



Project Samhati: Odisha

Why in News

The new [National Education Policy 2020](#) lays emphasis on imparting teaching in the mother tongue in primary classes. However, when seen from the context of the **diverse language-base of tribal people**, the task appears to be quite onerous.

- In this scenario, **Odisha's decade-long experiment** in multilingual education may come in handy to take up the challenge.
- The most important aspect of **Mother-Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education (MTBMLE)** is that it helps save endangered tribal languages.

Key Points

- The **ST and SC Development Department** of the Odisha government has started a project called 'Samhati'.
 - It intends to address the language issues faced by tribal students in early grades or elementary classes.
 - Under this, the department plans to cover approximately **2.5 lakh students in 1,450 primary schools in the State.**
- **Implementing Agency:** The **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRI)** along with the Academy of Tribal Language and Culture (ATLC), Bhubaneswar are implementing the project.
- **Multilingual Learning:** Under Samhati, it has been decided that all teachers of primary level would be provided functional knowledge of tribal languages and ways of communicating with tribal students.
 - Odisha's adivasi communities are as diverse as **21 spoken languages**. Out of the 21 languages, Santhali, the only language which has been included in the [eighth schedule of Constitution](#).
 - It is taught in its own **ol chiki script** while the rest of tribal languages have Odia scripts.
 - Only six tribal languages — Santali, Ho, Soura, Munda and Kui — **have a written script.**
 - These students are a multilingual group unlike mono-lingual groups in regular schools.

Way Forward

- A tribal student sees the world through his own language. The mother-tongue based education is a welcome step. There are some civil society organisations in Odisha that have demonstrated promising models of the MTBMLE education system (e.g. Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)).
- The tribal languages are used as a medium of instruction in primary schools, these languages need to be standardised.
- Efforts should be made to develop textbooks in tribal languages in sync with the syllabus of State boards, government textbook norms and National Education Policy.

[Source: TH](#)

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