



# Indo-European Languages

[Source: DTE](#)

## Why in News?

A Study published in the journal **Nature** identifies the **Caucasus Lower Volga people** as the probable originators of **Indo-European languages**, challenging the earlier **Yamnaya theory**.

## What are the Key Findings of the Study?

- **Genetic Origin:** The **Caucasus Lower Volga people**, who lived 6,500 years ago on the **Eurasian steppe**, stretching from the **Volga River** to the **Caucasus Mountains**, are identified as the **genetic progenitors of the Indo-European language family**.
- **Yamnaya People's Role:** The **Yamnaya people (5,700-5,300 years ago)**, descendants of the **Caucasus Lower Volga**, played a significant role in spreading Proto-Indo-European languages across **Europe, the Indian subcontinent, and China**.
  - These ancient populations migrated west, mixed with locals, and formed the **distinct Yamnaya genome**.
  - Earlier researches suggested the ancient **Yamnaya people of the steppe as the originators of Proto-Indo-European**, the precursor to modern Indo-European languages.
- **Economic Transformation:** The Yamnaya people's new economic practices, such as **livestock herding** and the use of **oxen-drawn wagons**, enabled their migration and expansion.
  - The **Yamnaya** underwent a **demographic explosion**, expanding from a few thousand people to tens of thousands within a few centuries.

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## Map of the main Indo-European languages in Eurasia

### Language families:

- Romance
- Germanic
- Slavic
- Baltic
- Celtic
- Iranian
- Indo-Aryan
- Albanian
- Armenian
- Greek



## Indo-European Language Family

- The Indo-European language family is the world's largest language family, comprising over **400 languages**. These languages are divided into several sub-families.

Indo-European Language Sub-family	Languages	Region
<b>Celtic</b>	Breton, Cornish, Manx, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh	Western Europe, British Isles
<b>Germanic</b>	English, German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian	Northern and Western Europe
<b>Romance</b>	Latin (classical), French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian	Southern and Western Europe
<b>Hellenic</b>	Greek (Modern and Ancient)	Greece, Cyprus
<b>Albanian</b>	Albanian	Albania, Kosovo, parts of Macedonia, Montenegro
<b>Armenian</b>	Armenian	Armenia
<b>Balto-Slavic</b>	Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Belarusian	Eastern Europe, Baltic region
<b>Indo-Iranian</b>	Persian (Farsi), Kurdish, Pashto, Baloch, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Dogri, Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Maithili, Nepali, Bangla, Assamese, Odia, Sinhala, Dhivehi	Indian subcontinent, Iran, Central Asia

**Note:** In South Asia, languages belong to four major families: **Indo-European (primarily Indo-Aryan), Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and Sino-Tibetan.**

- **Indo-Aryan languages:** The largest group, with 574 languages spoken by 73.30% of the population.

- **Dravidian languages:** 153 languages, spoken by 24.47% of the population.
- **Sino-Tibetan languages:** 226 languages, with less than 1% of the population speaking them, including Khampti from the Siamese-Chinese subfamily.
- **Austro-Asiatic languages:** 65 languages with 6.19 million speakers.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**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)**

**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)**