

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
HOME AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4894

ANSWERED ON:23.05.2006

RECOGNITION OF CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

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**Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the Government has decided to create a new category of languages as classical language;
- (b) if so, the criterion adopted by the Government for the recognition of Classical Language;
- (c) the names of the Languages which are recognized as classical languages as on date;
- (d) whether the Government has made any changes to the criteria adopted for selection of classical language after recognizing some languages;
- (e) if so, the details and the reasons therefor;
- (f) whether the Government has received any request from States for recognizing of languages as classical languages during each of the last three years; and
- (g) if so, the details thereof State-wise and the action taken thereon?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL)

(a) & (b): The Government created a new category of languages as `Classical Language` and the following criteria have been laid down for according classical status to a language:-

- (i) High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years.
- (ii) A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
- (iii) The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community.
- (iv) The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

(c): Tamil and Sanskrit have so far been notified as Classical Languages.

(d): Yes, Sir.

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(e): The Government amended part

(i) of the criteria i.e. High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a thousand years to read as `High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years.` This amendment was made as an important shared feature of languages like Sanskrit, Latin and Greek etc. that are universally recognized as Classical Languages is that they have early texts/recorded history dating back to 1500-2000 years.

(f) & (g): the requests for recognizing the following languages as Classical Languages were received during the last three years i.e. 2003, 2004 and 2005:-

Year	Name of Language	Name of State
2003	Tamil	Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry
2004	Tamil	Kannada
		Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand
		Karnataka
2005	Kannada	Karnataka

Such proposals are placed before the Committee of Linguistic Experts constituted by the Government for consideration.