

**The Fifth International Hindi Conference held at the Consulate General  
premise, 3 East, 64 Street, New York, NY 10065  
on October 20-21, 2023:**

**Inauguration of the conference**

New York, October 21, 2023:

On Friday, October 20th, Honorable Randhir Jaiswal, Consul General of India in New York formally inaugurated the Fifth International Hindi conference at the Ball Room of the consulate premises. Mr. Jaiswal underscored the commitment of the Government of India for supporting Hindi. “We are making all efforts to support the promotion of Hindi around the world”, he said. He said that the Government of India understood the value of Hindi education and supported all efforts to promote Hindi around the world.

The two day Hindi conference, organized by Hindi Sangam Foundation, a NJ based non-profit educational outfit, was supported by the Consulate General of India in New York, New York University, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), Michigan State University, World Hindi Secretariat, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, run by the Ministry of Education, Govt of India, Shikshayatan, Sriniketan, Yuva Hindi Sansthan and a battery of community organizations and individuals. The conference was attended by Hindi language experts and instructors from various educational institutions based in the USA, Europe and Asia.

The inaugural event began with a brief comment by Suman Singh, Head of Chancery, the Consulate General of India in New York, who welcomed and thanked the guests for attending the conference. She invited Mrs Neena Sarin, a Hindi instructor of Jersey City Public Schools to conduct the proceedings of the event.

Ms. Sarin invited important guests including Honorable Randhir Jaiswal, the Consul General of India, Purnima Desai, Organizing Committee Chair, Prof Gabriela Nik Iieva, NYU, Chair, Academic Committee, Ashok Ojha, conference coordinator and president, Hindi Sangam Foundation, Dr. Sunil Kulkarni, Director, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra, Dr. Maudhuri Ramdhaari, Secretary-General, World Hindi Secretariat, NJ based philanthropist Piyush Patel to take part in the lamp lighting ceremony to mark the beginning of the conference. The lamp lighting ceremony was followed by a classical dance performance ‘Ganesh Vandana’ by a Hindi student, Samanvi Madupoju.

Purnima Desai, Chair, Organizing Committee, welcomed the Consul General Randhir Jaiswal by presenting him a shawl and a memento. In her speech she thanked the consul general for sponsoring the 5th International Hindi Conference. On behalf of Hindi Sangam Foundation, the organizer of the event, shawls and mementos were also presented to dignitaries who were present on the occasion. These dignitaries included Prof. Gabriela Nik Iieva, NYU Hindi Program and

chair, Academic Committee, Prof Rajiv Ranjan, Hindi professor at Michigan State University, a conference sponsor, Dr. Sunil Kulkarni, Director, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra, Ministry of Education, Government of India, Dr. Maudhuri Ramdhaari, Secretary-General, World Hindi Secretariat, Mauritius, Piyush Patel, philanthropist, New Jersey, Upendra Chivukula, former New Jersey Assemblyman and Chair, Yuva Hindi Sansthan, sponsor of the conference and Prof Anand Sharma, Benaras Hindu University. Ashok Ojha, conference coordinator, welcomed and honored Akash Patel, president, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). ACTFL was a major sponsor of the conference.

Ashok Ojha presented an overview of the conference. He said that the ultimate goal of the conference was to build a strong connection between the Hindi educators of US school system and those teaching at various Universities. “We must work to remove the disconnect between the language teachers of schools and the universities. The theme of the conference was, “Innovation in Hindi instruction (Methodology, Technology, and more): Tools, Environments and Challenges”.

Mr. Piyush Patel, philanthropist, who represented the Indian community at the conference, congratulated the organizers for promoting Hindi in the USA. Upendra Chivukula, former NJ Assemblyman and Chairperson, Yuva Hindi Sansthan, emphasized the need to learn Hindi. “Hindi was a symbol of identity for the people of Indian origin”, he said.

Dr. Maudhuri Ramdhaari, Secretary-General, World Hindi Secretariat, Mauritius, spoke about modernizing the methodology of Hindi teaching. She suggested that the traditional teaching method for Hindi language must be made compatible to the needs of today’s Hindi learners and the requirements of modern day education. “The old pattern is not attractive for the learners of 21st century, who are hesitant to attend Hindi classes”, she said.

Akash Patel, president of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), in his key note speech, appealed to Indian-American parents to encourage their children to aspire for becoming teachers, not just engineers and doctors. The topic of his speech was, “Inspiring Global Citizenship and Intercultural Understanding in the Heritage Language Classroom”.

“Language teachers play key role in promotion of peace and conflict resolution around the world”, said Patel, a certified Spanish teacher, who was recently elected to the National Council of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA). He said that peace and conflict resolution were important goals that must receive priority by all. “We can achieve this goal if we encourage our children to learn other cultures”, he said.

Shubhra Prakash presented a solo stage show, 'Fontwala'.

Dozens of US based Hindi poets recited their poems at a 'Kavi Sammelan', which was organized as the final activity of the inaugural event. Well known New York based poet Dr. Bijoy Mehta presided over the 'Kavi Sammelan'. The Inaugural event ended with dinner.

## **Presentations by Hindi teachers and experts from USA, Europe and India**

### **Day 2: October 21, 2023**

On October 21st, day 2 of the conference, a number of language experts, who came from various parts of USA, Europe, India and Mauritius, presented their research papers on the theme, "Innovation in Hindi instruction-Methodology, technology and more: Tool, environment and challenges." The presentations were held in parallel sessions that took place onsite and virtually in two separate halls located on the ground and first floors of the consulate building.

Prof Rajiv Ranjan, Michigan State University, initiated a discussion on the role of language teachers in modern language education. He was of the opinion that teachers should receive appropriate training before leading a class. "This was important as untrained teachers are often times unaware of the learning needs of their students", he pointed out. Ranjan recently won an award by the US Department of Education for developing language resource materials.

Four Hindi language instructors, Patrica Sabarwal, Hindi instructor at Indiana University, Neena Sarin, a New Jersey School District, Mamta Tripathi, an independent teacher, and Anubhooti Kabra, an Atlanta based Hindi teacher, presented on 'Enriching and Diversifying Curricula by Inclusion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Rural and Minority Communities of India'. They narrated their experiences of visiting India where they travelled to learn about sustainable living style of marginalized communities and traditional ways to mitigate natural disasters such as the climate change. Their presentation was based upon the experiences during YHS Fulbright-Hays GPA Curriculum Development Project 2022. These instructors participated in a Study Tour program called Fulbright-Hays GPA Curriculum Development Project in 2022. The project was sponsored by the US Department of Education of which Yuva Hindi Sansthan and New York University Hindi language programs were its awardees in 2022. The presenters narrated their experiences gained during the study tour and explained major aspects of sustainable life style of marginalized communities in India and various challenges they face due to the changing weather.

Anoop Bhargava, a NJ based Hindi poet, along with Rekha Sethi, Indraprastha College, Delhi, jointly discussed the future of Artificial Intelligence and made a case for 'Translating and Interpreting: Role of Artificial Intelligence'

A number of speakers, who couldn't attend the conference, presented their work virtually. They provided insights into relationship between Hindi and other languages, such as, Portuguese, Assamese and more.

Prof Priyanka Sonkar of Benaras Hindu University, made a virtual presentation on the topic, 'Teaching language and culture to foreign students at BHU'. At a parallel session held in the second floor Ball room, Shiv Kumar Singh of the University of Lisbon demonstrated how Por-

tuguese language/lixicon influenced Indian languages, especially Hindi. His presentation was followed by a presentation by Ved Prakash Singh of Osaka University, Japan, who highlighted some historical facts regarding Hindi education in Japan. Singh also spoke about the current status of Hindi in Japan. Dr. Anushabda, Tejpur University, in his virtual presentation compared similarities and differences between Hindi and Assamese languages.

In another session Ranjan presented, ‘Open Educational Resources (OER) for Heritage and Non-Heritage Hindi Learners’. Sagar Desale presented his thoughts on using technology in Hindi education in his virtual presentation. NJ based Hindi teacher Mamta Tripathi presented her thoughts on ways to engage K-12 learners in performance based activities. The session was moderated by Ritu Jayakar, Penn State University.

Shilpa Parnami of Boston University delved upon ‘Developing Multicultural Communicative Competence in an Online Context: Lessons from a Bilingual Discussion Forum between Hindi and English Language Learners’. Elmar Josef Renner, a Copenhagen (Denmark) based Hindi instructor questioned the teaching of Grammar in his presentation titled, ‘What Sense Does It Make to Translate Grammar? Imitating Constructions in the Hindi Language Classroom’. Sujata Singh of Cornell University presented on ‘Second Language Acquisition through Community-Based Service Learning in the 21st century’ while Nora Koa, from University of California in Berkeley presented on ‘Reconciling Learning Goals in Advanced/Superior Hindi Speakers Class’.

Rajni Bhargava, NYU, moderated a session that focused upon expansion of Hindi around the world. Anand Sharma offered some useful advice to Hindi instructors of foreign learners of Hindi. Abha Gupta of BHU presented on ‘Communication and creativity’, while Mira Singh presented, ‘Hindi in the Indian Diaspora’.

Sushma Malhotra and Usha Sharma took part in a panel dedicated to language education. The session was moderated by Rajni Bhargava, NYU. Soma Vyas presented on ‘popularity of Hindi’, while Chandrika Das took the stage to discuss ‘Ram Katha in the Visual and Performing Arts of Rajasthan’, and Vinita Sinha presented a rich video clip on Translation.

### **Unanimously adopted Resolution**

#### **Government of India urged to fund ‘Hindi Center’ in New Jersey**

An unanimously adopted resolution at the Concluding event of the conference held on Saturday, October 21st at the Consulate General of India in New York the following demand was made:

That the Government of India must finance the establishment of a ‘Hindi Center’, in New Jersey, a hub of Indian-American in the USA. Such a center to be built and managed by Hindi Sangam Foundation, a New Jersey based non-profit educational organization that also organizes International Hindi Conferences in New York, with the support and supervision of the Consulate General and selected US based Hindi professionals will function to promote Hindi education in USA, will serve as a resource venue for Hindi learning in the USA and other parts of North and South America.”

Moving the resolution, Ashok Ojha, coordinator of the 5th International Hindi Conference emphasized that “Establishment of a ‘Hindi Center’ was the need of the hour.” He said, “Hindi learning in the Western Hemisphere, especially in the Caribbean nations as well as South American countries, like Guyana, Surinam, Peru and Brazil, was an important goal for Hindi promoters. It is necessary to extend support to all efforts of Hindi teaching in these countries. “Similar resolutions were adopted in previous Hindi conference held in New York in 2014, 2015 and 2016, all of which were actively supported by the Consulate General of India in New York”, he added.

A number of speakers at the concluding event supported the resolution. Dr. Sunil Kulkarni, Director, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, a Hindi learning institute run by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, said that his organization will support the establishment of ‘Hindi Center’ in New Jersey. Dr. Madhuri Raamdharee, Secretary General, World Hindi Secretariat, Mauritius said that establishment of a ‘Hindi center’ amidst the hub of Indian-American communities was a great idea that was in tune with the objective of World Hindi Conferences aimed at promoting Hindi around the world. Prof. Rekha Sethi, professor of Hindi, Indraprasth College, Delhi, also supported the demand for establishing a ‘Hindi Center’ in New Jersey, USA.

The conference delegates also supported holding the conference annually. They appealed to the Consul-General to sponsor such an event.

Suman Singh, Head of Chancery, the Consulate General of India in New York, assured her support to the resolution and promised that the summary of the conference including the resolution will be sent to the Government of India for further actions.

### **Review of ‘Adhe Adhure’**

Aadhe-Adhure (The dysfunctionals) represents one of the greatest Indian stories that have even been performed on the stages of Indian theatres. Its plot is a complex one that was treated by director Sandhya Bhagat with great sensitivity and depth. Harish Naval, a senior Hindi author and former Hindi professor at Delhi University, who witnessed the play in entirety, later commented that the characters of ‘Adhe Adhure’ represented the inner conflicts that Mohan Rakesh lived through during his lifetime. The play depicted a dysfunctional family unit in which both men and women are utterly unhappy. However, the women are more disadvantages than men because of the social organization, which imposes that women are wholly dependent on them. Directed by Sandhya Bhagat of Atlanta based ‘Dhoop-Chaon’ group, women characters were performed by Deepti Sharma, Poornima Raj and Ritambhara Mittal while Amit Prasad, Aashish Kapoor, Manish Dubey, Moiz Hussain, and Vijay Gaur played the male characters. Background music was created by Anil Bhagat.

## **Pre-Conference Online Roundtable:**

Theme: Artificial Intelligence in the Hindi Classrooms

Prior to the main conference a Pre-Conference Online Roundtable was organized on Sunday, 15th October. The event was coordinated by Bhavya Singh. The following US based Hindi experts and professional discussed the role of Artificial Intelligence in the Hindi Classrooms: Elliot McCarter, Vanderbilt University expressed his thoughts on “Using AI to Generate Data Supported Pedagogy Materials”, Prof. Kashika Singh presented her thoughts on “ AI: Cheat or Teach?” while Ritu Jayakar, Penn State University, spoke on “Generative AI in Hindi classroom”. Prof Rajiv Ranjan, Michigan State University presented his paper on “Artificial Intelligence and Hindi Learning and Teaching” and Bhavya Singh discussed “Integrating Generative ML model to Build Hindi Proficiency and Intercultural Competence through Storytelling”.