



# Classical Language Demand for Maithili

## Why in News?

Recently, the Janata Dal (United) party in Bihar has formally demanded the Indian government grant [classical language](#) status to **Maithili**, following the inclusion of several other languages in this category.

## Key Points

- **Languages Recognized:** The central government has recently granted classical language status to languages including **Marathi, Bengali, Pali, Prakrit, and Assamese**.
  - Previously, languages such as **Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia** were recognized as classical.
- **Historical Context:** Maithili has a literary history of around **1,300 years**, and the state has demanded it to be classified as a classical language.
  - An expert committee constituted by the government had made 11 recommendations in **August 2018**, including the inclusion of **Maithili in classical languages**.
- **Understanding Classical Languages:**
  - The term "[Indian classical languages](#)," or "**Semmozhi**," refers to languages with a long history and a rich literary legacy. Eleven languages are recognized as classical languages in India.
  - The recognized classical languages include:
    - **Tamil (2004)**
    - **Sanskrit (2005)**
    - **Telugu (2008)**
    - **Kannada (2008)**
    - **Malayalam (2013)**
    - **Odia (2014)**
    - **Marathi (2024)**
    - **Bengali (2024)**
    - **Pali (2024)**
    - **Prakrit (2024)**
    - **Assamese (2024)**
  - **Significance of Classical Language Status:** According to a government resolution from 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2004, classical languages hold significant importance, which includes:
    - Annual international awards for scholars of classical Indian languages.
    - Establishment of **Centers of Excellence for Classical Language Studies**.
    - The [University Grants Commission](#) will create professional chairs for distinguished scholars in classical languages, starting with central universities.
  - **Criteria for Declaring a Language as Classical:** As per the [Ministry of Culture](#), the criteria for a language to be declared classical include:
    - **Age of the Language:** The language must have a documented history or early texts between **1,500 and 2,000 years old**.
    - **Cultural Value:** It should possess ancient literature that its speakers regard as part of their cultural legacy.
    - **Originality:** The literary heritage must be original and not borrowed from other languages.
    - **Discontinuity:** There should be a clear distinction between the classical language

and its modern forms, indicating a potential discontinuity in its development.

## Other Provisions to Promote Language

- **Eighth Schedule:** To encourage the continued development, enhancement, and promotion of the language. 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule 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.

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