a community association. *Hariani* or *Haryanvi* identifies the language more directly with the cultural region of Haryana. *Deswali*, used in many contexts, carries another powerful suggestion: the language of one's own *des*, one's country or home region.

The movement toward "Haryanvi" as the most widely recognisable umbrella name is therefore significant. Language names often become more stable when regional political identities become more stable. Haryana as a modern state came into existence in 1966, but the cultural idea of Haryana and forms of speech associated with the region are much older.

This creates an interesting historical reversal. Earlier scholars often tried to name the speech by identifying the tract or community in which it was encountered. Today the name Haryanvi can work in the opposite direction: it gathers several forms of regional speech into a broader cultural identity.

Neither practice is completely neutral.

When someone says, "I speak Haryanvi," the statement may mean something different from "I speak Bangru," "I speak Deswali," or "I speak Hindi." The choice depends partly on whom one is speaking to. A person may use a highly local linguistic label within Haryana and the broader name Haryanvi outside the state. On an official form, the same speaker may write Hindi.

Such changes do not indicate confusion. They reveal how language identity works. People possess linguistic identities at several scales simultaneously.

A Language without a Hard Border

The political map of Haryana has firm boundaries. The linguistic map does not. This is one of the most important facts about Haryanvi.

Its central speech area is commonly associated with districts such as Rohtak, Jind, Sonapat and adjoining areas, but linguistic features spread beyond any single administrative division. Moving northward brings increasing interaction with Punjabi. Moving west and south-west brings the speaker closer to Bagri and other Rajasthani speech forms. Ahirwati becomes important in the southern belt, while Mewati occupies another culturally distinctive zone. Toward Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh, Haryanvi meets Khari Boli and neighbouring Hindustani varieties. Braj influence becomes more noticeable toward the south-east.

Official and scholarly descriptions likewise recognise this variation. Research on Bangaru locates it principally in parts of present-day Haryana while noting Bagri, Ahirwati and Kauravi around its borders. Contemporary linguistic work continues to classify Bangaru within Western Hindi while acknowledging its regional differentiation. ([Linguistics University of Kashmir](#))

There is continual give-and-take among languages and dialects. Few sentences describe the linguistic reality of northern India more economically.

People move. A daughter marries into another district. A trader works across a regional boundary. Soldiers return home after serving beside speakers of other languages. Labourers migrate. Villagers attend fairs and pilgrimage centres. Markets bring several communities together. Political capitals attract populations from wider regions.

Every such movement can become a linguistic event. A word is heard and retained. A pronunciation gains currency. A grammatical construction becomes familiar. A proverb travels. A singer modifies a line for a different audience. Speakers accommodate one another until a feature that once sounded foreign no longer does. Linguistic boundaries are therefore porous because human boundaries are porous.

This is why the search for a completely “pure” Haryanvi is historically misleading. A language that has lived beside other languages for centuries will naturally display traces of those relationships. Contact is not corruption. It is history audible in speech.

Punjabi, Rajasthani and the Making of Haryanvi

Among the neighbouring traditions, Punjabi and Rajasthani have been especially significant.

Grierson's located Bangaru/Hariani between Punjabi and Rajasthani zones and characterised it as Western Hindi in foundation while showing substantial interaction with both. ([Census India](#))

Yet “influence” needs to be understood carefully. Languages do not influence one another only by exchanging vocabulary.

Two neighbouring speech communities may share or converge in pronunciation, gender marking, participial constructions, postpositions, verbal forms, intonation and sentence patterns. Some similarities may be inherited from earlier Indo-Aryan stages. Others may develop through prolonged contact. Still others may arise independently.

The relationship between Haryanvi and Punjabi is therefore more interesting than the simple question of how many Punjabi words Haryanvi has borrowed.

Grammatical comparison also extends to Past Participles and patterns of gender and number agreement. Such details matter because they reveal that linguistic neighbourhood can operate below the level of conscious borrowing. A speaker may never think, “I am using a Punjabi-type grammatical construction.” The form may simply belong to the speech system in which that person grew up.

The Rajasthani relationship is equally significant. The transition from Haryanvi/Bangaru toward Ahirwati, Mewati and Bagri cannot be represented convincingly as a sudden break. Linguistic Survey materials from Rajasthan themselves recognise the merging of neighbouring speech forms and the resulting Rajasthani influence on Bangru/Haryanvi. (Census India)

The more closely one studies these transition zones, the harder it becomes to imagine languages as sealed containers. Haryanvi is distinctive, but its distinctiveness has been created in conversation with its neighbours.

Delhi: Proximity to Power and the Problem of Prestige

Haryanvi's relationship with Delhi introduces another dimension: not merely linguistic contact, but linguistic prestige.

Delhi is geographically close to the Haryanvi heartland. For centuries it has also been a major political, commercial and cultural centre. That proximity might seem to guarantee greater visibility for Haryanvi. Historically, however, the effect was more complicated.

Powerful centres often produce prestigious linguistic forms. People living around them may continue to speak their local languages at home while choosing a supra-regional language for administration, scholarship, poetry or public life.

Successive periods of North Indian history brought different languages and literary registers into positions of prestige. Persian became enormously important in administration and high culture. Braj developed a literary reach extending far beyond the geographical Braj region. Urdu acquired a powerful urban and literary presence. Khari Boli-based modern Hindi eventually became central to formal education, print and administration.

Haryanvi continued to be spoken throughout these transformations, but writers originating in the region were not compelled to use their everyday spoken language for literary composition.

This distinction is easy to overlook. The language a person speaks and the language in which that person writes need not be the same.

A Haryanvi speaker composing poetry in Braj does not thereby cease to be a Haryanvi speaker. A scholar writing in Sanskrit or Persian does not tell us that the local spoken language disappeared. A twentieth-century writer choosing standard Hindi may do so because that language provides a larger readership and stronger publishing infrastructure.

The linguistic history of Haryana therefore cannot be reconstructed simply by counting works whose title page identifies the language as “Haryanvi.”

Much of the region's cultural history travelled under other literary labels.

Delhi's proximity intensified this situation. Haryanvi existed beside a linguistic centre whose vernacular eventually became foundational to one of South Asia's major standard language traditions. Grierson himself distinguished between vernacular Hindustani and its much larger life as a literary and supra-regional language. (Census India)

The success of the neighbouring standard did not prove the weakness of Haryanvi. It changed the social spaces in which Haryanvi was most likely to be used.

Speech, Writing and the Question of Literary “Lack”

This brings us to one of the most difficult questions in the history of Haryanvi: why did a language spoken with such vitality appear for so long to possess comparatively little formal literature?

It brings us to something important about how literature was once defined.

If literature means primarily authored books, manuscripts belonging to recognised canons, printed poetry, formal drama and works admitted into histories of “major” languages, Haryanvi undoubtedly appears less institutionally visible than Sanskrit, Persian, Braj, Urdu or modern Hindi.

But if literary expression includes oral narrative, song, dramatic performance, proverb, riddle, ballad and ritual narration, the picture changes completely.

Haryana did not lack verbal creativity. It lacked, for long periods, the institutions that transform verbal creativity into a standardised printed canon.

That distinction is crucial. One of the most striking observations about the spoken tradition states that the people possess an immense love for their speech. This affection matters because languages survive first through use, not through academies. A community can continue to speak, sing and narrate in its own idiom even when its educated members write in another language.

The apparent contradiction between deep attachment to Haryanvi and limited historical print production therefore disappears once speech and writing are treated as different cultural domains. Haryanvi flourished where writing could not fully follow it.

Sāng and the Literary Life of Performance

Nothing demonstrates the weakness of the “absence” thesis more clearly than *sāng*.

The Haryanvi *sāng* tradition brings narrative, verse, dialogue, music, acting and improvisation together before a living audience. It cannot be adequately understood as a written dramatic text that happens to be performed. Performance itself is part of the work.

Ved Prakash Vatuk and Sylvia Vatuk's foundational ethnographic study described *sāng* as a North Indian folk opera and examined the relationship between performer, story, song and audience. Their research also showed how the genre responded to social change and modern media rather than remaining frozen in a supposedly ancient form. (JSTOR)

The audience is not incidental. Its laughter matters. Its recognition of a proverbial expression matters. The singer's ability to extend a passage matters. Local pronunciation matters. Improvised commentary matters. The performer may draw upon mythological material familiar across India and yet make it sound unmistakably local. That transformation is itself literary creativity.

The history associated with Pandit Lakhmi Chand makes this particularly visible. Stories known from older religious, legendary and moral traditions acquired a new life through Haryanvi performance. What mattered was not simply which story was told but how it was brought into the speech rhythms and moral imagination of a regional audience.

The same movement between oral narrative, dramatic performance and print has been demonstrated in Frances Pritchett's study of *Sit Basant*. Different genres reshape the same narrative differently; oral tale, *sangit* and *qissa* are not merely copies of one another but creative transformations conditioned by genre and audience. (*Asian Ethnology*)

This is precisely why the history of Haryanvi literature cannot be written exclusively through books. A performance may be lost as an exact verbal object the moment it ends, yet remain culturally alive for generations. Orality remembers differently from print.

Women's Voices and the Intimate Archive

There is another reason a book-centred literary history underestimates Haryanvi culture: some of its most expressive genres belonged to spaces in which formal literary institutions rarely looked.

Women sang.

They sang at weddings, during childbirth ceremonies, at festivals and in domestic gatherings. They sang about daughters leaving natal homes, difficult marriages, affectionate brothers, demanding mothers-in-law, absent husbands, sexuality, work, longing, injustice and desire. These compositions constitute an archive of emotional and social history.

A study of the Haryanvi women's ballad *Jatanā* is especially instructive. Such songs complicate the notion that folklore merely preserves conservative values. Tradition can affirm social norms, but it can also question them.

A woman singing within a ritual gathering may repeat a song inherited from previous generations and still make it speak to the circumstances of her own life. The words are traditional; the performance is immediate. And Speech moves because speakers continually inhabit it anew.

The Folk Voice as Literature

The problem therefore lies less in whether Haryanvi possessed literature than in what earlier literary histories were prepared to recognise as literature.

A proverb rarely has an identifiable author. A folktale may exist in twenty versions. A wedding song changes from village to village. A *rāḡṇī* may be remembered differently by different singers. A *sāṅg* exists partly in improvisation.

From the standpoint of a print culture seeking a stable "original text," such variability can appear troublesome. From the standpoint of folklore, variability is evidence of life.

The idea that writing fixes language is already present in the observation that writing gives speech a settled form. That stability is useful. It allows preservation, education and transmission across great distances. Yet stability also removes some of the flexibility characteristic of everyday speech.

A storyteller watches the listener. A book cannot. A performer can shorten a narrative when an audience becomes restless and expand a humorous passage when laughter encourages it. A singer can substitute the name of a local village. A proverb can be bent slightly to fit the moment.

Oral literature is therefore not simply written literature that has not yet been written down. It works differently. This distinction is indispensable to understanding Haryanvi.

Standard Hindi and the Visibility of Haryanvi

The rise of standard Hindi created both opportunities and pressures for regional speech traditions.

A common language of education, administration and wider communication enables people from different regions to participate in shared institutions. Yet standardisation can also create a hierarchy in which local speech begins to be treated as merely informal, rustic or incorrect.

Linguistically, such judgements have little foundation.

Every naturally transmitted language variety possesses a grammatical system. Haryanvi is not Hindi spoken badly. Its sound patterns, vocabulary, verbal system, agreement structures, idioms and discourse habits follow conventions learned by native speakers from childhood.

The difference is one of social prestige, not grammatical completeness.

Modern standard Hindi acquired dictionaries, grammars, educational institutions, publishing houses, examinations, newspapers and state functions. Haryanvi historically possessed far fewer of these mechanisms.

That difference eventually begins to appear natural. The standard becomes “the language.” The regional speech becomes “the dialect.”

Yet the distinction between language and dialect is never purely linguistic. History, politics, education and literary culture participate in making it.

The Census of India provides an instructive contemporary example. The 2011 mother-tongue tables recognise “Haryanvi” as a distinct mother-tongue return but place it under the larger Hindi category. (Census India)

That administrative choice is important, but it should not be mistaken for a linguistic verdict. Similarly, Haryanvi is not separately included among the twenty-two languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. (Rajbhasha)

Constitutional recognition, census classification and linguistic identity answer different questions. A language can possess millions of speakers without appearing independently in an administrative schedule.

A speech community can identify strongly with its language while using another standard for schooling. The absence of separate constitutional recognition does not make the speech less systematic, just as formal recognition would not suddenly create its grammar.

Haryanvi and the Myth of Linguistic Purity

Discussions of regional languages sometimes become preoccupied with purity. Which words are “really” Haryanvi? Which are Punjabi? Which came from Persian? Which are Hindi? Which are Rajasthani?

Such questions can be useful historically, but linguistic purity is a poor measure of authenticity. Every long-lived language contains layers of contact.

English would scarcely exist in its present form without French, Latin and Norse influence. Urdu developed through intense multilingual contact. Hindi contains vocabulary derived from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English and numerous regional sources. Punjabi and Rajasthani have equally complex histories.

Why should Haryanvi be expected to remain untouched?

Its contact with Punjabi and Rajasthani does not diminish its identity. It helps explain it. Indeed, the geographically transitional character of Haryana may be one of the reasons its speech is so linguistically interesting. Features that standardised literary languages regularise or suppress can survive in regional varieties. Border areas preserve evidence of older continuities. Haryanvi therefore deserves to be studied not in spite of its mixed linguistic environment but partly because of it. The language remembers its neighbours.

Sound, Rhythm and the Difficulty of Translation

Haryanvi also demonstrates why the linguistic identity of a language cannot be reduced to dictionary meaning. A sentence translated into standard Hindi may preserve its information and lose its personality. The humour may disappear. The impatience may soften. The intimacy may change.

A Haryanvi word pronounced with a particular lengthening or stress pattern can communicate attitude as strongly as lexical meaning. The sharpness for which popular representations of Haryanvi speech are sometimes known is often a matter of phonology, intonation and pragmatic convention rather than aggression in any straightforward sense.

Sound carries social meaning.

A speaker hears not merely words but region, generation, intimacy and social setting. This presents a serious challenge to translators of Haryanvi folklore. Rendering every expression into smooth standard English may make a tale readable while erasing the social voice that made it Haryanvi in the first place.

An adequate translation must sometimes retain terms that resist exact equivalence. Kinship words, agricultural vocabulary, forms of address, abuses, blessings, ritual expressions and culturally specific idioms may require explanation rather than replacement.

The same principle applies to transcription. A standard Devanagari spelling can make Haryanvi readable to Hindi readers, but excessive normalisation risks making the language look more like standard Hindi than it sounds.

Writing helps preserve speech. It can also domesticate it. The tension between *vāṇī* and *lekhanī* therefore returns.

Haryanvi as Cultural Memory

Languages carry things dictionaries cannot easily record. A kinship term carries a relationship. A proverb carries generations of judgement. An agricultural expression carries knowledge of soil, cattle, rain or season. A ritual song carries memories of women who sang it before the present singers were born. A *sāṅg* carries not only a story but a history of audiences who laughed and argued over that story.

Haryanvi is therefore not simply a means of communication used within Haryana. It is also a repository of cultural memory.

Consider the ordinary contexts through which it survives. A child first learns not grammatical terminology but voices. The language comes attached to people: grandmother, mother, father, neighbour, field worker, shopkeeper, singer. Certain emotions may even feel more natural in the first language than in the language of education.

Later the same person may study in Hindi and English, work in Delhi or another metropolis, and shift comfortably between linguistic registers. This multilingual competence should not be mistaken for linguistic displacement.

People can inhabit several languages.

The danger arises only when one language loses entire social domains. If younger speakers understand Haryanvi but cease to tell stories in it, one form of transmission weakens. If ritual songs disappear, vocabulary associated with those rituals may disappear with them. If performers abandon traditional repertoires, particular narrative forms may no longer find an audience.

Language preservation therefore cannot consist merely in producing a dictionary.

Genres must survive. Contexts must survive. People must have reasons to speak.

From the Village Performance to Digital Haryanvi

Haryanvi today no longer belongs only to the village spaces with which older descriptions often associated it.

Migration, television, cinema, popular music, comedy, YouTube, short-form video and social media have radically altered its circulation.

A language once imagined primarily through rural geography can now travel instantly beyond Haryana. This transformation should not automatically be understood as a decline in authenticity. Folk traditions have always adapted to new media. Vatuk and Vatuk were already observing decades ago that *sāṅg* performers responded to radio, cinema and changing audience tastes. (*Asian Ethnology*)

Digital culture continues the process on another scale.

A Haryanvi comic sketch uploaded from Rohtak may be watched in Canada. A *rāṅṇī* may circulate independently of the performance in which it originated. Young speakers may deliberately exaggerate regional pronunciation for humour or identity. Urban Haryanvi may incorporate English expressions that

earlier speakers never used. None of this means that Haryanvi has ceased to be Haryanvi. Living languages change precisely because they continue to be spoken. The more useful question is whether new forms preserve space for creativity in the language rather than whether they reproduce an idealised village speech unchanged.

Towards a More Inclusive Literary History

A future history of Haryanvi literature should therefore begin by refusing the old opposition between literature and folklore. It should include printed poetry and prose, but it should also include *sāng*. It should include named authors, but also anonymous songs. It should study male public performers and women's domestic traditions. It should examine folktales, riddles, proverbs and ritual narratives alongside written genres. It should follow stories when they move between Haryanvi, Hindi, Urdu and neighbouring languages. Most importantly, it should resist the temptation to identify one fixed "original" form whenever the tradition itself survives through variation.

This would produce a very different literary map of Haryana. The apparent emptiness would disappear.

In its place would appear singers, storytellers, performers, farmers, women gathered during ceremonies, itinerant entertainers, village intellectuals, religious narrators, professional composers and ordinary speakers whose verbal creativity has rarely entered conventional literary histories.

Literature would no longer begin when someone picked up a pen. It would begin when language became memorable.

Towards a Linguistics that Listens

Haryanvi also invites a different kind of linguistic research. Much remains to be done through systematic recording of actual speech across Haryana and neighbouring areas. Such research should take differences of age, gender, occupation, caste location, migration, education and rural or urban background seriously without reducing any one variety to the "real" Haryanvi.

The idea of a single perfect dialect is particularly unsuitable here.

Bangru/Deswali may function as a central or highly recognisable form, but Ahirwati, Bagri-contact speech, Khadar varieties and other regional forms belong to the linguistic ecology of Haryana as well.

A future linguistic atlas could map phonological and grammatical features rather than simply colouring whole districts with a single language name.

Recorded oral archives would be equally valuable. A folktale should ideally survive not only as a cleaned-up printed transcription but also as sound. Intonation, pauses, laughter and interaction are part of its meaning. A *rāḡṇī* needs music. A *sāng* needs performance. A women's song needs the social environment in which women sing together. Documentation should preserve the language without embalming it.

Conclusion

Haryanvi becomes most intelligible when we stop asking it to fit too neatly into categories.

Historically, it belongs to the Western Hindi linguistic sphere and participates in the wider New Indo-Aryan continuum. The conventional Shauraseni genealogy helps explain part of its inheritance. Grierson's classification as Bangaru/Hariani preserves another important stage in its scholarly history. Punjabi and Rajasthani contact explain much of its regional texture. Proximity to Delhi helps explain both its interaction with prestigious linguistic forms and the relative invisibility of an autonomous written canon.

None of these facts alone defines Haryanvi. Its deeper history lies in the relationship among them.

Haryanvi has survived because people continued to speak it while literary fashions changed around them. Courts changed language. Administrations changed. Educational standards changed. Political borders changed. Names changed. Yet speech continued.

Speech possesses its own movement and its own history. That movement is visible in Haryanvi's interaction with Punjabi and Rajasthani, in its changing relationship with Delhi, in the coexistence of Bangaru, Haryanvi, Deswali and other names, and in the difference between administrative classification and lived linguistic identity.

It is equally visible in *sāṅg*, *rāṅnī*, women's songs, folktales and everyday speech. The older claim of a scarcity of Haryanvi literature therefore needs to be turned around. What was scarce was not creative expression. What was scarce was the institutional recognition of that expression as literature. Once the ear is allowed to accompany the eye, the archive becomes much larger.

Haryanvi is no longer visible merely as the westernmost member of a linguistic classification. It emerges as the voice of a contact region—a language shaped by movement, neighbourhood, memory and performance.

Its history reminds us that languages do not become meaningful because scholars classify them. Scholars classify them because generations of people have already made them meaningful.

And in Haryanvi, as perhaps in every living language, *vāṇī* still runs a little ahead of *lekhanī*.

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