



## Recognition of Classical Status for Odia Language

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Odisha has a rich culture and tradition. The historical background speaks volumes of its grandness. If we take a glimpse of its past, then we can realize that Odisha is a land of art and beauty. Its contribution to Indian history is equally important. This land has produced many brave sons and daughters. The rocks, pillars and stone inscriptions sing songs of glory till today. The transition of Odisha from Kalinga is of great significance. The name Kalinga stands for bravery and boldness, which is reflected in the great Kalinga War. Our heroes fought valiantly. This gives us a clear picture of our past history. Not only this, another feather has been added to the crown of our motherland that is our regional language, Odia means a lot to us. It got its long standing due. Odia has got the recognition to be the first language from Indo-Aryan linguistic group. It will be the sixth language after attaining the classical status. Odia language has got this rare honour at a time when its importance and richness was fading away in government and private run schools. It pinches us back to our senses that we are Odias and Odia is our mother tongue.

Apart from the honour if accepted by the Union Cabinet, it will entail a one-time grant of rupees one hundred crore for further research and development of this language. Other than this there will be another five crore rupees grant every year. Hopefully under such a supervision Odia will

reach newer and newer heights. Earlier Sanskrit in 2005 and four other Dravidian languages come to the forefront like Tamil(2004) Telugu, Kannada (2008), Malayalam (2013) and now Odia joins the elite list. After the Cabinet approval, the Culture Minister will notify its classical status.

Odia is quite old and has a long maritime history. Enough evidences support Odia's claims to get the distinction. Traces and evidences are found in the Natya Shastra of Bharat Muni of 4th century and continued with the period of Ashokan (3rd century BC) and Kharavela (1st century AD) in stone inscription. Our language has a unique structure and style. It cannot be considered as a sister concern of Bengali or Assamese. The language dates back from 3rd country BC. There was a time when classical Sanskrit was being spoken by Brahminical classes in India, Odia was already used by the masses in Kalinga. For a language to have a classical tag, it should have high antiquity value, a vast collection of ancient literature and a valuable heritage, not borrowed from others. Odia fulfills all the above mentioned criteria to be in the elite category. Odisha was the first province to be constituted on 1st April, 1936 during British rule. Many scholars like Suniti Kumar, John Boulton, John Beams, Satya Narayan Rajguru, K.B. Tripathy, G.A Griearson and many others argue in favour of the Odisha's language status. The linguists have documented



thesis of the language from epigraphic sources to modern literary traditions. Rajya Sabha Member Ramachandra Khuntia is a crusader to bring the issue into limelight by raising it in Parliament last year.

Although Odisha has been demanding to fulfil its legitimate demands for special category status, recently it had launched a signature campaign including over one crore signatures which was submitted to Hon'ble President of India to further the cause of the Odia people. The Odissi Dance got its recognition as a classical dance in 1958, when danseuse Indrani Rahman presented the dance in New Delhi at Kamani Auditorium. Till today Odissi music has not received classical status. But now it is a pleasant moment for Odia language to get a special classical status.

Odia has its own original literature of very high value. As per the required criteria Odia researchers and scholars are hopeful that the language will surely get the prestigious tag. The report has all necessary details regarding Odia's pre-historic traditions, culture and maritime tradition, script, origin, and development of literature. An indepth study on the historical perspective of Odia language can surely opine that it has a strong socio-religious base.

The evolution of Odia language was first started by a community expert in maritime trade around 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. The report was prepared by a linguist and Founding Director of Mysore-based central institute of Indian languages, Debi Prasanna Pattanayak. He played a significant role in preparing the report. He emphasized on the importance of language. A language is the heart and soul of every nation. It is a medium on which a nation stands. In this context the contribution of Debi Prasanna Pattanayak is commendable.

It is a golden moment for all of us. Odia language is our pride and glory. To popularize it,

not only government but every single individual must join hands together. Our State Culture Department has started working on the official documents in Odia language. Odia literature is the reflection of our culture and tradition. It finds mention in our ancient literary heritage in the rock-cut inscriptions (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), Copper Plate Grants (4<sup>th</sup> century AD) and palm-leaf manuscripts in different shapes and sizes. Archaeological evidences relating to inscriptions are found from other countries in south east Asia, China, Srilanka and Myanmar in different periods. Odia's modern literary tradition is vast and vibrant. It began from Pre-Sarala literature, Sarala Mahabharata. Sarala Das is a renowned poet-laureate of Odia belonging to 15<sup>th</sup> century. He was an illiterate farmer by birth, who produced glittering works in Odia literature only by the blessings of "Maa Sarala" known as the goddess of wisdom and knowledge. Madalapanji is a chronicle in Jagannath Temple during Gajapati rule of Puri.

Finally, our cry for classical status is answered, voices heard and Odia got its due worth. This status of Odia language will inspire our next generation to take a deep interest in it.

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