

# Toto (Dengka) Language

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**In news**– Dhaniram Toto has received Padma shri award for “developing script of critically endangered Toto (Dengka) language.

## About Toto (Dengka) language-

- Toto is a **Sino-Tibetan language spoken on the border of India and Bhutan, by the tribal Toto people in Totopara, West Bengal** along the border with Bhutan.
- It is also spoken in Subhapara, Dhunchipara, and Panchayatpara hillocks on India-Bhutan border in Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal.
- The language now has **37 alphabets.**
- **Dhaniram Toto is the first author to write a novel in Toto language.**
- **Despite lacking any formal training as a Linguist, he is the architect of the Toto language script (2015), preserving the indigenous language.**
- **Toto, is a dying language – listed as critically endangered by UNESCO.**
- **The Himalayan Languages Project is working on the first grammatical sketch of Toto.**

## Toto community-

- Toto is a **small tribal community having a population of only 1,632 people living in Toto Para in Alipurduar district, on the edge of north Bengal** near the India-Bhutan border, and speaking the eponymous language.
- The Totos are considered having **Mongoloid features.**
- Toto family **is patrilocal in nature dominated by nuclear type.** However, joint family is not rare. Monogamy is common form of marriage among the Toto but polygamy is

not prohibited.

- If a man's wife dies, he may marry the deceased wife's younger sister, but a woman cannot marry her deceased husband's brother.
- On the death of a spouse, the husband or wife must remain single for twelve months before he or she is free to remarry.
- **They define themselves close to nature, they mainly perform Nature worship. The Totos have two main gods whom they worship:**
  1. **Ishpa** – He is supposed to live in the Bhutan hills, and causes sickness when displeased. The Totos offer him animal sacrifices and Eu.
  2. **Cheima** – She keeps the village and its people safe from troubles and sicknesses. She is also offered rice, fowls and Eu.
- The Totos have priests, also offer their worship and sacrifices on their own. Ishpa is worshipped in the open outside the house and Cheima inside the house.
- Anthropologists agree that the Toto culture and language is totally unique to the tribe, and is clearly distinguished from the neighbouring Rajbongshis, Koch, Mech or the Bhutanese Sharchop tribes.