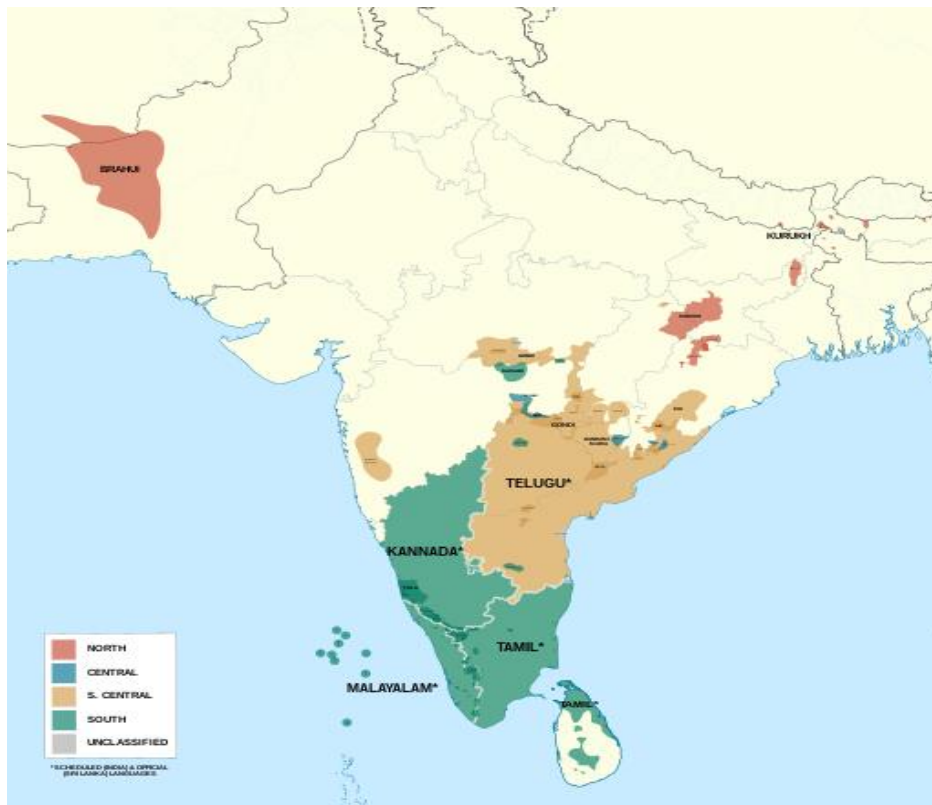


PAPER-II CLASS NOTES: TOPIC: DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

Dravidian Languages: Distribution

Dravidian languages are a family of languages spoken by an estimated 250 million people across the world. The Distribution of Dravidian Languages may be understood as follows:

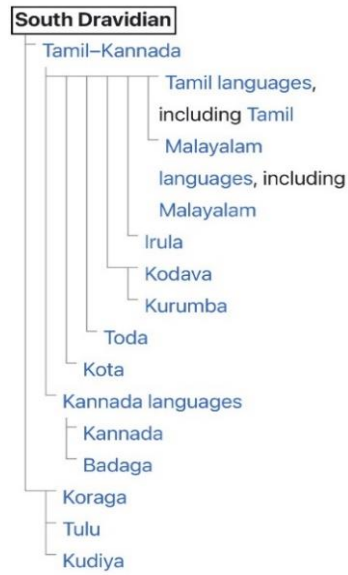
1. Distribution within the Indian Subcontinent – spread across Southern Indian States (AP,TS,KN,TN,KL) Central India, Eastern India, North-eastern Sri Lanka and South-west Pakistan.



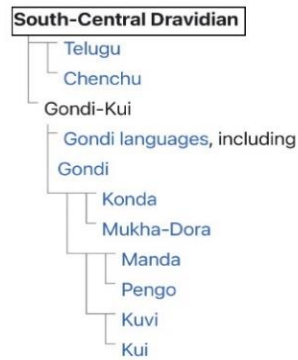
2. Distribution beyond the Indian Subcontinent as a consequence of colonialism : spread in Southeast Asia : Fiji, Mauritius, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Africa and the Caribbean.
3. Distribution beyond the Indian Subcontinent as a consequence of post world war 2 globalisation : spread in the Middle East, Europe and North America.

Classification of Dravidian Languages based on regional spread:Most scholars agree on four groups:

1. South Dravidian



2. South-Central Dravidian



3. Central Dravidian



4. North Dravidian



Overview :

The largest group of the Dravidian languages is South Dravidian, with almost 150 million speakers. Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam make up around 98% of the speakers, with 75 million, 44 million and 37 million native speakers, respectively.

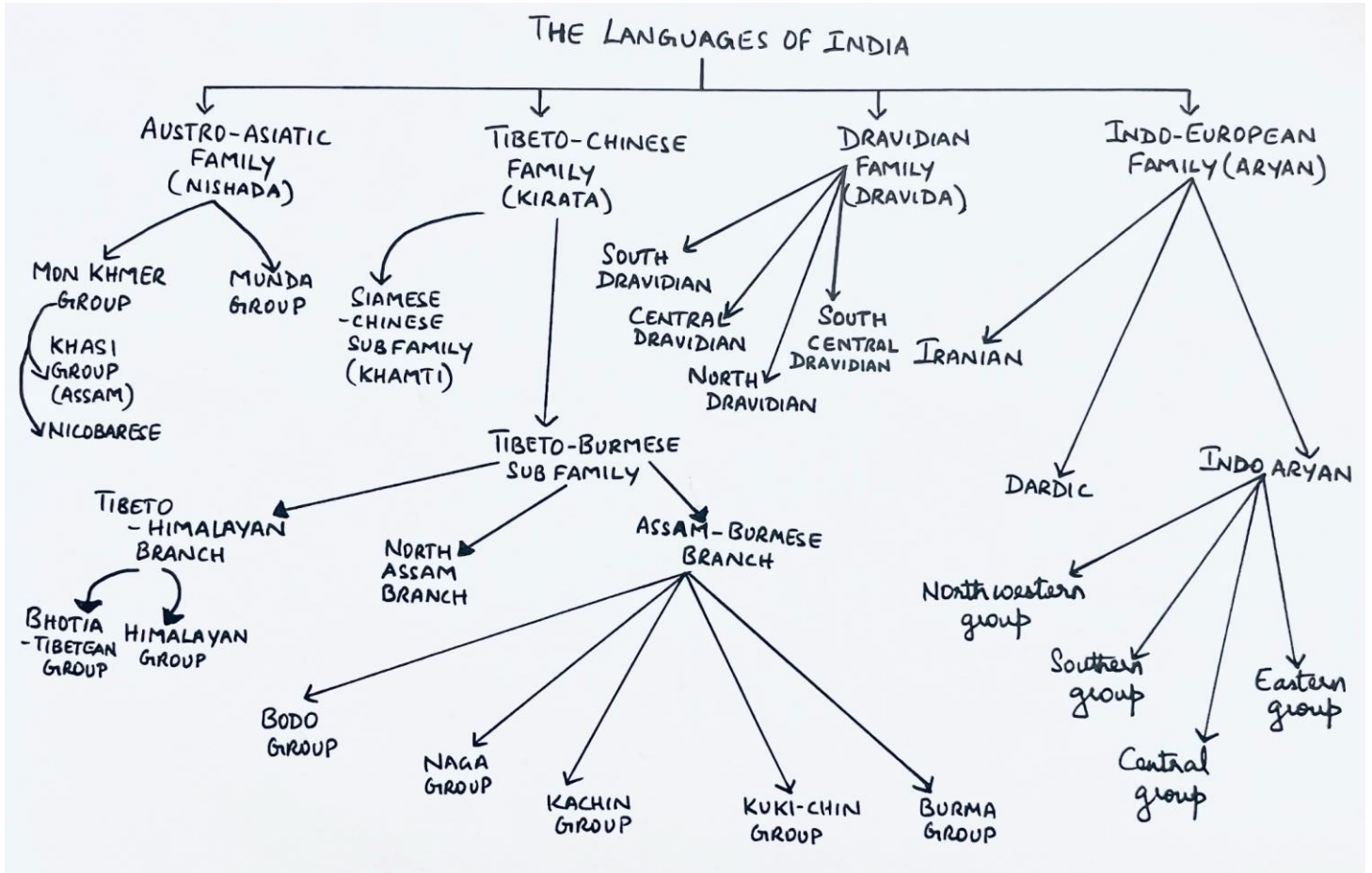
The next-largest is the South-Central branch, which has 78 million native speakers, the vast majority of whom speak Telugu. The total number of speakers of Telugu, including those whose first language is not Telugu, is around 84 million people. This branch also includes the tribal language Gondi spoken in central India.

The second-smallest branch is the Northern branch, with around 6.3 million speakers. This is the only subgroup to have a language spoken in Pakistan — Brahui.

The smallest branch is the Central branch, which has only around 200,000 speakers. These languages are mostly tribal, and spoken in central India.

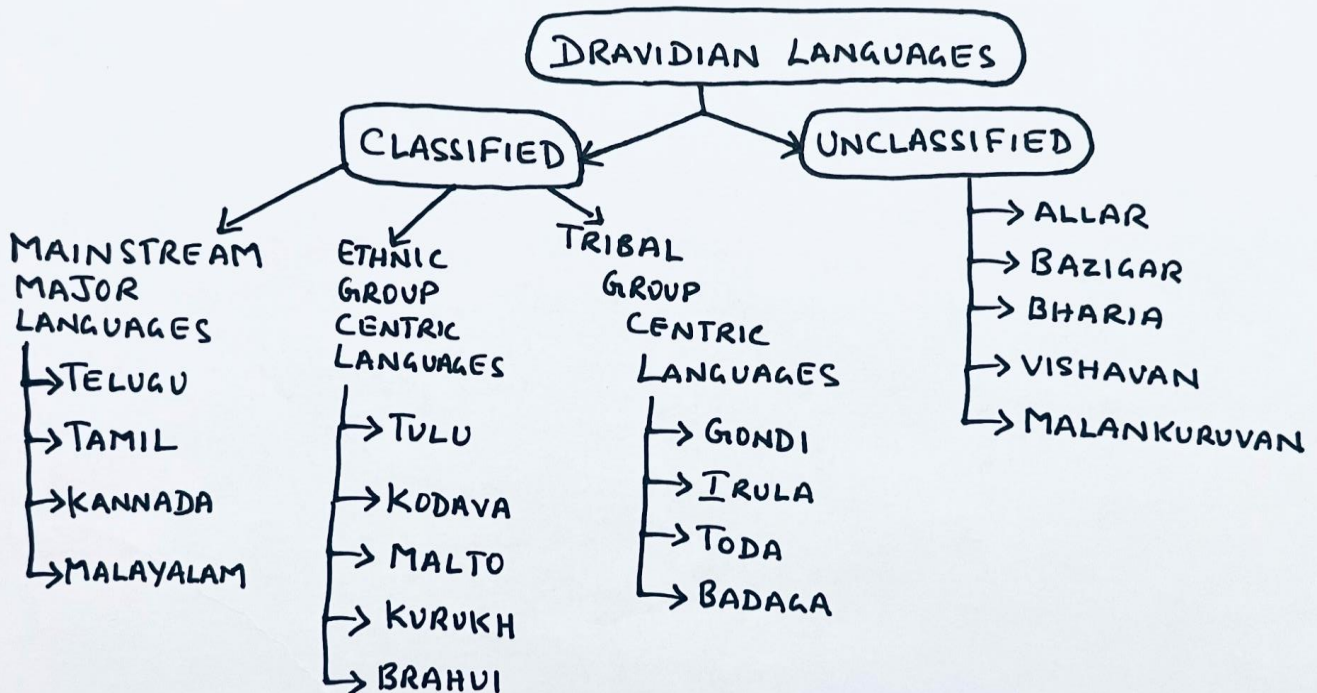
Since 1981, the Census of India has reported only languages with more than 10,000 speakers, including 17 Dravidian languages. But several global linguistic surveys like the Ethnologue list several unclassified Dravidian languages: Allar, Bazigar, Bharia, Malankuravan (possibly a dialect of Malayalam), and Vishavan.

Ethnologue also lists several unclassified South Dravidian languages: Mala, Malasar, Malasar, Thachanadan, Ullatan, Kalanadi, Kumbaran, Kunduvadi, Kurichiya, Attapady, Kurumba, Muduga, Pathiya, and Wayanad Chetti. Pattapumay also be South Dravidian.



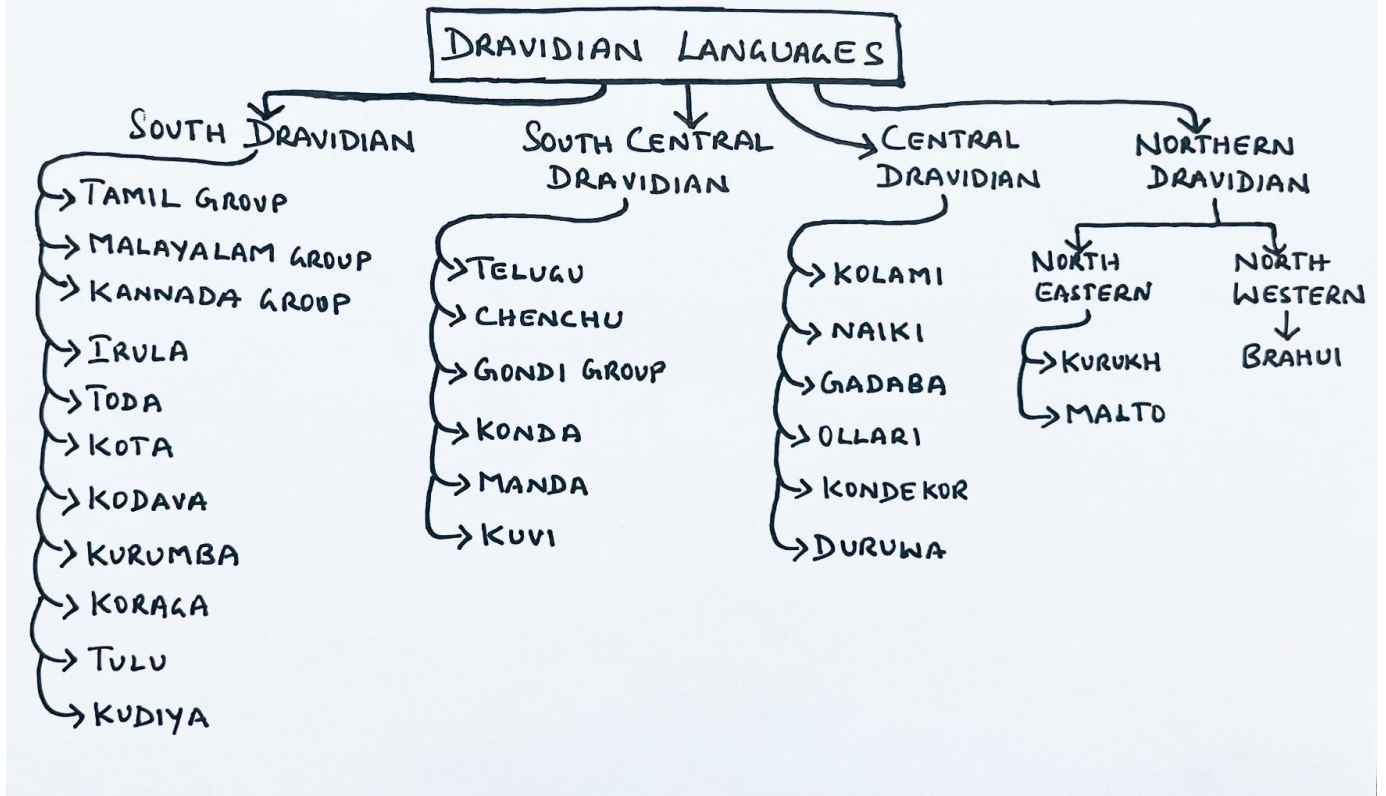
CLASSIFICATION OF DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

I POPULATION BASED CLASSIFICATION: -



CLASSIFICATION OF DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

II REGION BASED CLASSIFICATION :-



Dravidian Language Studies

In 1856, Robert Caldwell published his 'Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages' in which he coined the term 'Dravidian' to refer to a group of languages spoken in southern India.

The antiquity of Dravidian languages is estimated to be more than 4,500 years old. Since the 19th century, several studies were undertaken by linguists, scholars and linguistic anthropologists to categorise Dravidian languages and explore their relationship with other language families.

Most scholars agree on four groups:

1. South Dravidian
2. South-Central Dravidian

3. Central Dravidian
4. North Dravidian

but there is no consensus regarding the relationship between these groups.

Divergent Viewpoints:

1. Dravidian language as an indigenous system:

In 1816, Frances Whyte Ellis argued that Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu and Kodava, descended from the common non-Indo-European ancestor.

Several scholars deem that Dravidian languages were spoken more widely across the Indian subcontinent before the spread of the Indo-Aryan languages.

Linguists researching & reconstructing Proto-Dravidian vocabulary have suggested that the family is indigenous to India.

2. **Dravidian language as a foreign system:** Some others have argued that the Dravidian languages may have been brought to India by migrations from the Iranian Plateau in the fourth or third millennium BCE or even earlier.

A few Dravidian languages display typological similarities with the Uralic language group, and there have been several attempts to establish a genetic relationship in the past by prominent Dravidian linguists such as **Robert Caldwell, Thomas Burrow, Kamal Zvelebil and Mikhail Andronov**. This hypothesis however, has been rejected by most specialists in Uralic languages and in recent times by Dravidian linguists such as Bhadriraju Krishnamurti.

20th century studies:

The Elamo-Dravidian Hypothesis

In the early 1970s, the linguist David McAlpin produced a detailed proposal of a genetic relationship between Dravidian and the extinct Elamite language of the ancient Elam province of south western Iran. The Elamo-Dravidian Hypothesis suggested that Proto-Dravidian was brought to India by farmers from the Iranian part of the 'fertile crescent'.

In 2012, Southworth suggested a "Zagrosian family" of West Asian origin including Elamite, Brahui and Dravidian as its three branches.

Recent Studies:

A computational phylogenetic study of the Dravidian language family was undertaken by Kolipakam, et al. (2018). The study supports the internal coherence of the four Dravidian branches, Southern, South-Central, Central, and Northern, but is uncertain about the precise relationships of these four branches to each other.

Conclusion: The general consensus is that such deep connections between Dravidian languages and other language families are not, or not yet, demonstrable.

Previous Year Questions:

→ Dravidian languages (10 Marks, 2020)

→ Outline the distribution of Dravidian languages in India and describe their cultural significance. (15 Marks, 2014); (S.N - 1990)