



Madhika Language on Brink of Extinction

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Why in News?

In the remote colony of Kookanam, near Karivellur grama panchayat, Kerala the **Chakaliya community** is grappling with the imminent loss of its unique language **Madhika**.

- There are only two people left, who **are the last fluent speakers** of Madhika. They fear that with their passing, the language will be lost to the world.

What are the Key Facts about Madhika Language and Chakaliya Community?

▪ About Madhika Language:

- Madhika is a language with **no script** and is a **blend of Telugu, Tulu, Kannada, and Malayalam**. Despite sounding similar to Kannada, it can bewilder listeners due to its **diverse linguistic influences**.
- Madhika is largely influenced by **Havyaka Kannada**, an old form of Kannada.
 - The neglect of Madhika is attributed to the social stigma associated with the Chakaliya community. They were considered **untouchables**.
- Due to the lack of documentation (**no script**) and the passing of older speakers, there is a significant risk **that Madhika may not survive beyond individuals**.

▪ About the Chakaliya Community:

- The Chakaliya community was **originally nomadic and worshippers of Thiruvengktramana** and Mariamma. They migrated from the hilly regions of Karnataka to **northern Malabar centuries ago**.
- Originally categorised as a **Scheduled Tribe (ST)**, the community was subsequently reclassified into the **Scheduled Caste (SC)** group in Kerala.

How is the Linguistic Diversity of India?

▪ Indian Linguistic Space:

- India has a rich linguistic heritage, with diverse languages and writing systems.
- Writing in India dates back to the days of the **Indus Valley Civilization**, around four thousand years ago.
- **Linguistic Survey:**
 - During colonial rule the **first linguistic survey was conducted during 1894 to 1928** and identified **179 languages and 544 dialects**.
 - In 1991, the Census of India listed **1576 mother tongues' with separate grammatical structures and 1796 speech varieties** that are classified as other mother tongues'.
 - As per **UNESCO**, any **language spoken by less than 10,000 persons is considered "potentially endangered"**.
- **Language Families of India:**
 - There are major language families in India, including Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric, Tibeto-Burman, and others.

▪ Threat of Extinction:

- **As per People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI)**, a linguistic survey by an NGO (Bhasha Research and Publication Centre), **there are around 400 languages that are at the risk of extinction** in the next 50 years.
 - Most of the languages at risk are spoken by marginal tribes, whose children receive little to no education. If they go to school instructions are often provided in one of India's 22 languages recognized in the Constitution.
- **Languages without scripts have greater risk of extinction like the Bhili language.**
- **Initiatives Taken to Conserve Threatened Languages:**
 - [Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages \(India\)](#)
 - [International Mother Language Day \(UNESCO\)](#)

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Languages in India?

- **Article 29:**
 - Protects the **interests of minorities**, ensuring that all citizens have the right to preserve their distinct language, script, or culture.
- **Eighth Schedule:**
 - Part XVII of the Indian Constitution deals with the official languages. The Eighth Schedule recognizes 22 official languages.
 - Six languages in India **currently have 'Classical' status.**
- **Article 350A:**
 - Provides that **every state must provide primary education in the mother tongue.**
- **Article 350B:**
 - Provides for the **appointment of a "Special Officer" for linguistic minorities.**
- **Article 351:**
 - Gives power to the **Union government to issue a directive for the development of the Hindi language.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to India, the terms 'Halbi, Ho and Kui' pertain to (2021)

- (a) dance forms of Northwest India
- (b) musical instruments
- (c) pre-historic cave paintings
- (d) tribal languages

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Odisha has a unique place in India due to its vast population of tribals residing in the state. 62 tribal communities live in Odisha which is 22.8% of the total population of Odisha.
- Odisha's tribal language is divided into 3 main language families. They are Austro-Asiatic (Munda), Dravida and Indo-Aryan. Every tribe has its own language and language family. The languages include:
 - Austro-Asiatic: Bhumij, Birhor, Rem (Bonda), Gatah (Didyai), Gutab (Gadaba), Sora(Saora), Gorum (Parenga), Khadia, Juang, Santali, Ho, Mundari, etc.
 - Dravida: Gondi, Kui-Kondh, Kuvi-Kondh, Kisan, Koya, Olari, (Gadaba) Parja, Peng, Kudukh (Oraon) etc.
 - Indo Aryan: Bathudi, Bhuyan, Kurmali, Sounti, Sadri, Kandhan, Aghria, Desia, Jharia, Halbi, Bhatri, Matia, Bhunjia, etc.
- Out of these languages only 7 have scripts. They are Santali (Olchiki), Saora(Sorang Sampeng), Ho (Warangchiti), Kui (Kui Script), Oraon (Kukhud Tod), Mundari (Bani Hisir), Bhumij (Bhumij Anl). Santali language has been included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

- Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

Q.2 Under which one of the following Constitution Amendment Acts, four languages were added to the languages under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, thereby raising their number to 22? (2008)

- (a) Constitution (Ninetieth Amendment) Act
- (b) Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act
- (c) Constitution (Ninety-second Amendment) Act
- (d) Constitution (Ninety-third Amendment) Act

Ans: C

Mains:

Q. Are we losing our local identity for the global identity? Discuss (2017)

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