

মমতা ব্যানার্জী  
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ممتا بنرجی

Mamata Banerjee

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মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ  
मुख्यमंत्री, पश्चिम बंगाल  
وزیر اعلیٰ مغربی بنگال

CHIEF MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

January 14, 2024

Respected Prime Minister,

At the outset, I convey to you my best wishes for a very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

I take this opportunity to present before you a summary (kindly see enclosure) of a scholarly work undertaken by us in 4 volumes, which dates the origin of 'Bangla'/Bengali language to the 3rd-4th BCE. In sum, the research shows that our language is a classical language with roots in antiquity, and we seek its recognition as such. Hence this letter.

Bengali, apart from being the national language of a country, an official language of our State and the 2nd most spoken language in India, is also the 7th most spoken language in the world. The Bengali people have a rich heritage and culture dating back to pre-historic times. There had always been claims to the antiquity of the Bengali language, but concrete research was not present to scientifically substantiate the claim. Now, I am happy to present concrete evidence-based research to prove that Bengali as a language existed, even in writing, as early as 3rd-4th BCE. I am sure that you would appreciate this scholarly work and ensure that our language gets its due recognition accordingly.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, vide its Notification no. IV-14014/7/2004-NI-II dated 12/10/2004 (to be read with corrigendum dated 29/10/2004) enumerated 4 criteria to classify any language as a classical language. Our research document (being sent to MHA separately) has been framed in the prism set by those criteria.

The Government of India has already officially recognized six languages as having such classical status: Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Telugu and Kannada (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014). While presenting the research papers establishing the antiquity of the Bengali language for your kind perusal, I will very briefly state the substance of our contention and submit how Bengali eminently qualifies to be classified as a Classical Language by the Ministry of Home Affairs. MHA may study our 4-volume documentation to appreciate the validity of our claim.

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Briefly, the case for Bengali's classical status is supported by its rich historical evolution encompassing both oral and written traditions. Evidence from archaeological findings, inscriptions, references in ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts, and a substantial body of pre-seventh-century Bengali literature underpins its classical heritage. Moreover, concrete proof of written Bengali dating back to the 3rd-4th century BCE further testifies its ancient origins and development, aligning it with the criteria established for recognizing Classical Languages in India. Our research shows that Bengali retains its fundamental syntactic structure, as well as its distinct morphological and phonological patterns, throughout its course of evolution at least from 3rd BCE.

In the light of the above and in consideration of the fact that 6 Indian languages have already been notified as Classical Languages, I would be grateful if you kindly issue necessary instructions to the Ministry of Home Affairs so that the claim of Bengali language as a Classical Language is accepted at the earliest.

With regards

Yours sincerely,

  
(Mamata Banerjee)

Shri Narendra Modi  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India  
South Block  
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New Delhi-110011