



Protection and Preservation of Endangered Language

The Government of India is running a scheme known as “Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages” for conservation of threatened languages.

Background

- According to the census 1961, India has around 1652 languages. But by 1971, only 808 languages were left.
- According to the **People’s Linguistic Survey of India 2013**, around 220 languages has been lost in the last 50 years and 197 has been categorised as **Endangered**.
- Government of India currently defines a language as one that is **marked by a script** and effectively neutering oral languages. Therefore, government recognizes **122 languages** which is far lower than the 780 counted by the **People's Linguistic Survey of India** (along with a further 100 suspected to exist).
 - This discrepancy is caused primarily because **Government of India** doesn't recognise any language with less than **10,000 speakers**.
- According to the criteria adopted by the **UNESCO**, a language becomes extinct when nobody speaks or remembers the language. The UNESCO has categorized languages on basis of endangerment as follows:-
 - Vulnerable
 - Definitely Endangered
 - Severely Endangered
 - Critically Endangered
- UNESCO has recognised 42 Indian languages as Critically Endangered.

Causes For Decline

- GOI does not recognize languages with less than 10,000 speakers
- In and out migration of communities which leads to dispersal of traditional settlement.
- Changing employment pattern which favours majority language.
- Changes in social and cultural values.
- Growth of “individualism”, which puts self interest over that of community.
- Encroachment of materialism in traditional communities allowing spiritual, moral and ethical values being overshadowed by consumerism.

What needs to be done?

- The proven method to ensure the survival of language is the development of schools that teach in languages of minority (tribal languages) which enables the speakers to preserve and enrich the language.
- A vast digital project - on the lines of Project Tiger - for preserving and growing India's endangered languages must be launched.
- Audio-visual documentation of the important aspects of such language - like storytelling, folk literature and history.
- Existing work from groundbreaking initiatives like Global Language Hotspots can be used to

enhance such documentation efforts.

Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL)

- It was instituted by **Ministry of Human Resource Development** (Government of India) in 2013.
- The sole objective of the Scheme is to document and archive the country's languages that have become endangered or likely to be endangered in the near future.
- The scheme is monitored by **Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL)** located in Mysuru, Karnataka.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) provides financial assistance for creation of centres for endangered languages at Central and State Universities to undertake research projects.

Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL)

- Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) was established in 1969.
- It is under the administrative control of **Ministry of Human Resource Development**.

Purpose

- To coordinate the development of Indian Language.
- To bring about the essential unity of Indian languages through scientific studies.
- Promote interdisciplinary research.
- Contribute to mutual enrichment of languages and contribute towards emotional integration of the people of India.
- protects and documents minor, minority and tribal languages.

Source: PIB

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