



Pahari Speaking community and the demand of reservation: A Study of Pahari Community of Rajouri and Poonch

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Abstract

The Pahari people, also known as the Pahari-speaking people, are an ethnolinguistic ethnic group found in Jammu and Kashmir, India. There are two major categories to which they belong. In the first Linguistic Survey of India, G.A. Grierson categorised five primary Pahari languages as Western Pahari, which are spoken by the majority of the Pahari people. Bhadarwahi, Sarazi and Bhalesi dialects are present in Jammu's Doda, Ramban, Kishtwar and Kathua districts, as are the Gaddi and Kangri-Dogri languages and their people. In Jammu and Kashmir, one group speaks Lahnda dialects such as Pahari–Pothwari in Poonch and Rajouri Districts and Hindko in Baramulla and Kaupwara Districts, although they call themselves 'Pahari Speaking People.' ethnic Indo-Aryan people who have traditionally lived in a certain mountain range are the Paharis of Jammu and Kashmir. Our research is limited to identifying the 'Paharis of Jammu and Kashmir' ¹as a distinct social and ethnic group living in the State, but to properly classify them, it is necessary to understand the term 'Paharis' on a much larger scale, commensurate with its historically general use defining a huge mass of diverse individuals inhabiting different parts of the Himalayas in India, Nepal, and Pakistan The lexical definitions of the word Pahari will be useful in this endeavour as well.

Key words: Pahari, Speaking, community, Pahari, language etc.

Introduction

Humans have created a language that is more than just a collection of prepared signs that they use to communicate with other people. Unlike other species' communication, human speech is derived from a cortical speech centre, which does not react impulsively but instead organises sound and meaning on a logical basis. Language as a skill cannot be pinpointed with precision, but it is assumed to have evolved through time via an evolutionary process, thus the origin of human language² is likely to remain a mystery. However, over the last several centuries,

¹ “Khush Dev Maini, Pahari Qabayil (urdu), Government of Jammu and Kashmir Advisory Board for the Development of Pahari”

² “Speaking People, Jammu, 2006, p. 18-19”



researchers have focused on the differences in the origins of human languages. There are about 5000 different languages in use today. Language may refer to a particular human ability to learn and use communication systems. Linguistics is the scientific study of language in any sense. Codes and other types of artificially created communication systems, such as computer programming, may also be termed language in sign languages and written languages. When used in this sense, a language is nothing more than a set of symbols used to encode and decode data. As a general principle language refers to a person's ability to acquire and utilise a complicated communication system, cognitive ability is used. There are many sub-identities within the country's main identity, and language³ is an important marker of cultural identity. The state of Jammu and Kashmir seems to have a complicated linguistic crossroads. Diversity of dialects spoken by individuals living in distinct places reflects different contact, encounter and interaction procedures from time to time. Other languages and dialects are spoken in a specific circle or strip of the region besides the main language spoken there.

Linguistic Predicament in Jammu and Kashmir

People living in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir, exposed to diverse social interactions, speak a variety of languages and dialects, creating a difficult linguistic dilemma. Many places have a variety of languages and dialects in addition to the primary language. Occasionally, dormant segments of the speaking population are jolted awake by a newfound sense of social consciousness or political desire. All language groups have experienced the same thing. Pahari and gojri exhibit the same characteristics. They are both fighting for their rightful position in the state's socio-cultural and economic spectrum. It's worth noting that the 1946 New Kashmir Blue Print correctly promised the rehabilitation of all the state's marginalised languages. A fascinating picture emerges from an examination of Jammu and Kashmir's⁴ linguistic makeup. Leh is home to Ladakhi and Kargil to Balti people. To a great extent, the people of the Kashmir Valley speak Kashmiri, with swathes of pahari, Gojri, Shina, and Punjabi thrown in. As a result of linguistic interchange and continuity, there are a variety of mingled dialects including Sikh-Kashmiri, Pahari-Kashmiri, and Gujar-Kashmiri.

Pahari Language Basic Tool to Define Ethnic Identity of Pahari Community

³ "Nazir Masoodi, Waadi ki Pahari Bastiyaan (in Urdu), Shamsbari, Special Edition No. 2, Srinagar, June, 2000, p. 8"

⁴ "Supranote 3"



Language is the most effective tool for exchanging ideas, expressing cultural values and ambitions, and safeguarding cultural heritage, all at the same time. As a result, language is an essential tool for forming and maintaining a sense of belonging within a specific community. As a result of this cultural homogeneity, the linguistic areas have similar characteristics in history, folklore, and literature that bind them together. Religion, ethnicity, language, traditions, and rituals are only a few examples of cultural symbols. Language is the most important cultural indicator because it helps people identify with a particular group. As a result of its geographic isolation, language has become a more significant factor in the development of ethnic identity than religion. Language is a crucial tool for establishing and maintaining one's place in a society. Language is profoundly ingrained in human society, and it is utilised for more than just communication and information exchange. Social and cultural uses include denoting group identification, class distinctions, and the cultivation and entertainment of social relationships. The ethnic identity of Jammu and Kashmir's⁵ Pahari-speaking population is derived from the Pahari language, which serves as a social stratification marker, and they are referred to as paharis (People who speak pahari language). In order to deceive the authorities and other relevant institutions, some opponents of the pahari community attempt to combine the pahari language and the hills to confuse identity of the pahari tribe. The pahari language is used to identify the Pahari speaking community as a distinct ethnic group. This principle is also used to identify other groups, such as the Dogri speaking people known as the Dogras, the Kashmiri speaking people known as the Kashmiris, the Balti speaking people known as the Baltis, and the Gojri speaking people known as the Gujars. Political assertion of linguistic identities has become more important in today's rapidly evolving environment, as should be noted. In this backdrop, Pakistan offers an eye-opening illustration of religious identities in action. Pakistan, which was created as an islamic state after the subcontinent was divided, had an inherent tension between linguistic and religious identities. Bangladesh was largely the result of linguistic diversity. In the end, the Bengali language and ethnicity proved to be more important than the general sense of being a muslim. Pakistan's current disputes amongst Sindhis, Punjabis, Saraikis, Blouchis, and Urdu speakers have elevated political manifestations of linguistic competition to a central position. There is a need for in-depth research on the

⁵ “The Jammu and Kashmir Scheduled Tribe Order 1989”



nuances of language and politics in the multilingual state of Jammu and Kashmir⁶. As a writing system, pahari has been rendered obsolete. Despite this, pahari remains the language of personal and social interaction. As a result, it serves as a vehicle for the transmission of thoughts and feelings, and it also serves as a means of communication among members of one's family, friends, and in public areas like markets and places of worship. The paharis see their language as an important element of their culture and want it to play a bigger role in government, education, and media.

The View Point of Pahari Speaking Community

To demonstrate the sincerity of their demand for Scheduled Tribe status and other benefits, the pahari-speaking community uses logic and argument to show that their claim is legitimate. This logic is based on the fact that both communities share geographical areas and share the same locational disadvantages, eating habits and dressing styles, and live in similar conditions. The pahari people believe that they have been treated unfairly by the government's inability to give them scheduled tribal status quickly enough. There is a sense of outrage among these parents, who question why their children should be treated differently. To them, giving S.T Status to the Gujjar and Bakerwal groups but denying it to the pahari⁷ speaking population was an outright injustice. As well as the Kashmiris, Dogri, Punjabis, and others, Pahari and Gojri were recognised as official languages of their respective groups in 1891 and 1901. There was no differentiation between the two based on whether they were tribal or not. Other social groupings including Lohar, Mochi, Hajam, and Teli have been handled as caste rather than tribe. Bakerwal has not even been recognised as a language, and the community has not been reported as a tribe. Nobody in the Ladakh area, including the Gujjars, Bakerwals, or Gaddis, has been included as a tribe since the first one was taken in 1901.

Conclusion

Other ethnic groups are socioeconomically and educationally more advanced than the Pahari-speaking people, therefore they need protection and assistance right away. Political unrest and clashes on the other side of the border have wreaked havoc on Jammu and Kashmir's border regions and the Valley. As far as we know, this is the worst scenario that has ever occurred in

⁶ “Sharafat Ali Khan, Why Scheduled Tribe Status to Pahari Tribals, Pahari Cultural and Welfare Forum, Srinager, 2011, p. 1”

⁷ “Dr. Arif Khawaja, Commentary, Greater Kashmir, March 23, 2002.”



any Indian state. Due to their precarious social status, the state's marginalised groups are more likely to be targeted by both the state's apparatus and extreme elements working inside it. As a result, extensive measures are urgently required to provide security for these disadvantaged groups. It's true that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has set up many panels to look at the reservation system, but it doesn't stop the reservation policy from being changed repeatedly to suit their needs. Somewhere, caste-based reservations are being sought, which is incompatible with the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where Muslims constitute the majority population. As a result, the caste-based quota policy, which does not distinguish between wealthy and poor members of the same caste, is still in place in Islamic culture.

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