

Grand Celebration of "VISHWA Ahirani Sammelan"

Ahirani is an Indo-Aryan language originally spoken in the Khandesh region of Maharashtra, India. Despite its long history and rich literature, it has not been included in the Language Schedule of the Indian Constitution and has not received any government patronage.

Recently, people from all strata within and outside India, most of them Ahirani speakers and Khandeshi culture practitioners, joined a world Ahirani conference: the Vishwa Ahirani Sammelan. The conference, held online from 26 to 28 December 2020, was aimed at providing Ahirani visibility, through an extraordinary deployment of politicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, religious leaders, professionals, and artists from all over the world.

The Vishwa Ahirani Sammelan comprises a variety of activities and themes. The Ahirani language's long tradition and richness was highlighted in most speeches, as well as its potentiality in contemporary life. The conference opened with an invitation for all people from Uttar Maharashtra to unite to save the language. In the same vein, a number of distinguished people proudly manifested their Khandeshi identity and highlighted the need to protect and promote Ahirani. With this purpose, the Vice President of Uttar Maharashtra Khandesh Vikas Mandal proposed a resolution that was passed unanimously.

The document claims the celebration of World Ahirani Day every 11 March (Birth Day of Ahir Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad); the status of standard language for Ahirani and its inclusion as a mother tongue in Indian people's surveys; its inclusion in school curricula and degree courses; the admission of Ahirani literature to government-sponsored awards; regular government funding of the Ahirani Literary Sammelan and the Ahirani Drama; the establishment of an Ahirani Academy; a larger space for Ahirani programmes

on Kanhdesh radio stations, daily transmissions of Ahirani programmes on Sahyadri channels, and the change of the region's official name from Khandesh to Kanhdesh.

A part from the language issue, the conference dealt with many questions related to Kanhdeshi people's lifestyle, culture, religion, personal and collective development, economy, and so and forth. Most of the speeches were presented in Ahirani, thus demonstrating the suitability of this language for speaking about all kinds of subjects.

There were several presentations of Ahirani books, webpages, videoclips and other products, as well as Maha Nayaka biographies, and Kandheshi legends.

The large international audience could also enjoy poetry recitals, storytelling, songs, dances, dramas, and other entertainment items presented by Kanhdeshi artists.

Vishwa Ahirani Sammelan lasted more than 70 hours and was attended by a hundred thousand people from India and 27 other countries. It is available on YouTube.

Vikas Patil, teacher, social worker and language activist, and Linguapax,
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