

Pahari Language by Ali Daalat

Introduction

Purpose:

The purpose of this paper is to inform all concern about the Pahari Language, its journey through the history, survival under ever changing political and religious conditions and recent revival including UK.

The Language

Human beings existed before they started speaking. so do nations- they emerge before they acquire symbols that can represent them. Language being one of the most important of these symbols remains what it is- an acquired trait to emphasise a common identity that already exists.

Language is the finest repository of the thinking and emotional patterns of a group of people. Language grows out of human interaction and is reflective of group activity while individual only adds his flavour and enriches a language. No individual has been credited with his own language.

It has been considered to make mother tongue the medium of instruction for children (this seems to be even true of animals). In the past few decades with the founding bodies for the promotion and preservation of culture under the United Nations, the first principal of imparting education at the primary level in the mother tongue has been followed. It is now a human right recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In today's world the languages are becoming standardised and this process involves the extinction of many languages. Perhaps this process of standardisation had always been an ongoing one, only the current rate of acceleration is unprecedented. This accelerated process only means an accelerated extinction of languages.

Language politics in India

India is

a museum of languages and cultures, it is estimated that over three and half thousand languages and dialects exist in Indian sub-continent. It consists of over 558 former states. Over the centuries many rulers, invaders and ruling classes have tried to impose single identity, culture and language in the region with some degree of success, recent examples include, Hindi, Urdu and English. All these were languages of power and domination as well as of exchange between peoples of diverse culture. It formed the link between diverse groups and communities.

During the British Raj English was the only source of making inroads in to the exclusive citadel of power. This must have been true of Persian and Urdu during different eras, even for holding a minor position in government one had to know the rulers language otherwise one was considered illiterate, no matter how literate one was in his mother tongue or father's language. This then resulted in worthlessness of native languages which got demoted from language to "Boli" spoken language. It was the superiority of English which pushed Indians to look for identity and they found it in Hindi and Urdu. Which resulted in partition of India and creation of Pakistan.

Above material is used from, The news section of international, Daily Jang, Monday 14 March, 2005, Various articles on Urdu Language conference

Globalisation

Currently imperialists are looking for globalisation and standardisation in language and culture and yet in their human development indices they emphasise the need for pluralism and cultural diversity. It may be that they are merely seeking to introduce certain economic standards to further their one world thesis. At the same time the fact remains that opening of the boundaries and emergence of English as the global language of communication threatens the development and existence of other languages.

The fact remains that economy is central to the flourishing of a language.

Infact that is amply reflected in the case of Pahari which was thriving at the hight of Buddhist empire and now it seems to be the inherated property of the illetrate. This than does not stop in the Indian Sub- continent it follows Pahari speaking Kashmiri community in the UK too. Like global masters,Public Service providers are always talking about inclusion, community cohesion, need to recognise diversisty and social inclusion, despite all that they continue to deny Pahari speaking Kashmiri community their identity and keep one of the largest language spoken after English out of Classroom. It does not stop there, Public service providers choose to communicate with Pahari speakers in other South Asian languagues which are as foreign to Pahari community as is the English. It seems as though there is very little or no knowledge of Pahari within British state and society.

As a reasult of that not only a very large Pahari speaking community living in Britain miss out on public services, but multicultural Britain's ethos of inclusion are defeated and Pahari speaking Kashmiri community's invisiblity and exclusion remains a big challenge for authorities. Underachievement of Kashmiri community can be translated as none participatary which in essance means British state and society is not exploiting full potential of this community. Continious exclusion means that Pahari would be extinct within third and four generation of Kashmiris living in Britain.

Pahari Language

Pahari is a language of the Indo-Aryan family of languages¹ It drives its name from Pahar meaning " hills and mountains " for it is spoken over a very large area starting from Nepal and running throughout the foothills of the Himalayas, in the Hamachal Pardesh (Northern Indian province), the Indian controlled part of the state of Jammu Kashmir, the Pakistani controlled Jammu Kashmir and through out the Northern Pakistan, up to River Indus and Chitral², (see map below) The language spoken in Pothwar and hills of Muree in Northern Punjab is by all means Pahari language, deriving its so-called name from the Pothwari region which consists of four districts, Rawalpindi, Jhelum,, Chakwal and Attock³. It is called Pothwari in this region for much the same reason as the Pahari spoken in the district Mirpur (especially in Britain) is some time referred to Mirpuri or in Rajori Chibali and in Jammu Dogari and it commands many more regional names such as Hindco and Garwali. Due to geo-political stresses and strains its current position can be compared with that of Scandian navian languages which is discribed as family of languages, hence all above can be described as family of Pahari languges though most linguists discribe it as Pahari language with many dialects. It is open to interpretation and demands serious discussions and research. However, it is very clear that it is neither Punjabi or dialect of another South Asian language, which often seems to be the explanation by language service providers.

A rough map of Pahari speaking areas which overlap in to India, Pakistan and Nepal, the central point being the Himalian region of state of Jammu and Kashmir from where most British Kashmiris have migrated

Pahari like many other languages of the world has seen rise and fall in the course of history,

Its written historical storey is as old and as complex as the language itself. At the height of the Buddhist reign Sharda university was built, After Maharaja Ashoke. It is a remembrance to Maharaja Kinshak and those Buddhists who in 5AD fled Northern areas of Gilgit, Tibet etc in the face of white Huns invasion and entered Kashmir through Sharda. It is argued by Dr Nassuralla Khan Nassar a Pahari scholar, that Landa Pahari is continuation of Ashoke Parakat or Pali language which was official language of Buddhist Empire which covered Most of current Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal and most Indian states in the Himalias from 600 BC to 100 AD.

Pahari was initially written in Landa script and landa is a form of Sharda which was invented by Buddhists⁴. Sharda was a Buddhist university which is situated in Neelam valley (Kishan Ganga) in the Azad Jammu Kashmir. In this village there are remains of an ancient Buddhist university, a monastery and certain stupas⁵ quoting from Professor Buhler's *Indische Palaeography* (p56), Dr Grierson states that Sharda script was introduced by Kashmir⁶. Heim Chander (1088-1172), an eminent Chinese scholar, collected eight ancient manuscripts from the Sharda monastery in order to compile his new book of grammar entitled "Sada Heim Chander"⁷.

Why Sharda?

One might argue why build a university at Sharda? it is a little place in the middle of nowhere but looking at it closely one would see that it is a central place between the Ganges and Kashmir valleys also it was on caravan routes to Upper Indus, the Karakoram valleys and linked to most central Asian and Indian trade routes. The other reason seems to be that because Buddhists way of writing was leaves, wooden planks and bark (it was called Laikam Chandni). The forests of Sharda exhibit a rich growth of paper trees locally called "Purzi" or "Bhoj pattar", that casts off paper-thin bark used for writing purposes, and

now-a-days the holy men use it for writing talismans. Hence, Sharda was chosen for the religious educational purposes by the Buddhists and Pahari language Alphabets were not restricted to Kashmir but were used in central Punjab and Sindh and through out Buddhist empire and religious influenced areas.

Some argue that Dave Nagari, Landa or Takari alphabets are older than Sharda alphabet, however if that was true than one might argue why go in to all that bother to invent Sharda alphbet? more research is needed on the subject Nevertheless It can be said that arguably Sharda Pahari is one of the oldest written language in South Asia and it has contributed in developing other languages old and modern including Urdu⁸. Pahari and other similar South Asian languages, most are not taught in the classroom but are very much alive within the people and overlap a lot through population's physical contact and interaction⁹, Along with other languages Pahari has suffered on the hands of foreign invaders, Pahari's erosion started with the demise of Buddhist Empire and religion within South Asia. Each new Master introduced and imposed new styles of official writing including alphabetic changes.

Erosion/Change

In the lower regions the style of writing started changing with Greek invasion followed by rafts and rafts of other invasions but in Kashmir up until 10th century AD the nagri Alphbet survived, however, this changed with Muslim invasion and it became farsi from 1819 to 1846 during sikh rule it was Punjabi and than it was replaced by Urdu. In Kashmir Pahari was and still is to certain extent written by Hindu business people in Landa script¹⁰ and has been kept alive from father to son. Some time reffred to as "Tunda Munda" or " Dand Mutrani" A drogotory term by the so called linguists.

Post 1947 Like Punjabi, Pahari has suffered from the division of India and the written forms got divided too in the shapes of Shah Mukhi and Gurmukhi broadly speaking. Punjabi seemed to have made some progress on the both sides of the border but Pahari in Jammu Kashmir got further suppressed through this neo- colonial status-co between Hindi and Persian scripts

Survival

Once thriving written Pahari language,

became extinct not only from the classroom but from existence in the written form, however, it remained verbally very strong within the people and seem to have stood test of time as have many Buddhist traditions with out any real awareness. One of the main reason for this could be the presence of mass illitracy and people's tradiotions and way of life unchanged in the absance of any infrastructual changes ie roads, industry etc. As the map shows, Pahari has survived and is still the language of agrarian mountain farmers and herdsmen living in the hymalyes which were former Buddhist strong holds and Sharda being in the heart of it.

Revival

Post 1947 there seems to be a drive for recognition of local languages more so by India than Pakistan, However, In Pakistan Punjabi, Sindhi and Pushto have found its way in to classroom and many more regional languages and dialects have found space in media especially air space. Indian occupied Kashmir has a very vibrant and thriving cutural acadmy, when it started work on Gojri, Dogri, Kashri and other languages of the state of Jammu Kashmir, a pressure group called Pahari welfare society was formed and soon Pahari became integral part of the acadmy and in the last twenty years have produced and translated many books into Pahari as well as TV ,radio programmes and dramas are being produced. Currently, there are magzines like, "Shamas Barri, Shiraza, Usta Adab and many more are produced regularly.

Recently Pahari from Hamachal Perdesch has found its way in to main stream Bombay film industry in the shape of?????????

On the Pakistani side, there have been radio programmes in the shapes of dramas, Pothwari shares and poetry in existance for a long time. In the recent pass there have been 18 Pakistani languages recognised by the Alama Iqbal open University for research purposes and Pahari is one of those 18 languages included. Radio Mirpur and Muzzaffrabad TV and radio programmes are seen dominated by Pahari.

Apart from the official recognition, the public effort in revivalism has been over whelming on both sides of Kashmir and only in the last decade there have been at least 20 books written, these include poetry, pros short stories, novels, nursery rhymes and people's folk stories. These are mainly written in Persian script. This than has contributed to literary exchange between writers of both sides of Kashmir,

which normally is a very rare thing.

While uncoordinated work on revivalism of Pahari language was going on in South Asia, for some reason it started in Britain too in the shape of a magazine called "Chitka" It was the British Pahari speakers who forged links between all sides of Pahari speakers and produced some qualitative Pahari literature.

Pahari in Britain

The spoken language of nearly all Kashmiris in the UK is Pahari, and many are unable to read any language. Most social commentators write that in Britain 80% to 90% of the so called Pakistanis are in fact of Kashmiri origin¹¹ Professor Nazir Tabbasam in his paper Pahari sounds writes "People who emigrated to UK on Pakistani passports, 80% were of Kashmiri origin. They are quite distinct from the rest of the south Asians not only culturally and linguistically but ethnically too"¹² Similarly 99% of the Kashmiris emigrated from the districts of Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimber, Poonch, Mehendar, Muzafrabad, Rajori, Jammu and Noshara, around 1% from the Valley, Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh/Kirgil. Thus 99% of the people of state of Jammu and Kashmir, northern India and Pakistan in Britain speak Pahari. This arguably makes Pahari the largest language in Britain after English i.e. more than 1 million, this makes Kashmiri community and Pahari speakers almost 2% of the UK population.

Recognising this BBC world service, British High Commission in Islamabad, and many local radio stations and Muslim Charities in UK including radio Ramadan and one off community stations run programmes and advertisements have adopted Pahari to reach its customers. Lot of good Local Authorities and other public service providers recognise and include Pahari in their communication strategies to reach to Kashmiri community.

Conclusion

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