

Sindhi language

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Sindhi language, [Indo-Aryan language](#) spoken by about 23 million people in [Pakistan](#), mostly living in the southeastern province of [Sindh](#), where it has official status, and in the [adjacent Las Bela](#) district of [Balochistan](#). In [India](#), where Sindhi is one of the languages recognized by the constitution, there are some 2.5 million speakers, including both speakers of the [Kachchhi dialect](#) living in Kachchh, on the Pakistan frontier, and [communities](#) descended from Sindhi-speaking immigrants who had left Pakistan in 1947–48 and who are mostly settled in [Gujarat](#) and [Maharashtra](#) states. There are also smaller overseas groups in [North America](#), the [United Kingdom](#), the [Middle East](#), and [Southeast Asia](#).

Characteristics

As a result of the historically isolated situation of [Sindh](#) in the lower Indus valley, Sindhi is distinguished within [Indo-Aryan](#) by many linguistic features of its own. Its closest relative is [Siraiki](#), with which it shares the four distinctive implosive consonants /b/, /d/, /g/, and /j/, which are pronounced with indrawn breath and contrast phonemically with the usual /b/, /d/, /g/, and /j/. Sindhi also preserves the old short final vowels lost in most other Indo-Aryan languages—e.g., *gharu* ‘house,’ *ghara* ‘houses,’ versus Siraiki (and [Urdu](#)) *ghar* ‘house, houses.’ Sindhi is further distinguished by numerous items of vocabulary and by many complexities in its grammatical system, such as a large number of irregular past participles—e.g., *ditho* ‘saw’ from *disanu* ‘to see,’ *muo* ‘died’ from *maranu* ‘to die’—and the use of suffixed pronouns, as in *atha-mi* ‘is mine,’ *atha-si* ‘is his.’

Scripts

Various [indigenous](#) scripts were formerly used by Hindu business communities to write Sindhi, but those are all now obsolete. The Muslim majority always favoured the use of the [Arabic](#) script with some necessary [adaptations](#) to record Sindhi sounds. Finally standardized in 1853 by the British colonial authorities, that Sindhi-Arabic script has since been in general use. Distinctively written in the printed [naskhī](#) form as opposed to the cursive [nasta‘liq](#) used for [Urdu](#), the Sindhi script has 52 letters (as against 35 in the Urdu script). They include not only letters with special combinations of dots to write the implosive consonants and the distinctive set of nasal sounds but also numerous other dotted letters to write most of the aspirated consonants, such as *bh*, *dh*, *th*, and so on, that appear in Urdu as combinations of the simple consonants with *-h*.

The distinctive appearance of the Sindhi-Arabic script is a matter of great cultural pride to most Sindhi speakers, whose cultural solidarity is reinforced by the universal appeal of

the great symbolic figure of classical [Sindhi literature](#), the [Sufi](#) poet Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit (1690–1752). Although attempts were made in [India](#) to encourage the writing of Sindhi in the national [Devanagari](#) script used for [Hindi](#), the Sindhi-Arabic script continues to be generally current in both India and Pakistan.

Sindhi since 1947

The cultural [homogeneity](#) of Sindh that embraced both [Hindu](#) and [Muslim](#) speakers of Sindhi in the colonial period was severely disrupted by the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Most Hindu Sindhi speakers migrated to India, where they form a minority scattered among speakers of other languages. Their leading position in the [urban society](#) of [Sindh](#) in Pakistan was assumed by the immigrants known as [muhajirs](#), the Urdu-speaking Muslims who came from the towns of North India to settle in large numbers in [Karachi](#) and other cities. The subsequent history of Sindh has been marked by a continuing tension between the indigenous Sindhi speakers, who have often felt [marginalized](#), and the numerically superior *muhajirs*, whose overwhelming urban presence has allowed them to maintain a separate linguistic identity.