

## **Quadrant II – Notes (Module Wise)**

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### **Notes**

Language as an organized system of spoken words by which people communicate with each other with mutual comprehension. Languages greatly differs in their 'relative importance', if the importance can be taken to mean the number of people using them. A language family is a group of languages descended from a single earlier term. Example: Latin – Roman Empire. India is called a 'veritable tower of Babel' and according to A.R. Desai "India presents a spectacle of museum of tongues." Linguist Grierson has noted in his "Linguistic Survey of India" that India has 179 languages and 544 dialects. The 1971 census, reported 1652 languages in India as the mother tongue. Indian languages have evolved from different stocks and are closely associated with the different ethnic groups of India. Broadly the Indian languages can be put into six groups: 1) Indo-Aryan, 2) Dravidian, 3) Sino-Tibetan, 4) Negroid, 5) Austric and 6) Others. These languages have interacted on one another through the centuries and have produced the major linguistic divisions of modern

India. The Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian are the dominant groups and together comprises all the major languages of India.

### 1. Indo-Aryan

It is part of the Indo-European family of languages, which came to India with the Aryans. It is the biggest of the language groups in India and accounts for about 74% of the total Indian population. It comprises of all the principal languages of northern and western India such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, Rajasthani, Assamese, Oriya, Pahari, Bihari, Kashmiri, Urdu and Sanskrit.

### 2. Dravidian

This is the second most important group and comprises mainly of languages spoken in the Southern India. It covers about 25% of the Indian population. Proto-Dravidian gave rise to 21 Dravidian Languages. They can be broadly classified into three groups: Northern group, Central group, and Southern group of Dravidian languages. The Northern group consists of three languages i.e., Brahui, Malto and Kudukh. Brahui is spoken in Baluchistan, Malto spoken in Bengal and Orissa, while Kurukh is spoken in Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The Central group consists of eleven languages viz., Gondi, Khond, Kui, Manda, Parji, Gadaba, Kolami, Pengo, Naiki, Kuvi and Telugu. Out of these, only Telugu became a civilized language and the rest remained tribal languages. The southern group consists of seven languages viz., Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Tulu, Kodagu, Toda and Kota. The major languages of the Dravidian group are: (i) Telugu (numerically the biggest of the Dravidian languages), (ii) Tamil (oldest and purest language of the Dravidian family), (iii) Kannada and (iv) Malayalam (smallest and the youngest of the Dravidian family).

### 3. Sino-Tibetan

The Sino-Tibetan or Mongoloid family stretches all over the sub-Himalayan tracts, covering North Bihar, North Bengal, Assam up to the north-eastern frontiers of the country. These languages are considered to be older than the Indo-Aryan languages and are referred to in the oldest Sanskrit literature as Kiratas. The Tibeto-Burman languages are divided into four broad groups: Tibetan: Sikkimese, Bhotia, Balti, Sherpa, Lahuli and Ladakhi; Himalayan: Kanauri and Limbu; North-Assam: Abor (Adi), Miri, Aka, Dafla and Mishmi; Assam-Burmese: It is again sub-divided into four main sub-groups, viz. Kuki-Chin, Mikir, Bodo and Naga. Manipuri or Meithi is the most important language of the Kuki-Chin sub-group. The Bodo sub-group includes such dialects as Bodo, Rajbangsi, Koch, Mech, Rabha, Dimasa, Kachari, Chutiya, Garo, Haijong and the Tipra (Tirupuri). Mikir has strong affinities to the Bodo and is spoken in the Mikir Hills and Parts of Sibsagar district in Assam. The principal languages of the Naga sub-group are Angami, Sema, Ao, Lotha, Mao, Konyak, Kabui and Lepcha.

### 4. Austric

The Austric languages of India belong to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family, which are represented by languages of the Munda or Kol Group, spoken in the central, eastern and north-eastern India and languages of the Mon-Khmer group like Khasi and Nicobarese. These are very ancient languages which have been in existence much before the advent of Aryans and were referred in ancient Sanskrit literature as Nisadas. The most important language of the Austric group is Santhali, which is spoken by over 5 million Santhals and is the largest spoken among the Adivasi languages. Mundari, spoken by about a million Mundas, is another important language of this group.

## 5. Others

This group includes several Dravidian adivasi languages like Gondi, Oraon or Kurukh, Mal-Pahariya, Khond and Parji which are very distinct and cannot be classified in other groups.

### a. Pali and Prakrit

Pali and Prakrit are the languages that belong to the Middle Indo-Aryan period i.e., 600 BC-1000 AD. Prakrit was the Indo-Aryan speech which was in the form of uncultivated popular dialects. Prakrit came down to us in inscriptions dating back to 4-3 BC. Practically all over India, Prakrits were freely used for inscriptions almost up to the Gupta age.

In the course of time, the Prakrits were transformed into what are known as the Apabhramsa dialects, which were widely used in popular and folk literature. The various Prakrit dialects described by Prakrit grammarians are Maharastri, Sauraseni, Magadhi, Paisaci and Apabhramsa. Pali and Ardha-Magadhi are also Prakrits and were used in early Buddhist and Jain literature. The Satavahana rulers were great patrons of Prakrit.

The earliest of the Buddhist literature is in Pali. Some consider Pali as Magadhi Prakrit or Magadhi-bhasa, while others point to a close relationship of Pali with Paisaci Prakrit spoken at that time in the Vindhya region. The Tripitakas; Milindapanha; Petakopadesa and Visuddhimagga are some early works in Pali.

There is no consensus for a specific time where the modern north Indian languages such as Hindustani, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Sindhi and Oriya emerged, but AD 1000 is commonly accepted.

The Dravidian languages of South India had a history independent of Sanskrit. Though Malayalam and Telugu are Dravidian in origin, over

eighty percent of their lexicon is borrowed from Sanskrit. The Kannada and Tamil languages have lesser Sanskrit and Prakrit influence. The Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages of North-East India also have long independent histories.

## Official Languages

English was the only language used for official purpose in the British India. In the independent India, it was declared in Article 343 (1) that Hindi will be the official Union language. It was also mentioned that over a period of fifteen years since the commencement of the Indian Constitution, Hindi will replace English as the official language. However, the Parliament can decide whether to use English as an official language or not.

The non-Hindi speaking communities across the country protested on the aspect of the change in official language from English to Hindi. This protest resulted in the enactment of the Official Language Act, 1963. According to the act, Hindi in Devanagari script has been declared the official language of the Union. However, English may also be used for official purposes even after 1965. English has been given the status of the 'subsidiary official language' of India. It was decided that either Hindi or English can be used for procedures of Parliament.

In the Constitution of India, there is a provision made for each of the Indian states to choose their own official language for communicating at the state level. The selected languages, which can be used for official purpose, have been listed in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. Originally, there were 14 languages in the 8th schedule. The further languages were added as follows:

- i. Sindhi by 21st amendment, 1967
- ii. Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali languages by 71st amendment, 1992
- iii. Bodo, Dogri, Santhali and Maithali by 92nd Amendment, 2004.

The 22 official languages currently are:

1. ASSAMESE – Assam
2. BENGALI – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Tripura, West Bengal
3. BODO – Assam
4. DOGRI – Jammu and Kashmir
5. GUJARATI – Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Gujarat
6. HINDI – Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, the national capital territory of Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
7. KANNADA – Karnataka
8. KASHMIRI – Jammu and Kashmir KONKANI – Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra
9. MAITHILI – Bihar
10. MALAYALAM Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Kerala
11. MANIPURI (also MEITEI or MEITHEI) – Manipur
12. MARATHI – Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Goa, Maharashtra
13. NEPALI – Sikkim, West Bengal
14. ODIYA – Odisha
15. PUNJABI – Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab
16. SANSKRIT – Only in scriptures. Not in usage.

17. SANTHALI – Santhal tribals of the Chota Nagpur Plateau (comprising the states of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa)
18. SINDHI – Sindhi community
19. TAMIL – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu.
20. TELUGU – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh
21. URDU – Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh

However, the constitution does not specify the official languages to be used by the states for the conduct of their official functions, and leaves each state free to adopt any language used in its territory as its official language or languages. The language need not be one of those listed in the Eighth Schedule, and several states have adopted official languages which are not so listed. Examples include Kokborok in Tripura, Mizo in Mizoram, Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia in Meghalaya, and French in Puducherry.

It should be noted that there is no national language of India. Hindi is not a national language. Neither the Constitution of India, nor any Indian law defines any national language.

### Classical Language

In 2004, the Government of India declared that languages that met certain requirements could be accorded the status of a “Classical Language in India”.

The following criteria were laid down to determine the eligibility of languages to be considered for classification as a “Classical Language”:

High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years

A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers

The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community

The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

### Current Classical Languages

Tamil was the first Classical Language of India. The government declared Tamil (in 2004), Sanskrit (in 2005). These two languages are undoubtedly parental sources for many languages belonging to the Indo-European family and the Dravidian family of linguistic groups. Later the government declared Kannada and Telugu (in 2008) as classical languages of India. In 2013, Malayalam was also given status of classical language. In 2014, Odiya was also given the status of Classical language. With these the following six languages are included in the list of Classical Languages:

- a. Tamil (since 2004)
- b. Sanskrit (since 2005)
- c. Telugu (since 2008)
- d. Kannada (Since 2008)
- e. Malayalam (since 2013)
- f. Odiya (since 2014)