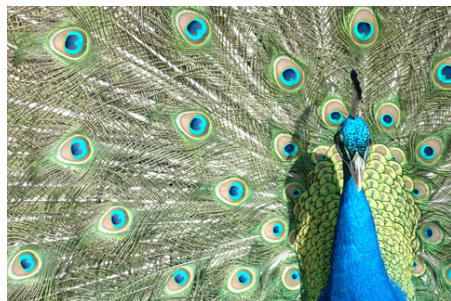
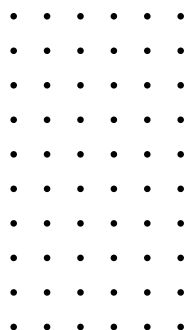




# **SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER ASSOCIATION**



**SALTA**  
AY 2024–2025 NEWSLETTER



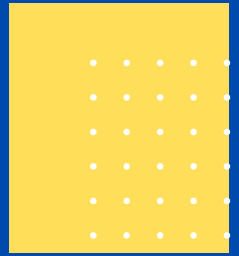
## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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This is my first year as the SALTA president, and I am very excited to host my first conference as president. We aim to expand our reach globally, connecting with countries where South Asian languages are taught. Although Hindi is the most widely taught South Asian language in the US, SALTA has long aimed to serve all South Asian languages and connect with all language communities. We strive to invite representatives from different South Asian languages as presenters and keynote speakers. In Hindi, there is a saying: "कुआँ प्यासे के पास नहीं आता, प्यासे को कुएँ के पास जाना पड़ता है।" (The well does not come to the thirsty; the thirsty must go to the well.) In this way, we welcome South Asian language coordinators to connect with us.

# A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONT.)

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Based on our informal survey of US programs, approximately 57 universities in the USA offer Hindi courses. Sanskrit and Urdu are the most commonly taught South Asian languages after Hindi, with 9 and 8 universities offering these languages respectively. Bengali and Tamil follow closely, each being taught at 6 universities. Punjabi is offered at 5 universities. Marathi and Telugu are taught at 2 universities each, and Malayalam is also offered at 2 universities. Tibetan, Kannada, and Gujarati are each taught at 1 university. This analysis highlights the strong presence of Sanskrit and Urdu in academic programs, suggesting a potential focus area for expanding the reach of other South Asian languages in future initiatives.

These numbers explain why we tend to have more speakers and educators for Hindi-Urdu than for other South Asian languages. Nevertheless, we encourage higher participation from those language communities. Our efforts will focus on fostering more involvement and representation from these languages to create a more inclusive environment.

To this end, I invite all South Asian language educators and researchers to join us. We will provide a platform for you to conduct conference panels in your own language and organize reading groups for your literature. We are ready to train new South Asian teachers and encourage them to connect with us. We regularly share job opportunities and workshops related to teaching and research in South Asian languages. “सबका स्वागत है।” “All are Welcome!!

# **SALTA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS**

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Dr. Divya Chaudhry, Research Director

From Fall 2024 through Spring 2025, SALTA curated and hosted a series of professional development opportunities shaped by the interests and feedback of our community. These offerings fostered vibrant cross-regional dialogue, encouraged pedagogical innovation, and supported community-building among language educators and scholars across disciplines and geographies.

We began the fall season with Teaching Ancient Languages in Modern Times (October 4, 2024), a timely and thought-provoking session led by Dr. Vidya Mohan (Michigan State University). The session focused on how instructors can thoughtfully adapt ancient language courses for today's classrooms by making them more welcoming, culturally responsive, and relevant to the diverse backgrounds and identities of their students. Participants explored ways to reframe course content and pedagogy to better reflect the lived experiences of learners, while honoring the complexity and richness of the classical languages being studied.

Later in the fall, we hosted a two-part webinar series titled Introduction to AI for Language Teachers: Everything You Wanted to Know About AI but Were Hesitant to Ask (November 8 & 15, 2024). Facilitated by Dr. Mithilesh Mishra (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), the series provided a practical introduction to integrating AI tools into the language classroom. The sessions also opened space for important conversations around the ethical and pedagogical implications of emerging technologies in education.

# **SALTA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS (CONT.)**

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To close out the season, SALTA organized a panel discussion titled Teaching South Asia (March 28, 2025). The panel featured Professor Gautami Shah (University of Texas at Austin), Dr. Peter Knapczyk (Wake Forest University), and Dr. Sunil Bhatt (University of British Columbia), and was moderated by Dr. Divya Chaudhry (Vanderbilt University). This engaging discussion highlighted creative approaches to teaching non-language South Asia-focused courses, specifically on Bollywood, literature, and popular culture. Panelists shared their course structures, key themes, and methods for encouraging students to think critically about South Asia's complex cultural and social dynamics.

These initiatives welcomed participants from India, Pakistan, Portugal, and North America, and reflected the remarkable linguistic and intellectual diversity of our field. Attendees taught or studied the following languages (listed alphabetically):

Assamese, Bengali, Bhutia, English, Hindi, Kannada, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Persian, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

At SALTA, we view professional development as a shared space for learning, reflection, and growth. If you would like to request a future session on a topic of interest or are interested in offering one, we warmly welcome your ideas. Please reach out to the SALTA Research Director, Dr. Divya Chaudhry at [divya.chaudhry@Vanderbilt.Edu](mailto:divya.chaudhry@Vanderbilt.Edu).

# SALTA SHARE SATURDAYS

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Dr. Mansi Bajaj, Communication Director

The SALTA Share Saturday is a friendly forum that offers the language teaching and learning community another opportunity to come together and share timely ideas, projects, and solutions relevant to any aspect of teaching. We encourage the language faculty to share the ideas they implemented in your South Asian language class to participate and share in these sessions. It can be an activity that your students did in the class, an innovative use of technology, a lesson that your students appreciated, an assessment criterion that worked well for your class, a teaching practice, a collaborative project used in your class, etc. The ideas can be shared in anywhere between 10 to 20 minutes leading us into a group discussion. The goal is to initiate a dialogue among the colleagues to maximize professional exchanges and collaboration among SALTA community. If you would like to present a future session on a topic of interest, please reach out to the SALTA Communication Director, Dr. Mansi Bajaj at [mansi.bajaj@yale.edu](mailto:mansi.bajaj@yale.edu).

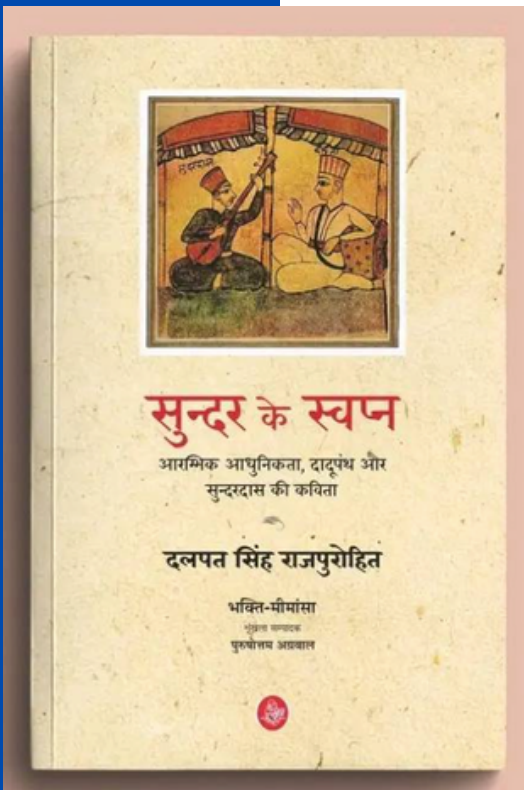
This academic year we had the privilege of hearing excellent and inspiring contributions from our esteemed colleagues listed below:

**Dr. Vasu Renganathan** on “Using Multilingual Robot in language education”, **Shalinee Gusain** on “Teaching Hindi Script” and **Samir Patel** on “KidsLipi - Language Platform for Global Educators to help students gain confidence speaking the target language”

# AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Dr. Divya Chaudhry , Principal Senior Lecturer in Hindi-Urdu (Vanderbilt University) has received American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)'s prestigious 2024 Research Initiative Grant for her project titled, Investigating the Portrayal of Caste in Hindi Language Textbooks in US Post-secondary Institutions.



Dalpat Singh Rajpurohit, Assistant Professor of Hindi Language and Literature at the University of Texas at Austin, recently edited and wrote the foreword for the Hindi translation of Allison Busch's book Poetry of Kings, a study of Hindi court poetry in early modern India. This book came out with Vani Prakashan, New Delhi. Dalpat's 2022 book, Sundar ke Svapn, was awarded the 30th Devishankar Awasthi Samman, Hindi's highest honor for literary criticism, by the esteemed critic Vishwanath Tripathi and renowned poet Ashok Vajpeyi.

His book In the Shrine of the Heart, co-authored with Monika Horstmann, includes Hindi Bhakti texts translated into English for the first time.



# AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Hindi with Mansi Bajaj

A new website created by Mansi Bajaj, a Hindi language instructor at Yale University, offers a dynamic, student-centered resource for teaching Hindi as a heritage language. Designed specifically for university-level educators, the site provides adaptable lesson planning tools and instructional materials that center on social issues relevant to students' lived experiences. Born from Bajaj's experiences teaching at the University of Texas, Austin (2019–2022) and Yale (2022–2024), this project addresses a longstanding gap in pedagogical resources for heritage Hindi learners—students who often bring different linguistic and cultural needs to the classroom than non-heritage learners.

The project emphasizes a “students as partners” approach, ensuring that students are not passive recipients of instruction but active contributors to the curriculum. With input from students, especially those in the Spring 2021 Heritage Hindi class at UT, the site features multimodal resources and prompts that explore topics such as mental health, masculinity, and gender and sexual diversity—subjects often underrepresented in traditional language instruction. These themes were selected to reflect students' realities and promote meaningful engagement in the target language. When students have the language to express their day-to-day hopes and struggles, and when their identities and concerns are respected, that is when they can bring their full self to the classroom. That is when academic success coincides with a sense of community/belonging

Importantly, the site is developed entirely in English to facilitate adaptation across other South Asian languages, although all resources have been tested in Hindi instruction. Supported by grants from Yale's Center for Language Study and the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, the website is a growing open educational resource. With ongoing updates and an invitation for community feedback, the project aims to foster inclusive, student-led language learning well into the future.

Website link: <https://campuspress.yale.edu/hindiwithmb/>



# AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Dr. Sai Bhatawadekar, Professor of Hindi and Urdu at University of Hawaii, received a Department of Education grant (\$127,776.00 for the years 2023-2025) to develop Digital Storytelling to enhance Hindi-Urdu language instruction and curriculum building. Prof. Bhatawadekar, whose expertise includes creative project-based language teaching; theater, film, and dance; and German-Indian comparative philosophy, has been teaching and building Hindi-Urdu language programs since 2001 in innovative and interdisciplinary ways. With this grant, she and her students are creating Hindi and Urdu digital stories that are directly related to the students' research and personal interests. Some notable examples include beginning Hindi students celebrating the multiple languages they speak, a Japanese student's daily routine in Hawaii, a Math student and heritage learner of Urdu penning an introspective poem about his favorite mathematical concept and transforming it in a lyrical short film, an Indo-Guyanese student's glimpse in her travel diaries, a poet's aspirations of including her voice in Indo-Caribbean literature, a creative writer's Hindi children's story, a computer science student's interactive digital book of childhood memories, and hilarious parodies of Shahrukh Khan movies at all levels of language instruction. The list goes on as new students bring new projects to fruition.

These digital stories will be disseminated free and online with subtitled videos, transcribed texts, project- and lesson plans, step-by-step action plans, and other language structure and scaffolding resources, so teachers and students worldwide can use and implement them in their classrooms. Prof. Bhatawadekar has published one such 'poetry and short film' project and its details in her article "Pedagogy of Care and Creativity: Rethinking PBLL and CALL Beyond COVID" in a recent book titled *Advances in Hindi language teaching: Historical and methodological dimensions* (2024, edited by Ghanshyam Sharma, Sunil Bhatt). To catch a glimpse of these and other stories, please follow hindi.with.sai on instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/hindi.with.sai/> - or check out the (currently under construction) page connected to <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/ipll/academic-programs/hindi-urdu/>

# FULBRIGHT-HAYS PROJECT

## भारत की ऐतिहासिक स्थापत्य स्थलों की मूर्तियों और भारतीय लोक कला में समाहित विविधता की कथाएँ

ASHOK OJHA

2024 युवा हिंदी संस्थान-न्यू यॉर्क यूनिवर्सिटी फुलब्राइट-हेस ग्रुप प्रोजेक्ट्स अब्रॉड (GPA) शॉर्ट-टर्म पाठ्यक्रम निर्माण परियोजना टीम के कार्यक्रम निदेशक अशोक ओझा (युवा हिंदी संस्थान) और सलाहकार प्रो गैब्रिएला निक इलेवा (न्यू यॉर्क यूनिवर्सिटी हिंदी कार्यक्रम) के नेतृत्व में 12 प्रतिभागियों का दल गत 26 फ़रवरी से 30 मार्च तक भारत के अध्ययन दौरे पर गया। अमेरिकी शिक्षा विभाग द्वारा प्रायोजित इस कार्यक्रम का उद्देश्य अमेरिका के भाषा शिक्षकों को सम्बंधित भाषा की मूल संस्कृति का गहन अध्ययन करने और विषयानुरूप पाठ्यक्रम का निर्माण करने के अवसर प्रदान करना है ताकि अमेरिकी शिक्षार्थियों की भाषा शिक्षा उसके सांस्कृतिक परिवेश के साथ अधिकृत तौर पर दी जा सके। चार सप्ताह की भारत अध्ययन यात्रा के दौरान प्रतिभागियों ने भारत के प्रमुख स्थापत्य कला स्थलों पर जाकर विषयानुरूप ऑडियो, वीडियो, दृश्य और पाठ्य सामग्री और संसाधनों का संग्रह किया। हमारा लक्ष्य यह भी था कि उन स्थानों की लोक कला का अवलोकन करें जिनमें भारतीय परम्परागत जीवन की अनगिनत कहानियाँ समाहित हैं। इस लक्ष्य को पूरा करने में स्थानीय विशेषज्ञों और संस्थाओं का भरपूर सहयोग लिए गया। हमने अजंता, एलोरा, साँची, खजुराहो, सारनाथ, वाराणसी और दिल्ली का दौरा किया जो कि यूनेस्को द्वारा विश्व विरासत स्थल घोषित किए जा चुके हैं।



# FULBRIGHT-HAYS PROJECT (CONT.)

2024 की परियोजना के निर्माण में न्यू जर्सी की गौर लाभ संस्था युवा हिंदी संस्थान और न्यू यॉर्क विश्वविद्यालय का संयुक्त प्रयास तो था ही , इसे सफलता पूर्वक पूरा करने में अनेक अमेरिकी और भारतीय शिक्षा संस्थानों ने भरपूर योगदान किया। उनमें मिशिगन स्टेट यूनिवर्सिटी, यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ टेक्सस, ऑस्टिन, येल, बनारस हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय हिंदी विभाग, बी एच यू महिला, संगीत महाविद्यालय, वसंता कॉलेज फ़ॉर वीमेन, वसंता गर्ल्स कॉलेज, सेंटर फ़ॉर तिबेटन हायर स्टडीज़, रविंद्र नाथ टैगोर यूनिवर्सिटी, भोपाल, भोपाल ट्राइबल और मानव विकास संग्रहालय, साँची इंडो-बौद्ध विश्वविद्यालय, इंदिरा गांधी नैशनल सेंटर फ़ॉर द आर्ट्स, दिल्ली प्रमुख हैं। यात्रा के दौरान विभिन्न स्थानों पर अनेक निजी संस्थाओं तथा विशेषज्ञों ने विभिन्न पहलुओं पर अपने विचार प्रदान कर प्रतिभागियों का ज्ञान वर्धन किया। हम उन सभी के आभारी हैं। कार्यक्रम का उद्देश्य प्रतिभागियों की सामाजिक-भाषाई योग्यता में सुधार लाना और भारत के विभिन्न समुदायों की सांस्कृतिक विविधता के बारे में उनकी समझ को गहरा करना है, इसके लिए उनके आख्यानो को एकत्रित, रिकॉर्ड और परीक्षण करना तथा यह देखना है कि उन्हें विभिन्न कलात्मक माध्यमों से कैसे व्यक्त किया जाता है।

युवा हिंदी संस्थान और न्यू यॉर्क यूनिवर्सिटी के संयुक्त प्रयास से फुलब्राइट-हेस ग्रुप प्रोजेक्ट्स अब्रॉड (GPA) शॉर्ट-टर्म पाठ्यक्रम निर्माण परियोजना सन 2022 से ही चल रही है। 2024 की यह परियोजना तीसरा ऐसा कार्यक्रम है जिसके तहत हम अमेरिकी शिक्षकों को भारतीय संस्कृति और परम्परा के संदर्भ ज्ञान प्रदान कर रहे हैं। फुलब्राइट-हेस कार्यक्रम ने प्रतिभागियों को भारत के लोगों और संस्कृतियों की सीमा को बौद्धिक रूप से समझने का अवसर प्रदान किया है। हम

अध्ययन दौरे के वाराणसी-सारनाथ प्रवास का आयोजन बनारस हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय और वसंता कॉलेज द्वारा किया गया है। प्रतिभागियों ने अनेक लोकप्रिय लोक प्रदर्शनों में हिस्सा लिया। आधुनिकता और परंपरा, पुरातत्व स्थलों, संग्रहालयों और संस्थानों के अवलोकन और परीक्षण के लिए घाटों का दौरा करते हुए, स्थानीय कलाकृतियों का अवलोकन करते। हुए गंगा आरती देखी और गंगा नदी में नौका विहार भी किया। सारनाथ में तिब्बत की सांस्कृती का अध्ययन करने के लिए कुलपति के साथ बौद्ध दर्शन पर वार्तालाप किया और संस्थान की इमारतों पर अंकित कलाकृतियों में निहित कथाओं को विस्तार से जाना। स्थानीय सलाहकार प्रो आनंद शर्मा, सेंटर फ़ॉर हायर तिबेटन स्टडीज़ की कुल सचिव प्रो सुनीता चंद्रा ने सारनाथ के ऐतिहासिक संदर्भों की जानकारी प्रस्तुत करने तथा बौद्ध परम्परा से जुड़ी स्थापत्य कला की व्याख्या करने में मदद की।

दिल्ली में इंदिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केंद्र के मार्गदर्शन में प्रतिभागियों ने कला के विभिन्न पहलुओं का अध्ययन किया। संस्था के डीन प्रो रमेश गौर और सचिव सचिदानंद जोशी के सहयोग से एक सप्ताह का सांस्कृतिक-शैक्षणिक कार्य क्रम चला जिसके दौरान भारत की कलात्मक झाँकी देखने-सीखने को मिली। हम लाल क़िले परिसर में चल रहे भारत के विभिन्न राज्यों के हस्त शिल्प नमूनों का आधुनिक संस्करण भी देखा और राष्ट्रपति भवन में जन जाति संग्रहालय में सुरक्षित वस्तुओं का भी अवलोकन किया। इस प्रकार एक माह का हमारा अध्ययन दौरा भारत के विभिन्न सांस्कृतिक विषयों पर विहंगम दृष्टि के साथ समाप्त हुआ। प्रतिभागियों के विषयानुरूप सामग्री तैयार करने के लिए समुचित सामग्री प्राप्त हुई जिसका उपयोग कार्यक्रम के तीसरे चरण में किया जाएगा।

इन दिनों परियोजना के तीसरे चरण में सभी प्रतिभागी पाठ्यक्रम सामग्री तैयार कर रहे हैं। वे अमेरिका में छात्र-छात्राओं को भारतीय संस्कृति से परिचित करा सकेंगे।

# OER TEXTBOOKS OF SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES

Dr. Rajiv Ranjan

In today's geopolitical situation, South Asian and Southeast Asian countries play a critical role in global affairs. Building strong, constructive, and strategic relationships with these regions requires a comprehensive understanding of their languages and cultures.

At Michigan State University (MSU), we recognize the importance of language education and are committed to enhancing access to teaching and learning resources. With funding from the Title VI grant and the Asian Studies Center at MSU, as well as the IRS grant housed within the center, we have developed several Open Educational Resource (OER) textbooks. Our IRS grant, titled "OER Collaborative: Enhancing Language Teaching through Open Educational Resource (OER) Language Textbook Development and Partnerships," has supported the publication of eight OER textbooks in critical languages, including Hindi, Urdu, Vietnamese, Khmer, Tamil, and Persian.

Building on this success, we are expanding this list in 2024-25 by developing Intermediate and Advanced Indonesian, Advanced Filipino, Basic Tibetan, Basic Nepali, Intermediate Persian, and Intermediate and Advanced Hindi OER textbooks.



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Khmer  
Punjabi  
Telugu  
Vietnamese

Indonesian  
Persian  
Tamil  
Urdu

# OER TEXTBOOKS OF SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES (CONT.)

These OER textbooks have a deep impact on accessibility, affordability, and digital adaptability in critical language learning. By offering high-quality instructional materials at no cost, these resources support both online and in-person teaching environments which prepare language educators for situations like COVID-19 pandemic when we had to move to online teaching overnight. Furthermore, they serve as essential guides for new language instructors, particularly native speakers who may lack formal training in language pedagogy. Authored by experienced university-level educators, this initiative has fostered collaboration among critical language instructors from Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Duke University, Vanderbilt University, Columbia University, and the University of Hawaii. Additionally, key organizations such as the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS), the South Asian Language Teachers Association (SALTA), and the Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL) have actively contributed to this effort.

The widespread impact of these resources is reflected in analytics data, which shows 202,841 online visitors and 441,674 page views in the last 14 months (January 2024 to February 2025) from several countries like USA, Canada, Britain, India, Pakistan, Russia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, Australia, Denmark, etc. These numbers and countries highlight the growing global demand for high-quality, accessible language learning materials of these critical languages and reaffirm the significance of OER initiatives in promoting linguistic and cultural education in present globalized world.



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# THE HINDI LANGUAGE ACADEMY: NURTURING A LOVE FOR HINDI AND INDIAN CULTURE

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Arun Sharma, Mamta Tripathi & Soma Vyas

HLA is a community-based heritage language institution dedicated to making Hindi language education accessible, engaging, and meaningful. The academy fosters a deep appreciation for India's rich heritage among learners of all backgrounds by integrating linguistic skills with cultural experiences. HLA's mission is to equip students with strong language proficiency that enhances their academic, social, and professional opportunities. Through interactive lessons, cultural programs, and real-world applications, the academy nurtures bilingual proficiency while instilling a lifelong appreciation for Indian culture.

HLA offers a range of programs to cater to different age groups and learning needs:

- Online Hindi Classes (90 minutes, once a week) for students aged 6 to 18, structured into elementary, middle & high School Level (sub-divided by proficiency)
- Seal of Biliteracy Preparation & Proctoring, targeting Intermediate High proficiency or higher.
- Global Seal of Biliteracy Credentialing, offering international recognition for Hindi proficiency. The Hillsborough School District recently recognized the Global Seal of Biliteracy in Hindi, offering proficiency tests for interested students.
- Parental Education and Advocacy, promoting the importance of Hindi and the benefits of earning the Seal of Biliteracy, including college credits, scholarships, and career opportunities.
- Customized Private Lessons for adult learners are tailored to individual goals.
- Translation and Interpretation Services for diverse Hindi language needs.

# **SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER ASSOCIATION**



## **AY 2024–2025 NEWSLETTER**

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