



Multilingualism in India

For Prelims: Indian Languages, Multilingualism, [Eighth Schedule](#)

For Mains: Protection and Promotion of Indian Languages, Diversity of India

[Source:LM](#)

Why in News?

In today's interconnected world, multilingualism has garnered increasing recognition for its multifaceted significance. This includes not only its [cognitive advantages](#) but also its potential to **enrich diverse cultures**.

- A prime example of the importance of **embracing multilingualism is India**, with its abundance of languages and scripts.

What is India's Multilingual Landscape?

- **Multilingual Landscape:**
 - India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with **over 19,500 languages spoken throughout the nation**.
 - This diversity offers a unique opportunity for Indians to be multilingual, which means being able to **use more than one language in communication**.
 - According to the 2011 Census of India, **more than 25% of the population speaks two languages**, while about **7% speak three languages**.
 - Studies state that young Indians are **more multilingual** than their elder generation with about half the **urban population aged 15 to 49 years speaking two languages**.
- **Contribution of Multilingualism to India's Diversity:**
 - India's multilingualism is not only a matter of numbers, but also of culture, identity, and history.
 - India's languages reflect its diverse and **pluralistic society**, where people from **different religions, ethnicities, castes, and classes coexist and interact**.
- **Benefits of Multilingualism:**
 - Multilingualism can enhance cognitive abilities, such as **memory, attention, problem-solving, and creativity**.
 - Research has shown that bilinguals and multilinguals have better **executive functions**, which are responsible for planning, organizing, and controlling mental processes.
 - Multilingualism can also improve **social and emotional skills**, such as empathy, perspective-taking, and intercultural competence.
 - By learning different languages, people can access **different cultures, values, and worldviews**, which can help them understand and appreciate diversity.
 - Multilingualism can also offer practical advantages, such as career opportunities, travel

experiences, and access to information and entertainment.

- By knowing more than one language, people can communicate with more people, explore more places, and enjoy more resources.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Languages in India?

▪ Article 29:

- It protects the **interests of minorities**. It ensures that all citizens have the right to **preserve their distinct language, script, or culture**.
- It also prohibits discrimination based on race, caste, creed, religion, or language.

▪ Eighth Schedule:

- It lists the official languages of the republic of India. **Part XVII of the Indian constitution** deals with the official languages in **Articles 343 to 351**.
 - The [Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution](#) recognizes **22 official languages**:
 - Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.
- All the **Classical Languages** are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
 - Six languages in India currently have 'Classical' status listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
 - Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).

▪ Article 343:

- It states that the official language of the Union government is **Hindi in Devanagari script**, and numerals should follow the international form of Indian numerals.
 - This Article also states that English will continue to be used as an official language for 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution.

▪ Article 345:

- The legislature of a State may by law adopt any **one or more of the languages in use in the State** or Hindi as the Language or Languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State.

▪ Article 346:

- It recognizes India's linguistic diversity by allowing **multiple languages to be used in official communications**. It also provides a mechanism to ensure effective communication between states and between a State and the Union.

▪ Article 347:

- It gives the President the power to **recognise a language as an official language of a given state**, provided that the [President](#) is satisfied that a substantial proportion of that state desires that the language be recognised. Such recognition can be for a part of the state or the whole state.

▪ Article 348(1):

- It provides that all proceedings in the [Supreme Court](#) and in every High Court shall be in **English language** until Parliament by law otherwise provides.

▪ Article 348(2):

- Provides further that notwithstanding the provisions of Article 348(1), the [Governor](#) of a state may, with the previous consent of the President, authorise the use of Hindi or any other language used for any official purpose, in proceedings in the High Court.

▪ Article 350:

- Every person shall be entitled to submit a representation for the redress of any grievance to any officer or authority of the Union or a State in any of the languages used in the Union or in the State, as the case may be.
- **Article 350A** of the Indian Constitution provides that every state must **provide primary education in a mother tongue**.
- **Article 350B** provides for the appointment of a "**Special Officer**" for linguistic minorities.

▪ Article 351:

- It gives power to the union government to issue a directive for the **development of the Hindi language**.
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UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements:(2021)

1. 21st February is declared to be the International Mother Language Day by UNICEF.
2. The demand that Bangla has to be one of the national languages was raised in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

Q2. 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.3 Which one of the following was given classical language status recently? (2015)

- (a) Odia
- (b) Konkani
- (c) Bhojpuri
- (d) Assamese

Ans: (a)