

**Simple present and past tense conjugation of the
verb होना/honā = to be**

At a glance

[**Current** M = male, F = female, **Proposed** NB = non-binary* (*See comment under 'simple past' below)]

Personal Pronoun	Simple Present होना (M + F + NB)		Personal Pronoun	Simple Past होना (M)	Simple Past होना (F)	2019 Proposed Simple Past होना (NB)
	(S)			(MS)	(FS)	(NBS)
मैं <i>māĩ</i>	हूँ <i>hūĩ</i>		मैं	था <i>thā</i>	थी <i>thī</i>	थो <i>tho</i>
तू <i>tū</i>	है <i>hai</i>		तू	था	थी	थो
यह <i>yah</i>	है		यह	था	थी	थो
वह <i>vah</i>	है		वह	था	थी	थो
	(P)			(MP)	(FP)	(NBP)
हम <i>ham</i>	हैं <i>hāĩ</i>		हम	थे <i>the</i>	थीं <i>thīĩ</i>	थों <i>thō</i>
तुम <i>tum</i>	हो <i>ho</i>		तुम	थे	थीं	थों
आप <i>āp</i>	हैं <i>hāĩ</i>		आप	थे	थीं	थों
ये <i>ye</i>	हैं		ये	थे	थीं	थों
वे <i>ve</i>	हैं		वे	थे	थीं	थों



Some observations:

Simple Present:

(i) In the simple present tense conjugation of the verb होना, the only two odd ones out are the conjugations of the verb with the pronouns मैं *māĩ* and तुम *tum*. So with pronoun मैं *māĩ*, होना in the simple present will always be हूँ *hūĩ* (i.e मैं *māĩ* _____ हूँ *hūĩ*), and with pronoun तुम *tum* the simple present conjugation of होना will always be हो *ho*, (i.e तुम *tum* _____ हो *ho*)

(ii) The Simple Present tense conjugation of the verb होना for all other singular pronouns is non-nasalized है *hai* (i.e. तू/यह/वह *tū/yah/vah* _____ है *hai*)

(iii) The Simple Present tense conjugation of the verb होना for all other plural pronouns is nasalized हैं *hāĩ* (i.e. हम/ तुम/आप/ये/वे *hum/tum/āp/ye/ve* _____ हैं *hāĩ*)

Simple Past:

In the simple past tense, the verb होना is conjugated along gender lines.

Until 2014, in India, the parent culture of Hindi, only 2 genders, viz. male and female, were legally recognized. Transgender, non-binary, transexual, genderqueer and gender-questioning people were forced to identify themselves within a binary gender classification. Hindi being a gendered language, we see this traditional binary gender classification in verb conjugations and in a certain class of nouns and adjectives. Personal pronouns on the other hand are gender neutral in Hindi.

In April 2014, in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court of India formally recognized the rights of transgender, non-binary, transexual, genderqueer and gender-questioning people to determine their gender as neither male nor female, thereby affirming the existence of a third gender, and ending traditional binary gender classifications.

While this ruling has had a tremendous impact on gender identification, as far as the Hindi language is concerned, other than being able to choose a “third box” which is neither male nor female on official forms, gender expression in Hindi is still binary. Like many other gendered languages, Hindi has yet to catch up with realities of identity.



As mentioned above, in the simple past tense the verb होना is conjugated along gender lines.

In the table above and the observations offered below, the masculine and feminine simple past tense conjugation of the verb होना are the traditional and currently accepted forms of the verb. While the masculine plural form is often used across genders in some parts of India and hence could conceivably be used as a “gender neutral” expression, it is still problematic for many as it could be perceived masculine.

*The proposed third or “non-binary” simple past tense conjugation of the verb होना, is an avant-garde attempt to address the limitations posed by the gendered nature of verb conjugations in Hindi. It is not (yet :-)) part of the Hindi language.

At the very least, such an attempt will hopefully start the much needed conversation about the gendered nature of Hindi and realities of identity.

- All **Masculine Singular** Simple Past of होना = था *thā*
[So मैं/तू/यह/वह *māĩ/tū/yah/vah* _____ था *thā*]
- All **Masculine Plural** Simple Past of होना = थे *the*
[So हम/तुम/आप/ये/वे *hum/tum/āp/ye/ve* _____ थे *the*]
- All **Feminine Singular** Simple Past of होना = थी *thī*
[So मैं/तू/यह/वह *māĩ/tū/yah/vah* _____ थी *thī*]
- All **Feminine Plural** Simple Past of होना = थीं *thī̃*
[So हम/ तुम/ आप/ ये/ वे *hum/tum/āp/ye/ve* _____ थीं *thī̃*]

Added in 2019:

- All **Non-binary Singular** Simple Past of होना = थो *tho*
[So मैं/तू/यह/वह *māĩ/tū/yah/vah* _____ थो *tho*]
- All **Non-binary Plural** Simple Past of होना = थों *thō*
[So हम/ तुम/ आप/ ये/ वे *hum/tum/āp/ye/ve* _____ थों *thō*]



IMP Tangent: From the above enumerated simple past tense conjugation of the verb होना, one can extrapolate the **first Golden Rule** of Hindi grammar:

Golden Rule I: आ — ā ending for **Masculine Singular** (MS);

ए — e ending for **Masculine Plural** (MP)

ई (ई) — ī (ī) ending for **Feminine Singular & Plural** (FS/FP), where ई ī is sometimes nasalized in the **Plural**

ओ (ओं) — o (ō) ending for **Non-binary Singular & Plural** (NBS/NBP), where ओ o is **sometimes nasalized in the Plural**

