

## Proverbs and Identity: A Study of Hadoti Proverbs

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**Abstract:** Proverbs are part of oral tradition in a society. They get meaning when they interact with a context, either when they precede or follow it. Proverbs, like any other linguistic element, are culturally meaningful in a given context. They are part of every society, and Hadoti proverbs are no exception to it. Such proverbs create a sociolinguistic reality and a unique identity to the indigenous people from the Hadoti region. This paper discusses how the identity of Hadoti speakers emerges from proverbs and is an attempt to capture this theme by analyzing what they say about the Hadoti region, culture, and people, and how the meanings that derive from a single-line phrase mirror the sociolinguistic reality and help establish an identity.

**Keywords:** Identity. Proverbs. Hadoti.

**Resumo:** Provérbios fazem parte da tradição oral de uma sociedade, ganhando significado quando interagem com o contexto, quer estejam inseridos antes ou depois dele. Provérbios, como qualquer outro elemento linguístico, são culturalmente significativos em um dado contexto. Eles fazem parte de toda sociedade, e provérbios Hadoti não são exceção à essa regra. Tais provérbios criam uma realidade sociolinguística e uma identidade única para o povo indígena da região de Hadoti. Esse artigo discute como a identidade de falantes de Hadoti emerge dos provérbios e é uma tentativa de capturar esse tema ao analisar o que esses provérbios tem a dizer sobre a região Hadoti, sua cultura e seu povo, e como os significados que derivam de uma frase de uma linha refletem a realidade sociolinguística e ajudam a estabelecer uma identidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Identidade. Provérbios. Hadoti.

### Introduction

Identity has emerged as a key topic in the study of minority groups and languages. Since Erikson's quest for identity in the 1960s, many volumes and books have been devoted to studying different cultures and seeking their identities. More recently, "identity" has become a keyword in the field of sociolinguistic studies. Proverbs are part of oral tradition in society through which a cultural group constructs its identity. The best part of an oral tradition is that even though the speakers are "suspicious of the idea of identity" and "keeping silent about it", yet it speaks it out loudly (GLISSANT, 2007, p. 35). In the literature on language and identity, the notion of identity has been defined in many ways, and therefore it is necessary to give a general consideration about which one was opted for this study.

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Identity studies are generally divided into two trends: an *essentialist* and an *existentialist* orientation. The former sees identity as a collective essence of individuals and the later as the constructed character of the individuals. Since this study is searching identity in Hadoti proverbs, it studies a constructed identity created from linguistic elements. Proverbs are rooted in the reflections and perceptions of the self and other, in the history of language, in the memory of people, in religion, castes, space and geographical territory. This study will configure how through spatial and temporal lens the dimensions of self and other, the historical aspects of language and psychological aspects of memory, religion and castes have emerged.

In the remainder of the paper the general nature of proverbs is discussed and defined, such as the Hadoti region and language. The plan of presentation is discussed in methodology, and data and discussion presents the representative proverbs configuring the identity of Hadoti people.

### **The general nature of proverbs**

Human nature is a collection of everyday activities and works, both organized and unorganized. The American proverb "Human nature is the same all over the world" quite literally figures it out quintessentially. Its observation is general and it is based on a descriptive account of codes of conduct that we all need to help us live in a reasonable and safe way. Proverbs describe these commonsensical behaviors of daily life precisely. The earliest documentation of proverbs can be traced back to inscriptions on Sumerian cuneiform tablets.

The comparative studies on proverbs started on Richard Chenevix Trench's volume titled *On the Lessons in Proverbs* (1853). Following this tradition, writers like F. Edward Hulme wrote *Proverb Lore: Being a Historical Study of the Similarities, Contrasts, Topics, Meanings, and Other Facets of Proverbs, Truisms, and Pithy Sayings, as Explained by the Peoples of Many Lands and Times* (1902), a pretty long title for a short saying, and Archer Taylor compiled a volume on *The Proverb* (1931) (MIEDER, 2004). There are various definitions to describe the nature of proverbs. Some say they are truisms, other call them wisdom in a loose form, but everyone at least agrees on that

proverbs are short and that they stem from oral tradition first. We can define it more definitively in the words of Mieder:

A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. (2004, p. 3).

This paper will focus on how proverbs help in configuring identity of Hadoti natives. Let us first discuss what is Hadoti.

## **Hadoti language**

The Hadoti language is spoken in the Hadoti region of Rajasthan. Rajasthani is a language cluster of the Indo-Aryan languages family. The current name Rajasthan was introduced by Col. Tod in 1829 and it gradually replaced the old name "Rajputana" given by George Thomas in 1800. Hadoti is spoken by approximately 10 million people in Rajasthan, India (Census of India, 2011). This language is derived from *Surseni Apbhransha* (a language spoken in ancient India) and its word order is Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). Hadoti falls under the definition of living unclassified language, which are languages whose genetic affiliation has not been established due to the paucity of reliable data (DWIVDEI, 2012, p. 1).

SIL International in 2005 (documentation for Rajasthan for ISO 639-3) identified Rajasthan as [raj] and Hadoti as [hoj] (LEWIS, 2013). Standard Hadoti is described by G. A. Grierson (1908) loosely as a variety of Jaipuri language, but, as a matter of fact, Jaipuri language is now known as Dhundhari language, and standard Hadoti is still used as an oral form that was typically used in the Hadoti speaking region. This qualifies the indigenusness of Hadoti region in Cobo's most cited definition of indigenous peoples in 1986:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories or parts of them. (Keal, 2003, p. 7).

Hadoti is as rich and diverse as any other language in its phonology, morphology, and syntax and hence it can be used as an

effective medium of expression and communication to transfer complex human thoughts, which is a feature that characterizes any language. Hadoti proverbs classify the diverse experiences and attitudes shared by the people living in this region. They work as a story for people who share the same language irrespective of their living standards and caste distinctions, and though the speakers sometimes do not even know the origin of the proverbs, yet they use them as a social constructional device to give a deep rooted meaning to their identity. These proverbs say about the ethical and moral law of an ethnic group succinctly.

## **Methodology**

This paper will employ only those Hadoti proverbs which qualify the proverbial minima and constitute the cultural literacy of Hadoti speakers. Natives use these proverbs and it helps them communicate meaningfully. Though proverbs have a quotation quotient and this linguistic string of words is often used as a formula in a conversation, yet in this study the essentialist orientation of identity construction is applied to configure, categorize and identify the internal differences in this indigenous ethnic group.

Generally, a proverb has two meanings: the immediate meaning or the literal meaning directed to said object, person, or thing, and the universal meaning that is a general meaning which may be found in the other proverbs of the world cultures. It is in the immediate meaning that this study will search the identity issues with respect to proverbs related to the self and other, history of Hadoti people, women, morality and religion.

Data is presented in four ways: the Romanized Hadoti text, its word-to-word translation, culturally bound meaning and general meaning of the proverbs. The superscript on the Romanized Hadoti text shows the grammatical category of the word. Data and discussion go parallel.

## **Data and discussion**

Inclusiveness and exclusiveness is part of any process of identity construction: it is through the knowledge of the self and the discovery

of the others that an individual develops a feeling of belongingness and security. The feeling of selfness corresponds to the distinction; an individual, a caste, or an ethnic group arrests this feeling in the oral tradition when it is employed in proverbs. However, it is crucial to state that the origin of these proverbs is purely based on the sociocultural understanding of different groups.

Proverbs related to Casteism in Hadoti often capture the complexities of dialectics of the self and other in which either two or more individuals and castes are compared, a single person or caste is criticized, or simply a typical characteristic of an individual or caste is marked. Interestingly, even when a single individual gets an entry in a proverb it actually represents the whole group or characteristics type found in that group.

1.daaymaa<sup>N</sup>                      ki<sup>PREP</sup>    daari<sup>ADJ</sup>    jaat<sup>N</sup>    khaayaa<sup>V</sup>    paache<sup>PREP</sup>    mare<sup>V</sup>    laat<sup>N</sup>  
  
daaymaa- brahmin      of      bad      caste      Eat      afterwards      hit      leg

Culturally bound meaning (CBM): Daaymaa-Brahmin is unpredictable.

General meaning (GM): "Human nature is unpredictable."

Casteism is prevalent in India, and Hadoti region is no exception to it. As we know, "caste is the Hindu form of social organization. No man can be Hindu who is not in caste" (FARQUHAR, 2013, p. 216). The sayings of Casteism in Hadoti culture present very minutely the identity of each caste and the connotations related to it. The proverb in number (1), directs to a particular subcaste "daaymaa", which falls under a higher ranked Brahmin caste in the Hadoti region. The criticism of this subcaste "daaymaa" is reflected in this proverb. It is interesting here to note that sarcasm - gentle or harsh - remains the key element in the formation of proverbs related to the distinction between the self and the other. Mocking reference of one of the castes by the other members of different castes of same, higher or lower rank in social structure remains the focus of the proverbs so that a clear distinction can be made between the inclusion and exclusion dialectics of different castes, and in this way no caste remains excluded. But the usage of such proverbs is limited to the absence of the targeted group, and the targeted members who are criticized in the proverbs avoid using such

proverbs.

Another proverb condemning different castes - higher and lower - says:

2. baaman<sup>N</sup> kutto<sup>N</sup> k<sup>h</sup>aati<sup>N</sup> naa<sup>NEG</sup> suwaaye<sup>V</sup> yaane<sup>PRON</sup> dusro<sup>DET</sup> saath<sup>iN</sup>  
 Brahmin dog carpenter not tolerate them other person  
 Culturally bound meaning (CBM): Brahmin, dog, and carpenter cannot stand other companion.

General meaning (GM): "Human beings cannot live without fighting."

Though we have discussed that castes and subcastes are often criticized in proverbs, this saying is a unique example of mixing castes - higher and lower - and their comparison with an animal *i.e.* "dog". The social construction of Hadoti shows that even though in terms of castes and occupations the natives are different from each other, there are unavoidable changes in their basic human traits that maintain sameness. This parity runs in this oral tradition and the social constructs work with animals, birds, and other creatures for finding symmetry, analogy and comparisons. And proverbs say it quite loudly.

Another proverb says:

3. bijo<sup>N</sup> mute<sup>V</sup> waa<sup>ADV</sup> bichchu<sup>N</sup> bayaae<sup>V</sup>  
 businessman urinate where Scorpion marry  
 Culturally bound meaning (CBM): Businessmen do everything for profit.

General meaning (GM): "No business without profit."

Here again a caste "bijo" (businessmen) is targeted on the basis of profession. The tactic is the same: to specify the characteristics of said caste, and to create a unique identity for it. Almost every caste gets an expression in these proverbs. Bhramin (priest), Rajput (warrior), Vaisha (businessman), Jat (farmer), Nai (barber), Gujar (milk-man), Kumbhar (potter), etc. are compared, and often widely criticized by showing their typical characteristics. It would be more fruitful to see these proverbs as a draft of general weaknesses/virtues among various human beings than to define specific castes under definitive statements.

In proverbs where classification, categorization and specification are focused, the general meaning remains minor and the culturally bound meaning speaks loudly. The majority of proverbs, under the

dialectics of self and other, publicizes one caste and criticizes another. The history of Casteism in Hadoti region is well captured in these sayings, and it clearly indicates that every caste belongs to a group, and a person who is part of such group - small or large - has a different identity. The categorization and classification of castes constitute one of the identity markers, and the specification links the caste with the social construct in which all castes exist, and it symbolizes the dialectic relationship that is supposed to exist among groups. In fact, specification is usually based on the subjectivity of different group members, and categorization and classification create a social history.

Some proverbs relate the geography of this region to the past. They select the historical facts and tie them with the current logic to produce relevant social representations. The geographical region is explored, and the elaboration of history encapsulates it in a saying. Such as:

4. gadh<sup>N</sup>      to<sup>EMP</sup>      chittorgadh<sup>N</sup>      or<sup>N</sup>      sab<sup>DET</sup>      gadhayaa<sup>N</sup>      he<sup>AUX</sup>  
 fort      only      Chittor fort      rest      all      fortress      is

Culturally bound meaning (CBM): Only Chittor Fort is the real fort, rests are fortress.

General meaning (GM): "Only the ideal form should be taken as a model."

Most proverbs are related to particular conceptions of history that give acceptance to the affirmed ancientness of the group, contrast it with other groups and acknowledge either its position in power relationships or its demand for increased reverie, position and place. Chittor Fort is a monument of strength and glory of Rajasthan, and when someone say this proverb it offers the past glory that has more to do with the truth of the present statement than with the historicity of the past.

Any traditional text on women represents a group's ideas about equality, sexuality, gender and power. Some proverbs are dedicated to women too. Such as:

5. kawaari<sup>ADJ</sup>      kanyaa<sup>N</sup>      kaa<sup>PRT</sup>      chattis<sup>NUM</sup>      war<sup>N</sup>  
 unmarried      Girl      of      thirty-six      groom

Culturally bound meaning (CBM) meaning: An unmarried girl can marry anyone.

General meaning (GM): "Till the work is unfinished don't consider it finished."

And:

6. beti<sup>N</sup>    rewe<sup>V</sup>    aap<sup>PRON</sup>    se<sup>PREP</sup>    naa<sup>NEG</sup>    re<sup>V</sup>    to<sup>EMP</sup>    koi<sup>DET</sup>    ka<sup>POSS</sup>    baap<sup>N</sup>    se<sup>PREP</sup>  
 daughter live self from not live only Any of father from  
 Culturally bound meaning (CBM): No one can control the sexuality of a woman.

General meaning (GM): "Female nature is generally unpredictable."

The stereotyped ideas pertaining to women's sexuality and nature are well captured in these proverbs. Issues such as: she is an object of desire; her unpredictable nature; who should possess her, etc. are articulated in these sayings, but the meanings are specific to the Hadoti culture in this context. Women often find themselves in an ambiguous relationship: they too employ the same proverbs with their meanings which is "the general one" whereas men use them to express their stereotyped ideas for women. It appears with a prejudiced tone, humiliating narrative, and the victimization of women from one point of view, and self-identity and discovery from the other.

## Conclusion

It is possible to read this paper without worrying about the conclusion, but if readers are rather concerned about the question of how do non-indigenous people react to these proverbs of Hadoti in Rajasthan, then this conclusion is very significant.

The oral tradition proves that Hadoti language and culture is as far from Gujarati as Hindi is from English. Although in the recent past Indian government seems to be going in the right direction to organize a New Linguistic Survey of India (2007) for preserving the indigenous languages and cultures of India, Hadoti is not yet recognized as an independent language till date. Another major problem is the way natives start adopting Hindi and English considering it more important and prestigious because it is part of the curriculum or because it is used in government offices. This diverse and scattered thinking of Hadoti speakers seems to be a major hurdle in getting a unified voice to do any effort to establish it in the constitution of India as a language.

Migration of people during their jobs from one language region to another is quite common. Many Indians migrate from other states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, etc. to Rajasthan and,

consequently, social and personal identity to language and culture disappears and multilingualism and culturalism come in vogue. The indigenous culture of Hadoti is becoming a mixed culture, and might transform into a non-indigenous culture as a result of this practice. The oral tradition of proverbs can sustain itself only if the speakers are using this language as a mother tongue and transfer it to the next generation. The need of the hour is for the Indian government to come forward and make serious efforts in the promotion of this language by encouraging it through various schemes, awards and scholarships.

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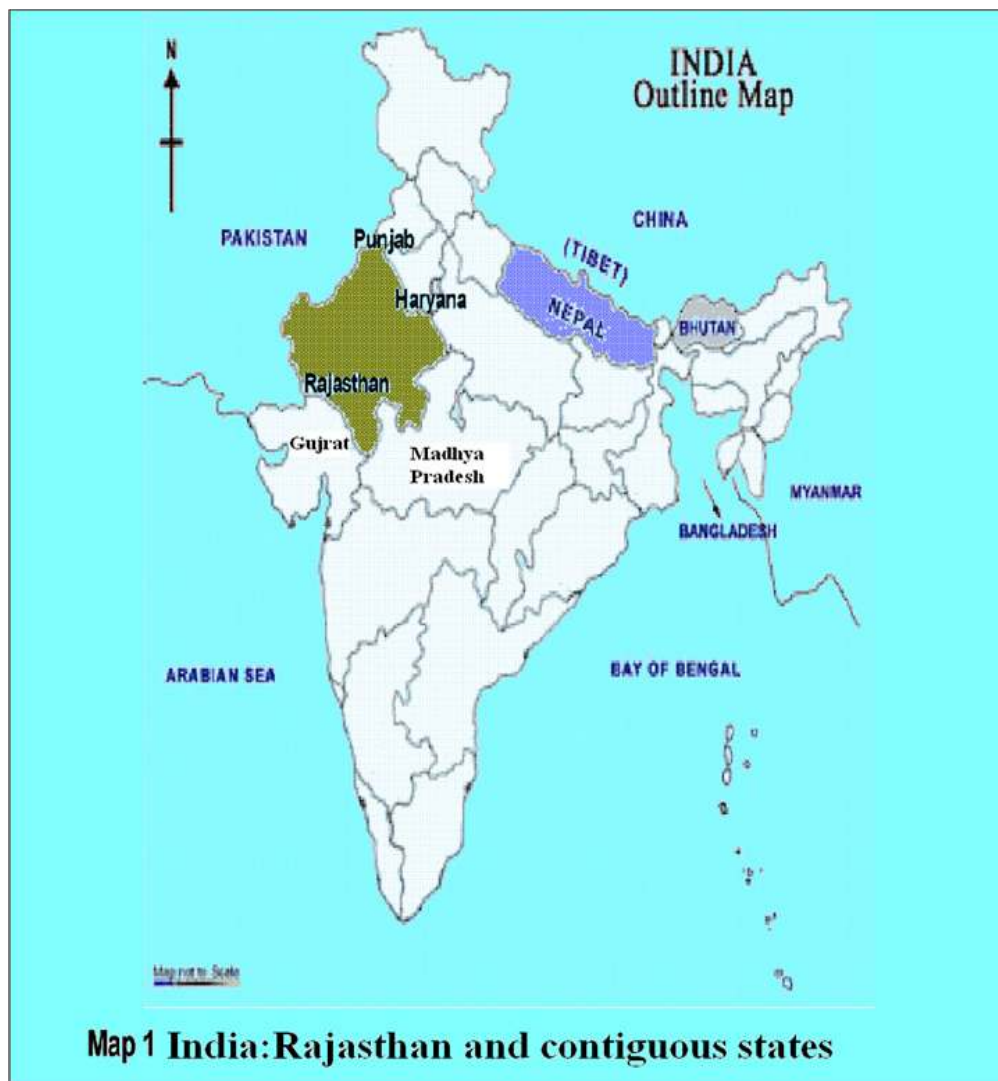
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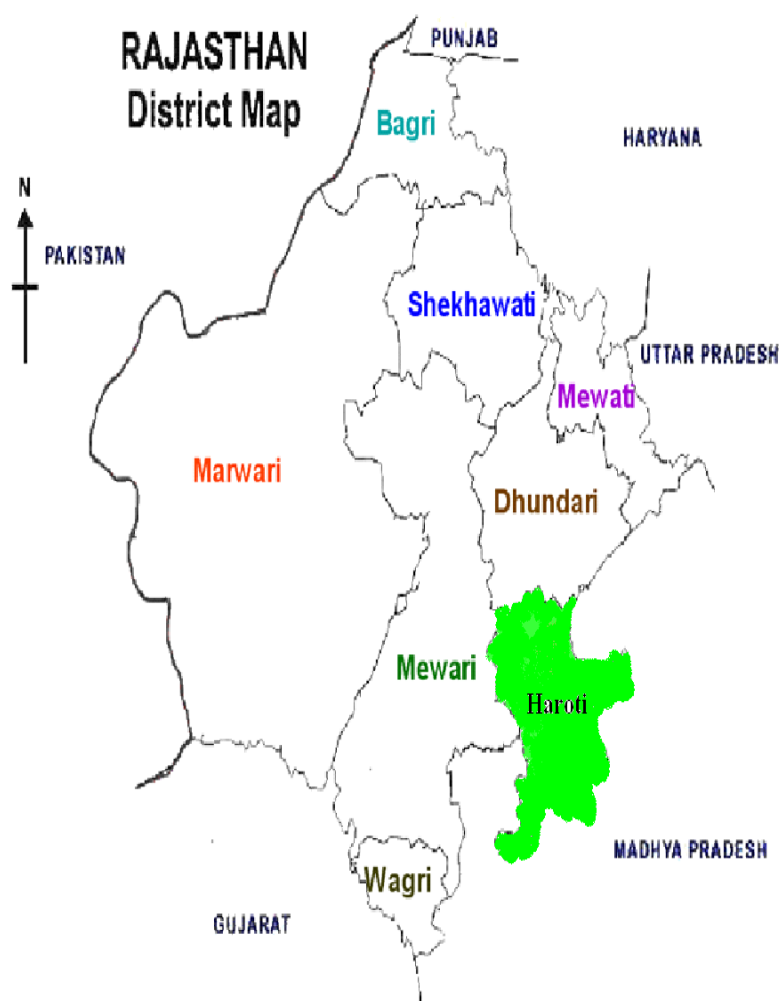
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## APPENDIX - MAPS

Map 1: Rajasthan and contiguous states in Republic of India

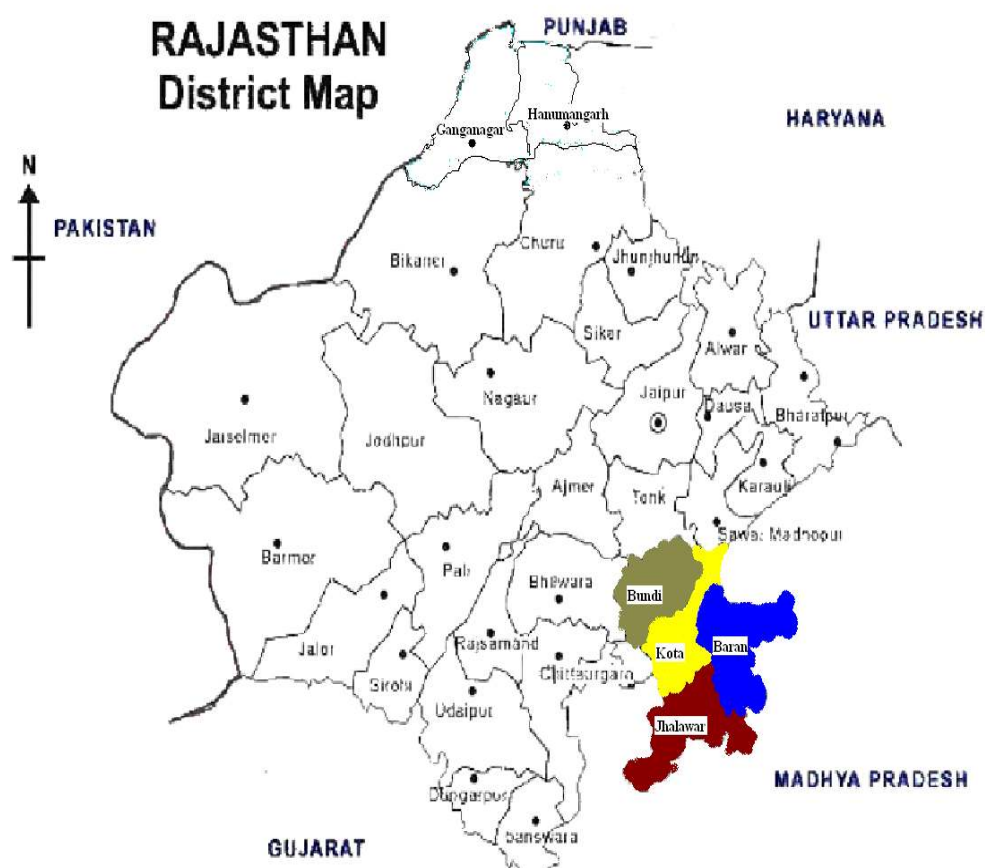


Map 2: Haroti speaking districts-Kota, Jhalawar, Bundi, and Baran



Map 2. Dialects of Rajasthani with their respective areas

Map 3: Language regions of Rajasthan



Map 3. Haroti Speaking Area

Map showing language regions of Rajasthan