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THE EXPONENTS OF PLURAL IN HINDI DECLENSION

The present form of the Hindi language is a result of a long historic evolution which we can partly observe on the grounds of the examination of the texts. The lacunae in philological data are completed with hypotheses. The oldest Indian texts are the Vedas; through comparison with the Old Iranian texts we reconstruct the Indo-Iranian stage and a confrontation with other groups of the Indo-European family leads us to the reconstruction of the primitive Indo-European language. A comparison with the forms of other language families allows us to draw conclusions on the possibilities of the language as such of expressing the Plural number.

This category can be expressed in every language, but not every language expresses it with formal elements. The most primitive way of expressing Plural is using a separate word. Its traces can be found in all natural languages, e. g. Polish człowiek (man), ludzie (men). This method is used especially, when a collection of elements is emphasized rather than their number. When, on the other hand, only a great number of things should be expressed, then a repetition of the name is used, e. g. in the Japanese language, hito (man), hito hito (men). Repeating symbolizes the enumeration of elements of a set. It does not always include the whole

word, but sometimes part of a word can also be repeated. It would then be a kind of reduplication. Such construction occurs in some African languages. Other languages do not mark the Plural form of the word, but they express it - if necessary - syntactically, through attribute-numerals, either by a definite number or by words denoting quantity, like "much", "a lot". Frequent exponents of Plural as a collection are words denoting a set, a group, which are placed after the name of the unit. In the evolution of language such words can be turned into postpositions, then to suffixes and finally to inflexional endings. Such an evolution, however, can but seldom be observed in one language. There exist also languages which put such elements before the word e. g. the Bantu languages.

In the reconstruction of the primitive Indo-European language -es is assumed as the ending of Plural in the declension of masculine and feminine stems; however, it is neither possible to reconstruct a more primitive form of it nor to explain its primitive meaning; it is supposed that it was a particle. For Neutra the ending -a is assumed, which denoted a collection, Pl. *juga, Sg. *jugom. This ending was preserved still in Vedic texts.

In the period of the Indo-European community one more factor must be taken into account, namely the influence of the Plural form of the demonstrative pronoun *toj. It can be seen chiefly in Greek, Latin and the Slavonic languages; but also in the Old Indian language it can be observed; the pronominal adjectives like sarva, viśva, have pronominal inflexion, sarve, viśve.

In the Indo-Iranian group the Indo-Eur. *e is changed into *a, therefore the ending *es > *-as. The neuter nouns which had in the Plural the ending -i (besides -a) undergo the influence of nasal stems, like nāman and after the pattern of nāmāni the forms danāni (dāna) and manāmsi (manas) are created.

The Plural of personal pronouns has a different meaning from that of substantives; it does not denote a greater number of "I" (speaking person), but "I and other persons connected with me". Similar is the case with the form "you". According to this different meaning the Plural forms of personal pronouns are no derivatives from the Singular ones, but they constitute separate words, Indo-Eur. I. Pers. Sg. *eǵhom, Pl. *uei, II pers.

Sg. *tuem, Pl. *jus. In Indo-Iranian both the pairs give *ažham, *vayam; *tvam, *yušma. The Indo-Iranian period must have also included the innovation of the Plural ending *-āsas. It occurs both in Vedic texts and in Avesta, Skr. vrkāsas, Av. aspāho and it must have arisen through adding once more the ending -as to the to the ending -ās. The confrontation of this ending with the forms of other Indo-European language groups in order to prove its occurrence in the proto-Indo-European period does not allow us to draw certain conclusions. The Old Indian phase of the language is represented by the Vedic dialect and Classic Sanskrit. In their colloquial form they spread on the areas inhabited by non-Aryan peoples and they were strongly influenced by the substratum languages. The early stages of this process cannot be studied, as the earliest texts do not record such changes because they reflected the literary language.

The evolution of the Indo-Aryan languages weakens the final sounds, at first the consonants, then the vowels too. It was probably caused by the shifting of the accent; but it was just at the end of the word that the exponents of grammatical categories were placed and so the categories - among them also the Plural - have become less distinctive. Therefore it was necessary to find new exponents. The predominant type of masculine substantives in Old Indian are the nouns in -a, e. g. putra. Its phonetic evolution went on parallel in all Indo-Aryan languages, Sg. putrah, Middle Indian putta, New Indian pūt; Pl. putrāh, M. Ind. puttā, N. Ind. pūt. Hence the form of Singular became identical with the Plural. Therefore the form of Nominative Plural of the masculine consonantal stems in Hindi is not different from the Singular form. In many cases it does not cause any misunderstanding, as both the forms often denote the whole class, e. g. "the man is a thinking being" - "the men are thinking beings". In most cases the context - it is usually an attribute - qualifies the substantive in respect of quantity, the most precisely, when the attribute is numeral. Here we can quote such expressions as in German "drei Mann stark", where the ending of Plural is needless, or the Hungarian rule, that after numerals the substantives get no Plural mark, ember (man), Plural emberek (men), but három ember (three men).

The predominant type of masculine nouns in Hindi are stems in -ā. They evolved from the derivatives in -ka through a later contraction. They have in the Nominative Plural -e, laṛkā - laṛke. This form is usually explained as a relict the old Instrumental Plural ending -aiḥ > -ai > -e. The development of the ending -ebhiḥ gives the same result, -ebhiḥ > -hi > -e. To this we may add the fact, that the Old Indian group -aḥ in some dialects is changed to -e. Moreover -e as a mark of Plural can be supported by the Sanskrit pronominal forms, such as te, sarve, viśve.

It remains to explain the development of neutral forms of Plural. Some Indo-Aryan dialects have retained three grammatical genders, e. g. Marathi, most of them, however, including Hindi, have lost the neuter gender. The old neuter forms of Plural have reinforced the masculine ones. Skr. rūpāni > Middle Indian rūpāim > rūpe, joined formally also the masculine forms.

The old forms of the oblique cases, both in Singular and in Plural fused together and developed the bases of the Indian oblique cases. In Singular it was chiefly the Dative form, Skr. -āya; they have evolved the forms in -e, Hindi laṛke. In the Plural the only form that in spite of its phonetic decay had retained its characteristic mark was the Genetive case with the Sanskrit ending -ānām. After the falling off of -ām the remaining part -ān (-am) was just distinct enough to differ from the casus rectus, laṛkāḥ - laṛke. Therefore the form laṛkāḥ became at first a base for all oblique cases in the Plural. It has been preserved in Panjabi and in some Hindi dialects. The change into -om in West Hindi probably proceeded as follows: to the ending -am the particle -hu was attached, -amhu > amḥ (Braj bhāṣā) and further (in Kharī bolī) -om. This ending occurs in oblique cases of both the genders.

For the feminine stems in the Nominative Plural two endings occur: the stems in -ī have -iyām, laṛkī, laṛkiyām, the other stems take -em, bāt, bātem. The Old Hindi Plural form for -ī stems was -īm; it has been preserved in adjectives and participles, thī - thīm. In the later period it was changed to -iyām. The ending of all other stems -em could be a monophthongization of -aim. These changes are only hypothetical, as many link forms are lacking, especially for the Old Kharī bolī which is the basis of the contemporary Classical Hindi.

For the masculine stems whose Nominative Singular does not differ from the Plural - especially in the names of living beings - new exponents of Plural number appear. They are words denoting a group, chiefly log (men), bandar log (monkeys). This innovation is parallel to a feature in the Dravidian languages, where only the names of living beings get the mark of Plural, whereas the names of things have the same form in both the numbers.

The form of Plural in Hindi also denotes respect, hence it is often used, when respectable persons are addressed. Thus the pronoun of the second person Plural is usually applied here, tum (instead of tū). As this custom became a conventional social norm, a new honorificum has been introduced to express some particular respect, namely āp (you), (Sir) and this form is used with the 3rd person Plural of the verb, āp dekhte hain, which exactly corresponds with the German "Sie sehen". Therefore if it is necessary to stress the Plural of persons whom we are addressing the mark log is added, tum (you) (Sg.), tum log (you) (Pl.), āp (you), (Sir) (Sg.), āp log (you), (gentlemen) (Pl.).

Analogically the form of the first person Plural ham has acquired the meaning of the Singular main (I). This shift of meaning has become fixed in the Eastern Hindi dialects. Hence a new form ham log (we) has taken over the function of the Plural.

The formal evolution of Plural exponents in Hindi is illustrative of the change of its morphological type. In the inflexional languages several grammatical categories are expressed by one common exponent, e. g. Skr. vrkas denotes the Nominative case as well Plural and masculine gender. Through the phonetic evolution the distinctive features of these categories disappear and in the New Indian period new exponents evolve. Each of these new marks, however, denotes one category only. On the other hand these marks of the cases, being postpositions, become independent of the category of number and they join both Singular and Plural. This is the peculiarity of agglutinative languages.

Such is the outline of the formal and semantic development of the exponents of Plural in the Hindi declension. Hindi is functioning as a literary language on a vast dialectal territory. The forms of these dialects influence its grammatical system and modify it. This is, however, either a literary genre or a feature of the author's individual style.