

10. Languages in Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh Region and the Sharada Script

• Prin. Dr. Jagdeesh R. Lanjekar- B. M. College of Commerce, Pune.

Email: jrlanjekar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Due to the immigrants from the Indian Plains, Tibet, Iran, and other central Asian nations, the regions of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are diverse in terms of terrain, culture, and languages. In these areas, the languages are as varied as the civilizations. There are many different languages spoken in these areas; four of them are the primary languages, and many more are dialects of these four. Formerly, the official language of the J & K state was Urdu. The Indo-European Group of languages includes Urdu. However, Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory officially recognised Kashmiri as a language for the first time in 2020. Dogri and Hindi are spoken in Jammu, but Kashmiri is primarily spoken in the Kashmir Valley. The primary tongue of Ladakh State is Ladakhi. In the border regions of these regions, additional indigenous languages such Shina, Pahari, Gujari, Balti, and Brushaski are also spoken. Hindi is the native language of the Gujjars and Kashmiri Pandits who reside in Jammu and Kashmir. All of the classical Sanskrit literature is written in Sharada Script. From the eighth to the twelfth century, in and around Kashmir, Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of Vidya, is also known by the name Sharada (Learning). The major deity at the Sharada Peeth Temple, which is presently located in Pakistan, is Sharada, and the script bears her name. The present study is an effort to explore the languages of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh Region with special reference to the Sharada Script.

Key Words: Languages, Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh Region, Sharada Script

Introduction

Kashmir is popularly known as the heavenly paradise of India. Jammu & Kashmir state was founded during the last days Mughal Empire by Gulab Singh with the help of Sikh Maharaja of Punjab. The Jammu, Kashmir Ladakh regions are crucially important and integral parts of our country. These regions are situated on the borders of our many neighbouring countries. These regions are diverse in many aspects. The traditions and culture here are greatly influenced by the culture from Central Asia, Indian Plains and Tibet. The aim of this Research Paper is to study the various aspects of the languages spoken in J & K territory as well as in the Ladakh State and their relation with the Sharada Script.

Table 1

Districts and Population in J-K-L Regions

Sr.No.	Region	No. of Districts	Population
1.	Jammu	10	48,01,338
2.	Kashmir	10	57,40,412
3.	Ladakh	2	2,36,539
4.	Gilgit-Baltistan	7	10,53,347
5.	POK (Azad Kashmir)	10	29,73,000

Review of Literature

Various types of literature are reviewed. Some selected reviews related to the Research topic have been given here.

- (a) Gyawan in his research article, 'Types of languages spoken in Jammu and Kashmir' states that the languages spoken in J-K-L are classified as Dardic, Pahari, Tibetic, Dogri and some isolated languages. These languages are related to the language family groups like Indo-Aryan, Indo-Iranian, Sino-Tibetan, etc.
- (b) The research article published on the website quora.com informs that Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi, Urdu and English are the official languages of Jammu – Kashmir Union Territory. The regional languages include Shina, Dogri, Bhadarwahi, Padari, Sarazi, Paguli, Rambai, Pahari, Hindko, Gujari or Gujjari, etc.
- (c) Naseer Ganai in his research article updated on 19th Jan., 2022 mentions that 'Ladakh Govt. has dropped official status of Urdu language and removed its mandate for the government jobs.
- (d) The article on 'Sharda Alphabet' published on the website *omnig lot* says that the Sharda Alphabets are developed from the Brahmi Script during the second half of the 8th century AD.

The review of literature shows that there is need to study the languages spoken in the POK and reveal their cultural similarities with their Indian counterparts. This research is based on mainly the secondary data collected from various sources. The analysis and interpretation of the data collected show that there are number of linguistic and ethnic groups in these regions which speak different dialects of Kashmiri language which is written in Urdu script. However Sharada Script was the original script of Kashmir and it is evolved from the western branch of the Brahmi Script during the second of the 8th century AD.

Statement of the Problem

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions have diversity in the geography, culture and languages due to the migrants from Indian Plains, Tibet and Iran and other central Asian countries. There are different languages as the cultures in these regions. There are various types of languages spoken in these regions; 4 out of them are the main languages while many other languages are the dialects of these main languages.

Rational

This is the study of various languages spoken in the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir which includes the Jammu province, Kashmir valley, Leh-Ladakh region, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (Pak occupied) and the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To study the main languages and their dialects spoken in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.
- (2) To study different family Groups of languages in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh
- (3) To know more about the Kashmiri language
- (4) To know more about the Sharada Script and its relationship with the Kashmiri and Sanskrit language.

Data Collection

This research work is entirely based on the secondary data which is collected from various literature and Census Reports.

Languages in Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh

Earlier Urdu was the official language of the erstwhile J & K State. Urdu is related to the Indo-European Group of languages.

However, Kashmiri has become an official language in Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory in the year 2020 for the first time. Kashmiri is spoken mainly in the Kashmir Valley while Dogri and Hindi are spoken in Jammu. Ladakhi is the main language of Ladakh State. Shina, Pahari, Gujari, Balti and Brushaski, etc. are other indigenous languages spoken in the border areas of these regions.

Kashmiri Pandits and the Gujjar people staying in Jammu & Kashmir speak Hindi.

Kashmiri Language

Kashmiri language is also known as Kashur. It belongs to the Dardic branch of Indo-Aryan origin. Kashmiri is written in Urdu/Persian Script. Kashmiri is one of the 22 National Languages stated in the Schedule of Indian Constitution. It is spoken by more than 5 million speakers, mostly in the Kashmir Valley as an official language. It is also spoken by 1,10,000 immigrants in Pakistan from Kashmir Valley. As per the census of 1981, there were total 30,76,398 Kashmiri speakers. No Census was conducted in the region due to the threat by extremists. Kashmiri language is used in the education, literature and mass media there.

There are two types of dialects of Kashmiri language; the first one is the Kashmiri language which is spoken within the region inside the Kashmir valley and the second one is spoken in the regions outside the valley. There are three regions of the valley where the Kashmiri language is mainly spoken; the first region is the southern & the south-eastern region known as Maraz, the second region is the northern and the north-western region known as Kamraz and the third region is Srinagar and its surrounding areas. There is considerable influence of Persian language on the Kashmiri vocabulary. Kashmiri is referred to as one of the most conservative Indo-Aryan Languages.

Various Types of Family Groups of Languages spoken in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh

1. Dardic Languages Group –

This group includes the languages like Kashmiri, Shina and Khowar (Chaitali). It is a sub-group of Indo-Aryan Languages. These languages are mainly spoken in Kashmir valley, Jammu province and the Gilgit-Baltistan region.

- (a) Kashmiri is spoken in the Kashmir valley, Chenab valley and the Neelum valley.
- (b) Shina is spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan, Gurez and Drass. Each of these regions has its separate dialect of Shina language. Around 9 million people speak Shina language.
- (c) Khowar or Chitrali is spoken mainly in Gilgit-Baltistan.

2. Pahari Languages Group–

These languages are spoken in Pahari areas. Pahari languages have many dialects such as Bhaderwahi, Padri, Ponchi, Mirpuri, Parmi or Pahari (Karnah). There is an influence of Kashmiri and Punjabi languages on the Pahari languages. However, these Pahari languages

are different from Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and northern Hilly regions in other states in northern India.

Pahari languages are spoken in Azad J & K (Pak occupied), Pir Panjal, Karnah, Uri and many parts of Chenab valley.

The clusters of Pahari Languages include Pahari, Dogri, Hindko, Potwari, Saraiki and standard Punjabi.

3. Tibeti Languages –

These languages are related to the Tibetan and Sino-Tibetan family. They are categorized as Balti-Ladakhi or western archaic Tibetan. There are different forms of Tibetan languages; they are as follows:

- (a) Ladakhi or Bhoti or Bodhi – It's spoken in Leh District by Buddhists and it is written in Tibetan Script. Its dialects are Shamskat, Stotskat, Lehskat, Nubra, etc.
 - (b) Balti – It is spoken mainly by the Muslims in Baltistan, Kargil and Leh district. It is the most spoken Tibetan language. Pargi (Kargil) is considered to be its dialect.
 - (c) Purgi (Purigi / Purki) – It is also spoken mostly by Muslims in the Kargil and Leh district and also in Baltistan. It is considered to be the dialect of Ladakhi and Balti.
 - (d) Zangskri – It is spoken mostly by Buddhists in Zaskar area of Kargil District. It is a separate language with the four dialects namely Oot, Zhuag, Sham and Lungnak.
4. **Dogri** – This Indo-Aryan language is spoken by 3 million people in Jammu city and Jammu Plains (Duggerdesh). It is tonal language like Punjabi. It is written in Devnagari. It became India's National Language in 2003.
5. **Iranian Languages** – Pashto and Wakhi are spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan by the descendants of the migrants in 18th and 19th centuries when the whole Kashmir area was under the Afghan rulers. At present there are 15000 to 20,000 speakers of Pashto in Kashmir valley alone.
- Wakhi is spoken in Gojal, Ishkoman areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. It's a part of Pamiri languages spoken in the Central Asia. There are about 25,000 to 30,000 speakers of Wahi language.
6. **Gujri** – It is mainly spoken by Gujjars and Bakerwals. It is related to Rajastani languages under the Indo-Aryan language group. It is spoken in Azad J & K, Pir Panjal in some scattered parts.
7. **Urdu** – It is spoken in Kashmir valley. It was recognized as a State language and official language of Jammu and Kashmir in 1889 replacing the 3 centuries long spoken Persian.
8. **Burushaski** – It is a unique, isolate and unclassified language spoken in Hunza and Nager areas of Gilgit-Baltistan with few hundred people in Srinagar's Hari Parbat area and the northern Kashmir.

Table No. 2

Languages Spoken in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh

Sr. No.	Dardic Group	Western Pahari Group	Inter-mediate Between Dardic and Pahari Group	Lahada Group	Rajastha -ni Group	West Tibetan	Un-classified	Other Languages
1.	Kashmiri (34.64%)	Dogri (17.99%)	Poguli	Hindko	Gojari (Gujjari) (10.41%)	Balti (1.87%)	Brush-aski (1%)	Wakhi, Khowar, Kundalshahi
2.	Shina (4%)	Padari (23.99%)	Sarazi	Pahari Pothwari		Ladakhi (1,56%)		Pashto, Punjabi, etc.
3.		Bhaderwahi	Rambani					

(Ref. - India Census Report, 2001)

Table 3

Proportion of Kashmir Speaking Population.

Sr. No.	Language	Census 1941	Census 1981
1.	Kashmiri	38.53	52.32
2.	Dogri (Punjabi)	26.73	24.29
3.	Gujari (Rajasthani)	7.05	16.91
4.	Ladakhi	1.16	1.2
5.	Other Languages	26.53	2.28

Sharada Script

Sharada is another name of Goddess Saraswati which is the Goddess of Vidya (Learning). There is Sharada Peeth Temple (now in Pakistan) where the main deity is Sharada and the script is named after her. Sharada Peeth was the main sea of learning in these days.

All the ancient literature in Sanskrit is written in Sharada Script. It was widespread and in more use between 8th to 12th centuries in and around Kashmir i.e., in the northern areas and nearby western countries for writing both the Sanskrit and the Kashmiri. However, it is rarely used in modern time, mainly by the Kashmiri-Pandits only for the religious purposes such as for writing and calculating astrological Birth records, Horoscopes, etc. in the Jammu region only. The Gurumukhi script of Punjabi language is derived from Sharada Script around 500 years ago.

Sharada is the original script of Kashmir. It was evolved from the western branch of Brahmi about 1200 years ago. It became unfit for Sanskrit in these regions due to the impact of evolving the Kashmiri language. The intonations, variations and sounds of Kashmiri language

affected the Sharada script during the period of development of Kashmiri. However, the Sharada script continued to be used for writing the Sanskrit literature.

The Punjabi script like Gurumukhi and Lahnda script started evolving from Sharada Script as its dialects. The earliest known inscription in the Sharada Script was discovered in Hund village (now in Pakistan) and it dates back 774 AD. Sharada script was in use not only in Kashmir region, but also in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Gilgit including some of the Central Asian countries. Sharada Script was being used to write almost all Sanskrit literature in Kashmir during those days. Sharada script is the member of the Brahmic family of scripts. It was originated in 700 CE and still it continues to be in use. It was

Scope for further Research

1. Detailed study of linguistic and ethnic groups in J_K_L region is required to find out more accurate classification of languages spoken and their nomenclature.
2. More study on the enumeration of indigenous languages is needed.

Findings

1. Kashmiri, Pahari, Dogri and Gojari are the most spoken 4 languages in J-K-L area.
2. Both the Kashmiri and Dogri languages have a considerable modern literature in modern days.
3. The number of Kashmiri speaking population in the Jammu and Kashmir regions has increased since the migration of Kashmiri Pandits on a large scale in the year 1989 from these areas to the other states in the country due to the danger from the terrorists. It also affected the use of Sharada Script which was mainly used by the Kashmiri Pandits.
4. Muslim people in Kashmir valley largely speak Urdu.

Conclusion

1. All the people staying in Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh regions are generally bilingual or trilingual.
2. The linguistic scenarios in these regions are diverse, mixed and complex.
3. Majority of languages spoken in these areas are from the language group families like Dardic, Indo-Aryan, Tibetan-Burman, etc.
4. Kashmiri language is mainly spoken in the Kashmir valley, however, people speaking Dogri, Gujari, Pahari, Shina, Burushaskhi, Tibetan, etc are also found in the valley.
5. People in all these three regions speak dialects of main four languages e.g. Kashmiri, Pahari, Dogri and Gujari. They speak the hybrid of these languages which could be described as the sister languages.
6. Burushaskhi language spoken in some areas of Jammu-Kashmir, Gilgit, Baltistan, etc. is an isolated language without any Group Classification.

References

- Bubenik, V. (1991). Contact-Induced Morphosyntactic Change in The North-West Indo-Aryan Languages. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 72/73(1/4), 701–713. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41694932>
- Mohan Shakil (2012). Languages of erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/6485567/Languages_of_Erstwhile_State_of_Jammu_Kashmir_A_Preliminary_Study

- Dutt, A. K., Khan, C. C. & Sangwan, C. (1985). Spatial Pattern of Languages in India: A Culture-Historical Analysis. *GeoJournal*, 10(1), 51–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41143431>
- Gyawan (2020). Types of languages spoken in Jammu & Kashmir' (Research article), Feb. 12, 2020.
- Husain, S., & Manchanda, R. (2013). Unequal Citizens: Field Notes from Rajouri and Poonch. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(31), 131–136. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23527950>
- India. (1962). *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 21(5), 735–783. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2942912>
- K. Wariko, Languages and politics in Jammu Kashmir: Issue & Perspective retrieved from <https://ikashmir.net/history/warikoo.html>
- Languages of India: Pidginization/Creolization. (1975). *Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications*, 14, 632–635. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20006659>
- ORANSKAJA, T. I. (1994). Indo-Aryan Words in The Secret Languages Of Central Asia. *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, 54/55, 185–195. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42930470>
- Puri, B. (2001). Major Identities of Jammu and Kashmir State. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 28(3), 69–79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005561>
- Rahi, R. (1964). Kashmiri Literature. *Indian Literature*, 7(2), 52–55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23329250>
- Strand, R. F. (1973). Notes on the Nūristāni and Dardic Languages. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 93(3), 297–305. <https://doi.org/10.2307/599462>
- Turner, R. L. (1927). Notes on Dardic. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London*, 4(3), 533–541. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/606953>
- Turner, R. L. (1934). [Review of *A Dictionary of the Kāshmirī Language*, by G. A. Grierson]. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3, 571–573. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25200955>
- www.quora.com
- www.outlookindia.com
- [www.discoverindia.com/jammu and Kashmir](http://www.discoverindia.com/jammu%20and%20Kashmir)
- [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanda Script](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanda_Script).
- www.unesco.org
- www.omniglot.com
