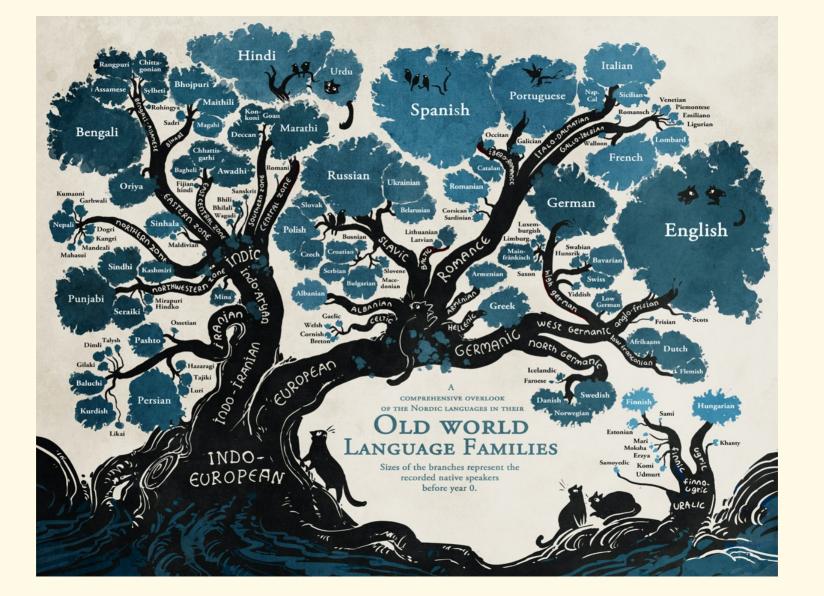# *Introduction to Prakrit*
॥ पाउअप्पवेसिआ ॥

Lesson 1: Introduction
पढमज्झाओ – पवेसो

andrew ollett · ❈ · अल्लडाआरियो

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- Prakrit, Prakrits, Middle Indic, Middle Indo-Aryan, etc.

- Let's start with **Middle Indic** and **Middle Indo-Aryan**.

- These term **Indic** names a **language family**, i.e., a group of languages that are related to each other by their shared evolution from a common ancestor. Other examples of language families include:

    - Indo-European (including many sub-families, such as…)

    - Romance (including French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, etc.)

    - Italian (including Roman, Tuscan, Sicilian, etc.)
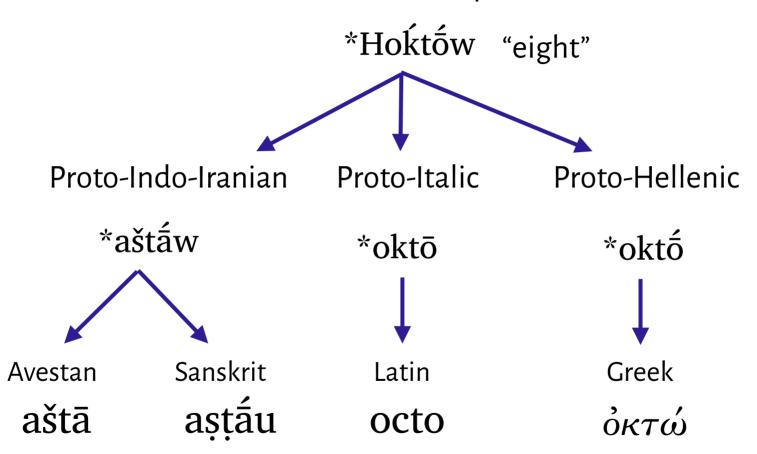
OLD WORLD LANGUAGE FAMILIES

A COMPREHENSIVE OVERLOOK OF THE Nordic languages in their

OLD WORLD LANGUAGE FAMILIES

Sizes of the branches represent the recorded native speakers before year 0.

INDO-EUROPEAN

INDO-IRANIAN

IRANIAN
- Ossetian
- Talysh
- Dimli
- Pashto
- Gilaki
- Baluchi
- Kurdish
- Likai
- Persian
- Hazaragi
- Tajiki
- Luri

INDO-ARYAN — **INDIC**

Northwestern zone
- Sindhi
- Kashmiri
- Mirapuri Hindko
- Mina

Northern zone
- Kumaoni
- Garhwali
- Nepali
- Dogri
- Kangri
- Mandeali
- Mahasui
- Punjabi
- Seraiki

Eastern zone
- Rangpuri
- Chittagonian
- Assamese
- Sylheti
- Rohingya
- Sadri
- Bengali
- Oriya
- Sinhala
- Maldivian
- Bhojpuri
- Maithili
- Magahi

Bengali-Assamese / *Bihari*

East central zone
- Chhattisgarhi
- Bagheli
- Fijian hindi
- Awadhi
- Sanskrit
- Bhili
- Bhilali
- Wagadi

Southern zone

Central zone
- Hindi
- Urdu
- Konkoni
- Goan
- Deccan
- Marathi
- Romani

BALTIC

- Lithuanian
- Latvian

SLAVIC
- Russian
- Ukrainian
- Belarusian
- Slovak
- Polish
- Czech
- Bosnian
- Croatian
- Serbian
- Slovene
- Macedonian
- Bulgarian

ALBANIAN
- Albanian

CELTIC
- Gaelic
- Welsh
- Cornish
- Breton

HELLENIC
- Greek

ARMENIAN
- Armenian

ROMANCE

Italo-Dalmatian
- Occitan
- Galician
- Catalan
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Corsican
- Sardinian
- Nap. Cal
- Italian
- Sicilian
- Romansch
- Venetian
- Piemontese
- Emiliano
- Ligurian
- Lombard

Ibero-Romance

Gallo-Iberian
- Walloon
- French

GERMANIC

High german
- Luxemburgish
- Limburg,
- Mainfränkisch
- Saxon
- Swabian
- Hunsrik
- Bavarian
- Swiss
- Yiddish
- Low German
- German

West germanic

Low franconian

Anglo-frisian
- Frisian
- Scots
- English
- Afrikaans
- Dutch
- Flemish

North germanic
- Icelandic
- Faroese
- Danish
- Norwegian
- Swedish

URALIC

Finno-ugric

Finnic
- Finnish
- Sami
- Estonian
- Mari
- Moksha
- Erzya
- Samoyedic
- Komi
- Udmurt

Ugric
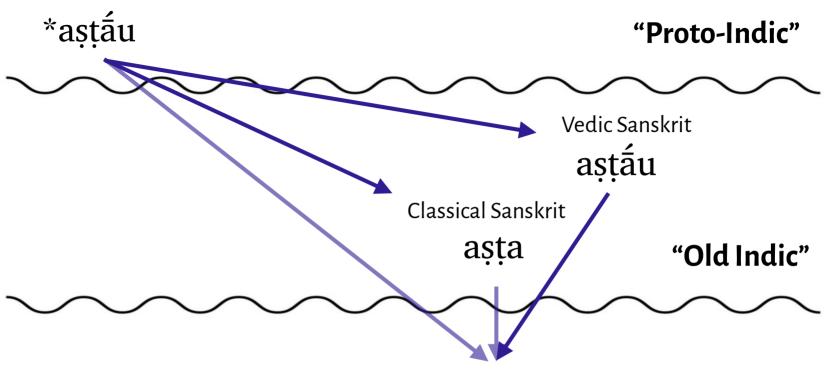- Hungarian
- Khanty

THE INDIC FAMILY

- **Indic** languages are essentially Sanskrit and all of the languages that descend from it.

    - (In fact Sanskrit as we know it is not really the **ancestor** of all of the Indic languages, but it's a useful approximation.)

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Proto-Indo-European

*Hoḱtṓw   "eight"

Proto-Indo-Iranian   Proto-Italic   Proto-Hellenic

*aštā́w   *oktō   *oktṓ

Avestan   Sanskrit   Latin   Greek

aštā   aṣṭā́u   octo   ὀκτώ

THE INDIC FAMILY

🍃 Some scholars prefer the term **Indo-Aryan**. I don't. But it means exactly the same thing as **Indic**.

HERMANN JACOBI

Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Mâhârâshtrî, 1886:

§ 1.   Die indische Sprache hat drei Entwicklungsstufen durchlaufen:

1) Altindisch oder Sanskṛit, vorliegend in drei Varietäten als vedisches, episches und classisches Sanskṛit;

2) Mittelindisch oder Prâkṛit, bekannt in vielen zeitlich und örtlich unterschiedenen Dialekten teils durch Denkmäler der Litteratur, teils durch Inschriften und Münzen;

3) Neuindisch oder Bhâshâ, etwa neun Sprachen mit vielen Dialekten umfassend.

PRAKRIT AND MIDDLE INDIC

- Following **Jacobi**, who was to some extent following Indian sources, many scholars consider "Prakrit" to be synonymic with "Middle Indic," and hence refer to a **family** of related languages, including:
  - The language of the Thēravāda Buddhists, which they called **Māgadhī** but which, thanks to an old misunderstanding, was generally known as **Pali** in Europe;
  - The language of the old Śvētāmbara Jain texts, which Jains called **Ardhamāgadhī**;
  - The language of early inscriptions in India, which didn't (as far as we know) have a name.

PRAKRIT AND MIDDLE INDIC

- Following **Jacobi**, who was to some extent following Indian sources, many scholars consider "Prakrit" to be synonymic with "Middle Indic," and hence refer to a **family** of related languages, including:
  - Lots of languages that were actually called "Prakrit" by ancient sources, but which Jacobi then had to distinguish (both from each other and from the general category of Middle Indic languages), including:
    - Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit
    - Jain Māhārāṣṭrī (Prakrit)
    - Archaic Jain Māhārāṣṭrī (Prakrit)

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    - Lots of languages that were actually called "Prakrit" by ancient sources, but which Jacobi then had to distinguish (both from each other and from the general category of Middle Indic languages), including:

        - Śaurasēnī Prakrit
        - Jain Śaurasēnī (Prakrit)
        - Archaic Śaurasēnī (Prakrit)

BUT WHAT DOES PRAKRIT MEAN?

🍃 But what does the word "Prakrit" actually **mean** in the texts that use the word?

prākṛta-   vs.   *saṁskṛta-*

"natural, everyday, normal, unrefined"   "artificial, special, worked up, refined"

🍃 Prakrit notionally means "everyday language" in contrast to the refined, grammatically-articulated, special language, i.e., Sanskrit.

🍃 This contrast is noted in a lot of early texts (*Kāmasūtra, Nāṭyaśāstra, Vuḍḍa-Kappa-bhāsa*, etc.).

BUT WHAT DOES PRAKRIT MEAN?

- And what does the word "Prakrit" actually **refer to** in those texts?

  - A particular literary language, in which literary texts such as the *Gāhāsattasaī*, the *Taraṅgavaī*, and the *Rāvaṇavaha* were composed.

  - It seems that the languages other than Sanskrit used in stage plays were called by a variety of regional names (Śaurasēnī, Māgadhī, Āvantī, etc.), but they were at some point considered to be forms of Prakrit.

PRAKRIT VS. MIDDLE INDIC

- That's why I used "Prakrit" to refer to a specific literary language that other scholars call "Māhārāṣṭrī" or "Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit" (following Jacobi, often without knowing it).

- This is also the language that grammarians describe, usually under the category of "Prakrit" (and occasionally under the category of "Mahārāṣṭrī").

- I **do not** use the term "Prakrit" to refer to any arbitrary Middle Indic language, such as Pali, or Epigraphic Middle Indic, or Ardhamagadhi, or Gandhari, or Apabhramsha.

VARIETIES OF PRAKRIT

🍂 Even when defined narrowly in this way, "Prakrit" still has a pretty broad range of styles and forms, and it's sometimes useful to characterize it further:

- 🍂 Archaic Prakrit (*Taraṅgavaī, Vasudēvahiṇḍī*)
- 🍂 Classical Prakrit (*Sattasaī, Rāvaṇavaha*)
- 🍂 Digambara Prakrit (*Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama, Kaṣāyaprābhṛta*) (= "Jain Śaurasēnī")
- 🍂 Śvētāmbara Exegetical Prakrit (*Niryukti*s and *Bhāṣya*s)
- 🍂 Informal Prakrit (*Haramēkhalā*)

THE PRAKRIT LEXICON

Prakrit grammarians divided up the Prakrit lexicon into three major categories:

❦ *tatsama-*: lexemes that, apart from their endings, were *identical* to the corresponding Sanskrit form.

Sanskrit	Meaning		Prakrit
hari-	Viṣṇu	=	*hari-*
hara-	Śiva	=	*hara-*
kamalā-	Lakṣmī	=	*kamalā-*

We can think of these as forms to which the distinctive rules of Prakrit phonology applied *vacuously*.

THE PRAKRIT LEXICON

Prakrit grammarians divided up the Prakrit lexicon into three major categories:

🍂 *tadbhava-*: lexemes that differ from their corresponding Sanskrit forms by the application of phonological rules of transformation.

Sanskrit	Meaning		Prakrit
mahīndra-	king	≈	*mahinda-*
saindhava-	salt	≈	*sindhava-*
badhira-	deaf	≈	*bahira-*

These can usually be recognized as the corresponding Sanskrit forms, although some knowledge of the transformational rules is often necessary.

THE PRAKRIT LEXICON

Prakrit grammarians divided up the Prakrit lexicon into three major categories:

🍂 *dēśī-*: lexemes that **have no corresponding Sanskrit form**.

Prakrit	Meaning		Sanskrit
bokkaṇa-	crow	≠	*kāka-*
kaṅkelli-	Aśōka tree	≠	*aśōka-*
ciriḍḍhihilla-	curds	≠	*dadhi-*
sitthā-	bowstring	≠	*jyā-*

These have to be looked up in lexicons. Several such lexicons (*dēśī-śāstras*) were compiled in premodern India.

PRAKRIT AMONG ITS SIBLINGS

- Prakrit is a Middle Indic language, and shares a **lot** of its phonology and morphology with other Middle Indic languages.

Sanskrit

अवनतविटपो नदीपलाशः

avanataviṭapō nadīpalāśaḥ

पवनवशाच्चलितैकपर्णहस्तः ।

pavanavaśāc calitaikaparṇahastaḥ

दवदहनविपन्नजीवितानाम्

davadahanavipannajīvitānām

उदकमिवैष करोति पादपानाम् ॥

udakam ivaiṣa karōti pādapānām

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The *palash* tree by the river, its boughs bent low,
with a single leaf-hand shaking in the wind,
appears to offer a libation to the trees
that lost their lives in the forest fire.

One example (from the *Pañcarātra*)

Sanskrit

अवनतविटपो नदीपलाशः

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udakam ivaiṣa karōti pādapānām

Pali (made up by me)

अवनतविटपो नदीपलासो

avanataviṭapō nadīpalāsō

पवनवसा चलितेकपण्णहत्थो ।

pavanavasā calitēkapaṇṇahatthō

दवदहनविपन्नजीवितानं

davadahanavipannajīvitānaṁ

उदकमिवेस करोति पादपानं ॥

udakam ivēsa karōti pādapānaṁ

One example (from the *Pañcarātra*)

Sanskrit

अवनतविटपो नदीपलाशः

avanataviṭapō nadīpalāśaḥ

पवनवशाच्चलितैकपर्णहस्तः ।

pavanavaśāc calitaikaparṇahastaḥ

दवदहनविपन्नजीवितानाम्

davadahanavipannajīvitānām

उदकमिवैष करोति पादपानाम् ॥

udakam ivaiṣa karōti pādapānām

Ardhamagadhi (made up by me)

अवनतविटपे नदीपलासे

avanataviṭapē nadīpalāsē

पवनवसा चलितेकपण्णहत्थे ।

pavanavasā calitēkapaṇṇahatthē

दवदहनविपन्नजीवितानं

davadahanavipannajīvitānaṁ

उदगमिवेस करोति पादपानं

udagam ivēsa karōti pādapānaṁ

One example (from the *Pañcarātra*)

Sanskrit

अवनतविटपो नदीपलाशः

avanatavi**ṭ**a**p**ō na**d**īpalāś**aḥ**

पवनवशाच्चलितैकपर्णहस्तः ।

pavanavaśā**c** cali**ta**ikapar**ṇ**aha**staḥ**

दवदहनविपन्नजीवितानाम्

davadahanavi**p**annajīvitā**na**m

उदकमिवैष करोति पादपानाम् ॥

u**d**a**k**am iv**ai**ṣa karō**t**i pā**d**apā**nā**m

~~~~~~

Gandhari (made up by me)

avana**d**avi**ḍ**avo nadipalaś**o**

avana**θ**avi**ḍ**av**ə** na**ð**īpalāś**ə**

pavanavaśa cali**dē**kapa**ṇṇ**aha**tho**

pavanavaśā cali**θē**kapa**ṇṇ**aha**tthə**

davadahanavi**v**annajivi**d**ana

davadahanavi**v**annajīvi**θ**ān**ə**

uda**g**am iv**ē**sa karo**d**i pāda**v**āna

u**ð**a**ɣ**am iv**ē**sa karō**ð**i pā**ð**avān**ə**

One example (from the *Pañcarātra*)

Sanskrit

अवनतविटपो नदीपलाशः

avanataviṭapō nadīpalāśaḥ

पवनवशाच्चलितैकपर्णहस्तः ।

pavanavaśāc calitaikaparṇahastaḥ

दवदहनविपन्नजीवितानाम्

davadahanavipannajīvitānām

उदकमिवैष करोति पादपानाम् ॥

udakam ivaiṣa karōti pādapānām

Prakrit (from Svayambhū's *Meters*)

अवणअविडओ णईपलासो

avaṇaaviḍavō ṇaīpalāsō

पवणवसा धुणिएक्कपण्णहत्थो ।

pavaṇavasā dhuṇiekkapaṇṇahatthō

दवदहणविवण्णजीविआणं

davadahaṇavipaṇṇajīviāṇaṁ

सलिलमिवेस दएई पाअवाणं ॥

salilam ivēsa daēi pāavāṇaṁ

THE HISTORY OF PRAKRIT

❧ If Prakrit means "mispronounced Sanskrit," it is coeval with Sanskrit, and in fact people have written about "Prakrit words in the Rigveda" and so on.

❧ But Prakrit came to be used, and named, as a **literary language** around the same time as Sanskrit, perhaps slightly later. The earliest mentions of it, and earliest uses of it that we know of, date from the time of the **Sātavāhanas** in the Deccan (1st c. BCE to 3rd c. CE).

THE FIRST PHASE OF PRAKRIT LITERATURE

- In this "first phase," we have a few major innovations:

  - Versified commentaries (*niryuktis*) on the canonical texts of the Śvētāmbara Jains, attributed to Bhadrabāhu, and probably dated to the 1st or 2nd c. CE.

  - Story literature, including the *Taraṅgavaī* of the Jain monk Pālitta, probably 1st or 2nd c. CE.

    - The same author wrote a work of astronomy in Prakrit.

  - Lyric poetry, including the famous anthology *Gāhāsattasaī*, compiled by "Hāla" who was allegedly a Sātavāhana king (1st c. BCE to 3rd c. CE).

THE FIRST PHASE OF PRAKRIT LITERATURE

🍂 In this "first phase," we have a few major innovations:

🪷 A few Digambara Jain works, written in a slightly different (and more conservative) form of Prakrit, such as the *Kasāyapāhuḍa* and the *Chakkhaṇḍāgama*.

THE SECOND PHASE OF PRAKRIT LITERATURE

- ❧ Around the 4ᵗʰ and 5ᵗʰ centuries, some new genres emerged:

  - ❧ More extensive commentaries on the Śvētāmbara canon and their *niryukti*s, called *bhāṣya*s.

  - ❧ The development of narrative prose by Jain authors, especially Saṅghadāsa's *Vasudēvahiṇḍī*.

  - ❧ Courtly epics, associated especially with the court of the **Vākāṭakas** in the Deccan, similar to Sanskrit *mahākāvya* (*Harivijaya* and *Rāvaṇavadha*).

  - ❧ The Jain Rāmāyaṇa (Vimala's *Paümacariya*).

  - ❧ The use of Prakrit (and various forms thereof) in **stage-plays**, for example by Kālidāsa.

Happy studying!

॥ सहलो होउ सज्झाओ ॥