

# Pahari Speaking Community-Ethnic and Linguistic Identity in the State of Jammu and Kashmir; Pahari-Gujar faultline, Pahari Perspective



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## Abstract

Human beings have developed a language based on a set of prearranged signals. It cannot be precisely pointed out when the language as a talent developed. The origin of different languages in contrast to each other has been a subject of study for the past few centuries. There are around 5000 languages spoken in the world. In general concept language refers to the cognitive faculty that enables humans to learn and use system of complex communication. Language as a marker of cultural identity within the country's overall identity.

Jammu and Kashmir is a multicultural and multi lingual state and the linguistic criss cross is dauntingly complex. Alongside prominent language of an area there are other languages and dialects also spoken in a particular strip or the pocket of the area concerned. A study of linguistic composition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir presents an interesting picture. In Ladakh we find Ladakhi in Leh, and Balti in Kargil. In Kashmir valley we have by and large kashmiri speaking people with strips of Pahari, Gojri, Shina and Punjabi linked together by urdu. Similarly in Jammu there is Dogri, Punjabi and Pahari with strips of Gojri, Kishtawari, Bhadarwahi, Rambani etc. Language is an important means to acquire and preserve identity of a particular group or community. Language and culture are interrelated.

**Keywords:** Community, Pahari, Ethnicity, Gujjars, Gojri, Cultural Identity, Language, Composite Culture, Script, Folklore, Social Stratification, Language Variable, Fault Line.

## Introduction

All Social animals communicate with each other from bees and ants to whales and apes, but human have developed a language which is more than a set of prearranged signals. The speech of human beings differ from communication of other animals in physical ways as well as it comes from a cortical speech centre, which does not respond instinctively but organizes sound and meaning on rational basis. It cannot be precisely pointed out when the language as talent developed, but it is presumed that it has been a long evolutionary process, so the origin of human language will perhaps remain obscure. However the origin of human languages in contrast to each other has been a subject of study for the past few centuries. There are around 5000 languages spoken in the world.

Language may refer either to the specific human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication. The scientific study of language in any sense is called linguistics. In sign languages and written languages codes and other kinds of artificially constructed communication systems such as those used for computer programming can also be called language. A language in this sense is system of signs for encoding and decoding information. In general concept language refers to the cognitive faculty that enables humans to learn and use system of complex communication.

Language is a significant marker of cultural identity within the country's overall identity comprising of number of sub identities. The linguistic criss- cross in the state of Jammu and Kashmir seems to be very complex. We find diversity of languages dialects spoken by people inhabiting various areas and reflect diverse processes of contact, encounter and interaction from time to time. Besides a prominent language spoken in a particular area there are other languages and dialects also spoken in a particular circle or strip of the area.

The study of the linguistic composition of the state presents an interesting picture as for example in Ladakh, we have Ladakhi in Leh and Balti in Kargil. In Kashmir valley we have by and large Kashmiri language with strips of Pahari, Gojri, Kishtawari, Bhadarwahi etc. Various linguistic groups in the state derive their separate identity on the basis of language spoken by them. The Pahari speaking community stands at number three in the state as it is spoken by third largest population of the state.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

This research study has been undertaken with the aim to highlight the linguistic predicament in the state of Jammu and Kashmir viz a via Pahari speaking community and also reflect on the demand of scheduled tribe status and its impact in creating economic and social disparity between the Gujjar Bakerwal community which was granted S.T Status on 19th April 1991 and Pahari speaking community which was denied the benefits, despite being recommended along with other communities by the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir vide cabinet decision 159 of 1989.

In addition to this an effort is made in this study to highlight the emergence of a fault line - friction between the Pahari speaking community and Gujjar and Bakerwal community (Which is enjoying the benefits of reservation), which poses a challenge to the steps initiated for restoration of peace in the troubled state of Jammu and Kashmir.

This study also undertakes the language demography of the state before and after the partition of the state. In addition to this an effort is made to put forth argument in favour of language as criteria, a potential cultural marker for group/Community identity and also how Pahari language is tool to define ethnicity of Pahari speaking community – a parameter applied for identifying other linguistic communities.

### **Linguistic Predicament in Jammu and Kashmir**

The linguistic predicament in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is dauntingly complex as we find a diversity of languages and dialects spoken by people inhabiting various areas exposed to various processes of social interactions. In many areas along with prominent language some dialects and other languages are also spoken in some strip or area. Occasionally some dormant sectors of speakers suddenly wake up to a refreshing stroke of socio cultural aspiration or political ambition. That is what has been happening with all the linguistic groups. The same is profoundly seen happening in case of Pahari and Gojri. Both the linguistic groups are striving for due place in the socio cultural and economic spectrum of the state. It is pertinent to mention that the new Kashmir blue print had as early as 1946 rightly guaranteed rehabilitation of all the neglected languages (mother tongues) of the state.

A study of the linguistic composition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir presents an interesting picture. In Ladakh, we find Ladakhi in Leh and Balti in Kargil. The Kashmir Valley has by and large Kashmiri with strips of Pahari, Gojri, Shina and Punjabi linked together by Urdu. Linguistic contiguity and exchange occasionally gives rise to a mix up like what is popularly labeled as Sikh-Kashmiri, Pahari-Kashmiri, Gujjar-Kashmiri etc.

Similarly in Jammu we find Dogri, Punjabi and Pahari with strips of Gojri, Kishtawari, Bhadarwahi, Rambani etc. Major population of the state speaks Kashmiri which is unique language in the Indian linguistic context. It is analytic like modern Indian languages of Sanskrit stock and synthetic like Indo-Aryan itself possessing the characteristics of both and at the same time having peculiarities of its own, many of which are yet to be fully explored. Kashmiri does hold the key to understanding the processes through which these languages have passed in their development before assuming their present form.

The second largest population in the state of Jammu and Kashmir speak Dogri language, predominantly in Jammu province. Some parts of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. John Beames includes Dogri in the group of eleven Indian languages which gives it area as lying between the Punjab and the valley of Kashmir. The earliest known mention of Dogri language is found in Amir Khusrus list of Indian languages, Sindhi, Lahouri, Kashmiri, Dogri, Dhursundri, Tilangi Gujrati, Malbari, Gaudi, Bengali, Awadhi, and Dehlvi. Dogri belongs to the Indo European family of languages in India and is derived from Sanaseni Prakrit (Gouri Shanker 1981, B.K Shastri 1981). Grierson describes Dogri as a dialect of Punjabi and Kandyali, Kangra and Cameali as its three subdialects- linguistic survey of India vol. IX part-I.

The Pahari language stands at number three in the state of Jammu and Kashmir as it is spoken by third largest population. The origin of Pahari language can be traced back to the ancient times, when Jammu and Kashmir was ruled by Hindu Rajas. It has been established that Buddhism as religion found its base in Jammu and Kashmir, the priests and the preachers of this religion searched for a language other than Sanskrit which was dominating and mainly was considered of Hindu religion people, so Buddhists found success in the form of Pahari, which in fact was one language and one state at that time. This was a golden period for Pahari language (dating back to 400BC)

Buddhists adopted Pahari as a language of their preaching and various scripts were introduced to write the language. With the rise of Buddhism Pahari was developed and preached in major parts of Jammu and Kashmir and also in its adjoining areas. It is mentioned that, when King Ashoka took control of Kashmir, he also contributed in the development of language and introduced another script for its writing and preaching. This is considered as climax of Pahari language and literature.

However when Kashmir saw the rise of Hinduism again, it marked the fall of Pahari language as there was no one to promote and preserve the Pahari language and virtually it was left on the mercy of local people and soon its writing script disappeared. Now the only mechanism for the language to survive was its adoption from parents to children and so on. It was vulnerable to all other languages. That is why with the arrival of Muslims, Sikhs etc. the region contributed to change in its words and Pahari turned more resembling to such languages. In Pakistan administered Kashmir where majority of the people speak Pahari language, a committee was constituted

to trace the background of Pahari language and after detailed studies, it was declared a separate language in the year 1969.

The people who migrated from Pakistan administered Kashmir to U.K, speak pahari language. The British High Commission, with intent to provide services to the pahari community employed pahari interpreters. This was followed by B.B.C. world and Asia radio networks. In 1990's a pahari magazine chitka was launched from the north Britain. Today Pahari is the largest language in Britain after English. Professor Nazir Tabassum in his Paper, 'a phonological analysis of pahari language' (a research paper written under the supervision of J.M.Y Simpson, the senior lecturer in the department of English language, University of Galsgow) writes - "People who migrated to U.K. on Pakistani passports 80% were from Jammu and Kashmir (Pak administered), they are quite distinct from the rest of the south Asians not only culturally and linguistically but ethnically too. Dr Tahir Abbas of Birmingham University states that pahari speaking community is second largest language group in Birmingham and they identify themselves as Paharis.

In Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 1% of total population that has migrated from Jammu and Kashmir, POK speak Pahari Language. Moreover around thirty thousand people have migrated to USA, they speak Pahari language.

In 1947 communal frenzy culminated in the partition of this country and also the state of Jammu and Kashmir, it caused a huge blow to the pahari speaking belt, which was bisected by the most infamous dividing line known as LOC. Though the Pahari language stood second major language after Kashmiri as per census of 1931 and 1941, but the situation changed with the going of one third part of the state to Pakistan. However in spite of many flaws, misconceptions, miscalculations the census record of 1961 appeared with the assertion that Pahari stands third largest language in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pahari speaking community is simple, hospitable and free from any kind of prejudice. This community enjoys a composite culture with a blend of population from all religious faiths, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians.

A.	District	Pahari Speaking Population (PSP) in lakhs
	Rajouri	409600
	Poonch	300734
B.	Baramulla( Uri & Boniyar) & Kupwara (Karna & Keran)	152122
C.	Rest of the Kashmir*(tentative)	100,000(approx.)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>962456</b>

\*Anantnag, Budgam, Bandipora, Ganderbal, Kulgam, Pulwama, Shopian, rest of Baramulla etc.

Another important language spoken in Jammu and Kashmir is Gojri. It is the language spoken by Gujars and Bakerwals of the state. Sir Walter Lawrence has termed this language as Parimu or Hindki. Before the partition of the country it was categorized as Rajasthani by the state in the census report. In the census of 1941, Gojri has been

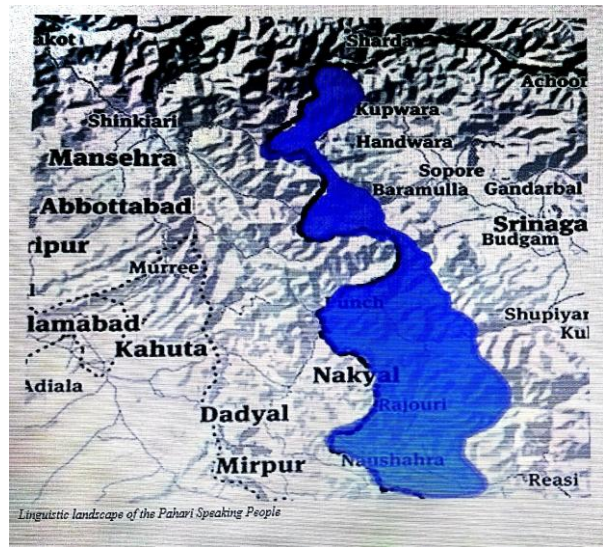
# Remarking

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classified under Pahari. The settled class of Gujars and Bakerwals speak Gojri which akin to Rajasthani. The scholars trace the historical roots and affinity of gujri language from thr gurjara & pabhramsa of the Sanskrit grammarians.

## Language demography in Jammu and Kashmir

An in -depth study of the language composition in the state of Jammu and Kashmir requires understanding of the language demography of the state which indicates the spatial distribution of various linguistic groups and communities .This in turn reflects ethno- cultural mosaic of the state.



In 1931 the pahari speaking population in the state was 5,95,754. As per the report of census of India J&K 1911, Vol XX Page 201 regarding groups. It is stated that despite having different religion, they have common in them the linguistic communications, customs traditions and sharing of their festivals.

According to the census report of 1931, the speakers of Pahari language were distributed as as under:

1.	Pahari	5.95,754
2.	Bhadarwahi	20,357
3.	Gaddi	9,778
4.	Saroori	1.702

Keeping in view the census of 1931 and 1941 it is fully clear that Pahari stands at s.no.3. Moreover the Pahari language has been recognized in the constitution of J&K Schedule -VI.15

	1931 Census	1941 Census
Kashmiri	11.60 lacs	15.49 lacs
Dogri	5.11 lacs	6.59 lacs
Pahari	5.95 lacs	5.31 lacs

On the basis of Census Atlas of 1961, JK Map No. 112 (pg-25), the % of Pahari speaking community in contrast with other main languages of the state is as under:

District	Kashmiri	Dogri	Pahari
Srinagar	99.70%	0.1%	0.2%
Anantnag	98.6%	0.1%	1.3%
Baramulla	91.8%	0.00%	10.30%
Kathua	1.3%	97.00%	0.1%
Udhampur	10.2%	89.4%	0.04%
Jammu	2.6%	97.1%	0.2%
Doda	35%	5%	Bhadarwah 60%
Poonch & Rajouri ( One district at that time)	9.7%	19.4%	70.9%
Overall percentage in J&K	63.0%	28.3%	8.1%

### Major Linguistic Population

The people of J&K State, whether Kashmiris, Dogras, Gujars-Bakerwals, Ladakhis, Baltis Dards etc have in all the census unambiguously identified their indigenous languages as their mother tongues, thereby consolidating their respective, ethno-linguistic and cultural identities . This is particularly important in view of the fact that the Muslims of the state have thus acted in a manner quite different from that of Muslims in most of the Indian states.

The census report of 1941 for Jammu and Kashmir provides an insight into the language situation in the state before Independence. The 1941 census has listed Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Western Pahari, Balti, Ladakhi, Shina? Dardi as the main languages spoken in the state.

It is interesting to note that instead of recognizing Gujarati the mother tongue of Gujars the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir has included Pahari as one of the regional languages in its VI Schedule. More over the census of 1941 has included Gujarati under Rajasthani. Whereas ,the Pahari has not been mentioned in the subsequent census. This is one of the contributory factors that have led to the Gujarati –Pahari controversy.

Though Pahari has not been enumerated as a separate language in the J & K state census reports of 1961, 1971, and 1981 of late there have been demand for grant of some concessions to “ Paharis” in the state . Pahari versus Gujar issue is a potential source of ethnic conflict with each other. Both the Paharis and the Gujar identities overlap in certain aspects, particularly their hill settlement pattern and some common language features.

### Pahari Language Basic Tool to Define Ethnic Identity of Pahari Community

Language is the most powerful means of communication, vehicle of expression of cultural values and aspirations and instrument of conserving culture. As such language is an important means to acquire and preserve identity of a particular group or community. Language and culture are interrelated because the language regions possess certain homogeneity of culture and are characterized by common traits in history, folklore and literature.

Among, various cultural symbols –religion, race, language, traditions and customs etc. Language is the most potent cultural marker, providing for group identity. Its spatial spread over a fixed territory makes language more important than religion as a basis for ethnic identity formation.

Language is an important means to acquire and preserve identity of a particular group or community. The use of language has become deeply entrenched in human culture and apart from being used to communicate and share information .it also has a social and cultural use such as signifying group identity, social stratification and for social grooming and entertainment. Pahari speaking community in Jammu and Kashmir draw the reference of their ethnic identity from Pahari language, which acts as a marker of their identity in the social stratification and are identified as paharis (People who speak pahari language). Some people opposing pahari community try to mislead the establishment and other concerned agencies by mixing the pahari language and hilly areas to create confusion with regard to identification of pahari tribe.

Pahari speaking community is identified as a separate ethnic community on the basis of pahari language, a principle applied for identification of other communities, like Dogri speaking people called Dogras, Kashmiri speaking people called Kashmiris, Balti speaking as Baltis and Gojri speaking as Gujars etc.

It is pertinent to mention that in the modern world political assertion of language identities has assumed importance in the fast changing scenario. The case of Pakistan in this context provides a striking example of religious identities. After the division of subcontinent Pakistan was formed as an islamic state, demonstrated inherent conflict between language and religious identities. The language variable was the major factor in the creation of Bangladesh. Bengali language proved to be more powerful and ethnic factor than common muslim identity. Moreover in Pakistan, political manifestation of language rivalry have now gained primary importance in the present day conflicts between Sindhis, Punjabis, Saraikis, Blouchis, and Urdu speakers even though all of them are muslims. The complex dynamics of language and politics in multi lingual state of Jammu and Kashmir needs minute analysis in the broader spectrum of the State.

Though pahari has no functional role as written language now, it is "overwhelmingly" the language of personal and in group communication. It is the medium of dreams, mental arithmetic and reflection, of communication within the family, with friends and in the market places, in places of worship etc. The paharis view their language as an integral part of their identity and want it to be accorded its due role in the fields of education, mass media and administration.

### Pahari Gujar Faultline-Pahari Perspective

The differences /conflict between the pahari speaking community and the Gujar community started emerging soon after the partition of the country and the state, but it gained momentum in 70's when the demand for scheduled tribe status was raised by Gujar and Bakerwal community and a clear



fault line emerged when on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1991, the Gujar and Bakerwal communities of Jammu and Kashmir were declared scheduled tribes by the Govt. of India. This enraged the pahari speaking community, as this community was also recommended for S.T. Status by the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir at that time headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah in the year 1989 and interestingly the pahari community was kept at serial no 1 in the list along with gadis, sipis, Gujars and Bakerwals. Cabinet decision no 159 of 1989. Not only this, finding relevance and genuineness in the demand the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Lt. Gen. Retd. K.V.Krishna Rao, also sent a strong recommendation (on 18<sup>th</sup>, December 1993) from his august office to the Govt. of India for grant of S.T. status to Pahari speaking community of Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, the three member committee of interlocutors appointed by the Govt. India to talk to all shades of opinion in Jammu and Kashmir in its report submitted to the Govt. of India has also recommended S.T status to the pahari speaking community, to address the genuine aspiration of this community in the broader spectrum of Kashmir conflict.

In 90's militancy /armed struggle by separatists started in J&K and to address the concerns and grievances of the cross section of the society in the state, the Govt. of India through its representatives attempted to reach to the people. It was during this time that a suitable platform was created, for highlighting genuine demands, of the cross section of people and address the regional imbalances. The pahari speaking community also emerged with its demand for S.T Status and other associated benefits. The creation of advisory board for pahari speaking community, scholarships for their wards etc. was an outcome of this struggle, but it created a fear psychosis in the Gujar Bakerwal Community, which is already enjoying the benefits of reservation under Scheduled Tribe status, as they considered pahari speaking community as their rivals and pahari-gujar friction emerged as a major contemporary internal conflicts in the beleaguered state of Jammu and Kashmir. It poses a most serious challenge to the efforts made for internal peace at micro level and is seen as a major impediment in handling Kashmir issue in broader perspective.

The clash between the two communities is based around the concessions and privileges enjoyed by Gujar Bakerwal community under the provision of Scheduled tribe Act. The battle lines between the two communities are gaining prominence as the political parties with intention to increase vote bank extend selective patronage to different communities and groups and this way political patronage has contributed towards escalation of this conflict.

This tension is observed between the pahari speaking community and Gujar community especially in Pir panchal region ( Rajouri- Poonch districts) of Jammu province and some areas of Kashmir province like Baramulah, Kupwara, Bandipura, some parts of Shopian and Budgam where these communities reside side by side.

This divide between the pahari speaking community and Gujar and Bakerwal community is a major socio-political discourse and has become a

dominant factor in all administrative, political and other related decisions. It becomes more profound during the process of elections, when different political parties chose their candidates for assembly, panchayat and Urban local bodies elections and during formation of the government appointing ministers and selecting office bearers of their respective parties and also in identifying beneficiaries for new projects in health, education, social welfare, infrastructural development, roads, etc.

It is heartening to note that political parties, in a way state government instead of adopting corrective measures, play pahari gujjarcard and enhance the quantum of conflict. The two communities are plagued with routine psychological irritations leading to land disputes and also in the implementation of programmes and projects. A holistic overview of the issue needs to be undertaken and corrective measures adopted at the earliest failing which this pahari gujjar conflict has the potential to become unmanageable in future.

### The View Point of Pahari Speaking Community

The argument and logic put forth by pahari speaking community to project the genuineness of their demand for Scheduled Tribe status and other benefits is based on the fact that the geographical areas inhabited by both the communities are same, they have same locational disadvantages, have same eating habits and dressing styles, live under similar conditions of life, the backwardness index of the two communities is same, then why one community should be preferred over the other in granting the benefits under Scheduled tribe Act. The pahari community is of the view that there is grave injustice done to them by delay in granting scheduled tribe status. They ask why their children should be discriminated against. They opined that grant of S.T Status to gujjar and Bakerwal communities and denial of the same to pahari speaking community is a grave injustice. In 1891 and 1901 both Pahari and Gojri were treated as languages of respective communities along with the Kashmiris, Dogri, Punjabi etc. No distinction was made between the two as regards their tribal or non tribal character. Further the Gujjars have been treated as caste rather than tribe, along with other social groups like Lohar, Mochi, Hajam, Teli, Bakerwal has not even mentioned as language, nor is Bakerwal community returned as tribe. No census since 1901 has returned Gujjars, Bakerwals and Gaddis as tribes, not even people of Ladakh region. It was in 1987-88 that certain groups were declared as S T on political grounds. All the census right from, 1891 have treated Paharis, Gujjars, Bakerwals and Gaddis as linguistic and social groups rather than tribes in the classical sense. There are stray references to Bakerwals as Nomads and there is no such description in favour of Gujjars. All the census have been carried out on the basis of religion, language and caste.

Moreover the pahari speaking community feels stressed as on one side the youth of this community have to compete with the communities which are socioeconomically and educationally developed by enjoying better quality life and facilities and on the other side with gujjar and bakerwal community for which seats are reserved in the

professional colleges and also in employment opportunities and promotions in jobs. Besides this, the Gujjar community also gets economic benefits under S.T Act. Now the reservation in panchayat halqas and in urban local bodies has further added to the stress. Moreover sedentization of Gujjar bakerwal community has taken place over a period of time and one can hardly differentiate one community from the other. As per the considered view point of the pahari speaking community, the two decades of reservation has given an edge to the gujjar bakerwal community over pahari speaking community and today their representation in government jobs in gazetted and non gazetted sectors and also in the state's political establishment is far higher than that of the pahari speaking community.

#### **Conclusion**

Language is basic tool to identify any community or a group in overall linguistic composition of a nation or State. Pahari speaking community has a separate ethnic identity with pahari language as basic criterion, a principle applied to ascertain the ethnic identities of other communities like Dogri speaking people called as Dogras, Kashmiri speaking as Kashmiris etc.

A clear faultline has emerged between Pahri speaking community and Gujjar and Bakerwal community on the parameter of have and have not, as the Gujjar and Bakwerwal community residing in same areas and under similar conditions of life as their Pahri counter parts have been granted S.T Status and the pahari speaking community has been denied this benefit, giving unequal treatment to equals.

This faultline-friction can be reduced between the two communities by taking a holistic approach towards both and improving the socioeconomic profile of both the communities and not pitching one community against the other by

political establishment in the distribution of socioeconomic benefits.

Granting Scheduled Tribe status to Pahari speaking community would go a in reducing simmering undercurrent of discontentment among the members of pahari speaking community as Gujjars-Bakerwals and Pahari speaking people share common, social, economic and geographical disabilities, so as principle of justice they must be treated equally.

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