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# Santhali Language & Ol Chiki Script

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**Why in news:** The **President of India** highlighted the role of **language and literature in social cohesion** during the **centenary celebrations of the Ol Chiki script and Santali Language Day**, underscoring the cultural significance of Santhali.

## About Santhali Language

o**Santhali** is one of India's **oldest living tribal languages**, spoken primarily by the **Santhal tribe**.

oIt is recognised under the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**.



## Origin & Linguistic Family

Belongs to the **Munda branch** of the **Austroasiatic language family**.

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Linguistically distinct from **Indo-European** and **Dravidian** languages.

Historically transmitted through **oral traditions**—songs, folklore, myths, and rituals.

## Ol Chiki Script

**Developed in: 1925**

**Creator: Pandit Raghunath Murmu**

### Significance:

- o Provided Santhali with a **distinct written script**, strengthening linguistic identity.

- o Designed as a **phonetic and scientific script**, accurately capturing Santhali sounds.

- o Replaced earlier dependence on borrowed scripts (Bengali, Devanagari, Odia).

### Current Status

**1 Constitutional recognition:** Included in the **Eighth Schedule** through the **92nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003**.

**2 Speakers:** About **7 million** speakers in India.

**3 Geographical spread:** Mainly in **Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar**; also spoken in **Nepal and Bangladesh**.

### Key Features

**1 Distinct script:** Ol Chiki, unique among tribal languages.

**2 Austroasiatic traits:**

- o Agglutinative structure

- o Tonal elements

- o Extensive use of suffixes

**3 Rich oral heritage:** Folk songs, myths, storytelling reflecting Santhal history, ecology, and social life.

**4 Cultural identity:** Language and script serve as symbols of **tribal dignity, unity, and continuity**.