

Marginal Languages and Landscapes of West Bengal

Through Bibliographic Inventories

Editors

**Manoranjan Pradhan
Arimardan Kumar Tripathi
Sahinur Sardar**

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Centre for Endangered Languages,
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Acknowledgement

Language and culture are invaluable assets of any society that must be preserved in every possible manner, and an academic effort is one of them. Scholarly work in a particular language or culture requires a comprehensive list of existing research and writings. Collecting bibliographic data for that theme is foundational, laying the groundwork for future academic endeavours. In fact, a research begins with gathering a list of earlier research and publications.

We have employed Census 2011-based non-scheduled languages spoken in West Bengal, and names of districts in the state are given as landscape. We firmly believe that reaching out to uncovered languages and landscapes in remote areas will ensure that social welfare schemes, particularly those related to language and culture, are more effective. Our primary concern is highlighting the research and publication, etc., focused on marginal languages of West Bengal and tracing the regional socio-political concerns and potentials on the name of the landscape. Thus, already completed academic exercises will be stored in one place.

We thank the professionals who developed the interactive online interface for data entry for this bibliographic collection. Our sincere thanks also go to our colleagues in the Centre for their invaluable assistance.

The book aims to fill the enormous gap in this field and be a foundation for further research and writing related to Indian landscapes and their associated cultures. The collection of bibliographic entries is an ongoing process on its web portal (<https://cfelvb.in/bibliography.php>) and Android app. Meanwhile, the entries collected so far are being presented through this book to language researchers and enthusiasts.

11th June, 2024

Manoranjan Pradhan
Arimardan Kumar Tripathi
Sahinur Sardar

Introduction

A bibliographic collection on the given topic is an essential starting point for researching the same. It is necessary to acknowledge that earlier available research on the subject is not only a moral responsibility but also shows the keen interest of the researcher. On the other hand, the volume of bibliographic inventories on a given theme often reflects its strong socio-economic background and rigorous academic tradition. At the same time, a comprehensive collection of bibliographic entries attracts a broader academic community for further research. Compiling and presenting a bibliography on a particular subject is an art and a testament to a researcher's profound passion. Tracing a language through its landscape is a novel yet crucial approach to study the marginal languages of a region. Traditionally, one of the ways to present the research on marginal languages or cultures has been through works like- 'Languages of West Bengal' or 'Ethnic-linguistic Status of Darjiling.' Considering the logic, we are trying to introduce such academic production, which will help the researcher interested in the state's languages and regional landscapes.

West Bengal is one of the country's most culturally, intellectually and historically rich states. Bengali is the dominant language here, reflecting the cultural and linguistic heart of the state. The identity of the people in the state is well associated with language and culture. As such, languages have always been the primary determinants of identity, and the state has made great efforts to maintain and advance regional languages and dialects in addition to Bengali. The tribal population in the state is spread in the western districts such as Jhargram, Purulia, Bankura, etc, which majorly belong to Mundari, Mahali, Ho, Bhumij, Koda, Kurmali, and Santhali communities. The northern part of the state speaks languages like Nepali, Bhotia, Dimasa, Limbu, Rabha, Rai, Sherpa, Tamang, and Tibetan, particularly in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The geography of West Bengal is well connected to other Indian states such as Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Sikkim and Assam. It also shares the international boundary with Bangladesh. The state is an ideal place for ethnic multilingualism, and it hosts mother tongue speakers from Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic, Dravid and Tibeto-Burman language families, which is rare in other states of the country. On the other hand, West Bengal geographically connects the Himalayas in the north to the forests of the Sundarbans in the south. This geographic diversity is paralleled by a rich linguistic landscape, reflecting the state's cultural and ethnic plurality.

The landscape contains green fields of rice, jute, and other crops. Fish farming is a natural habit of the state, which has been culturally associated with the society. Ponds around the homes can be easily found for farming the fish. The state's landscape shares the sea, rivers, mountains, forests, and plains, which are significant throughout the geography. The state also maintains metro cities and urban and rural surroundings, of which Kolkata has historically been important, as there was a time when the city was the capital of the country and one of the prominent gateways for cross-border trade and tourism. Santiniketan in the state has been known for its cultural and intellectual activities since the age of Nobel

laureate Rabindra Nath Thakur. The state is also rich in mines of minerals like iron, coal, etc, which prepares the base of industrial activities as well. These regions contribute to the landscape of West Bengal, making it a unique and beautiful state with diverse natural beauty and a vibrant linguistic mosaic. The interplay of geography and language in West Bengal shapes the state's physical landscape and cultural and social fabric, which creates a dynamic and multicultural environment throughout the state.

As per Census Report 2011, the following number of speakers are residing in the state of West Bengal-

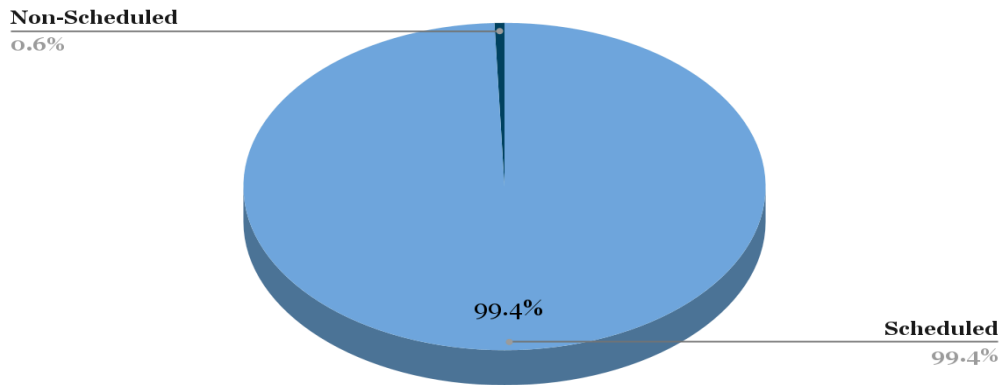
Languages in West Bengal		
Sr. No.	Language	Number of Mother Tongue Speakers
Scheduled Languages		
1.	Assamese	7835
2.	Bengali	68369255
3.	Bodo	37654
4.	Dogri	2006
5.	Gujarati	46926
6.	Hindi	5747099
7.	Kannada	2755
8.	Kashmiri	1084
9.	Konkani	960
10.	Maithili	22064
11.	Malayalam	17043
12.	Manipuri	1075
13.	Marathi	15176
14.	Nepali	1022725
15.	Oriya	186391
16.	Punjabi	67952
17.	Sanskrit	138
18.	Santali	2247113
19.	Sindhi	5749
20.	Tamil	20238
21.	Telugu	208769
22.	Urdu	1653739
Non-Schedule Languages		
23.	Adi	159
24.	Afghani/Kabuli/Pashto	111
25.	Anal	108
26.	Angami	8
27.	Ao	90
28.	Arabic/Arbi	2913
29.	Bhili/Bhilodi	103
30.	Bhotia	6508
31.	Bhumij	6304

32.	Bishnupuriya	41
33.	Chakhesang	2
34.	Chakru/Chokri	1
35.	Chang	1
36.	Coorgi/Kodagu	21
37.	Deori	6
38.	Dimasa	4
39.	English	15681
40.	Gadaba	110
41.	Gangte	4
42.	Garo	1457
43.	Gondi	375
44.	Halabi	10
45.	Halam	12
46.	Hmar	31
47.	Ho	4235
48.	Kabui	9
49.	Karbi / Mikir	22
50.	Khandeshi	26
51.	Kharia	7276
52.	Khasi	200
53.	Khezha	57
54.	Khond/Kondh	10
55.	Kinnauri	36
56.	Kisan	101
57.	Koch	1583
58.	Koda/Kora	33218
59.	Kom	16
60.	Konda	8
61.	Konyak	11
62.	Korku	201
63.	Korwa	146
64.	Koya	92
65.	Kui	13
66.	Kuki	251
67.	Kurukh/Oraon	201309
68.	Ladakhi	44
69.	Lahauli	1
70.	Lahnda	30
71.	Lepcha	14731
72.	Liangmei	5
73.	Limbu	2377
74.	Lotha	33
75.	Lushai/Mizo	489
76.	Malto	1961

77.	Maram	10
78.	Maring	5
79.	Miri/Mishing	5
80.	Mishmi	19
81.	Mogh	745
82.	Monpa	29
83.	Munda	61862
84.	Mundari	32571
85.	Nicobarese	28
86.	Nissi/Dafla	49
87.	Nocte	11
88.	Paite	66
89.	Parji	188
90.	Pawi	4
91.	Persian	3670
92.	Phom	1
93.	Pochury	1
94.	Rabha	10967
95.	Rai	1137
96.	Rengma	3
97.	Sangtam	7
98.	Savara	1696
99.	Sema	32
100.	Sherpa	2902
101.	Shina	1
102.	Simte	2
103.	Tamang	4897
104.	Tangkhul	27
105.	Thado	121
106.	Tibetan	7107
107.	Tripuri	98
108.	Tulu	84
109.	Vaiphei	29
110.	Wancho	12
111.	Zemi	1
112.	Zou	19
113.	Others	61494

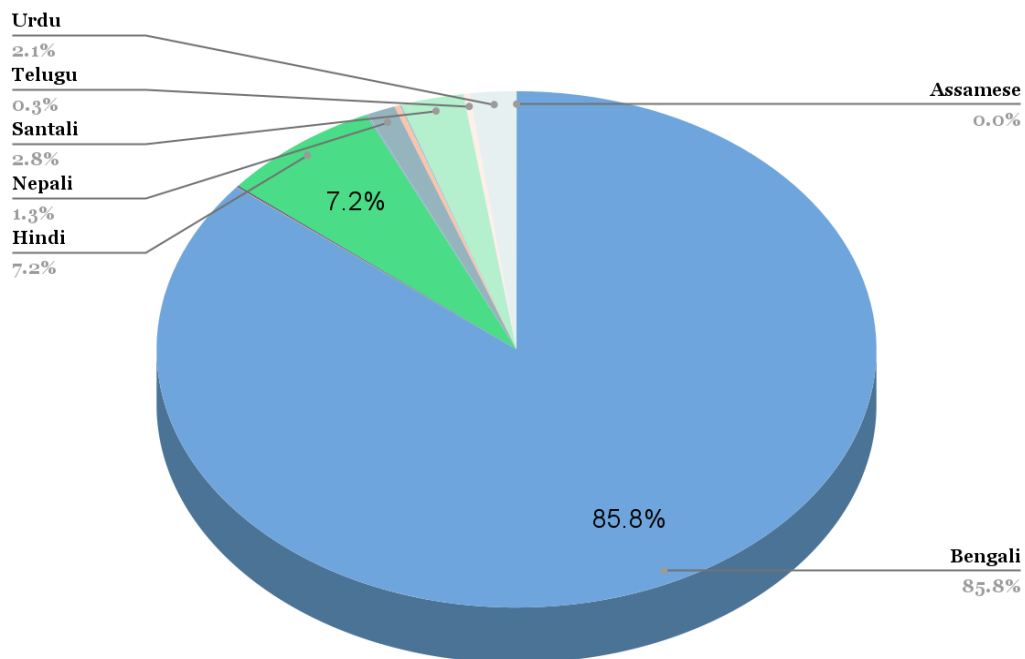
The linguistic population is distributed based on the Scheduled and Non-Scheduled Languages list. Where more than 113 languages are listed, that shows the multilingual situation of the state. Out of the total population, the share of Scheduled and Non-Scheduled speaking population is shown below :

Population Share

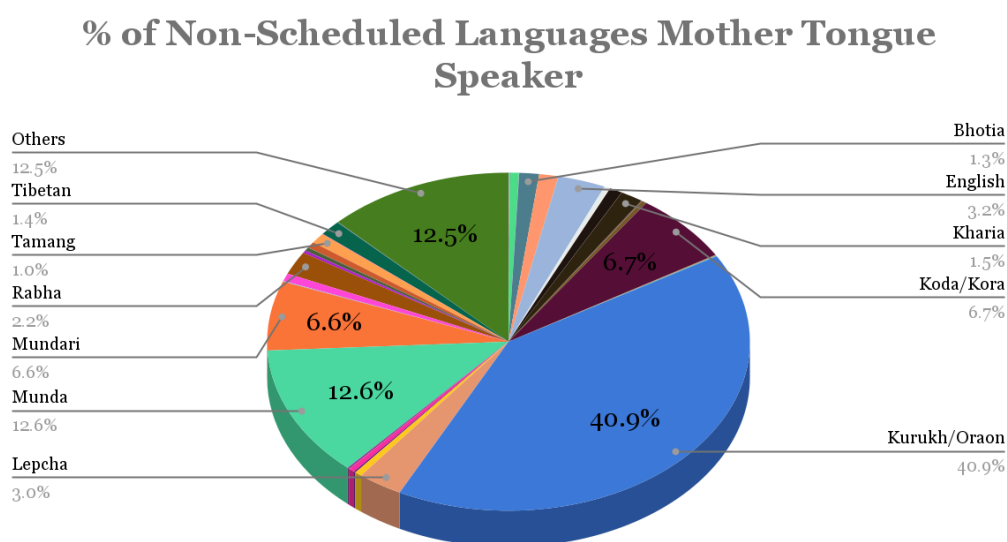


As can be seen, out of the total population, 99.4 percent of the population belongs to Scheduled languages, and only 0.6 percent is from Non-Scheduled languages. It is important that all 22 Scheduled languages are found in the state, while more than 91 Non-Scheduled language-speaking communities reside in the state, and that share is only 0.6 percent. If we can note the internal distribution of the population, more than 85 percent the population speak Bangla, 7.2 Hindi, 1.3 Nepali, and 2.8 Santhali, as it is shown below:

% of Scheduled Languages Mother Tongue Speaker



Now, the situation of the marginal linguistic population can be analysed based on below's pie-chart:



Hence, as per the 2011 Census, Kurukh, which is spoken by the Oraon community and grouped under the Dravidian language family, acquired the most prominent position in the marginal languages of West Bengal. While other languages majorly belong to Non-Scheduled or considered as marginal language are from Austro-Asiatic language family.

The linguistic and landscape of West Bengal are very diverse, which is well supported by the list of languages showing its speaking population share, which is 113 in number, but based on the list given by CENSUS 2011, we have chosen languages that have more than 100 speakers in West Bengal except for English, Afghani/Kabuli/Pashto, Arabic/Arbi and Persian, as these do not, shows their authenticity in numeric strength. For instance, the data shows that English has 15681 mother tongue speakers in West Bengal. For the landscape, we have chosen the names of the districts made so far and the rest under the title West Bengal as a unified title for those inventories where the titles of publications have been mentioned in the name of the state. Now, the book is being presented to researchers and enthusiasts of the state and others, and we are hopeful that this book will address their academic hunger.

11th June, 2024

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Languages

Adi

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