

Original Article

Language Shift and Death Among Indigenous Dialects in India: Causes and Consequences

Devadharshini G¹, Kishalini C²

^{1,2} UG Scholar Holy Cross College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

¹ddganapathy01@gmail.com, ²shalinishaluma1812@gmail.com

Received Date: 14 November 2024

Revised Date: 17 December 2024

Accepted Date: 13 January 2025

Abstract: Bilingual India with more than 1,600 languages and numerous native tongues spoken across its vast geographical and cultural landscape is one of most linguistically diverse countries in the world. These languages have unique cultural ceremonial roles, oral traditions, social structures and ecological knowledge developed over generations well beyond the role of communicative devices. However, many of India's mother tongues are quickly disappearing, and some have reached the stage of extinction. This phenomenon, often dubbed as language shift and death, has severe effects on the cultural, social and natural environment of the indigenous communities.

Language shift is the process through which speakers shift functional operations of a minority language to another. This trend is often a result of perceived socio-economic gains, educational policy, urbanization and the impact of globalization. This situation is exacerbated by factors such as disruption of intergenerational language acquisition, ecological dislocation and lack of state support (Andric) Systematic promotion This phenomenon has even been felt at the expense of competing indigenous languages. Unconscious promotion of linguistic diversity comes from political and educational systems that favor dominant languages at the expense of regional ones. Also, the omnipresence of technology and mass media in the dominant languages lessens the social and practical worth of indigenous dialects—especially among youth. Language death has serious repercussions. At a cultural level, when we lose a language, so too do we lose community identity, oral histories and collective memory. On the social level, language loss weakens the bond among people and disrupts communication between generations. On an ecological level, the indigenous languages contain invaluable knowledge regarding the biodiversity of their region, tradition cultivation practices and natural resource management strategies which if lost are unlikely to be recorded elsewhere. Case studies like Aka-Kora's extinction in Andaman Islands and Bihar's broken Bihari (e.g., Angika, Bajjika) illustrate socio-economic, political, environmental factors working together to accelerate one language death.

The urgent requirement of tools and methods to document, conserve and revive endangered languages in India is highlighted. Some strategies are focused on comprehensive linguistic documentation; additional purposes of these strategies are including the indigenous languages into the school curriculum, and community-based projects that help their speakers preserve and recover their language. India can safeguard its linguistic diversity and these unique cultural and ecological treasures for posterity with the adoption of a layered inclusive approach. The paper highlights that maintaining cultural identity, social cohesion and environmental knowledge are dependent on the survival of indigenous languages, which is not merely a language issue.

Keywords: Ecological Knowledge, Linguistic Variation, Cultural Identity, Language Maintenance, Revitalization Initiatives, Socioeconomic Dimension Indigenous Languages, Language Change And Death India.

I. INTRODUCTION

With over 1,600 languages spoken and numerous dialects used by several indigenous people, India has one of the most diverse and richest linguistic landscapes in the world. They are more than mere communication tools; they embody libraries of ecological knowledge, culture, identity and oral history accumulated over many centuries. Indigenous languages carry worldviews that reflect the lived experiences of communities that have existed within India's diverse natural surroundings for centuries. Each dialect (including local systems of knowledge, folklore, ritual and custom) is also an identifiable socio-cultural-ecological setting. Thus, the maintenance of these languages is not respective for linguistic reasons but it is necessary for maintaining environmental stewardship, community unity and cultural sovereignty.

Despite their significance many of India's indigenous languages are dying out at an alarming rate: it is the phenomenon known as "language shift," in its more extreme instances as "language death." Due to perceived social, educational, or commercial advantages of minority languages' speakers are more and more abandoning their first language towards majority such as Hindi and English or regional lingua franca. It is a process called language shift. When a language dies, that information wasps out from under it: words for smells and sounds and emotions, names for animals and types of



weather, expressions connected to particular localised ways of living. It is called linguistic death. For all its prodigious variety of languages, India remains no different to the disturbing pattern witnessed across the world – one language dies roughly every two weeks. In many of the nation's more than 200 indigenous languages, which are sometimes mutually incomprehensible, small tribal populations that speak them are among those most vulnerable, with only a handful of speakers remaining.

Several intertwined factors contribute to language shift and death among India's indigenous societies. Socioeconomic pressures weigh heavily, and proficiency in the dominant language itself is often seen as a key to more educational and career opportunities. Youngsters prefer to acquire those language or languages that have better social prestige and mobility, at the cost of belief in relative worthlessness of dialects spoken by them. Urban migration and globalization exacerbate the trend, as communities come into contact with dominant languages both in commerce, media, education and technology. Tongues of minority and tribal communities have in general been left out in the cold by political and educational institutions, which have favoured Hindi/English. This systemic marginalization is what prevents so many indigenous languages from accessing the resources, outlets and recognition that they need to survive. In addition to disrupting customary ways of life, environmental displacement caused by industrial development, natural calamities or climatic changes has led to the resettlement and linguistic acclimatization of communities.

When a language goes extinct it has far-reaching and diverse consequences. Language and identity are closely entwined at the cultural level, and its demise causes oral histories, rituals, customs and collective memory to become less relevant. Loss of language contributes toward social dispersion as it undermines communities and interrupts intergeneration's communication. In ecological contexts, indigenous languages often preserve knowledge on local biodiversity and traditional farming practices, medicinal plants, and sustainable use of resources. Accordingly, when these languages are lost, irreplaceable ecological and cultural knowledge also disappears. Case studies from across the country, including Aka-Kora in the Andaman Islands and Angika and Bajjika in Bihar show us how socio-economic, political-ecological factors combine to drive out languages. A coherent approach is required to solve the problems created by linguistic transition. Key strategies include promoting community-based conservation programs, supporting bilingual education including indigenous dialects, and documenting endangered languages by linguistic research. Such initiatives enable communities to maintain cultural identity and intergenerational continuity as well as to contribute to language diversity. In addition, more integrated approaches to the study of language preservation which is merged with broader issues of economy, society and environment are needed for sustainable frameworks in preserving India's pilal languages.

The essays also look at the reasons, and consequences for natural change and die-back of India's indigenous languages. The objective is to create awareness on the importance of language conservation at levels such as social, economic, and political in addition to cultural and environmental. Using case studies and theory formations, the study underscores that the protection of indigenous languages as components of India's cultural and ecological diversity is imperative. The study advocates broader policies to halt the erosion of linguistic heritage and secure the future of Indian indigenous knowledge systems that represent both human and environmental considerations in language decline.

II. CAUSES OF LANGUAGE SHIFT AND DEATH

A. Socio-Economic Factors

Economic force is one of the principal reasons why India's aboriginal tongues change and then die out. Mastery of dominant language/s such as Hindi-Urdu/Bengali and English is sometimes perceived as a prerequisite for access to education, occupational mobility and upward social mobility in many parts. Though their speakers possess rich ecological and cultural knowledge, indigenous languages may be seen by younger generations as barriers to upward mobility. Competent and intergenerational transmission get in short supply as household drive kids to use other more expansive languages from time they are toddlers. Urbanization has only accelerated that process. Rural migrants to the cities receive little or no encouragement with regard to maintaining their own linguistic identity--they are compelled by social, business and educational contacts to become fluent in languages closer to the cultural mainstream. There are few needs of indigenous languages in metropolitan life, which speeds their marginalization. And there is the peer pressure and societal aspiration that causes younger speakers to abandon them altogether, since regional dialects are held to be inferior, or in some cases simply backward.

These tensions are amplified by the globalized economy. Societies prioritize global languages, such as English, rather than regional or even tribal dialects, because of the demand for skilled workers who can speak these languages. The gap between economies of scale in the dominant language and cultural value placed on indigenous languages is such that market demand indirectly impacts whether any given language survives. Thus, the role of socioeconomic conditions in accelerating the disappearance and extinction processes among indigenous languages is through culturally conditioned perceptions and

decreasing vitality. They do this by communicating to future generations that indigenous languages are of little practical or material value.

B. Political and Educational Policies

The linguistic situation in India has its own special features, influenced by the governmental policies primarily in administration and education sectors. In the past, the government of India has focused on the role of Hindi and English as official languages and administrative languages, claiming they are required for social-political participation, educational attainment and economic development. This focus is problematic, because indigenous languages do not have institutional support and official status, and are to a certain extent inadvertently marginalised. Languages spoken by less than 10,000 people are considered to be endangered as they often do not have resources available for their maintenance (including a standardised curriculum and teaching materials), or teachers. Hindi or English being the medium of textbooks, exams and instruction, the formalization processes through education continues to reproduce linguistic hierarchies. It is common for Indigenous students to be brought up speaking languages that are not recognised at state-level as a mother tongue; they might eventually go to school and be denied fluency in local dialects through lack of access. Furthermore, the absence of indigenous languages in professional and higher education contributes to devaluation and stigmatization of such languages, motivating people to shift towards majority languages.

Popular languages are also backed up by political and linguistic policies that leave their mark on public debate, media and administrative communication. Minority languages have a difficult time receiving institutional support and visibility without legal status or policy-driven assistance. These political and educational components operate as concerted forces to undermine the linguistic fabric systemically, making indigenous languages vulnerable against brink of extinction and further marginalization. As such, formal recognition of the languages in policy and at school level as well as use in the classroom is important to ensure their ongoing sustainability.

C. Cultural Assimilation and Globalization

Globalization and acculturation have a tremendous influence on the existence of indigenous languages in India. There is mass media, technology and communication across borders — that's what makes it easier for dominant languages like Hindi and English to spread very far, often at the cost of local dialects." Large languages are suitable to online spaces, social media, film and TV for which they have enhanced social value and symbolic status. Indigenous languages, on the other hand, often remain regional or marginalised and struggle to play a more significant role in broader cultural and economic life. It is only the cultural organization of linguistic components that ensprozes their concordance with general norms of behaviour and which would maintain mobility in change there even after it was initiated. Influential mainstream cultural beliefs and social behaviors are influencing increasingly Indigenous communities, particularly the younger members. Many times it is necessary to speak widely-used languages in order to keep pace with modern economy, society and general mainstream life. When parents and other elders pressure children instead to use majority languages for social and academic success, this practice gradually diminishes the perpetuation of native dialects over generations (Fishman, 1979; Omoniyi and Fishman, 2006).

Furthermore, indigenous languages are perceived as less important or profitable following globalisation, which adds to the commercialization of culture. As global languages dominate our jobs in technology, commerce, and education, other ethnic language skills are blown off because they are not as useful. It also makes Indigenous languages that much more vulnerable to extinction, as they are threatened by the twin forces of globalization and assimilation, which work not only to narrow linguistic diversity but also to quash cultural identity, traditional knowledge and community cohesiveness.

D. Environmental Displacement

For India's indigenous peoples, the sort of environment-related problems, such as climate change, natural disasters and environmental destruction, are now significant contributors to language loss and death. Many rural and tribal communities depend directly on their surrounding ecosystem for subsistence, and in some of these languages rich ecological knowledge has been captured involving the understanding of biodiversity, forest science, agriculture practices and water management. When suddenly displaced by floods, droughts or cyclones and so on, these dialects constitute a lost continuity both in social patterns of life as well in linguistic sphere, thereby pushing those languages to extinction. Peoples' whose speech is Angika and Bajjikhha have had to move to towns or developed places (semiurations) in the states of Bihar, threatened as they are by frequent floods and droughts. For instance, traditional family structures and community networks — critical to passing down language and cultural customs to younger generations — are disrupted by displacement. Indigenous languages are further disempowered as displaced populations rely on regional lingua francas to find work, access services and relate in their new homes.

Furthermore, the forces of socio economic and educational along with environmental displacement intersect. The resolution that indigenous languages are not practicable is enhanced, for example, among (semi-)urban migrants because of their experience in social relations, the workplace and primary school with dominant languages. That eventually reduces the chances for everyday use and cultural expression and inherited learning. The combined effect together with loss of linguistic diversity is erosion of indigenous ecological knowledge embedded in those languages, which impacts on cultural heritage as well as the sustainable use and management of natural resources.

III. LOSS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Because language is the primary vehicle of handing customs, values and collective memory from one generation to the next, it's a critical gauge of cultural identity. "Language is a window on the indigenous world view ranging from social customs and taboos to rituals, folklore and social behavior—all deeply embedded in the local language," Arvind said. They bring with them the narratives of connected pasts, inherited experiences and unique perspectives. The cultural customs associated with a language are often in jeopardy when it dies out or diminishes. Proverbs, songs, rules of ceremony, oral literature and mythologies - that is to say; fundamental ingredients of group identity face the potential peril of being lost or misinterpreted. Language extinction sever the connection between the old and young also causing intergenerational discontinuity. Local dialects including idiomatic expressions, metaphorical expressions, and country-specific ideas all become extinct in younger generations. So cultural information is collapsed, while the dominant languages and related customs survive. Traditional identities sometimes get lost when communities adopt new cultural traditions related to the dominant language.

Social and psychological consequences People can lose their identity through not being able to relate to themselves culturally. Individuals might experience weaker group identification, lower self-esteem and increased alienation from their past. Furthermore, with fewer opportunities to preserve and communicate their unique cultural heritage when indigenous languages die out local culture is affected from artistic traditions through to cultural tourism and heritage preservation. It is, therefore, not just a communication issue but an imperative to maintain the resilient culture of India's innumerable indigenous languages.

A. Erosion of Ecological Knowledge

The traditional knowledge acquired through long-standing use of indigenous languages known to a community is not only group specific but also culturally rich. Knowledge about biodiversity, climate patterns, medicinal plants, farming systems, water conservation and sustainable resource use is recorded in these languages. Nuances in vegetation, fauna, soils and climate which are not found in dominant languages are embodied by specific terminology in aboriginal dialects. The loss of these languages has therefore a direct impact on sustainability and environmental knowledge. Deficiencies in the environmental literacy are due to the death of particular native languages and know-how. Perhaps those that once practiced indigenous medicine, sustainable farming and forest management are no longer transmitting their knowledge to the young. [...] Outmigration of younger speakers learning majority languages and discontinuing traditional ecological practices combined with the effects of urbanization, globalization, relocations to other places results in an even greater loss. This may impair the conservation of biodiversity and significantly hinder environmental stewardship and local resource management.

There are broader implications that Society faces as ecologists forget how the world works. Several Indigenous practices guided by traditional language-based knowledge have been shown to promote resilience against natural disasters, climate adaptation, and sustainable land use. The loss of these languages, then, is not just a cultural tragedy, though it is that too: It's also an environmental one, since the dialects preserving them hold knowledge about coping with climate and working in harmony with local ecosystems. Conserving ecological knowledge essential to the survival and good health of local communities and to the wider environment requires us to safeguard indigenous languages.

B. Social Fragmentation

Language is one of the most critical factors leading to social cohesion among different groups, allowing direct communication, group decision-making and preservation of culture. In indigenous cultures, it promotes intergenerational solidarity, reinforces collective identities and preserves social order. The loss of dialect is ineluctable subversion into a new subject position in the process of language shift, since social space is rearranged when outbridgers (i.e., younger speakers) wait against their native culture and towards that at which hegemony has managed to survive. Intergenerational communication is particularly affected. For older speakers, repositories of tribal history and oral tradition, it becomes ever more challenging to communicate with a younger generation that learns dominant languages. This breaks the generational link and then, the transfer of knowledge, values, culture is weakened. Socio-civic happenings, traditions and rituals in indigenous languages may therefore also lose meaning or authenticity thus weakening community links.

Moreover, social disintegration can reinforce disparities and diminish communal resilience. Such communities that suffer rapid language decline may be unable to rally around common concerns or maintain established governance systems if those are dominated by top-down organisational responses, such as the use of national languages in schools, media and bureaucracy. The movement toward dominant languages may also lead to social classes, in which the indigenous dialects speakers become more limited in economic, political, and even in social life. The loss of indigenous languages thus not only reduces linguistic diversity, but also weakens the cohesion and continuity of community life, threatening culture and collective identities.

IV. BIHAR'S INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Bihar, the eastern state of India has a number of languages spoken in the region including Angika, Bajjika and Tharu. These languages have traditionally been the medium for community intercommunication, maintaining oral traditions, cultural practices and local knowledge. But over the past few decades, pressures of various kinds – some economic, others due to displacement from the environment, and also because of the dominance of popular languages such as Hindi and English – have led to a decline in their use. Appearing in Environmentally driven by a series of flood and drought, many indigenous communities were forced to move from their homes in the rural areas which they have lived for several years to urban or semi-urban. Important: This exodus cuts the noisy ways through which nature of native identity is in continuous transformation from one generation to another (the process of language transmission), because displaced communities need to learn dominant languages as a medium for their own education, jobs, and social services. And Socio-economic pressure compounds that. Fluency in Hindi and English is increasingly being considered by the younger generations as being necessary for rising up the economic ladder, causing a decline in the use of their native language during daily life. This has resulted in a decline of the native speakers and a decrease in inter-generational language transfer too.

It seems that these trends are more pronounced among urbanized youth, who in a growing number of cases also consider that their ancestral languages become less useful or meaningful on some level in contemporary living. Angika, along with Bajjika are threatened with large scale extinction in coming decade as they do not have any official status. (2009) The disappearance of these languages does not only mean a cultural loss, but also the vanishing of traditional ecological knowledge contained in these languages. To counteract this, we need community-driven campaigns; documentation of ancestral languages and the inclusion of these tongues within local school systems to maintain their vitality and relevance in the modern world.

A. The Andaman Islands

The Andaman Islands, located in the Bay of Bengal, had a Great Andamanese language family comprising several existing indigenous languages. Among these languages are Aka-Kora, Aka-Bo and Aka-Jeru whose speakers comprise small isolated speech communities that also have characteristic linguistic properties, oral traditions and environmental knowledge. During the previous century, colonization, disease and relocation to population centres had greatly attenuated native speakers, which resulted in extensive language endangerment. Also a once-prevailing language of the Great Andamanese family, but it became extinct after its last speaker died in 2009. Boro's death represented the extinction of an entire language family carrying with it stories, tales unique to their culture, ecological information and social practices passed down in oral tradition for generations. The extinction of Great Andamanese languages serves as a striking example of the interaction between population collapse, exogenous cultural constraints, and isolation on language extinction.

Table 1 : Suggested Data Table: Status of Selected Indigenous Languages in India

State/Region	Language/Dialect	Number of Speakers (Approx.)	Status	Major Threats	Reference
Bihar	Angika	1,500,000	Vulnerable	Urbanization, migration, dominance of Hindi	The Times of India, 2023
Bihar	Bajjika	1,200,000	Vulnerable	Socio-economic pressures, education	The Times of India, 2023
Bihar	Tharu	500,000	Endangered	Displacement, assimilation	IJFMR, 2022
Andaman Islands	Aka-Kora	0	Extinct	Population decline, colonial impact	Wikipedia, 2009
Andaman Islands	Aka-Bo	<10	Critically Endangered	Isolation, cultural pressure	Wikipedia, 2023

Placement Proposal: Add this table as last in Section "Case Studies," after discussing Bihar and the Andaman Islands. It provides a visual snapshot of the current status of these languages to support the narrative analysis.

The Andaman case, as we saw tangible evidence of it, only serves to emphasize the absolute necessity for intensive documentation and rejuvenation work. Other efforts, including language recordings, dictionaries and community outreach programs are necessary to conserve the surviving dialects and traditions. It also demonstrates how environmental and demographic vulnerabilities in conjunction with socio-cultural inhibition might be causing an accelerated language death, which may provide space for learning to preserve other endangered languages in India.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

A. Language Shift Theory

Language Shift Theory describes the gradual process through which minority languages fall out of use in favor of more dominant ones. By this explanation, minority language speakers might eventually respond by using more populous or socially honored linguistic alternatives in different areas of their lives (e.g., education, the work place, the media and so forth). Such a migration is generally stimulated by presumed socio-economic advantages: proficiency in any of the dominant languages, Hindi or English, can lead to more access to education, better paid jobs and social upward mobility. Thus, minority languages are becoming less and less spoken in daily life, especially among the younger population.

Language shift usually occurs slowly over a number of generations. Language shift can be facilitated by exogamous marriage partners speaking a different language than the native one, since children raised in such a mixed-language household may prefer to acquire fluency in the majority's tongue for socializing with that larger group. Urbanization also plays an important role: the need to migrate from rural or indigenous regions to cities results in minority language speakers becoming exposed to dominant linguistic environments. Educational policies that focus on a national or global language legitimize this movement, often implicitly discounting the value of the minority language and reducing institutional support for its survival. In the Indian context, Language Shift Theory can be used to explain the downfall of native languages like Angika, Bajjika and Tharu languages in Bihar. These dialects are losing ground to Hindi and English, which is used in schools and offices, thus only being spoken by older generations in rural areas. Lacking intervention, the minority languages are liable to become utterly extinct in the future. The most important aspect of conceptualizing language shift in this way is that it provides a theoretical framework necessary for structuring policies and programs that support language preservation, revitalization, and intergenerational transfer.

B. Ecological Linguistics

Ecological Linguistics is an interdisciplinary movement that studies the inter-relationships between language, culture and environment. Instead it suggests that language functions both as a 'reservoir' of ecological knowledge (recalling ways human communities see, engage with and manage their natural world), as well as an instrument for communication. Native languages are also rich in specialized terminology that relates to plants, animals, weather, farming and the management of natural resources -- words and concepts encode centuries of practical knowledge required to sustain life. "When native languages fade from use in the Amazon, it can mean that local ecological knowledge is lost and we think that's a loss to all of us." When a language is no more, also the content that it contains about plant names or soil types or water managements systems and emissions of biological meaning in nature drops out of use. In India, for instance, dialects that have been classed as scheduled languages in the Andaman Islands and some north eastern states hold information on very specialised aspects of ecology which did not find their way into mainstream translation. The disappearance of these languages brings cultural loss as well as erosion on the community-based approaches to biodiversity conservation and management.

Ecological linguistics suggests that we should consider conserving a language as connected to but between, preserving the environment. Glossaries of indigenous terminology, oral histories and ecological techniques offer a window on how humans cope in their local ecologies. Through this framework, policy makers, linguists and environmentalists will be able to create sound strategies that protect both linguistic and ecological heritage making sure the knowledge encased in indigenous languages can continue to inform sustainable development, climate adaptation, and conservation for generations to come.

VI. DOCUMENTATION AND RESEARCH

Documentation and investigation are fundamental for the survival of endangered languages. In-depth linguistic description involves documenting the grammar, phonology and vocabulary of a language and recording oral histories, folktales, songs or traditional narratives in a language. These types of initiatives establish a permanent record for posterity, academics and the heritage sector. Linguist-indigenous collaboration is crucial here, as it ensures that documentation is rooted in the real linguistic domain and cultural context, as well as community needs. Various methods are used such as daily speech audio, video recording, grandparent's interviews, dictionary making and oral literature recording. Digital tools like language apps, online databases and digital archives offer readily available means for storing and disseminating that information. For instance documentation projects on Great Andamanese dialects have been able to conserve words, sounds, and cultural history despite the fact that certain languages like Aka-Kora have become extinct.

Research can also help in better understanding the sociological, economic and political determinants of language loss which could inform the development of specific revitalization efforts. Linguistic documentation, when integrated with sociolinguistics research can help communities and policy makers determine how to best preserve a language to find which ones are most in need of preservation. Documentation is not just academic, but allows communities to retake possession of their linguistic inheritance to learn and preserve - teach! - the language; in this way their knowledge systems and culture continue undiminished.

A. Educational Integration

Integrating indigenous languages into formal and informal education is an important measure to encourage intergenerational transmission and linguistic esteem. Bilingual education systems, using mother tongue in combination with a prevalent language (here Hindi or English), have also been found to help maintain fluency as well as provide better socio-economic prospects. And that means teaching literacy, local history and cultural practices in the indigenous dialects, so students understand what its worth as a practical skill as well as cultural knowledge to speak their native languages.

Teaching materials, textbooks and teachers, fluent in both the native language and the curriculum are also a requirement for inclusion of indigenous languages into school curriculums. Some pilot models by introducing locals dialects like Angika and Bajjikapg into primary would facilitate helping in retaining their usage among children who are otherwise likely to abandon the use of these languages completely for hindi or english elsewhere in localization. It is also possible to enhance engagement with heritage languages through extra-curricular activities such as story-telling competitions, poetry reading and cultural clubs. Educational integration that not only helps preserve but also makes the language a powerful tool in the child's cultural identity as set forth by Curren. When communities see their languages as being legitimate and valued in schools, the attitudinal stigma of speaking minority languages tends to erode. Educational programmes, by providing for pride and proficiency at the same time, act as a link between cultural perpetuation and economic upliftment.

B. Community-Led Initiatives

Community-driven activities are a key to making language revitalization relevant and sustainable. When local communities are in control of preservation efforts, programs can respond to local priorities, practices and social norms. This could be community radio targeted towards indigenous communities, cultural festivals that reinvigorate traditional songs, dances and stories or language workshops designed to cater for both the youth and the old. Grassroots revitalization also fosters intergenerational connections, as elders instruct younger members in traditional vocabulary, stories, and ecological wisdom. Local communities in areas such as the Andaman Islands and tribal lands in central India have successfully utilized festivals and storytelling events to preserve oral traditions and encourage active speaking of endangered dialects. Partnerships with NGOs, universities and technology platforms can extend the reach and influence of such programs to build out support networks while preserving community leadership.

VII. CONCLUSION

The investigation of language shift and death in the indigenous languages of India illuminates a pressing dilemma: the gradual extinction of the world's linguistic varieties with their attendant deep cultural, social and ecological effects. India's indigenous languages aren't just means of communication, they are treasure troves of thousands of years' worth the collective knowledge, cultural legacy and worldviews that have developed connected to their local identities and environments. The death of these languages, whether because of socio-economic pressures, political and educational policies, cultural assimilation, globalization or environmental displacement is not only a linguistic loss but also a threat to the overall cultural and ecological identity of the country. Socio-economic is a crucial factor in language shift, the younger generations consider it useful for education, job opportunity and upward social mobility with Hindi or English. Urbanization and globalization strengthen the use of dominant language while senseless the native languages to be used from generation to generation. Political and educational policies that favour the mainstream languages in their recognition, institutional support and educational provision only contribute to deepen these trends. Assimilation and globalization also erode the utilitarian and symbolic value of the original dialects of native peoples, while environmental displacement caused by floods, droughts, climate change causes the networks that sustain these communities to unravel ever faster as languages will be abandoned.

The repercussions of language abandonment are challenging. From a cultural point of view, the death of a language is equated with loss of identity, oral tradition and collective memory. From a social perspective, it reduces communication between generations and undermines community solidarity and can potentially increase social disintegration. There is also an ecological dimension to this, whereby indigenous languages contain valuable information on local biodiversity, agriculture and natural resource management. The loss of such knowledge is undermining environmental stewardship and the livelihood resilience of communities who rely on their environment. However, reported findings of a critical relation between development variables such as social and economic factors did not give an explanation that most Language-in-Crisis cases were resulted from combined influences of environmental and cultural factors with socio-economic one for the rate

data acceleration of language endangered and orangeredding. A good deal of confirmatory case studies on Angika, Bajjika, Tharu (Bihari dialect) in the article have showed the fusion between 3 above fittings was more activated by how languages die quicker only when these rankers become very serious.

This crisis must be addressed in an interdisciplinary, multi-faceted way, and more or less everyone has a role to play. Documentation and research are at the core, providing support to preserve the grammar, vocabulary, oral tradition of stories and ecological knowledge by recording this data in a digital format as well as writing it down. Educational intergration, including bilingual and bicultural materials, encourages pride in indigenous languages among children to become their parents' language of choice. Community-based activities - from language workshops, cultural festivals and media projects - allow indigenous peoples to have ownership of the conservation process, guaranteeing that future generations can continue traditions. it will take the combined work of linguists, educators, policy-makers and particular come into play also representatives of local communities to set up frameworks which enable the endangered languages to be preserved and restored. The survival of India's native tongues, in short, is not only a linguistic issue but also a cultural one, and has implications for identity formation, social harmony and environmental sustainability. Rapid interventions can save threatened languages from extinction, and protect the unique knowledge, traditions and identities these languages represent. India can preserve her rich linguistic tradition for the coming generations - by recognizing, archiving and reviving indigenous dialects: ensuring cultural sustainability, natural conservation and social solidarity. Thus the preservation of local languages is not only a moral obligation and a political necessity, but also a practical requirement for preserving the nation's cultural and ecological diversity.

VIII. REFERENCES

- [1] Parshad, R. D. (2016). "What is India speaking? Exploring the 'Hinglish' invasion." *ScienceDirect*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378437116000236>
- [2] Krishna, D. (2025). "Climate change threatens Bihar's indigenous languages." *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/climate-change-threatens-bihars-indigenous-languages/articleshow/121438706.cms>
- [3] Goswami, R. (2025). "Analyzing the Rise of Green Linguistics (Ecolinguistics) in Indian Languages." *Language in India*. Retrieved from <https://languageinindia.com/may2025/goswamiecolinguistics.pdf>
- [4] "Documenting India's Endangered Languages." *Press Information Bureau*. Retrieved from <https://www.pib.gov.in/FeaturesDeatils.aspx?ModuleId=2&NotelD=155013&id=155013>
- [5] "Centering Indigenous Languages in India's Schools." *YES! Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2023/10/23/india-schools-indigenous-languages-education>
- [6] "Endangered Languages in India Making a Comeback." *TransPerfect*. Retrieved from <https://www.transperfect.com/blog/lost-revived-endangered-languages-india-making-comeback>
- [7] "Language Shift and Identity Reproduction among Diaspora Sindhis in India and Southeast Asia." *Cambridge University Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-asian-studies/article/language-shift-and-identity-reproduction-among-diaspora-sindhis-in-india-and-southeast-asia/678711394095029BE7AC10943ADA6946>
- [8] "Language Shift among the Tribal Languages of India: A Case Study in Bihar." *Academia.edu*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/849824/_Language_Shift_among_the_Tribal_Languages_of_India_A_Case_Study_in_Bihar
- [9] "Documentation and Description of Nihali, a Critically Endangered Language Isolate of India." *Culture in Crisis*. Retrieved from <https://cultureincrisis.org/projects/documentation-and-description-of-nihali-a-critically-endangered-language-isolate-of-india>
- [10] "Language, Artificial Education, and Future-Making in Indigenous Communities." *Taylor & Francis Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17439884.2023.2278111>
- [11] "Language Revitalization and Community Initiatives: An Indian Perspective." *ResearchGate*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346773020_Language_revitalization_and_community_initiatives_An_Indian_perspective
- [12] "Indigenous Language Revitalization Using TEK-nology." *Taylor & Francis Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01434632.2022.2084548>
- [13] "Strengthening Foundational Learning in Native Tongues." *PAL Network*. Retrieved from <https://palnetwork.org/the-power-of-language-strengthening-foundational-learning-in-native-tongues/>
- [14] "Online Efforts in Reviving Endangered Indigenous Languages of India." *MuftInternet*. Retrieved from <https://muftinternet.com/blog/online-efforts-in-reviving-endangered-indigenous-languages-of-india/>
- [15] "Language Shift, Cultural Change and Identity Retention." *South African History Online*. Retrieved from https://sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files/proofs_from_nic_southey1.pdf
- [16] "Endangered Languages in North East India." *LSRI Champion*. Retrieved from <https://lsri.champion.ox.ac.uk/node/274>
- [17] "Documentation of Malto - Endangered Languages Archive." *ELDP*. Retrieved from <https://eldp.access.preservica.com/dk0012/>
- [18] "Protecting Indigenous Languages in India's Schools." *Giving Compass*. Retrieved from <https://givingcompass.org/article/protecting-indigenous-languages-in-indias-schools>
- [19] "Revitalizing Indigenous Languages, Fostering Self-Governance." *Wiley Online Library*. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/capa.70035>

- [20] "Language Shift and Identity Reproduction among Diaspora Sindhis in India and Southeast Asia." *Cambridge University Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-asian-studies/article/language-shift-and-identity-reproduction-among-diaspora-sindhis-in-india-and-southeast-asia/678711394095029BE7AC10943ADA6946>