



Criteria For Classical Language

For Prelims: [Classical language](#), [University Grants Commission](#), [Schedule 8](#)

For Mains: Advantages of Classical Language Status, Criteria for Inclusion, Demand for Inclusion in Classical language list.

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Why in News?

Recently, the **Central government** has decided to **modify the criteria for granting classical language status**, following recommendations from the **Linguistics Expert Committee of the Union Culture Ministry**.

What are Classical Languages?

▪ About:

- In 2004, the Government of India decided to create a new category of languages called **“classical languages”**.
- In 2006, it laid down the **criteria for conferring classical language status**. So far, the 6 languages are granted classical language status.

Sl. No.	Languages	Year of Declaration
1.	Tamil	2004
2.	Sanskrit	2005
3.	Telugu	2008
4.	Kannada	2008
5.	Malayalam	2013
6.	Odia	2014

▪ Criteria:

- **High antiquity** of early texts/recorded history spanning 1,500–2,000 years.
- Possession of a **body of ancient literature/texts** considered valuable heritage by generations.
- **Presence of an original literary** tradition not borrowed from another speech community.
- The classical **language and literature being distinct from modern**, there can **also be**

a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

▪ **Benefits:**

- Once a language is declared classical, it gets **financial assistance for setting up a centre of excellence** for the study of that language and also opens up an avenue for two major awards for scholars of eminence.
- Additionally, the **University Grants Commission** can be requested to establish professional chairs for scholars of classical languages, starting with central universities.

▪ **Recent Developments:**

- The Central government has decided to **modify the criteria for granting classical language status**, following recommendations from the **Linguistics Expert Committee of the Union Culture Ministry**.
 - The Linguistics Expert Committee comprises representatives of the Union Ministries of Home, Culture and four to five linguistic experts at any given time. It is **chaired by the president** of the **Sahitya Akademi**.
- The new criteria will be officially notified once **approved by the Union Cabinet**.
 - It has delayed the consideration of **languages like Marathi for classical status**.
- There have been demands from other languages groups to classify their languages as classical language. For example Bengali, Tulu etc.
 - According to **National Education Policy-2020** works of literature of **Pali, Persian, and Prakrit** shall also be preserved.

What are the Arguments for Inclusion of Various Languages as Classical Language?

- **Bengali:** According to the language family, **Bengali is categorised as a Modern or New Indo-Aryan language** of the Indo-European language family.
 - **Bengali alphabets and terms** started to appear in the literatures of as **early as 10th century AD**. Since then it had gone through significant stages of development to finally take the present shape.
 - However, a panel established by the Bengal government established that Bengali's origin is **2,500 years ago** with **concrete evidence showing its written existence** as early as the 3rd-4th BCE.
 - Research indicates that bengali **retains its fundamental syntactic structure**, as well as its distinct morphological and phonological patterns, throughout its course of evolution at least from 3rd BCE.
- **Tulu:** **Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in two coastal districts Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala**.
 - Scholars suggest **Tulu is the language that was segregated from the original Dravidian languages some 2,000 years ago** and is one of the **most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family**.
 - The language has also been **mentioned in the Sangama Literature of Tamil and in Greek Mythology**.
 - **Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition** with folk-song forms like paddana, and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Language?

▪ **Eighth Schedule:**

- It was intended to **promote the progressive use of Hindi** and for the enrichment and **promotion of the language**.
- **Article 344(1)** provides for the **constitution of a Commission** by the President on **expiration of five years** from the commencement of the Constitution for the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes of the Union.
- **Article 351** of the Constitution provides that it shall be the **duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language** to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.
- **Languages in the Eighth Schedule:** The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the following 22 languages:

- Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.
 - Of these languages, **14 were initially included.**
 - Sindhi language was added in 1967 (**21st Amendment Act**).
 - Three more languages Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992 (**71st Amendment Act**).
 - Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added in 2004 (**92nd Amendment Act**).
- **Demands of Languages for Inclusion in the Eighth Schedule:** At present, there are **demands for inclusion of 38** more languages in the Eighth Schedule. Example: Angika, Banjara, Bazika, Bhojpuri etc.
- **Present Status on Inclusion of Languages in the Eighth Schedule:** As the **evolution of dialects and languages is dynamic**, influenced by socio eco-political developments, the matter is still under government consideration and the decision will be taken in line with the recommendation of the **Pahwa (1996) and Sitakant Mohapatra (2003) Committee.**
- **Language of The Union:**
 - **Article 120:** Deals with the language to be used in **Parliament.**
 - **Article 210:** Similar to Article 120 but applies to the **State Legislature.**
 - **Article 343:** Declares **Hindi in Devnagari script** as the official language of the Union.
- **Regional Languages:**
 - **Article 345:** Allows the state legislature to adopt **any official language** for the state.
 - **Article 346:** Specifies the **official language for communication** between states and between states and the Union.
 - **Article 347:** Allows the **President to recognise any language** spoken by a section of the population of a state if demanded.
- **Special Directives:**
 - **Article 29:** It **protects the interests of minorities.** It states that any section of citizens with a distinct language, script, or culture has the **right to preserve it.**
 - **Article 350:** Ensures that every person has the right to submit a representation for the **redress of any grievance in any language** used in the Union or the State.
 - **Article 350A:** Directs States to provide **adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue** at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.
 - **Article 350B:** Establishes a **Special Officer for linguistic minorities appointed by the President**, tasked with investigating matters relating to safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the ongoing demand for granting classical language status to various languages in India. Also analyse the implications of such recognitions.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. Which one of the following was given classical language status recently? (2015)

- (a) Odia
- (b) Konkani
- (c) Bhojpuri
- (d) Assamese

Ans: (a)

Q. Consider the following languages: (2014)

1. Gujarati
2. Kannada
3. Telugu

Which of the above has/have been declared as 'Classical Language/Languages' by the Government?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Mains:

Q. Do you agree that regionalism in India appears to be a consequence of rising cultural assertiveness. (2020)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/criteria-for-classical-language>

