

Memorandum for Inclusion of Kosli Language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution

Submitted to

Dr. Manmohan Singh, Honourable Prime Minister of India
Smt. Partibha Patil, Honourable President of India
Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Honourable UPA Chairperson
Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Honourable Leader of Opposition
Mr. P. Chidambaram, Honorable Union Minister of Home Affairs
Mr. Kapil Sibal, Honourable Union Minister of Human Resource Development
Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, Honourable Governor of Odisha
Mr. Naveen Patnaik, Honourable Chief Minister of Odisha
Honourable Members of Parliament from Odisha

Submitted & Approved by

Members of Kosal Discussion and Development Forum (KDDF) & well wishers

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Kosal Discussion and Development Forum (KDDF)

[A non-political and non-separatist organization focuses only on the development of Koshal or Western Orissa]

E-mail: westernodisha@googlegroups.com; Web site: <http://kddfonline.com/>

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Esteemed Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Singh,

In the past few years the central govt. has included different Indian languages in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution by the recommendation of various committees. It shows prudence on the part of Indian government in being flexible in recognizing the complexity of linguistic diversity in India. In 2003, the 93rd Constitutional Amendment was passed which enabled the government to have a fresh look at the possibility of inclusion of other Indian languages in the 8th schedule. Consequently, four languages, viz. Bodo, Dogri, Santhali and Maithili were judged to be included in the 8th schedule. We the people of Western Odisha were hoping that Kosli be included as well because our situation is identical to that of Maithili as it is explained in the following sections of this memo. Therefore, we humbly request you to examine our request by the same yardstick used to include the four recent languages in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

It is said that the right of a mother tongue is a basic cultural right of the people which link them with their economy, socio-cultural system and political right. UNESCO has recognized that the concept of language equality among all languages is important irrespective of whether the languages have a script or not. Furthermore, the Indian government is promoting the mother tongue based multilingual education to reduce the school drop-out rates and to enhance communication using a mother tongue.¹ This is a good and praiseworthy initiative taken by the Indian government. In this regard, the Kosli language (also called Kosli-Sambalpuri, Sambalpuri) is the mother tongue of ten districts of western Orissa (Kosal region) viz. Balangir, Bargarh, Boudh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Sonapur, Sundargarh, and Athmallik subdivision.² In addition, a large population of Raipur, Mahasamund and Raigarh districts of Chhattisgarh state also uses Kosli language as their mother tongue.²

The Kosli language and literature is vast as it is blessed with a group of dedicated writers. A large number of books are published regularly and available in the Kosli language.

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Epics like “Ramayana”, “Mahabharat” and “Meghduta” are translated into Kosli language.² Kosli language has a rich literature in different areas viz. Architecture, Astrology, Mantra-Tantra-Yantra science, Medicine, Yoga, Music, Arts, Dance, Drama, Yoga, Philosophy, and Grammar.

Kosli dramas, songs, and dances are popular across the world. Kosli dramas are highly acclaimed and regularly staged at various places of India. For instance, a recent Kosli language play “Maau” is aiming to enter the Limca record book by becoming the biggest ever stage show of its kind in the world.² In addition, the Kosli language cinema is attracting world wide attention. “Bukha (Hunger)” a Kosli language movie has won the Indian national award, an international jury award at the Gijón International Film Festival, Spain and was selected for World Rural Film Festival, Aurillac, France.² The All India Radio (viz. Sambalpur, Balangir, and Bhawanipatna) and television channels (viz. Nxatra news and OTV) are broadcasting their news and entertainment programs in Kosli language.

More than five registered newspapers and seventy magazines are available in Kosli language.² Unfortunately Kosli language has no political and official support although there was a discussion in the Indian parliament to include Kosli language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution.³ Recently the Orissa govt. has recommended the Ho language for its inclusion in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution.⁴ This is a welcome step. Along this line, we sincerely hope that the Orissa govt. will recommend Kosli language for the inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution.

For the people of western Orissa it is not just a language but a way of life that propel progresses and harmony in the region. The inclusion of Kosli language in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution will have following positive impacts on the people of western Orissa:

- **Kosli language as a mother tongue and medium of instruction:**

Western Orissa area contains 40 to 50 % of the state’s population. The key to development of western Odisha is the Kosli language. Drop out rate in schools particularly in rural and Adivashi area can be ascribed to, among other variables, teaching in Odia language which is not used in day to day communication. It is as if learning through an alien language. Kosli is the dominant means of communication through out western Odisha. Though we have several tribal languages, all tribals have functional capability in Kosli not Odia. That is the main reason why KBK has been found literacy rate is so low. We also have large population of scheduled caste in the area who are similarly impacted. It has caused various problems viz. i) the overall marks of students from western Orissa are lower than the students of coastal Orissa and ii) many bright students of western Orissa fail again and again in both 10th and 10+2 examinations because of their poor knowledge in Odia language. Recognition of Kosli language will facilitate education among the kids of western Orissa in their mother tongue and solve the above mentioned problems.

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• Freedom of expression in legislative and social sphere:

In spite of aggressive Odianisation, population of western Orissa has retained Kosli language for day to day communication. In large population centers where people of other states, especially from Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bengal, Punjab, Gujarat and other North Indian area have come to work, they have opted Kosli instead of Odia because the accent of Kosli follows North Indian pattern. And when poor Koslis go out of their area to seek employment they choose to go to other Hindi speaking area such as Chhattisgarh, U.P, Bihar and Jharkhand instead of Odia speaking area in Odisha. All Kosli can be easily identified by their accent when they try to speak Odia. Elected representatives from western Orissa can not engage in debates in the State Assembly because of their poor knowledge in Odia language. Recognition of this language will facilitate communication in the legislative and social sphere.

• Research and development:

Dictionaries, grammar books, plays, novels, anthology of poems, granthavalis of major poets, Kosli panjikas, several books on history of Kosal (western Orissa), and biographies on Kosli heroes are already available without any financial help from the government. Recognition of Kosli language will avail grants directly from the central government. This will facilitate the research and future development of Kosli language.

• Ease of governance:

Currently, notices are given in the villages of western Odisha in Odia; not very literates do not understand the full implications of these notices. Civil servants from other areas who do not even have rudimentary knowledge of Kosli language can not communicate with citizens, thus resulting in miscommunication. In fact, Orissa is among the minority of states which claims to have only one language. Out of 28 states, 15 have more than one official language. Out of 7 union territories, 6 have more than one recognized language. In a democracy, freedom of expression is a fundamental right of the citizen. Good governance requires efficient communication between the citizens and the government. In this context, inclusion of the Kosli language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution will facilitate governance in western Orissa.

• Kosli as a distinct language and its socio-cultural impact:

The linguistic characteristics of Kosli language are markedly different. Kosli language is a direct derivative of Sanskrit.⁵ Odia scholars have accepted it as a dialect of Odia language and Odia language as a member of Eastern Magadhi group of Indo-Aryan family. But genealogical analysis shows two different sources of origin of the two languages, that is, Odia and Kosli language. Odia is originated from the Magadhi Prakrit; whereas, Kosli language is originated from Ardha-Magadhi Prakrit.⁴ So there is remarkable difference between the two in the sphere of phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax.⁵ The researchers at the Sambalpur University, Odisha have shown that the Kosli is a distinct and old language.⁶

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Kosli language is intimately connected to the distinct culture and heritage of western Odisha, quite distinct from Odia culture. The unique folk songs and dances blends neatly with rhythm and punctuation of Kosli language. Inclusion of Kosli language in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution will promote the culture and heritage of western Orissa.

Keeping the above mentioned points into consideration we request you to recommend the inclusion of Kosli language in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Thanking you with best regards,

People of western Odisha and members of the Kosal Discussion and Development Forum (KDDF)

Acknowledgement: We thank the members of KDDF and other e-forums for suggestions. We are grateful to the people of western Odisha for constant support and encouragement.

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