

Kashmiri Language: multi-linguistic approach, issues and role of media in its accomplishments

Firdous Hameed Parey

Research Scholar
CAS, Department of History
Aligarh Muslim University
Email: firdousparey98@gmail.com

Abstract:

The study of Kashmiri Language and its culture has remained the topic of research and interest for a very long time. It has been extensively studied by the foreign writers, authors, scholars, and has equally remained an interest of national and local intelligentsia. Although a lot of research has been carried out on different aspects of Kashmiri culture, from linguistic points of view but how to save this language, has been neglected so far. It was in this back drop, that the idea to carry out the present study was conceived. The objective of the present study is to analyze the impact of other languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and English on Kashmiri language. An attempt is made to throw light on different dimensions of cultural lexicon of Kashmiri Language and study the changes which it has undergone in the past. These influences came through the contact and borrowing. This paper also highlights the role of media, both electronic and print media in saving this native language. In this study some constructive remedial measures are provided to save Kashmiri language.

Key Words: Kashmiri Language (KL), Media, Sanskrit, Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction:

Kashmiri language (KL) popularly known as “Kashur” by its inhabitant speakers in the valley of the Kashmir. It is numerically minority language. In other languages(e.g Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, the language is called Kāshmiri). The “Kashur” and its dialects are spoken in an approximately 10,000 square miles area, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. English variants spelling include kaschamiri, cashmiri etc.[1] It is a fact that Kashmiri ranks first among the native languages of the state, comprising majority number of speakers, with Dogri in second and Gujari in third position, followed by Punjabi, Bodhi, Balti, Dardi. The KL is one of the 22 scheduled languages of the India and has been included in the 8th schedule of constitution of India. There are approximately 5,527,698 speakers of KL, as per census of India 2001.[2]

Debate on origin of language

There has been a prolonged scholarly debate, on origin and linguistic affinity KL. Discussions are on issues, as whether Kashmiri is affiliated to the Indo-Aryan or Dardic family of languages. Grierson, considers Kashmiri a “mixed language” of a Sanskrit of speech. According to him, Kashmir belongs to the Dardic group of Pisacha family allied to Shina. He identifies several linguistic feature that are Pisacha shares with Iranian. Therefore, Grierson argues, Kashmiri must be treated as a Dardic language.[3] However, his theory of Kashmiri belonging to the Dardic branch of language has been rejected by the insider scholars of Kashmir. Most of the linguistic analytical study conducted in Kashmir during the past forty years, have find out that Kashmiri bears close resemblance to Sanskrit languages, thereby testifying to close civilization contacts and ties between Kashmir and India since ancient times. Grierson, who has misleadingly adopted the religious distinction between Hindu Kashmir and Muslim Kashmiri has actually followed the colonial approach towards non-European societies. Though it is very hard to know the exact origin of a language, linguists still try to locate it by studying its evolution in history at which point they make conclusion about its roots. The same can be said about Kashmir language. The history of language is rooted in the changing faiths and strategic geographic location of the valley of Kashmir. The language has developed out of Sanskrit and old Indo-Aryan language and has lastly been influenced by Persian and Arabic languages.

Kashmiri Language: Its multi-linguistic approach

The language of literally culture in Kashmir at various periods of its history has been, essentially, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, and much latter to a smaller extent English. The Kashmiri language was never in competition with any of these languages of wider communication. In fact, the KL had a lower status than other languages of power and functionally. It had very restricted domains. The main reason of its decay was attitude of administration of state and indeed attitude of Kashmiris themselves towards their own language.

There are different sources which make it clear the influence of other languages on this language. Following headings showed clearly this impact:

1. Impact of Sanskrit:

Sanskrit has played an important role in the development of all Indian languages and in the preservation of the cultural heritage of India. Kashmiri language also consists of a good number of words from Sanskrit. Until the middle of fourteenth century when Islam made its firm establishment in

the valley, it has been an important cultural language from 300 BC. Due to extra ordinary importance of Sanskrit, it was but natural for Kashmir to have been impressed by Sanskrit languages, literature and culture. The Sanskrit words have either in their original shape or in the modified form become an integral part of the Lexical property of Kashmir.[4] The words from Sanskrit language have nowadays become an integral part of Kashmiri language. The words that are derived from Sanskrit sources are as:

“Ma:ma” mothers brother is used as ma:m and kirma:caste is used as Kram in Kashmiri language, Kangir- fire pot, kh:andar- marriage, Maharaz:z- bridegroom etc.

The above examples make it clear about the significant influence of Sanskrit on the cultural lexicon of Kashmiri in different spheres like marriage, kinship etc. [5]

2. Influence of Persian:

“The influence of Persian on Kashmiri language dates back to the entry of some Islamic missionaries and tradesmen into the valley.”[6] Their influence is significantly visible in every aspect of Kashmiri life, whether art and crafts, dress, diet, architecture, music manners and customs. It has played an important role in the formation of present culture of Kashmir. Due to the strong influence of this language Kashmir came to be known as Iran-e-Sagar(Small iron). Masoodi says that the present dress of the majority of the people of Kashmir like Pheran, Qemize, Shalwar, Sadri, Choga etc. owe their introduction to the Persian influence. The head dress of Kashmiri women called Qasab and Burka was introduced by Persian immigrants. The modern Kashmiri Wazwaan which constitute such like Yakhni, Rista, Qabab, Tabakmaz etc. also found way in the valley for the first time during the period of Sultans and the credit to popularizing there dishes goes to Persian immigrant.[7]

In brief, the above statement shows that word Kashmir has a huge collection of words belonging to the categories of art, music, drama, architecture and other spheres of life.

3. Impact of Urdu:

In Kashmir, Urdu hold a great importance. It is the official language of Jammu And Kashmir State. Urdu has played a dominant role in Kashmir, whether it is education, administration or media etc. Srinagar branch of Doordarshan broadcasts different programmes in Urdu which includes news, dramas, songs and other programmes also. Similarly Radio Kashmir Srinagar mostly broadcasts programmes in Urdu language. The print media of Kashmir is also influenced by Urdu. Different Urdu words are in daily use in Kashmiri such as :

Da: da- paternal grandfather.

Na: na- maternal grandfather.

Da: di- paternal grandmother.

Di: di- sister.

Bayya- brother.

Above mentioned words are presently used in Kashmiri language showed influence of Urdu as well.

4. Impact of English:

English is the language that has acquired the status of a global language. The influence of English on Kashmiri language is outcome of the language contact between the Britishers and the Kashmiris, setting up educational institutions and also the use of English in administration etc. "A large number of English borrowing words were adopted in Kashmiri unchanged, which included the words for foreign innovations, European dresses, medicines, games and sports etc. The borrowing words like radio, bus, car, houseboat, and hotel etc. started frequent use in Kashmir as such these words did not exist in Kashmir earlier.

Accomplishment and challenges:

During the last half century Kashmir has lost many things. Dal Lake may be one of the most damaging losses as it has been a symbol of Kashmir, the Paradise on earth. The lush green forest cover has been lost to the greed of both locals and outsiders. A community which has formed a part and parcel of Kashmir psyche for centuries has been virtually lost, but still greater loss is native language whether in Kashmir or outside. The loss of a language means loss of identity.[8]

The highest misfortune is that Kashmiris are themselves responsible in destroying the language especially from their homes. The more they progressed towards so called modern education the more they this language neglect and giving emphasis on English and Urdu. In almost every place all over the world people in speaking their native tongue. On contrary, in Kashmir, people boost to use non-native languages. In many cases the children are not able to speak mother tongue. It is interesting to note

that even the famous internet search engine Google has introduced Kashmiri as one of the languages. There are better facilities available on the internet to learn Kashmiri language than there are in Kashmir itself. By now we should have introduced a complete audio visual programme for learning Kashmiri. If future generations of Kashmir do not speak, understand, read and write Kashmiri, Whether they are in Kashmir or anywhere else then it is unfortunate, for the future of the Kashmir there may be cultural decay, if they lose KL. They have, to take some urgent and solemn steps to save this language from an onslaught of global threat. To save Kashmir, they have to first ensure that their language should survive. Let them begin by speaking to their kinds in Kashmiri, in homes. Next they have to persuade the concerned authorities to introduce Kashmiri in all educational institutions whether government or private.

The vast chains of the Madrasas (Islamic schools) in the Kashmir valley do not consider Kashmiri a medium of instruction, their focus is on Arabic and Urdu. This situation is in Kashmir under Pakistan is naturally identical. To summarize, this situation the Pakistani writer Mir Abdul Aziz, on Kashmir affair, claims that "Kashmiri" (language) remains a stranger in its own country. Here it seems that not only common people are creating challenges to their native tongue but educational institutions are similarly responsible in its decay. [9]

Whether in parts of India or abroad, the language is going through gradual attrition due to the impact of languages of wider communication, mainly Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and English, and the resultant language shift, that is the acquisition by Kashmiri speakers of functionally more dominant languages that ultimately causes the decay and "death of Kashmir".[10]

Usage of Kashmiri Language:

Kashmiri has a limited role in its home state of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been recently in 2008, made a compulsory subject in all schools in the valley up to middle level. But it is still taught as an optional subject at the high school and higher secondary level. It is taught as subject in few colleges in the Kashmir at the graduation level. However, there is lack of specialized teachers, who can teach this language as it should be.

Kashmiri has never served as the language of administration instead the language, which served for administration purpose, has not been indigenous to the area. There has been no attempt to introduce Kashmiri as an administrative language in any time by the government.[11]

Mass media is not very well developed as far as Kashmiri language is concerned. In spite of the fact, the Radio Kashmir, and the Doordarshan Srinagar, the two important media institutions of Kashmir valley, have played a great role in the development of Kashmiri language. Srinagar branch of the Doordarshan telecasts programmes in Kashmiri and the Radio Kashmir also telecasts programmes including news, songs and dramas in Kashmiri.

It is unfortunate, that only a single daily newspaper is published in Kashmiri language that is the Sangarmal and only few journals are published in this language. Among these journals published in Kashmiri, are bimonthly *Sheeraza* is published by Jammu and Kashmir Academy of art, culture and language, Srinagar and the bimonthly *Aalove* is published by department of information Jammu and Kashmir Government. The department of Kashmiri, university of Kashmir published an annual journal *Anhaar*. In addition to these journals some literary organizations are also publishing their own journals which include *Volrik Malar*, *Saqafat*, *Partavand* and *vethiAagur*. There was a good initiative to start a daily newspaper the sangermal, of Kashmir language, by Kashmir media under Mr. Farooq Renzu Shah, the director information of Kashmir. He has admitted that the language of Kashmir has to be electronic and print message over this time. This paper has made the inhabitants of this state very knowledgeable and has made people aware about their rights and duties. Another step has been taken by Kashmiri media that a newspaper, "KasurAkhbar" was started online, that carries news and literary pieces in the Kashmiri Language. It is first online newspaper in Kashmir. This newspaper provides an opportunity to Kashmiris all over the world to be informed of events of province of Kashmir.[12]

Conclusion

To summarize, we can say that due to cultural lexicon there was evolutionary change in Kashmiri language, as it seems that it was influenced time by time by other languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, English etc. This all happens because, from ancient times till now Kashmiri language lacked administrative patronage. Kashmir was mostly ruled by foreigners, they have never taken any constructive step to glorify this language. And even indigenous rulers also have no care of it. This paper make it clear that modern technology has great impact on this language, as people prefer to use or speak English language. In present times, whether it is question of e-mail id, print media, electronic media etc. there is use of the English language. So, Kashmiri language has a big challenge. To save this language., there are some remedial measures as media is the voice of all things, so Kashmir media has responsibility to popularize message that "Loss of native language means loss of our own identity and cultural". The state government should take initiatives to protect this mother

tongue. As it should inform to the Director of State Information Bureau that maximum newspapers should be published in Kashmiri. It should patronize and encourage the prominent personalities, poets, scholars etc. So that youth will be inspired from them. They will start to read their literature, it would benefit in the progress of language. Also, the People of Kashmir should take their responsibility. They should try to make conversations in their mother tongue. Newspaper editors, columnists, different distinguished writers can play an important role in highlighting its importance through essays, articles and books etc.

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