CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES
53rd Foundation Day Lecture Series
Lecture 26
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Language Endangerment of Tibeto-Burman languages in Western Himalayas

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Suhrnu Ram Sharma retired as Professor of Tibeto-Burman Linguistics from Deccan College, Pune, (1980-2006). He served in Anthropological Survey of India for six years (1974-80) and conducted field work in Arunachal Pradesh, Andamans and Central India on several Tribal languages. He was Senior Fellow twice at the Himalayan languages Project, twice Gonda Fellow at the International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden and once Fellow at Central Institute of Indian Languages. He has been a member of the Editorial Board of the journal 'Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area', (1967-2010) and now on the Advisory Board of the "Himalayan Linguistics" Journal. He has published 3 books and 32 research articles mainly on Tibeto-Burman languages of western Himalayas. Currently he is working on the Manchad Grammar—a TB language in Western Himalayas.

This lecture will provide an overview of the diverse linguistic landscape of North-Western Himalayas focusing on the endangerments of Tibeto-Burman (TB) languages. About 20 TB languages/dialects are spoken by less than ten thousand speakers each along the Indo-Tibet borders in the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and the union territory, Ladakh. In this region the Pahari group of Indo-Aryan languages dominate numerically. Hindi and English are the languages of education, administration and mass media. Thus, the Tibeto-Burman languages are reduced to home and hearth leading to language endangerment. I will discuss the state of the Tibeto-Burman languages of this region in the light of the definition of endangered languages provided by UNESCO, Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered languages.

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