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# **A case study of critically endangered Dravidian languages in south India**

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## Introduction

In this thesis, I am going to visualize the most critically endangered languages of Dravidian language family in India. The endangered languages are those languages which possess a near extinction in coming future. The extinction of any language is killing the entire history, identity, culture and belief of those people and this motivated me to take up this topic. I have chosen South India as my study area. This is because, India is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest country in area vice and 2<sup>nd</sup> largest populated in the world. The unique diversity of India's cultural is unbelievable as compare to other nations in the world. When, I think about mapping of endangered languages, previously I collected of all the types of endangered languages in whole India. Then I realised that, it's a big task for me to visualize all those languages as it includes more than 2000 endangered languages. Since, I am belonging to southern part of India and where all the languages are derived from Dravidian language family group and therefore, I selected the most *endangered Dravidian languages* as my topic. But again, I encountered some problem with the abundant amount of data that I cannot precisely put into the map. Then I reduce the scope from endangered Dravidian languages into critically endangered Dravidian languages in south India and in this way, I got most convenient eight types of languages for my thesis work.

I would like to emphasise the importance of languages on human culture and how it is badly impact when it died to those culture. As a cartographic student, my academic objective is to visualize this topic in a cartographic manner, therefore, I prepared different maps which represent the most critically endangered languages in Dravidian family. All these languages are situated in the most remotely forest areas and therefore, the data availability is a big problem of my thesis, however, blessed with the UNESCO data and other internet sources, somehow, I managed to collect spatial and some attributes data. Also, I would like to prepare a brief history and contemporary scenario of these endangered languages soon if I get a chance to go deep inside these areas and interact with these people (it's a dangerous job too).

The analysis is based on internet data and soft data available from UNESCO, Centre for Endangered Language studies of Kerala, other authentic websites and journals. There is no field work done for the fulfilment of this thesis as it takes more time. As a cartographic student, it is my sole responsibility to make an aesthetic and more informative maps of endangered languages and therefore, I have used different mapping software for the same.

This paper contains different chapters. Each chapter is written in a different way. The style of the first chapter is a sort of questions and answers with depicting some tables and charts.

## Chapter 1: What are endangered languages?

There are different definitions given by different scholars for the language death. For example,

a) According to David Crystal, the phrase ‘language death’ sounds as stark and final as any other in which that word makes its unwelcome appearance. And it has similar implications and resonances. To say that a language is dead is like saying that a person is dead. It could be no other way – for languages have no existence without people. (*Reference: David Crystal, first published in 2000, Language death, page number 1, first paragraph, Cambridge press*)

b) A language is endangered when its speakers cease to use it, use it in fewer and fewer domains, use fewer of its registers and speaking styles, and/or stop passing it on to the next generation. (UNESCO) According to UNESCO, endangered languages are divided into different classes, such as the table below (Table 1).

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Speaker Population
Safe	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
Unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
Definitively endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
Severely endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
Critically endangered	1	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.
Extinct	0	There are no speakers.

Table:1. Degree of Endangerment

(Source: www1)

The Table 1 vitality of endangerment has been used by different agencies and endangered language institute across the country. So, I have chosen the same for my decree of standard for analysing if a language is critically endangered or not.

#### *How does Language become extinct?*

One reason is invasion and genocide. For example, European invaders exterminated natives of Australia and thus resulted extinction of certain tribal languages. However, language can be extinct due to under the pressure to integrate with a larger or stronger group. Sometimes, people try to learn foreign languages, say kalallisut a local language in Greenland is learned alongside Danish and English.

When we talk about the extinction of a language, there is a question come up that whether it is a sudden or gradual process? Well, the answer can be both. If there is no longer learned by children, then the language can be in a single generation. Some Yupik Eskimos in Alaska, where just 23 years ago all the children spoke Yupik, but, toady the youngest generation speak only English. Other example for slower process is Scots Gaelic was spoken on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, until the 1940s, but by the 1970s the language was no longer being learned by children.

#### *How many languages are endangered?*

In 1996, 6,703 separate languages were spoken, of these

- 1,000 were spoken in the Americas,
- 2,000 in Africa,
- 225 in Europe,
- 2,165 in Asia, and
- 1,320 in the Pacific including Australia (Figure 1).

Although, recent studies by the UN show that today, a third of the world's languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers left. Every two weeks a language dies with its last speaker, and 50 to 90 percent of them are predicted to disappear by the next century.

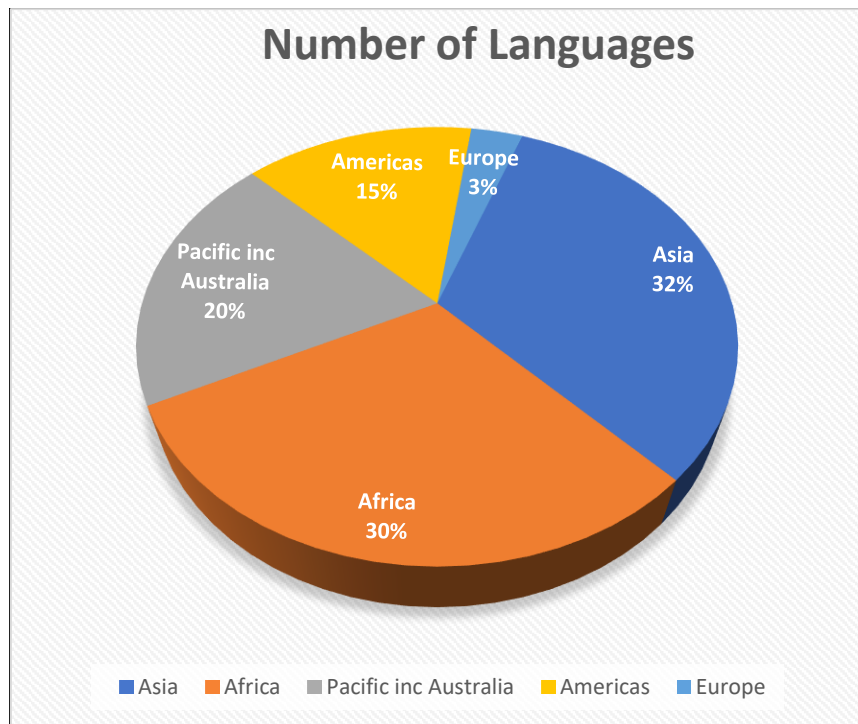


Figure 1: Pie diagram of the number of languages by continents (Source: www2)

### *Why did I choose Endangered Dravidian Language?*

The most convenient answer for this question is to save culture. Language is not only a medium of communication but also it tells a long historical and cultural background. Each language has its own cultural indication. So practically, if a language dies, it means dying of a long legacy culture and people too.

Here, I am researching about most critically endangered Dravidian languages. This language family is considered as the second largest language group in India and my mother tongue (Malayalam) is one among them. When history, traced back, most of the common languages were grounded with scheduled tribes people domain. But, nowadays, scheduled tribes' languages are at the edge of extinction. I want to find out what causes are more affecting for the negative impact of these languages.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology and data collection**

In this chapter, I discuss about the methodology, software, projection and data collection which I used for this thesis work.

For the first instance, I was thinking about making a map of endangered languages in India. When I went into deep about the topic, I realised that it is a big task and I could not accomplish it within the time limit. Then I analysed each data which I collected from UNESCO websites, and gradually I understood that endangered languages are divided into different categories. Namely, severely endangered, definitely endangered, critically endangered and extinct languages. Then I have chosen only the critically endangered languages in India. But again, there is a problem with the abundant amount of data: there are about 46 critically endangered languages in India. I understood that if I tried to make maps of these 46 languages, it would surely be a bad impression for my thesis. Then I thought about reducing the scope of the geographical location into south India, where most of these languages are derived from the Dravidian language family and my mother tongue is one among them. After that, I analysed all the available data sources for these eight critically endangered Dravidian languages. Since most of these languages are situated in remote areas, data availability is a big issue. However, I believed myself and I started to search and collect data. Well, somehow, I could collect relevant data from the internet and only from the internet.

Next step is to collect spatial data for my mapping work. For this task, I collected all types of shapefile from a website (source [www3](#)). As my laptop is my best labourer for this thesis work, I was able to install only ArcGIS 10.3 and obviously, I have chosen ArcGIS as my mapping software. Well, I know much more about Arc tools than other software – this is the reason why I have chosen ArcGIS as my prime tool. Also, I used MS excel for data comparison and making different diagrams and used paint software for additional sketching and colouring work for the finished maps and pictures. Well, I have used Global Mapper only for the spatial data conversion and configure projections. I exported shape files into .kml and GeoJSON files by using Global Mapper. This is done for the making of interactive maps of languages by setting up a basic website.

## Software

The main mapping software is ArcGIS version 10.5. It is an ideal software for doing all types of spatial mapping. The main reason of my choice on this software is because I know it's better than other tools.

Secondly, I used global mapper for doing some conversion of shapefile. So, these are the two software's which I used for the fulfilment of mapping in this thesis.

## Projection

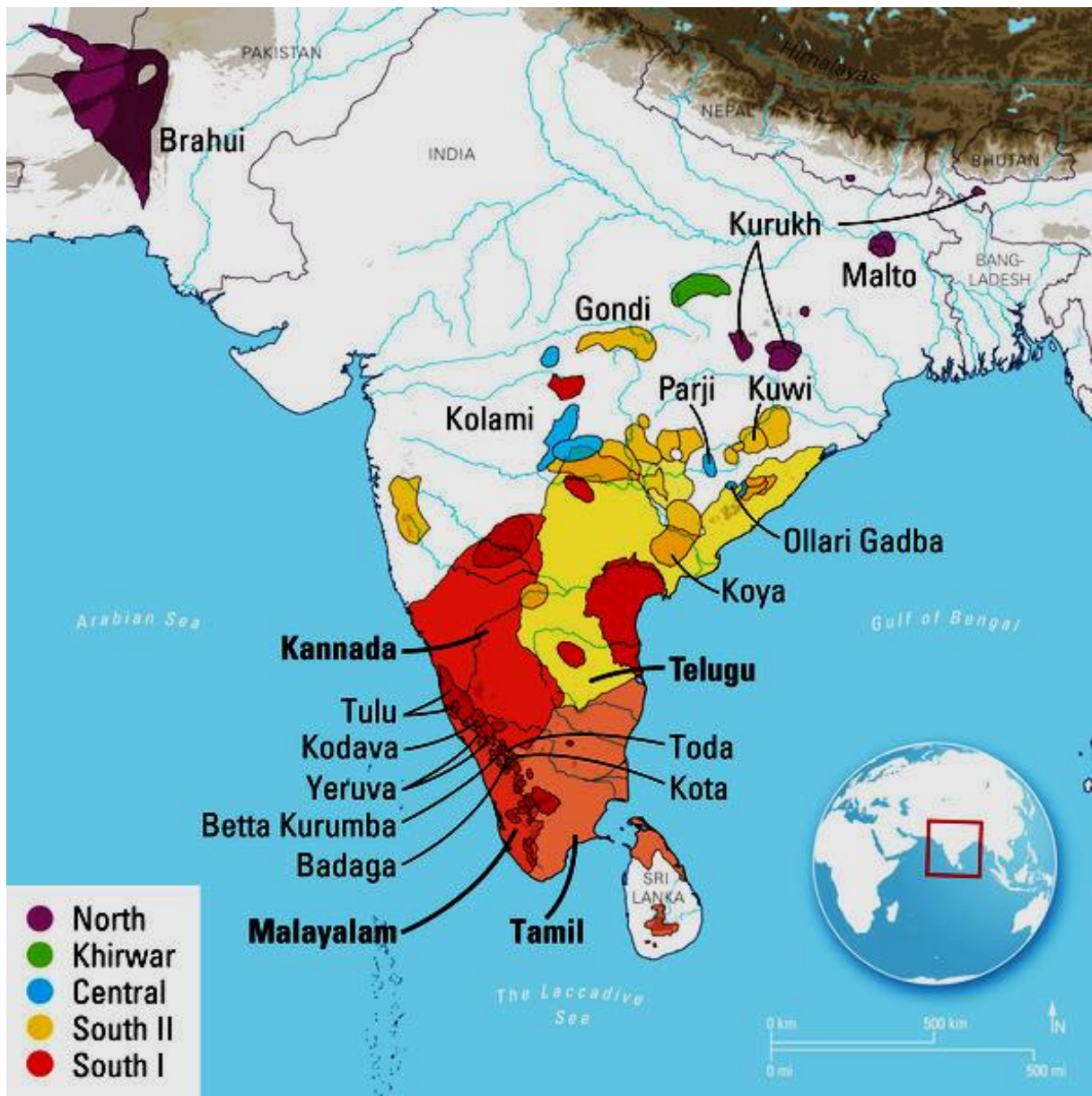
I was bit confused about the projection to be used in Indian prospective. Luckily, I got direct spatial data from an open source which includes projection details. Therefore, I used WGS 1984 Geographic co-ordinate system map projection with datum D -WGS-1984 and the prime meridian is Greenwich.

(Source: [www3](#))



### Chapter 3 : Dravidian Languages

Dravidian languages, family of some 70 languages spoken primarily in South Asia can be dated back to 4500 years ago. The Dravidian languages are spoken by more than 215 million people in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.



Map1. Dravidian language in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan  
(Source: www4)

The Dravidian languages are divided into South, South-Central, Central, and North groups; these groups are further organized into 24 subgroups. The four major literary

languages—Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada—are recognized by the constitution of India. They are also the official languages of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka (formerly Mysore), respectively.

The Dravidian languages, 153 in number, form the second major linguistic group of the country (24.47 per cent). Less than one per cent, 0.73 per cent, of the total population of the country speaks the languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman subfamily, including the lone language Khampti, which belongs to the Siamese Chinese subfamily of the Sino-Tibetan/TibetoChinese family. The number of Sino-Tibetan languages stood at 226.

(Source: www5)

The languages belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family of languages, 65 in number, accounted for a total number of 6.19 million speakers, and on top of it all, 530 were still recorded as unclassified languages.

In fact, South Asia has been recognized in the serious literature on historical linguistics as one entity, not only because of the movement and admixture of ethnic groups that we talked about, but also in terms of genetic gradation of Asian people, along-side the linguistic classifications, which will make the north-south division evident (ref: Menozzi, Piazza and Cavalli-Sforza History and Geography of Human Genes, Chapter 4).

It was the discovery of surprising similarities of structure and function that the South Asian languages have developed because of shared cultural space that has been vibrant and interactive over several millennia that prompted scholars like Murrey B. Emeneau to come up with the concepts like ‘India as a linguistic area’ (1958). This essential unity of divergent languages of India has made it possible to make Indian languages a very fertile ground for creative and critical minds.

## Chapter 4: Introduction to Critically Endangered Dravidian Languages

In this chapter, we discuss about eight most critically endangered Dravidian languages in India. Also, I made a map which shows all the eight different languages and their geographical distribution. As I already mentioned in the previous chapters, most of the endangered languages are spoken by scheduled tribal people of India. So, the word “scheduled tribe” might not be a famous term in internationally. Here, I am giving a simple definition of these people. *In India, scheduled tribes or scheduled tribal people refers an indigenous people officially regarded as socially disadvantaged.* These people are economically weak, and their way of life is considered as aboriginal or more primitive in nature. The living standard of these people is very low. Most of these people are living in huts or bamboo house in a remotely placed area or in a forest.

Below Table 2 shows the selected critically endangered languages for this thesis work.

Order	Name of Languages	Number of Speakers	Region/District	State	Latitude and Longitude
1	Bellari	1000	Kundupura(uduppi)	Karnataka	74.69 /13.71
2	Konda	10000	srikakulam	Andhra Pradesh	83.90/18.44
3	Konda	10000	vishakappattinam	Andhra Pradesh	82.98/17.85
4	Koraga	1582	kasargod	Kerala	75.00/12.73
5	Koraga	14794	uduppi	Karnataka	74.92/13.13
6	Kota	930	nilgiri	Tamil Nadu	76.34/11.44
7	Kurumba	24189	nilgiri	Tamil Nadu, Kerala	76.53/11.38
8	Manda	4000	kalhandi	Odisha	83.24/19.87
9	Ollari Gadaba	1000	koraput	Odisha	82.73/18.79
10	Ollari Gadaba	2000	vijayanagaram	Andhra Pradesh	83.21/18.60

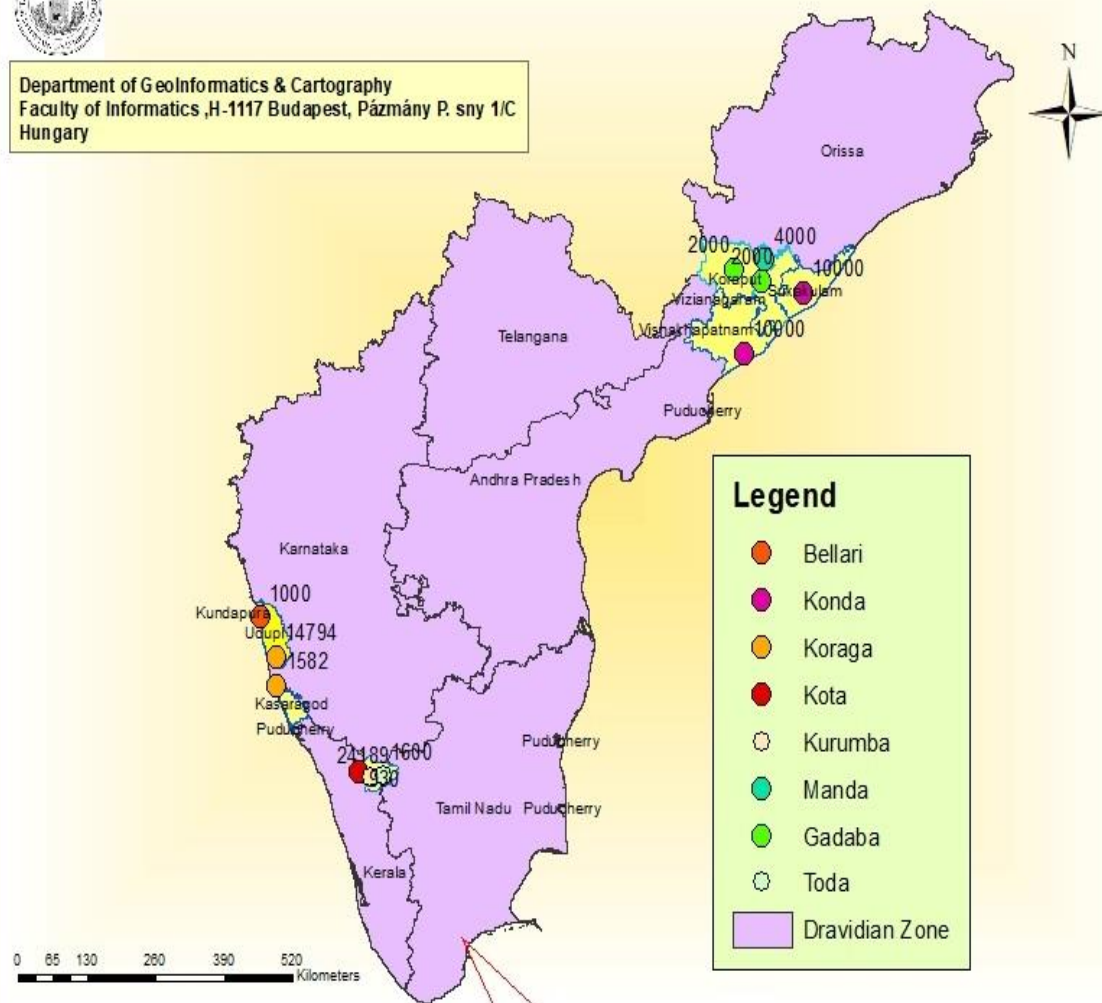
Table 2. Critically Endangered Dravidian Languages in South India

(Source: www 6)



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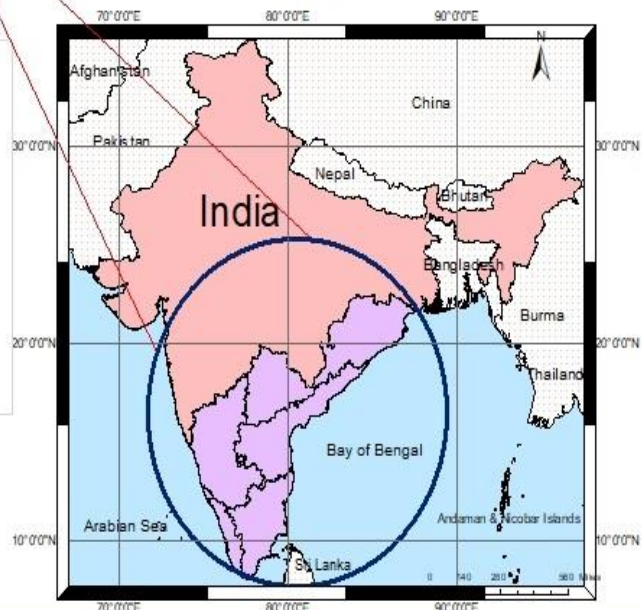
## Critically Endangered Languages in South India



Language comparison chart

Language	2001	2007	2011	2001	2011	2007	2000	2007
Toda	1600	1000	4000	930	24189	20000	4000	14000
Bellari								
Gadaba								
Kota								
Kurumba								
Konda								
Manda								
Koraga								

INSET



Map 2

(Compiled by author based on Table 2)

According to UNESCO, there are eight critically endangered languages in India. Such as *toda*, *bellari*, *ollari-gadaba*, *kota*, *kurumba*, *konda*, *manda* and *koraga* etc. These languages are spread over minority community location. These languages are found mostly in southern part of India. The major languages of southern India are derived from dravidian language family. The oldest languages in India is also from dravidian family. Say, tamil literature (Sangam tamil literature) (Tamil Nadu state) can be said as the one of the oldest literatures works in Asia. Other prominent major languages in south of India are malayalam of kerala state, kannada of karnataka state, telugu of andhra pradesh and telangana (newly formed state of India) states.

In the map 2 shows critically endangered dravidian languages in south India. As I already mentioned, the corner stone of these languages are from south India. There are eight critically endangered languages in the map. Each one has their own style of dialects and writing style. Moreover, these people are belonging to scheduled tribe. Scheduled tribal people in India are eligible for getting different types of reservation from the government of India and state governments. They treated as special groups of people in society due to certain reasons. Even for the development and enrichment of their culture, the government already set up different good policies for them. One of them is to secure and empower these scheduled tribal languages those are at the edge of dying. So, these languages later termed as most critical languages in dravidian family in India by UNESCO.

This map shows geographical distribution of each critically endangered languages in South of India. Some of three languages are sparsely distributed in the south eastern part of the country. Look at the languages situated in the states of odisha and andhra pradesh namely, *ollari-gadaba*, *manda* and *konda* are situated in the districts of koraput, vishakhapatnam, kalahandi, koraput and srikakulam. It is interesting that all these languages are spread out in one radius of hardly 20 to 50 kilometres difference. And there are no other dravidian critical languages within 3000 km around it. Now, look at the down south of the map, there are several critically endangered languages spread in the states of kerala, tamil nadu and karnataka. In kerala we have only two languages, mainly *Koraga* in Kasaragod district and some *kurumba* languages spread out from Nilgiris hills of tamil nadu state. Languages of *bellari* and *koraga* can see in udupi district of karnataka. Other three languages are closely situated in the Nilgiris hills of tamil nadu state. These languages are *toda*, *kota* and *kurumba*.

Next chapter onwards, we will discuss about each language separately in different maps. The description of each language includes introduction, culture, society, reference and pictures etc.



## Chapter 5: Detail study of selected Dravidian languages

### 1)Toda Language

Toda language is a scheduled tribal language and it belongs to dravidian language family. It is spread around Nilgiris hills in tamil nadu state of India. According to the 2001 census the literacy rate was about 66% to 77%. The total population is about 1560. These people live in a forest and mountainous area of Nilgiris. The geographical area of this language is very shredded and small. Majority of these people belong to Hindu religion. This language is considered as one of the oldest languages and there was no clear-cut idea about the origin of this language. Most of the older generation was buffalo herders. In India, toda language comes under scheduled tribal language and therefore the spoken people are eligible to get some special reservation from the state and central government.

#### *Culture and Society*

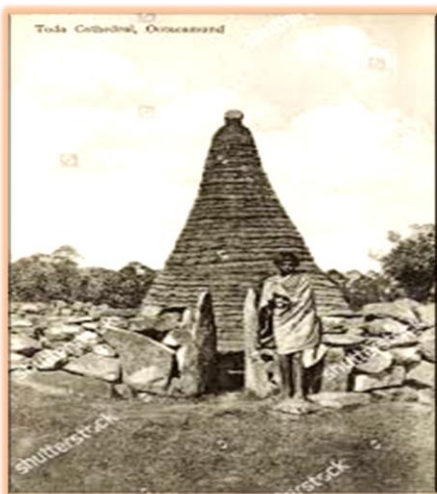


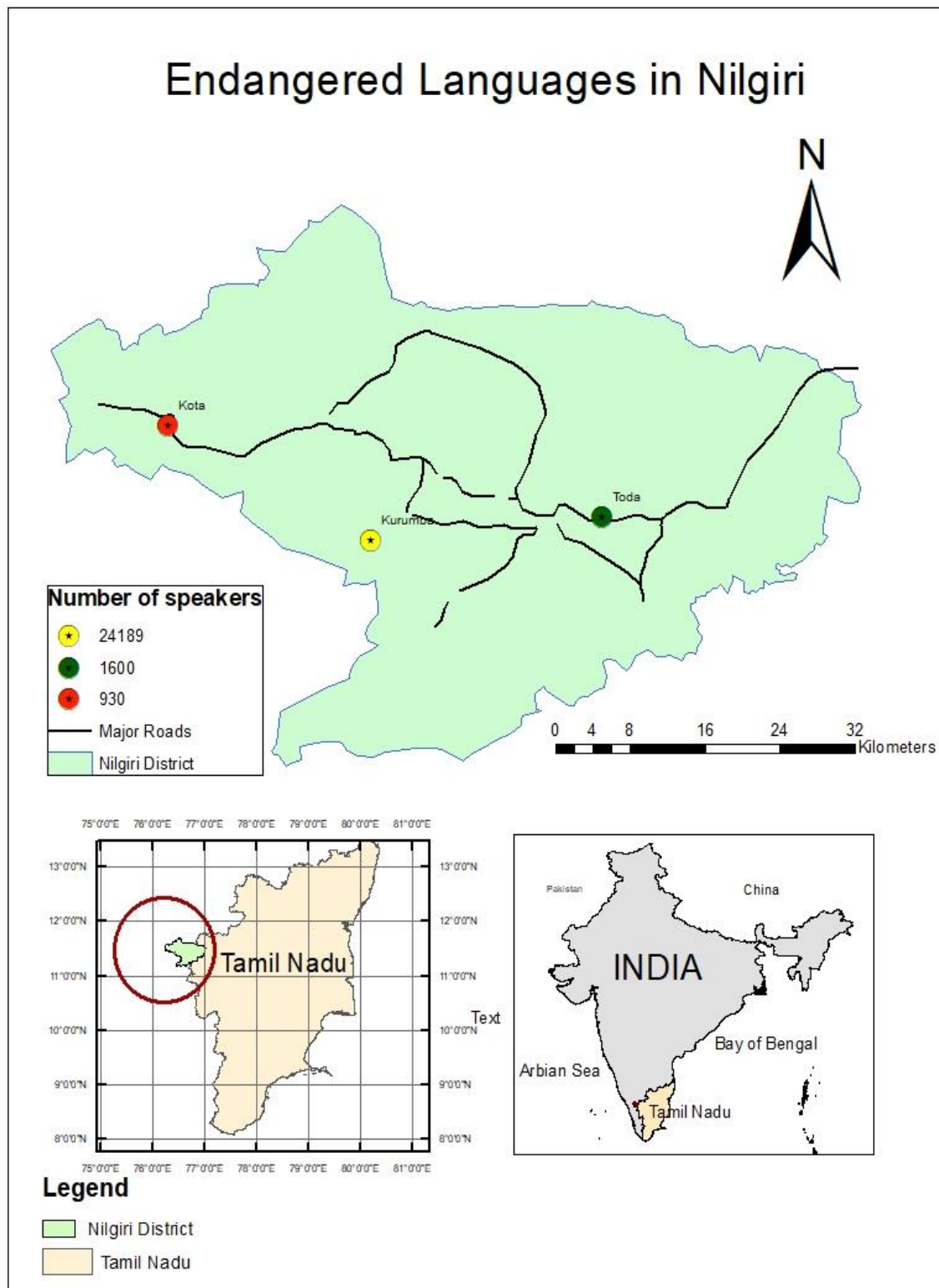
Figure 1: Toda temple (source: www7)



Figure 2 : Toda huts (source:www8)

Toda old people believe that this is scared place because the first God came here to meet. Before men created, there were so many Gods and they met here. About 20 years back everyone had 30 to 50 buffalo, so they did not worry about anything else to survive. Sometimes, they called by their self as buffalo herds or buffalo man. If a man died in their community, they will kill 10 buffalos. Previously, no children went to schools from this community, but when the

government started to implement certain good policies in favour of them, the kids started to go to school education.



Map 3. Critically Endangered Languages in Nilgiris District, India (Source: Compiled by Akhil)

The people go to temples and pray as they believe in Hinduism. They use buffalos' milk for worship and its ghee's for lightening lamp in temple. Women's do embroidery to earn money. Women are not allowed to enter the temple.

Time has gone away, and the younger generations of Toda community do not interest in buffalo herding as it doesn't give good money. So, they search for different jobs in outer cities. The old people worry about who will preserve our sacred culture and places after them? And this might be the crucial reason for the decline of this language.

Audios and video visuals of this language can be getting from the sources below.

(Audio) (source: [www9](#))

(Video) (source: [www10](#))

## 2) Kurumba Language

Kurumba language sometimes also called Kannada-Kurumba language. It is a south Indian Dravidian language mainly spoken in Nilgiris hills of Tamil Nadu. This language community has different dialects and it scattered around in the Nilgiris hills of three main states namely, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The different Kurumba culture groups live in the abruptly slope and dense forest areas of the Nilgiris. Till 20<sup>th</sup> century there was very minimal external interferences happened in these people. Figure 4 shows Mallu Kurumba people in front of their house.

### *Culture and Society*



Figure 4 *Mallu Kurumba People* (source: [www11](#))



As I mentioned above, this Kurumba community spread different states. *Mallu Kurumba* is a typical Kurumba community found in Wayanad district of Kerala state. These people well known for hunting and bird catching jobs. Today, they have pretty good education and well organised society with average economy. Most of the people moving out to search jobs and the community scattered with native speakers.

Another Kurumba community is known as *cholanaika*. Cholanaika considered as the most primitive community in Kerala having less than 350 people native people be lived. These people found in eranadu, malappuram district of kerala state. They are food gatherers and practicing hunting and collecting forest goods. Being one among the rarest ‘‘food gatherers’’ community in India, they receive special attention from media and Tribal Welfare agencies of government of Kerala. Figure 5 shows some tribal people *Cholanaika Kurumba*.



Figure 5 : *Cholanaika Kurumba people* (source: [www11](http://www11))

Next kurumba community is *allu kurumba*. Around 800 allu kurumba speakers located on the southern border of Nilgiris. They are economically average section. They do hunt, herd and shifting cultivation. Socially, they are recognized as Patrilineal followers. They have unique exorcism and other way of religious beliefs. Figure 6 shows local people of allu Kurumba community.



Figure 6 : allu Kurumba (source: www11)

Last type of kurumba group is known as *jenu kurumba's*. About 1300 native speakers are living disperse in a small ground around the northern border of Nilgiris. These people mainly engaged into making products from forest, hunting, plantation labourers and some of them work to assist wildlife departments. They live 300 to 400 group of tribal people scattered over a wide area along the northern border hills of Nilgiris. This community following a predominant Kingship rule for political relations. Jenu community have a relational concept of dead and ancestors thought to live in the underworld. In figure 7, a researcher interacting with jenu Kurumba tribal people



Figure 7 (source: www11)

### 3)Kota Language

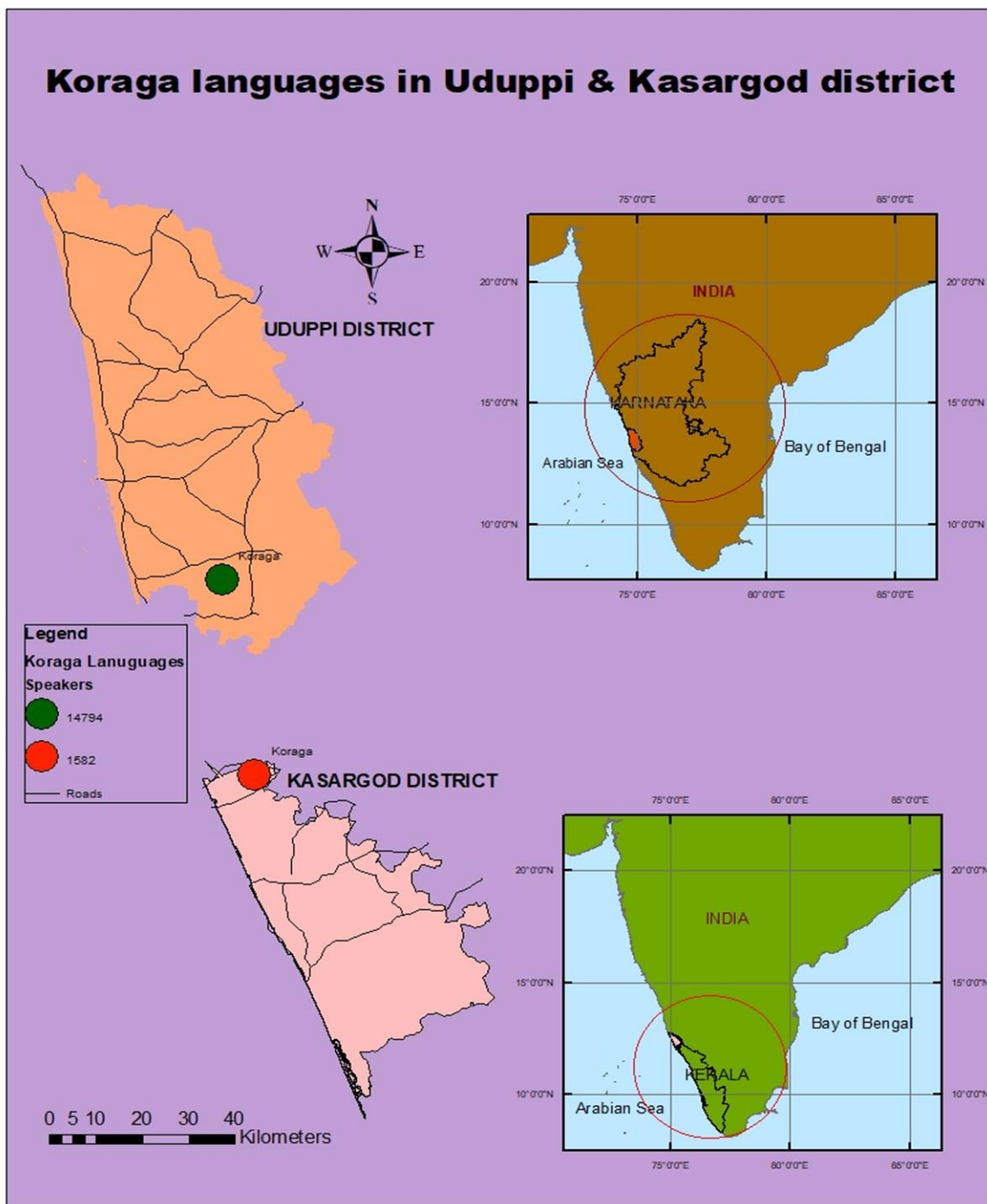
Kota language derived from dravidian language family. It formed through tamil-kannada language stream. Kota language mainly spoken in kottagiri area of nilgiris hills in tamil nadu. This language also has several relationships with Toda language as it situated in Nilgiris hill. The word '*KO*' means mountain; thus, it makes sense that kota means the land of mountains.

Only 900 native speakers are there in the world. The main decline for this is due to greater influence of neighbour languages such as tamil, malayalam etc. As they lived in dense forest area these people belong to scheduled tribal community and following hindu religion.

(Source : www12)

#### 4)Koraga Language

Koraga language is a south Indian Dravidian language. These languages mainly spoken in Kasaragod district of Kerala and Udupi district of Karnataka.



Map 4

Source: compiled by Author from table 2

Koraga language is a spoken language not writing language. But, very often they use kannada language script system for writing. According to 2007 census, there are fourteen thousand native speakers are there. It was earlier considered as a dialect of Tulu language (Tulu is a language spoken in south west coastal part of Karnataka state in India). The existence of these language is mainly noted by scholars back in 1880's.

#### Culture and Society

According to D.N Shankara Bhat, " Koragas are an aboriginal race. In their intercourse with other people they speak Tulu, but it is believed they speak a separate language at home quite unconnected with any other main language. No one, however, seems to have been able to learn the language up to this as they will not impart any knowledge of it to others or even talk it in their presence'.

Three distinct dialects of Koraga have been recorded so far, which are northern ( Mudu ), southern ( Onti) and central or eastern ( Tappu ). It is possible that additional dialects are prevalent, especially to further north, and a more detailed search may turn out to be rewarding. The above three dialects are quite distinct from one another and because of certain major sound changes and of heavy lexical and grammatical borrowings they retain very little of mutual intelligibility today.

*(D. N. Shankara Bhat, M.A., Ph.D , published on 1986 ,Koraga Language (page 1, first edition, Reader in Linguistics, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Poona POONA)*

Around 20000 native speakers are in kasargod and udupi districts of Kerala state and karnataka state respectively. Total number of speakers in kasragod district is 1582 speakers and in udupi is around 14794 native speakers. It is clearly showing in the *map 4*. Koragas made a bamboo chair in figure 7.

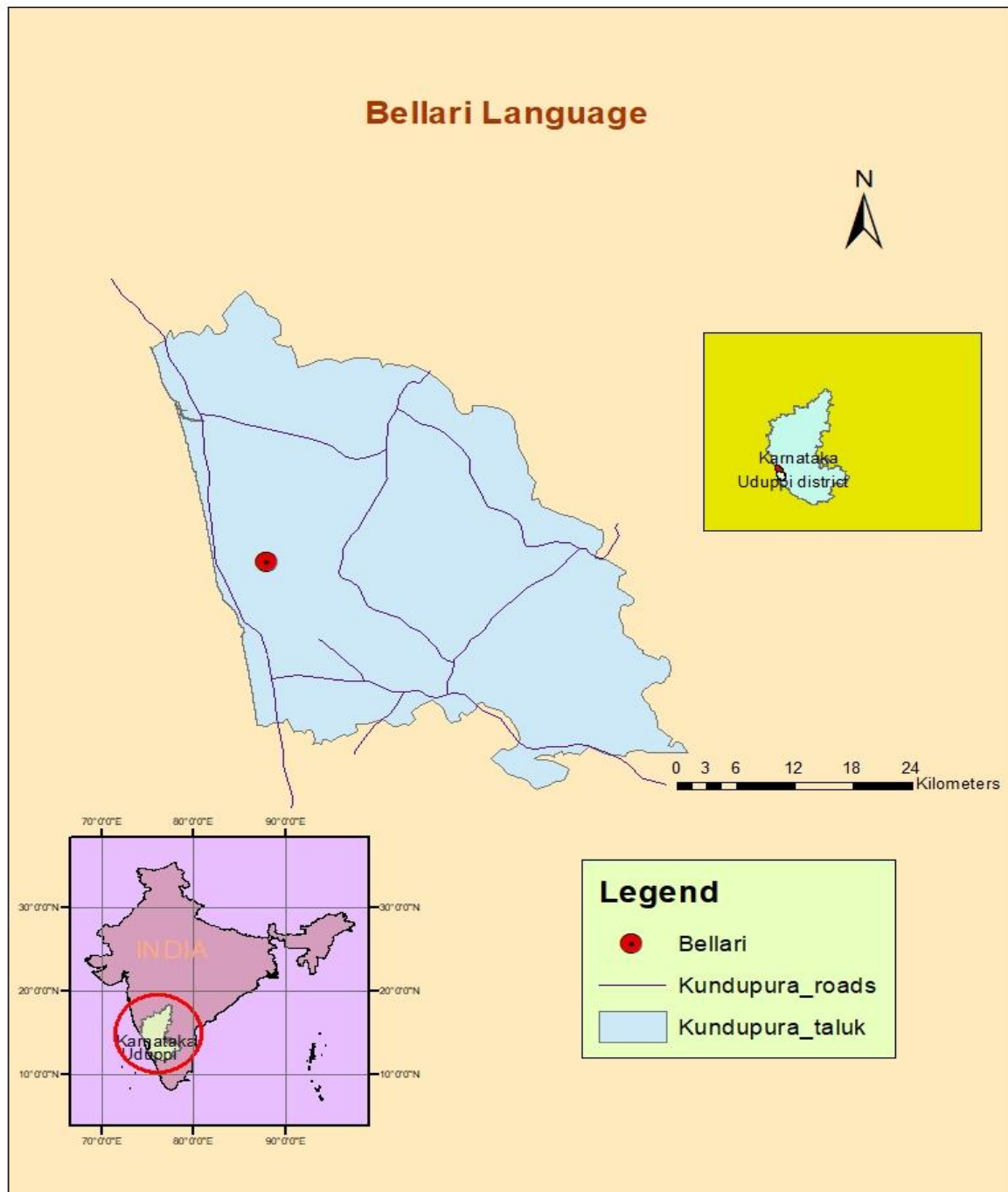


Picture 8 : Koragas

(Source: www13)

## 5) Bellari Language

In the map 4 shows Bellari language distribution. Bellari is a critically endangered language in karnataka state of India. It is widely spoken in kundupura taluk (taluk is an administrative division within the district) in udupi district of Karnataka state.



Map 5

References: compiled by author from table 2

According to the available resources, the total native speakers is about 1000 only. As it situated in karnataka state, this language has some similarity with kannada language (most spoken language in karnataka state) script.

## 6)Manda Language

In the map 5 shows geographical distribution of manda language. Manda is one of the critically endangered language spoken in odisha. The population is about 4000 found in the kalhandi district, odisha, India. The population is heavily concentrated in villages namely kathakura , darla , champichuva , ranipodar , Indira colony ,dakuta , chatrang ,moska ,duliguda ,pokra birikot etc. Manda language is spoken less than 4000 speakers and its member of south-central subgroup of Dravidian family. The community is called kondh community.

### Culture and People

Here, I am going to discuss about certain local words and their meanings in English.

Regional Script	Gloss	Transcribed word	Picture	Audio (refer the link below)
କାଢ଼ି	cow	kuḍi		<a href="http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/cow.mp3">http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/cow.mp3</a>
ଘେନି	goat	u:ḍe		<a href="http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/goat.mp3">http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/goat.mp3</a>
ନାକ	Nose	muge:l		<a href="http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/nose.mp3">http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/nose.mp3</a>



ନଦୀ	river	nagu:ɖ		<a href="http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/river.mp3">http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/river.mp3</a>
ଘର	house	ile:		<a href="http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/house.mp3">http://www.sppel.org/docimages/manda/sounds/house.mp3</a>

Table: 3 Word and Audios in Manda Languages (Source: www14)

The community people live in high lands and they are having fluency in their mother tongue and Odiya (largely spoken language in the state of odisha). The major religion of this community is hinduism. The kondh tribe were hunters and gradually changed into agro-workers, wage labourers and animal formation. Tuki is regarded as the mail festival in their community.

#### 7)Ollari Gadaba Language

Ollari gadaba is tribal language spoken in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. According to 2001 census the total native speakers are 4000 only. There are two section of Gadaba community such as Gutoba gadaba and Dravidian gadaba. The Dravidian gadaba found in the vijayanagara district of Andhra Pradesh and koraput district of Odisha. The total population is about 46000 according to 2001 census. This language is also known as ollar , ollar ,hallari , allar and hollar gadabas. Refer map 5 for geographical distribution this language.

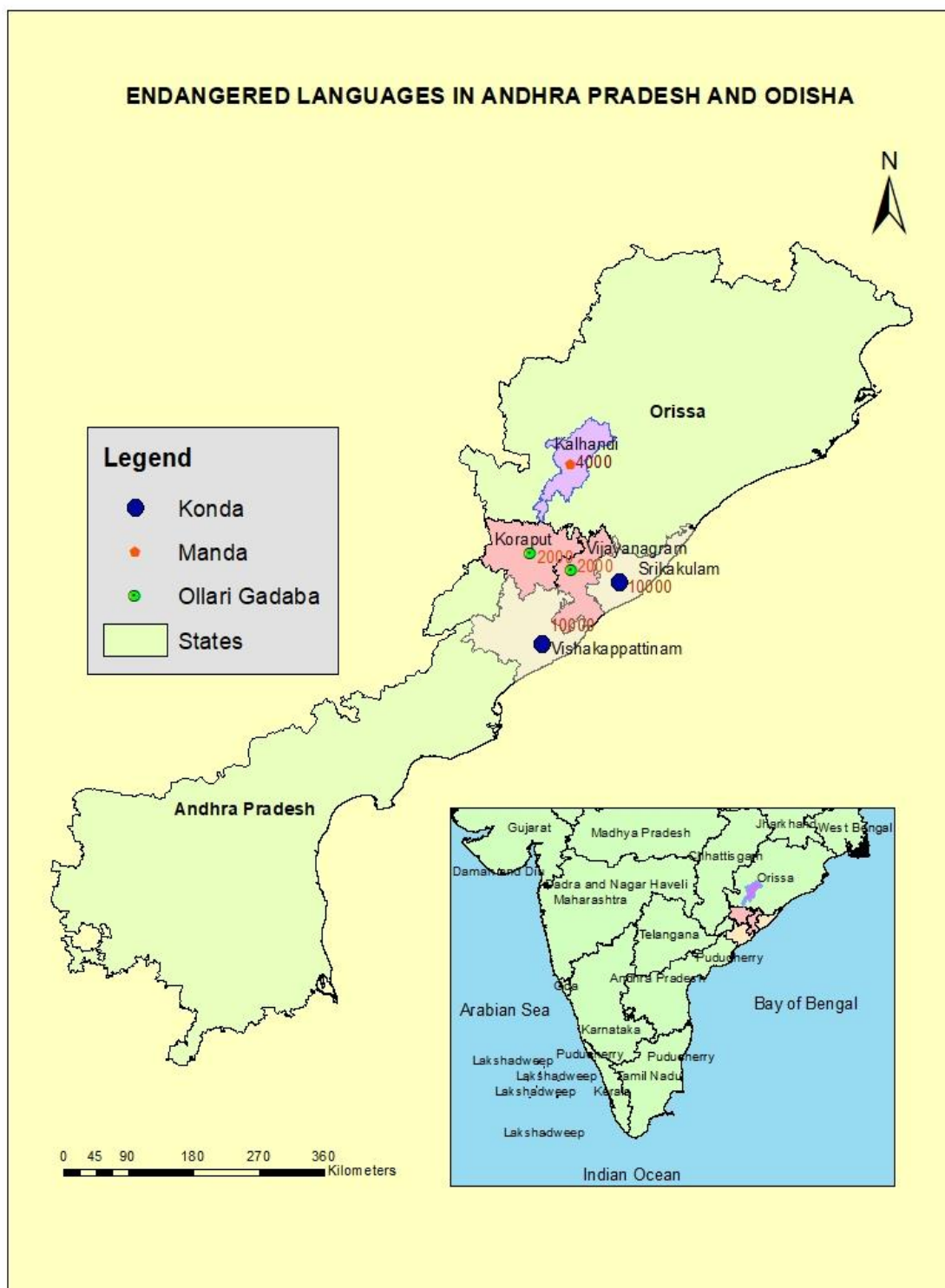
#### Culture and people

They are largely involved in agriculture activities. The main food is ‘Mandia’ which keep them away from starvation. The origin of ollari gadaba is unknown and it is believed that ollari derived from gadaba (gutoba gadaba) word ola means leaf. Ollar women previously used to wear leaf instead of clothes.

#### 8)Konda Language

Konda language is also a Dravidian language found in the state of Odisha, India. It is widely spread out in koraput district of odisha. The tribe name derived from the word ‘Konda’ which

means hill. According to 2001 census there are 20000 people are native speakers. Refer map 5 for the geographical distribution of this language.



Map 6

References: compiled by Author from table 2



## **Chapter 6: Measures to be taken for the protection of languages**

Step to be Taken for the Preservation of critical languages

*1. Language Documentation*

*2. Language Revitalization*

Language Documentation is an effort to prevent languages from becoming unknown. There are several ways to document the endangered languages. Among the major steps can be seen below.

### *Record the Data*

The first and easy step to preserve a language is recording the data. If the data is recorded it can be used for various language revitalization purposes to preserve the dying language.

### *Developing Primers*

Once the data is recorded, it can be used for various purposes like developing primers. According to the constitution (of India) every child should get primary education in his/her mother tongue which is not happening at all. With the recorded data, if primers are developed and teachers are appointed by giving training, it will be great step from the government side in preserving the endangered languages.

### *Developing Dictionaries*

Developing dictionaries need some amount of funding from various institutions which has become very hard to get funding in the present days. With recent technology and tools like FLEx developed by Summer Institute of linguistics can be used in making the phonemic, bilingual dictionaries etc. with less effort and minimum of training.

### *Developing the Scripts*

Many people in India think that new scripts should be developed for the tribal endangered languages. It is not correct because tribal people are bilinguals in most of the cases. Bilingualism among tribal is very common and in some places, they are multi-lingual's too (Ramaiah & Reddy 2005, vol. VI, p-424). So, we can develop the script in one of the dominant languages of that area. For example, Devanagari and Roman scripts are used for many languages. If a script is developed, it will be a significant step in preserving the language. These

scripts should be developed in consultation with the respective communities. So that the communities can proudly say that they too have the scripts. Once the script is developed, the community can be encouraged to document the vast knowledge which will bring the recognition to the society (Mohanty, 2013:63).

*Include in local school syllabus*

It would so helpful if the language is added in the school syllabus. At least up to middle school standard. Students keep trying to speak their own mother tongue. It will facilitate their skills in mother tongue and usability.

*Make it official in local government or administrative departments.*

If the local government initiate to give information in these critical languages, then it will be a great idea to uplift the usage and safeguarding of these languages.

## Chapter 7: Review of Literature

### 1. Endangered Languages (Crisis)

Reports of the world's languages in crisis are now commonplace. It is not uncommon in media reports to see "language obituaries" – where the death of a language is reported with the death of its last speaker. Some cases are well known. Ubykh, a WestCaucasian language, was reported to have "died at daybreak, Oct. 8, 1992" when its last speaker, Tefik Eşenç, passed away (Crystal 2000: 2). Eyak of Alaska lost its last speaker when Marie Smith Jones died at the age of 89 on January 21, 2008, reported widely in the media. Recent examples include Klallam, a Salishan language, whose last speaker, Hazel Sampson, died at the age of 103 on Tuesday, Feb 4, 2014, also widely reported. Such news items put a human face on the problem of language endangerment; they also spread alarm about the crisis of language endangerment. However, most languages that lose their last speaker are not reported in widely circulated obituaries. In this article we report, rather, the various facets of language endangerment that scholars and language groups

The endangered languages crisis is believed by many to be one of the most serious issues facing humanity today, posing moral, practical, and scientific issues of enormous proportions. An endangered language is one at risk of extinction, or more precisely, one predicted to cease to be the means of human communication for a specific cultural or social group. When speakers of a language shift to another language and give up their own, great amounts of knowledge are lost. A large number of the world's languages are endangered, and it is in this sense that humanity faces a crisis.

Source: Endangered Languages (in press) Lyle Campbell, Chris Rogers (In press. Endangered Languages. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics, ed. by Mark Aronoff [<http://linguistics.oxfordre.com/>]. (Christopher Rogers and Lyle Campbell.)

### 2. Language vitality and endangerment by UNESCO

Language diversity is essential to the human heritage. Each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The loss of any language is thus a loss for all humanity. Though approximately six thousand languages still exist, many are under threat. There is an imperative need for language documentation, new policy initiatives, and new materials to enhance the vitality of these languages. The cooperative efforts of language communities, language professionals, NGOs and governments will be indispensable in countering this threat.

There is a pressing need to build support for language communities in their efforts to establish meaningful new roles for their endangered languages.

A language is endangered, when it is on a path toward extinction. Without adequate documentation, a language that is extinct can never be revived. A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children. About 97% of the world's people speak about 4% of the world's languages; and conversely, about 96% of the world's languages are spoken by about 3% of the world's people (Bernard 1996: 142). Most of the world's language heterogeneity, then, is under the stewardship of a very small number of people. Even languages with many thousands of speakers are no longer being acquired by children; at least 50% of the world's more than six thousand languages are losing speakers. We estimate that, in most world regions, about 90% of the languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century. Language endangerment may be the result of external forces such as military, economic, religious, cultural, or educational subjugation, or it may be caused by internal forces, such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. Many indigenous peoples, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining. They abandon their languages and cultures in hopes of overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate to the global marketplace. The extinction of each language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world. Thus, the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future. Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory, and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystems. Above all, speakers of these languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard 1992, Hale 1998).

UNESCO has developed programs aimed at promoting languages as instruments of education and culture, and as significant means through which to participate in national life" (Noriko Aikawa, 2001: 13). Among these programs was the project; *The Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing*. The purpose of that project was:

- 1.to systematically gather information on endangered languages (including their status and the degree of urgency for undertaking research);
- 2.to strengthen research and the collection of materials relating to endangered languages for which little or no such activities have been undertaken to date, and that belong to a specific category such as language isolates, languages of special interest for typological and historical-comparative linguistics, and are in imminent danger of extinction;
- 3.to undertake activities aiming to establish a world-wide project committee and a network of regional centres as focal points for large areas on the basis of existing contacts; and
- 4.to encourage publication of materials and the results of studies on endangered languages.

Source:

[https://www.academia.edu/38722031/Language\\_Vitality\\_and\\_Endangerment\\_UNESCO\\_Ad\\_Hoc\\_Expert\\_Group\\_on\\_Endangered\\_Languages\\_Document\\_submitted\\_to\\_the\\_International\\_Expert\\_Meeting\\_on\\_UNESCO\\_Programme\\_Safeguarding\\_of\\_Endangered\\_Languages?email\\_work\\_card=interaction\\_paper](https://www.academia.edu/38722031/Language_Vitality_and_Endangerment_UNESCO_Ad_Hoc_Expert_Group_on_Endangered_Languages_Document_submitted_to_the_International_Expert_Meeting_on_UNESCO_Programme_Safeguarding_of_Endangered_Languages?email_work_card=interaction_paper)

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### 3. Mapping language and land with the Nunaliit Atlas Framework: Past, present and future.

The Nunaliit Atlas Framework is a collaborative mapping platform designed for creating interactive online atlases following the principles of cybercartography. This paper provides an overview of the application of Nunaliit to mapping language and land, showing the evolution of cybercartographic language atlases from mapping Indigenous place names on topographic maps to displaying abstract language relations using non-geographical visual forms. The languages mapped in these atlases include Gwich'in (an Athapaskan language), the language of Canadian Inuit, and the languages of Iran. We also discuss future Nunaliit language mapping initiatives, with a focus on an astronomical atlas by the Indigenous Pa Ipai and Koal people of Mexico. Consistent across all these atlases is a commitment to language documentation, the importance of presenting language in context, and the collaborative process of atlas creation.

Source:

[https://www.academia.edu/39230090/Mapping\\_language\\_and\\_land\\_with\\_the\\_Nunaliit\\_Atlas\\_Framework\\_Past\\_present\\_and\\_future?email\\_work\\_card=interaction\\_paper](https://www.academia.edu/39230090/Mapping_language_and_land_with_the_Nunaliit_Atlas_Framework_Past_present_and_future?email_work_card=interaction_paper)

#### 4. Endangerment of Dravidian Languages in India.

Based on number of speakers, Dravidian family of language continues the status of the third largest family of language in the world. The numbers of Dravidian language speakers are 214 million in South Asia and represent the 20.82 percent of Indian population. Standard literature recognized 26 languages as independent languages in the family. Based on number of speaker's Telugu is first in India and 14<sup>th</sup> in the world followed by Tamil. The recent article titled *Endangered language families* by D. H. Whalen and Gary F. Simons appeared in *Language* (Whalen 2012) states that Dravidian language family, in border sense *Dravidian linguistic stock* (the largest subgroups of related languages that are reconstructable) is safe from endangerment based on the fact that many of the languages in this stock has the speakers more than 3, 40,000. Following are the list of Dravidian languages listed by WALE (Moseley 2010) with different degree of endangerment.

This preliminary study -based on the relatively less reliable secondary materials- found that 90 percent of the tribal languages in Kerala are undergone different degree of endangerment. Irula, Kanikkar and Kurichya are the only relatively safe languages. The observed increase of language endangerment among the tribal speech of Kerala could be more or less attributed to the non-availability of literary materials for language education in their mother tongue and their active assimilation towards dominant language and culture. The evidence from this study suggests that the status of tribal languages in Kerala is critical. Therefore, a detailed study based on primary data and extensive field work is an imperative to assess the critical situation which might have been overrepresented or underrepresented by this study.

Source: Status of Dravidian Tribal Languages. (Author: Dr.S.Prema, University of Kerala)

#### 5. The Problem of Endangered Languages: What does language extinction mean for a community – and for the rest of us.

Language endangerment, a global phenomenon, is accelerating and 90 percent of the world's languages are about to disappear in 21<sup>st</sup> century, leading to the loss of human intellectual and cultural diversity. When Europe colonized the New World and the South, an enormous body of cultural and intellectual wealth of indigenous people was lost completely and it was appreciable only through the language that disappeared with it (Hale, 1998). This research deals with the problem of language loss in the world and seeks answer to critical questions: What does language extinction mean for humankind? What is to be done to save languages from loss? Some scholars suggest that linguists should find solutions whereas others disagree that it is

linguists' responsibility to maintain and preserve the currently disappearing languages. Moreover, the research indicates that not only language specialists are participating in this process but also general public, particularly members of the communities whose languages are declining, are contributing their efforts in saving languages from loss.

According to Krauss '2009', there are three categories of language: moribund, endangered, and safe languages. Even safe languages are under the crisis of becoming extinct languages because /soon will be might cause to cease to be learned by children during the next century. For example, the case of Breton, the number of a million speakers is likely to go down to very few children speakers. Another "Navajo" language, with 100,000 speakers, has uncertain future. Languages are regarded as moribund when they are no longer being learned by children as mother tongues, and such moribund languages are already doomed to extinction (Krauss, 2009). Krauss (2009) in his article assures linguists about the importance of language preservation not only for the future of science, but also for the future of the community.

Source:

[https://www.academia.edu/28133582/The\\_Problem\\_of\\_Endangered\\_Languages\\_What\\_does\\_language\\_extinction\\_mean\\_for\\_a\\_community\\_and\\_for\\_the\\_rest\\_of\\_us?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/28133582/The_Problem_of_Endangered_Languages_What_does_language_extinction_mean_for_a_community_and_for_the_rest_of_us?email_work_card=title)

## 6. Language Endangerment in European Secondary Schools: Challenges and Perspectives.

According to Radosław Wójtowicz , Languages, whether foreign languages or mother tongues, constitute a vital part of everyday school life in Europe. Quality teaching and effective learning of foreign languages, especially English as the lingua franca of today, is of importance to students, teachers, and parents. Most languages taught at European schools (German, Russian or Spanish, to name just a few) can be found among the 20 world's biggest languages, used by dozens of millions of speakers in multiple domains and functioning as idioms of wider international currency. These languages, however, constitute only a small percentage of the total of 7,105 languages currently spoken on our planet (cf. Lewis et al. 2013 [8]). Language professionals rejoice in the linguistic diversity of the world, but estimates concerning its future range are alarming: every other language presently spoken is in danger of disappearing in less than one hundred years (Krauss 1992 [7]). Documenting dying languages and collaborating with speech communities who wish to revitalise their languages make, therefore, top tasks on

the to-do lists of contemporary linguists (see e.g. Gippert et al. 2006 [4] and Grenoble & Whaley 2006 [5] for practical introductions to these topics).

Between November 2011 and January 2014, school curricula in Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland were examined and possibilities of introducing topics connected with language endangerment sought for. Parallely to conducting the curriculum investigation, linguists met 16-17-year-old students and their teachers at secondary schools and assessed their needs and awareness of linguistic issues by conducting semi-structured interviews. Following the assessment stage, multimedia-supported educational materials were created and tested in classrooms. In the course of the research, over twenty schools in the four partner countries were visited. Not surprisingly, endangered languages as such are not a topic of focus in secondary school curricula. However, in each country certain school subjects include topics which could be covered with the use of materials on language endangerment.

Source:

[https://www.academia.edu/7286458/Language\\_Endangerment\\_in\\_European\\_Secondary\\_Schools\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Perspectives](https://www.academia.edu/7286458/Language_Endangerment_in_European_Secondary_Schools_Challenges_and_Perspectives)



## **Summary and Conclusion**

Generally speaking, identity of any person depends his /her mother tongue. Well, in this scenario there are some social community facing an imminent loss of their identity due to the extinction of languages. India, the largest democratic republic and second most populated country in the world. There is no national language for India as the country respects every culture in equal importance. But, there more than 1000s of languages are dying in India according to UNESCO reports. In this thesis I analysed eight unique language's which are possessing critically endangerment. Some of them have only 1000 native speakers or less than of it. I wonder why it is happening around the world. I brought some analysis and possible solution to protect those languages. The very first objective of this thesis is to identify the geographical distribution of critically endangered Dravidian languages in India. After analysing, I found the most important reason for the extinction of these languages is modernisation of culture. There are other factors adversely affecting for the same, such as migration, unemployment, better education and lack of infrastructure availability. Most of these languages are situated in very deep remoted forest areas where people live within the nature and no contact with outer world. This makes sense, that why those people considered as tribal and no attention from government agencies to uplift development programmes for nourishing their culture, language and identity. It is so ambiguous that government policies are not helping to prevent the shutting down of those languages.

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## DECLARATION

I, undersigned *AKHIL VALAYAMKULANGARA SASI* (NEPTUN CODE: *ROK11K*), declare that the present master's thesis is my original intellectual product in full and that I have not submitted any part or the whole of this work to any other institution. Permissions related to the use of copyrighted sources in this work are attached.

I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to the publication of the accepted master's thesis in pdf form on the website of the Department of Cartography and Geoinformatics.

Budapest, *16, December 2019*

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*(signature of the student)*