



# 5 New Classical Languages Approved

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## Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has **approved the recognition of five more languages as "classical,"** expanding the nation's list of culturally significant tongues.

- Other than 5 languages, **Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali** have been included in the prestigious category.

## What is a Classical Language?

### ▪ About:

- In **2004**, the Indian government began designating languages as "**Classical Languages**" to acknowledge and preserve their ancient legacy.
- The **11 classical languages** of India serve as custodians of the nation's rich cultural heritage, representing key historical and cultural milestones for their communities. //
- Indian **classical languages (Shastriya Bhasha)** are languages with a **rich historical legacy, profound literary traditions, and distinctive cultural heritage.**

### ▪ Significance:

- These languages have played a **key role in the intellectual and cultural evolution** of the region.
- Their texts provide valuable insights into diverse fields such as **literature, philosophy, and religion.**

### ▪ Criteria:

- **High Antiquity:** Early texts and recorded history spanning 1,500–2,000 years.
- **Ancient Literature:** Possession of a **body of ancient literature/texts** considered valuable heritage by generations.
- **Knowledge Texts: Presence of an original literary tradition** not borrowed from another speech community.
- **Distinct Evolution:** 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:

- Languages designated as 'classical' receive various **government benefits aimed at promoting their study and preservation.**
- **Two international awards** are given annually to scholars who have made notable contributions to the research, teaching, or promotion of classical Indian languages.
  - These are **the Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour** and **the Maharshi Badrayan Samman Award.**
- The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** supports the creation of Professional Chairs in central universities and research institutions to focus on classical Indian languages.
- To safeguard and promote these linguistic treasures, government established the **Center of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages** at the **Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysore.**

## What are the Other Provisions to Promote Language?

- **Eighth Schedule:** To promote the progressive use, enrichment and promotion of the language. Consists of 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.
- **Article 344(1)** provides for the **constitution of a Commission** by the President on the **expiration of five years** from the commencement of the Constitution for the progressive use of Hindi .
- **Article 351** provides that it shall be the **duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language**
- **Other Efforts to Promote Languages:**
  - **Project ASMITA:** The **project ASMITA** aims to produce 22,000 books in Indian languages within five years.
  - **New Education Policy (NEP):** The **NEP policy** aims to turn Sanskrit universities into multi-disciplinary institutions.
  - **Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL):** This institute works to **promote four classical languages: Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia.**
  - **Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019:** It granted Central status to three deemed Sanskrit universities: the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth in Delhi, and the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth in Tirupati.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**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)**