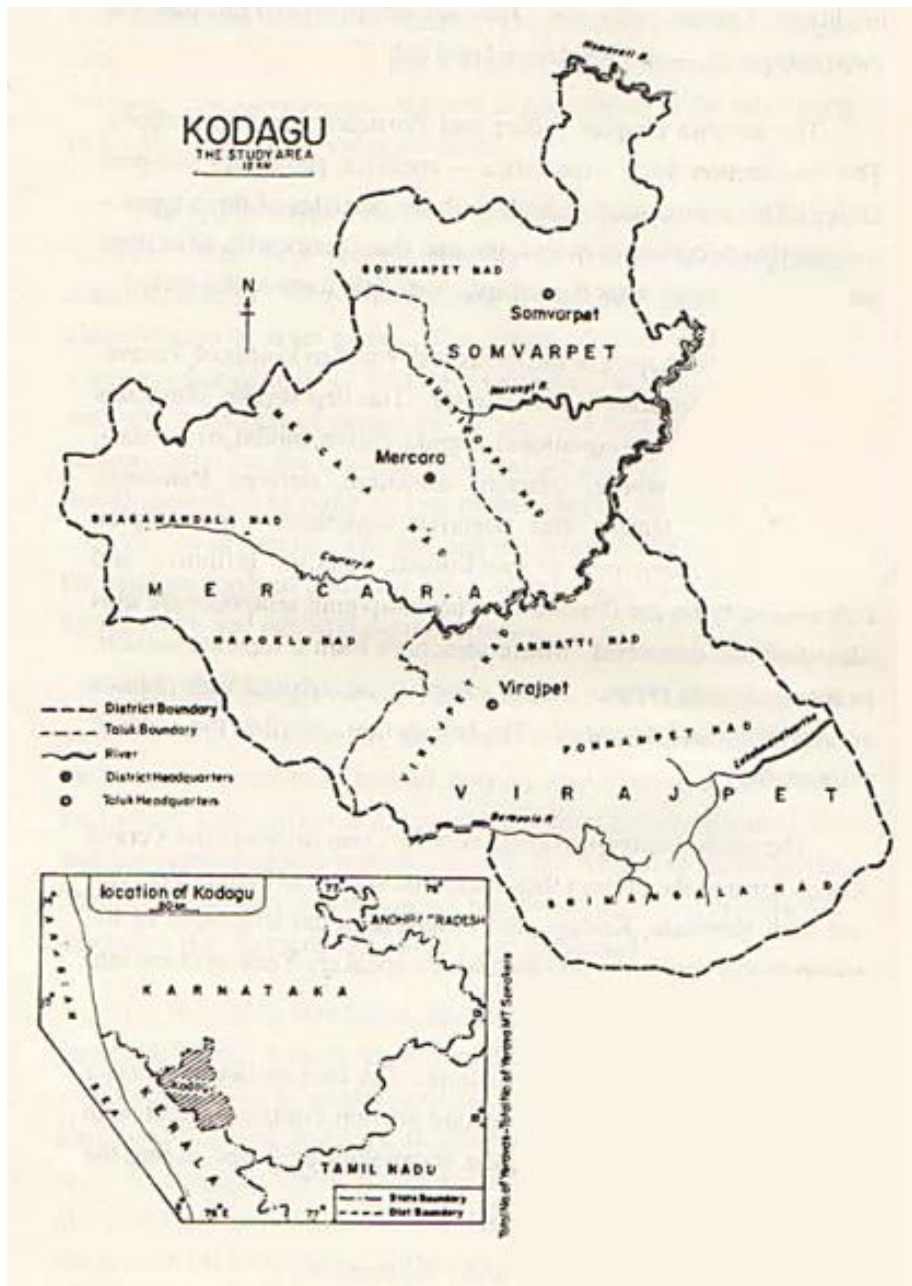


**Languages in Kodagu
(A District in Karnataka, India)**

Prof. B. Mallikarjun
Former Director
Centre for Classical Kannada
Central University of Karnataka
Kadaganchi, Aland Road, Kalaburagi District - 585311
Karnataka, India
mallikarjun56@gmail.com

Introduction

Kodagu, popularly known as Coorg, also is a district in Karnataka, India. It is the smallest district in the state. Coorg is well-known for its coffee and orange estates. It is famous as the district from which two Chiefs of the Indian Army came, and also as a major contributor of soldiers to Indian Defence Forces for generations. It has a unique distinction of being geographically intact for centuries and has independent census records from 1872 unlike other districts of the state.



The Census of India by the British recognizes Kodagu as a home of two indigenous mother tongues and principal languages of the province: Kodava and Yerava. Here it is intended to describe the linguistic composition of this unique district from the available census records.

The British took over Kodagu on April 4, 1834. The Linguistic Survey of India (Vol IV) cites from Caldwell's grammar that '*Coorg is a small but interesting district, formerly an independent principality... The native spelling of Coorg is usually kodagu properly kudagu, west, a meaning of the word which is usual in Ancient Tamil...*' (P 282). Now, Kodagu is one of the 30 districts in the Indian state of Karnataka. It is 4104 square kilometers in area and known as a tiny district. The maximum length of the district from North to South is 96 kilometers and maximum breadth from East to West is 64 kilometers. It is adjacent to Kerala

state. On other sides, Mysore, Hassan and Dakshina Kannada districts encircle Kodagu. It has three talukas: Madikeri, Somvarpet and Virajpet. The latest Census of India -2011 records its population as 5,54,519 persons. Among them 4,73,531 persons reside in the rural and 80,988 persons in the urban areas.

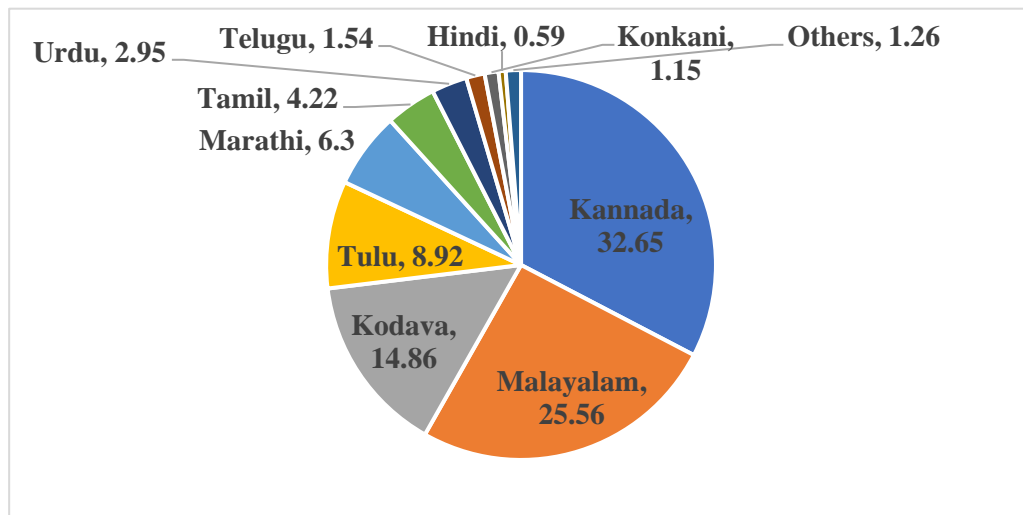
Languages in Kodagu:2011

The 2011 Census of India records ten languages spoken by 98.74% of the population. They are - Kannada: 1,81,087 (32.65%), Malayalam: 1,41,785 (25.56%), Kodava: 82,421 (14.86%), Tulu: 49,490 (8.92%), Marathi: 34,948 (6.3%), Tamil: 23,440 (4.22%), Urdu: 16,369 (2.95%), Telugu: 8,592 (1.54%), Konkani: 6,415 (1.15%) and Hindi: 3,327 (0.59%). Other languages are spoken by 1.26% of the population of the district. The graph-1 illustrates the linguistic composition of the Kodagu district.

Graph-1

Languages in Kodagu:2011

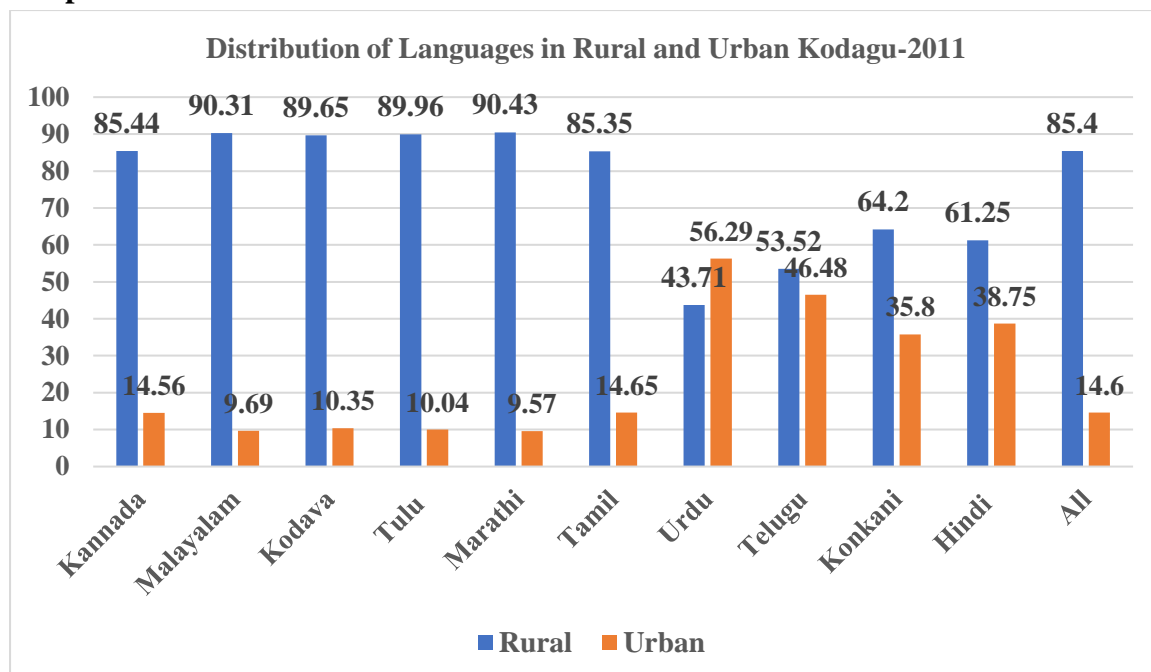
(Percentage)



In Karnataka, 53.7% of Urdu speakers reside in the urban areas and 46.3% of them in the rural areas. Similarly, in Kodagu also 56.29% of Urdu speakers are in the urban areas and 43.71% are in the rural areas. Tamil speakers present a contrasting picture. In Karnataka 68.2% of Tamil speakers are in the urban areas and 31.8% of them in the rural areas. However, in Kodagu only 14.65% of Tamil speakers are in the urban areas and 85.35% of them are in the rural areas. More speakers of other languages reside in rural areas than in the urban areas. The details of the rural and urban distribution of different language speakers is - Kannada: 85.44% / 14.56%, Malayalam: 90.31% / 9.69%, Kodava: 89.65% / 10.35%, Tulu: 89.96% / 10.04%, Marathi: 90.43% / 9.57%, Telugu: 53.52% / 46.48%, Konkani: 64.20% / 35.80%, and Hindi: 61.25% / 38.75%.

The graph-2 illustrates the rural and urban distribution of speakers of languages of Kodagu.

Graph-2



Changing Linguistic Landscape of Kodagu: 1951- 2011

In the *Memorandum on the Census of British India of 1871-72* at page 20 it is stated that 'In Coorg, besides the Coorg language, Kanarese, Malayalam, Tamil, Tulu and Hindustani are used'. The 1871 census records population of Kodagu as 1,68,312 persons. The Census of 2011 records the total population of the district as 5,54,519 persons -- A substantial increase in the population of Kodagu in more than a century.

The first census in 1951 after the independence of the country and the first census in 1961 of the country after the reorganisation of its states on the basis of languages help us to understand the changes that are taking place in the linguistic landscape of Kodagu.

The table-1 gives the details of the number of speakers of the 10 languages from 1951 to 2011. In case of all these languages, the number of speakers is increasing.

Change in Numbers

Table-1

Language	2011	2001	1991	1961	1951
Kannada	1,81,087	1,93,088	1,84,798	98,914	80,410
Malayalam	1,41,785	1,28,789	1,13,752	53,199	32,683
Kodava	82,421	92,193	79,415	75,003	66,642
Tulu	49,490	47,989	44,110	28,430	21,000

Marathi	34,948	2,798	2,957	2,058	1,558
Tamil	23,440	30,756	32,278	22,429	13,824
Urdu	16369	15,567	13,868	8,070	3,818
Telugu	8,592	10,583	7,967	5,777	3,927
Konkani	6,415	6,711	6,729	6,220	3,515
Hindi	3,327	4,337	1,945	839	1,373

We observe an unusual increase of population of the speakers of Kannada, Malayalam and Marathi languages in the district. This is not a normal population growth, but it could be due to influx of speakers of Kannada and Malayalam languages for various reasons. The increase in population of other languages does not attract the immediate attention. The case of Marathi is interesting and entirely different.

Mother tongue ‘Are’

In 2011 census, the list of mother tongues in Kodagu finds a new entry ‘Are’. This is included / classified as a mother tongue under Marathi language. Hence there is an unusual increase in the number of Marathi speakers. This *Are* mother tongue has 32,226 (Male: 15,990, Female: 16,236) speakers in Kodagu. Among them 29,613 persons reside in rural areas and less persons in urban areas 2,613. The 2011 census records speakers of ‘Are’ mother tongue in Karnataka as 50,339 persons: Male-25,008, Female-25,331 persons and in India: 53,879 persons.

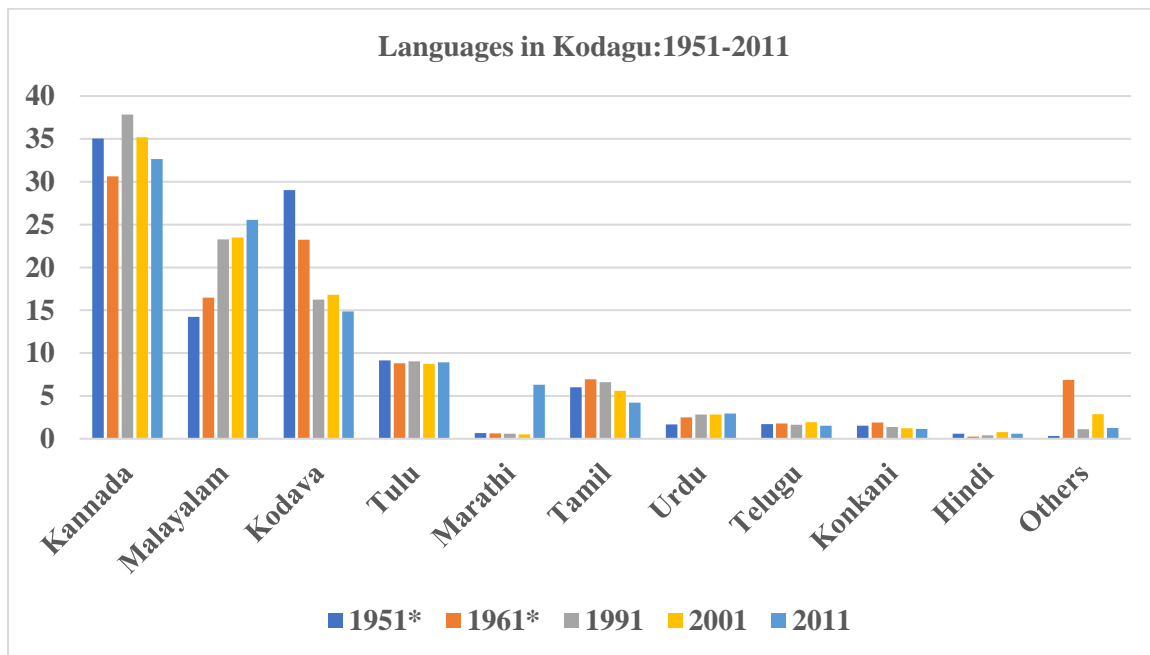
Change in Proportion

The table-2 and the chart-3 illustrate the proportion of 10 language speakers in Kodagu and the changes in its linguistic landscape from 1951 to 2011.

Table-2

Language	1951*	1961*	1991	2001	2011
Kannada	35.05	30.63	37.83	35.20	32.65
Malayalam	14.24	16.47	23.29	23.48	25.56
Kodava	29.04	23.23	16.26	16.81	14.86
Tulu	9.15	8.80	9.03	8.75	8.92
Marathi	0.67	0.63	0.61	0.51	6.30
Tamil	6.02	6.94	6.61	5.61	4.22
Urdu	1.66	2.49	2.84	2.84	2.95
Telugu	1.71	1.78	1.63	1.93	1.54
Konkani	1.53	1.92	1.38	1.22	1.15
Hindi	0.59	0.25	0.40	0.79	0.59
Others	0.34	6.86	1.12	2.86	1.26

Graph-3



Though the number of speakers of these languages have increased in Kodagu, their proportion in the district has changed remarkably. Between 1951 and 2011 percentage of Kannada speakers is reduced from 35.05% to 32.65%, Kodava speakers from 29.04% to 14.86%. Kodava speakers were number two in 1951 but they are number three now. Malayalam speakers were 14.24% and now they are 25.56%. They are proportionately occupying the second place in Kodagu. The place of indigenous language of the district has inquisitively changed.

Indigenous Mother Tongues of Kodagu

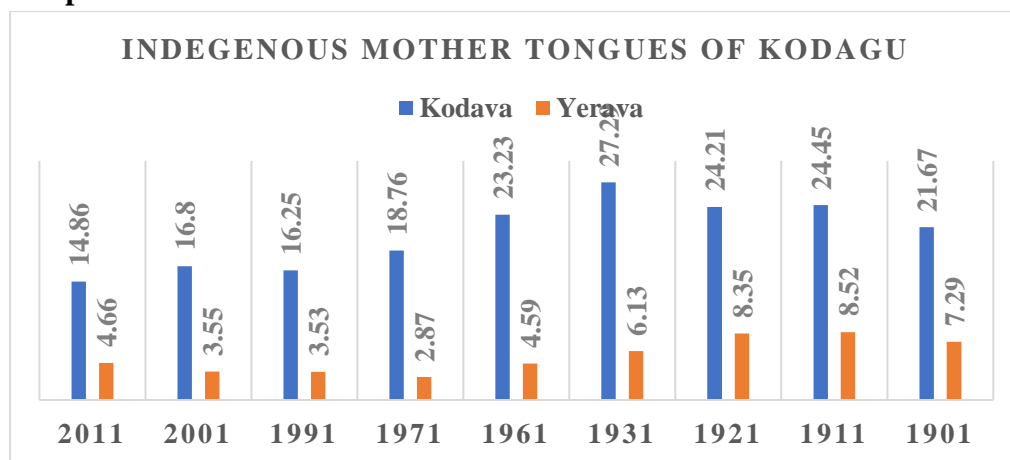
The historical records show that Kodava and Yerava, a tribal mother tongue. are indigenous to Kodagu. Kodava is the mother tongue of Kodava people and Yerava is the mother tongue of the Yerava tribe. The recorded history of Yeravas by Connor (1870) and Richter (1887) indicate Yeravas as slaves, *praedial* (relating to land and farming) slaves attached to the land. They were considered lowest in the social hierarchy. They were also owned like land and sold when land was sold. The Census of India 1921 in the Coorg volume on page 33, records that *'The languages peculiar to Coorg are Kodagu and Yerava. Both these languages show a decrease in the number of people speaking them as compared with the 1911 census, but they are slightly better than the figures for 1901. The decrease in the Yerava language is to be accounted for by the decrease among the Yerava population'*.

Details of Yerava population from 1901 to 2011 are provided in the table-3 and the chart-4.

Table - 3

Year	Kodava	Yerava
2011	14.86	4.66
2001	16.80	3.55
1991	16.25	3.53
1971	18.76	2.87
1961	23.23	4.59
1931	27.29	6.13
1921	24.21	8.35
1911	24.45	8.52
1901	21.67	7.29

Graph -4



Here we realize that the proportion of these two indigenous language speakers has gone down for Kodagu from 24.45% to 14.86% and for Yerava from 8.52% to 4.66% in one hundred years between 1911 to 2011.

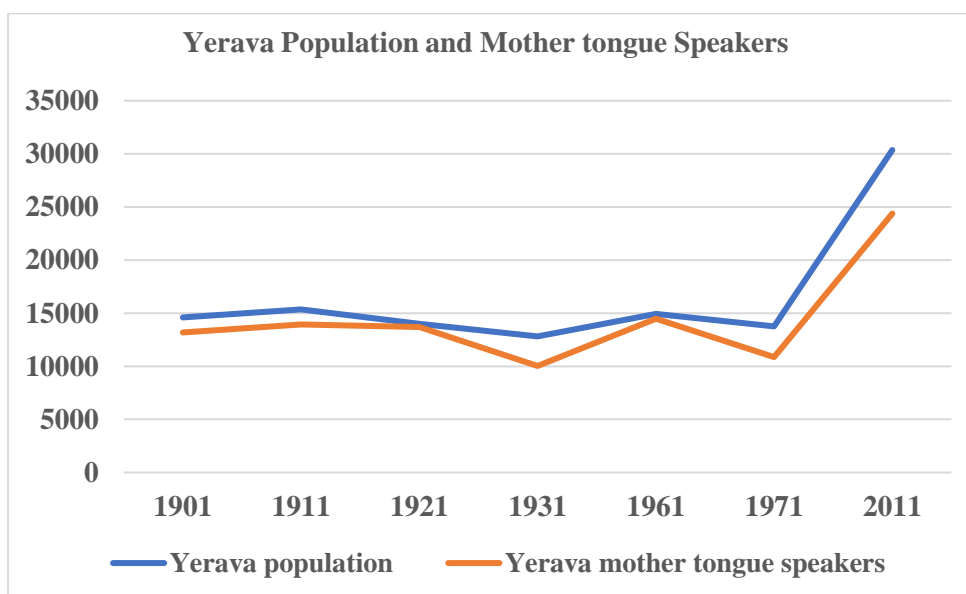
Language Endangerment

Language shift due to social, economic, political reasons among mother tongues spoken by a comparatively small number of speakers is expected, especially if they exist amidst a politically, socially and economically powerful languages. This shift leads to the loss of their mother tongue. Kodagu is a real time witness to this. The table-4 and the graph-5 thereon provides the details of the population of Yeravas and also the number of speakers of the Yerava mother tongue along with the percentage of speakers.

Table-4

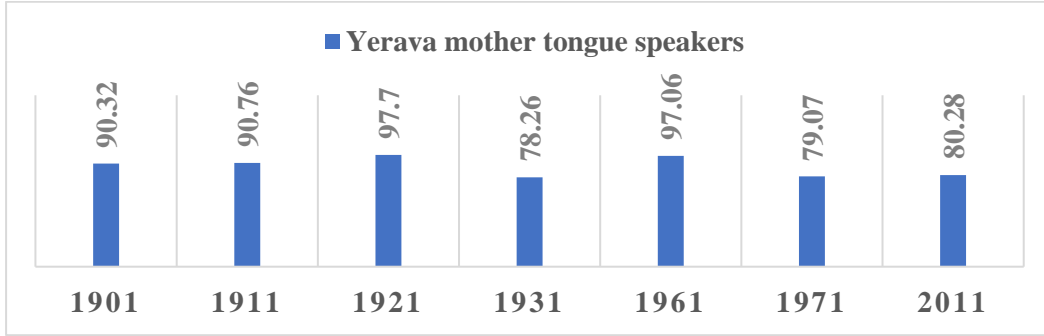
Year	Yerava population	Yerava mother tongue speakers	%
1901	14586	13175	90.32
1911	15338	13921	90.76
1921	14008	13686	97.70
1931	12810	10026	78.26
1961	14927	14489	97.06
1971	13743	10867	79.07
2011	30359	24374	80.28

Graph-5



After the reorganisation of states in 1961 Census, Yerava tribal population of the state was 14,927 and Yerava mother tongue speakers was 14,489 (97.065%). In 2011, population of the Yerava tribe is 30,359 and the number of Yerava mother tongue speakers is 24,574 (80.94%). Among them 1579 persons have reported that Kannada is their mother tongue. The number of Yerava tribe speaking their own mother tongue continues to decline and is less than the number of corresponding tribal population. Population of the tribe is increasing but the percentage of mother tongue speakers is not increasing correspondingly. A decline from 97.065% (1961) to 80.94% (2011) indicates that the trend of decreasing of mother tongue speakers of this tribe continues unabated. This is really alarming and makes us to consider that Yerava mother tongue is one of the really endangered languages.

Graph -6



In one hundred years, the linguistic landscape of Kodagu / Coorg has undergone a radical change. It is evident that though the number of speakers of all the 10 languages has increased, percentage of Kodagu speakers is reduced by 50% of what it was in 1951. At the same time the percentage of speakers of Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi and Urdu also has increased. A mother tongue 'Are' has become a part of the Marathi language in 2011.

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