

The Indic Font Project

Bridging the digital divide by creating basic building blocks for computing in Indian languages, and distributing them on a freely shareable basis

(points to focus on - standardization, why single font is not enough, availability for all)

Fonts are the most basic requirement for computing in any language. It must therefore be noted with sadness that this basic requirement is lacking in Indian languages. This is leading to a growing digital divide between the English speaking elite and those speaking Indian languages. For example, Hindi with 405 million speakers is the fourth largest native language in the world, but ranks at the bottom of the tables in terms of Internet content. On [Wikipedia](#), the popular free and open source online encyclopedia that is created by users, Hindi is at 40th rank with around 100,000 articles, while English is far ahead with 3.9 million articles. The German language, which has 90-89 million speakers (one fourth that of Hindi!) ranks second on Wikipedia with 1.4 million articles (i.e fourteen times more than Hindi). While most Indian languages rank among the top 20 native languages of the world, online, they fare even worse than Hindi. The situation reminds one of an old rhyme, titled, "For Want of a Nail."

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the message was lost.
For want of a message the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

Desktop computing users in English have a choice of more than 70 high quality fonts, with which they can write e-mails, create documents and other basic computing tasks. However, for Indian languages there is only a single font available as default font (eg. for Hindi there is Mangal in Windows, Lohit on Linux), and users need to either purchase additional fonts or download them from the Internet, which significantly raises the barriers for Indic computing.

Solution

The Indic Font Project aims to resolve this situation by creating high-quality Indic fonts and releasing it under a liberal license that allows users to freely redistribute the software without any restrictions. It will work with software developers, Internet web sites, social networks, online publications, blogs and others to popularize the usage of these fonts.

Call for Donations

Our estimate is that it costs Rs 3,60,000 to create a basic set of fonts (a set consists of normal and bold versions) and we plan to create at least two sets of fonts in each major Indian language at a cost of Rs 10,80,000. We invite public spirited individuals and organizations to come forward and donate generously to this project, which will help millions of Indians to use computers in their own language. Donors contributing the entire cost of a font (Rs 3,60,000) will get naming rights to the font, but we also accept donations of any size. Donations can be made to (organization name, bank details etc to be inserted here).

All fonts created by the Indic Fonts Project will be released under a Free and Open Source (FOSS) license which will allow:

- * unlimited redistribution of the software, which allows for its inclusion as part of PC/mobile/tablets.
- * the fonts to be bundled with other software (after acknowledging copyrights).
- * long term support through community network.

Details of development cost

As with any venture requiring dedicated effort and specialized skills, font design and development is an intensive effort. Our goal is to create a dedicated team of Font designers and technical consultants to design, develop and thoroughly test it under different operating systems, devices and applications.

Below is outlined team composition and cost estimates for manpower.

	Responsibilities	Cost +	Time
Font Designer	• Evaluate language needs (no of characters, shapes) • Come up with typographic styles suited for different needs (PC/web/mobile/print). • Design the font • Setup technical parameters in font as per language and style. • Implement TTF/OTF features. • Deliver the font in different formats.	75000/- per font (single style)	5-6 weeks per font set (4 styles)
Technical consultant	• Evaluate font on technical metrics defined. • Test the font in different devices and software • Suggest improvements	15000 per font	2 wks per font

Total cost/time		90,000 per font (single style)	6-8 weeks
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+ *Estimated cost, needs to be evaluated based on metrics (number of characters, glyphs, complexity of language).*

Per language cost estimate as below, assuming a minimum of two sets of fonts.

Languages +	Basic styles	Cost (INR)	Additional styles	Cost * (INR)	Total per font set (INR)
Hindi	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Marathi	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Sanskrit/Vedic	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Bengali	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Gujarati	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Kannada	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Punjabi	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Oriya	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Malayalam	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Tamil	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Telugu	Normal, Bold	1,80,000	Italic, Bold Italic	1,80,000	3,60,000
Total	22 fonts	19,80,000	22 fonts	19,80,000	39,60,000

+ *Actual cost per language may vary depending on number of characters and glyph shapes supported.*

* *Cost for Italic , Bold Italic may be less than Normal+Bold.*

About the Indic Font Project

The Indic Font Project is a group of volunteers who have been involved with Indic Computing for many years. After having been involved with translating and localizing software programs to Indian languages for many years, we felt the acute lack of quality fonts and have therefore started the Indic Font Project to fulfill a basic computing need.