
Language and Dialect of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Over 30 district dialects have been counted to be in existence in this hill tract or we can say that there are so many dialects as there were many hill states. So the special form of speech used hereby the people is known as Jaunsari, Sirmauri, Baghati, Keonthali, and Sutlej group (Kochi, Saraji. Western Pahari is the maze of Sanskritic languages spoken in the hill country from Jaunsar Bawar of Dehradun District to Bhadaerwah in Jammu and Kashmir, while the central Pahari is spoken in the hilly regions of Gharwal and Kumaon of Uttar Pradesh “There are in all six dialects in Bilaspur or Kahlur as the state is sometimes called. In the centre of the state extending to a distance of six or seven miles in every direction from the capital is the standard dialect of *Bilaspuri* or *Kahluri*. In the case of Pahari. However, a special feature has been a queer blend of that language with Kol-Kirati, the early dialects of the aborigines of this area. This blend has given rise to certain specifications in the *Pahari* language which makes it different from *Hindi* but also *Punjabi*. *Baghati* is an immediate western neighbor of *Sirmauri*.it is spoken in the Solan area which previously comprised Baghat Baghal and some other odd states. In the western portion, i.e., in Kunihar and Arki, this dialect is known as *Baghlani* perhaps after Baghal state. To the west of it is the Nalagarh area and the speech of its people is called *Hinduri* after the name of Hindur state. *Brari* known after *Pargana* Brar of the former Jubbal state is a dialect of the people of the Jubbal tehsil, and also of the adjoining area of the Kotkhair tehsil and the Rohru tehsil. It extends up to the Tons River across which *Jaunsari* dialects start. To the extreme south of Jubbal and west of Jaunsar Bawar, there is an area which is called Kiran. It was the part of the erstwhileTharoch state. The people there speak *Kirni* which has received the influence of Jaunsari dialect. After the integration of these Shimla Hill States in 1948 into one administrative unit called Mahasu district, the *Keonthali* and its sub-dialects have conjointly come to be termed *Mahasui*.

Key Words: Pahari, dialect, Mahasui, Sirmauri, Keonthali, language, Shimla hills.

Western *Pahari* language is spoken by over 90 per cent of the people of Himachal Pradesh. The Indo-Aryan languages spoken in northern India from Nepal to Bhaderwah in Jammu and Kashmir, have been divided into three groups. On the far eastern side, it is Eastern *Pahari* popularly known as Nepali, on the Western it is Western *Pahari* which is the maze of Sanskritic languages spoken in the hill country from Jaunsar Bawar of Dehradun District to Bhadaerwah in Jammu and Kashmir, while the central *Pahari* is spoken in the hilly regions of Gharwal and Kumaon of Uttar Pradesh. This nomenclature was given to these languages at a time when classification and study of languages had not even been taken up in the sense in which it is being done now. In the 1881 census, 5,86,218 persons returned their language as *Pahari* in Sirmaur, Shimla Hill States, Bilaspur and Mandi. Similarly, *Pahari* was returned by 6,40,370 persons in the Kangra and Shimla districts in that census.

Over 30 district dialects have been counted to be in existence in this hill tract or we can say that there are so many dialects as there were many hill states. So the special form of speech used hereby the people are known as Jaunsari, Sirmauri, Baghati, Keonthali, Sulej group (Kochi, Saraji, Kului, Mandiali, Chambiali, Bhaderwahi). This formal classification by G. A. Grierson in his famous work '*Linguistic Survey of India*'. But in the case of *Kahluri*, popularly known as *Bilaspuri* and *Kangri*, he tagged these dialects with *Punjabi*. But both the later researchers and eminent linguists like Dr. Sidheshwar Verma and R.C. Nigam { in the Census of India 1961, Vol. I Part II-C (ii), Language Tables(1967)p.448) have classed the *Kangri* with *Pahari*. There is no doubt that the language of Kangra is more akin to that of Chamba, Mandi, Sukek and Jammu. Besides, locally, the dialect is known as *Pahari* and is written in Tankri script and not in Gurumukhi.

The main basis of Dr, Grierson's classification was the existence of the erstwhile princely states then comprising this geographical area, whereas, recent studies have shown that there is a complete and unique similarity in the vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structure of all these dialects. An explanation follows below:

- *Sirmauri* is spoken in the Sirmaur district. The main stream of it is Giri or Giri Ganga, which enters the district northernmost point, runs from north-west to south-east and divides the district into two almost equal portions, the Giri-war or cis-Giri country, south-west of the river and the Giri-Paror trans-Giri north-east of it. The people of these two parts differ considerably in their characteristics. Out of these two tracts formed by the giri is known as *Dharthi*.

It is after this that the sub-dialect of *Sirmauri*, as spoken in this portion, is locally known *Dharthi*. This portion is nearer to the planes and has thus assimilated some influence of *Hindi*.

- Whereas in the trans-Giri tract which includes Pachhad, Sain area and Rainka right upto Tons river and a small part of Kiarda Dun, the dialect spoken there is called merely Giri-Pan. It is purely a *Pahari dialect*. Some scholars aver that *Giri-Pari* has retained some Sanskrit words as well. In the north, the Chur mountain range separates Sirmaur district from the Chopal tehsil of Shimla district. This area in olden times was known as Bish-Shaw. The dialect spoken by the people here is akin to *Giri-Pari* and was named by G.A.Grierson as *Biswahi*. In other words, the appropriate name of *Giri-Pari* is *Bish-shawi*.
- *Baghati* is an immediate western neighbor of *Sirmauri*. It is spoken in the Solan area which previously comprised Baghat Baghal and some other odd states. In the western portion, i. e., in Kunihar and Arki, this dialect is known as *Baghlani* perhaps after Baghal state. To the west of it is the Nalagarh area and the speech of its people is called *Hinduri* after the name of Hindur state. G.A.Grierson has placed it with *Keonthali* which is not justifiable because *Keonthali* is spoken in the upper Shimla hills where as Nalagarh is surrounded by *Kahluri (Bilaspuri)* dialect in the north, *Baghati* in the east and by the plains in the south.
- *Keonthali* is spoken in the surrounding areas of Shimla and the northern region of the district. This dialect was named after Keonthal state as it occupied the central place in the Shimla hills. The other important state of Shimla hills were Bashahr and its tributaries of Dalath and Khaneti, Jubbal, Sari (Rohru area) Balson, Kumarsain, Kotkhai and Bhajji.
- The dialect spoken in the Rampur Bushahr, Kumarsain and Kotgarh regions and in the nearby parts of the Sutlej valley is called *Kochi*. In the north of this area it extends upto Sarahan.
- *Brari* known after Pargana Brar of former Jubbal state is a dialect of the people of the Jubbal tehsil, and also of the adjoining area of the Kotkhai tehsil and the Rohru tehsil. It extends up to Tons river across which *Jaunsari* dialects start. To the extreme south of Jubbal and west of Jaunsar Bawar there is an area which is called Kiran. It was the part of the erstwhile Tharoch state. The people there

speak *Kirni* which has received the influence of Jaunsaridialect. After the integration of these Shimla Hill States in 1948 into one administrative unit called Mahasu district, the *Keonthali* and its sub-dialects have conjointly come to be termed *Mahasui*.

The principal dialect of the people of Kullu is called *Kului*. It has three sub-dialects which are *Saraji*(Inner and outer *Saraji*), *Sainji* and the main *Kului*. The last is widely spoken mostly by the people of upper Beas valley.

Mandi and Suket were two important states situated between Shimla and Kangra, with Kullu as their eastern neighbor. In 1948 these states were integrated into one administrative unit and came to be known as Mandi district. The main Mandi dialect *Mandiali* is rather spoken far and wide in the district. It is found with very little change over all the western and northern portions of the district. It is also spoken in Mandi town, and its regions extend without much variation southwards into Sundernagar and Karsog areas. The dialect spoken in these latter areas is called Suketi.

G.A. Grierson in *The Linguistic Survey of India* the language of Bilaspur to be *Kahluri*. According to him *Kahluri* (*Bilaspuri*) is an offshoot of rude *Punjabi*, as spoken in Hoshiarpur area. T. Graham Bailey who was his contemporary made a more detailed survey of the dialects of Shimla hills. He has described Bilaspuri as under:

There are in all six dialects in Bilaspur or Kahlur as the state is sometimes called. In the centre of the state extending to a distance of six or seven miles in every direction from the capital is the standard dialect of *Bilaspuri* or *Kahluri*. Immediately to the west of this, in the portion of the state which just out westwards and is bounded on the north by the district of Kangra, we find a dialect which we may call western *Bilaspuri*. To the north of the standard dialect are found two minor dialects, that to the west near the Kangra border, to which we may give the name Northern *Bilaspuri*, while that on the east near the Mandi border is the same as *Mandiali* which has been treated in the Language of the Himalayas. Immediately south of the area of the standard dialect, the people speak a slightly different dialect which I have called Southern *Bilaspuri*. Its area is a narrow strip of country on the Nalagarh border, and to the east of this in south-east Bilaspur is found a dialect locally known as *Dami*. It extends over the border into Arki state and beyond. It commences the *Keonthali* dialect which is spoken all over the Central Shimla states.

The Bilaspur dialects are so closely allied that one might call them one dialect *Bilaspuri* or *Kahluri*. I have preferred the former name as the state is much better known to the outside world as Bilaspur, the name Kahlur hardly being known to anyone who has not visited the state.

From a linguistic point of view, the dialect of Chamba is intensely interesting. Situated, as it is, entirely in the hills, it lends itself to the perpetuation of diverse dialects. There are five distinct forms of speech found within the district. Distinguishing them roughly they are: in the north-west *Churahi*. In the northern portion of Pangi tehsil *Pangwali*, in the south-west of Bhattiyat tehsil *Bhatiali*, in the south-east of Bharmaur area *Bharmauri* or *Gadi* as this area is inhabited by Gaddi tribe, while round about Chamba proper, which lies in the south-west (but further north and east than the *Bhatiali* area) the dialect spoken is *Chambiali*. Commonly, all these dialects are termed as *Chambiali*.

In Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur, the languages spoken are Tibeto-Himalayan and there exist colonies of speakers of Tibeto-Himalayan in Kullu also.

The Kinnauri dialect, called *Homskad*, is the mother tongue of nearly seventy-five per cent of the population of Kinnaur. There are as many as nine different dialects used by various sections of the population. One of them called *Sangnaur* is spoken in a solitary village Sangnaur of tehsil Poo. The villages on the Tibetan border speak the Tibetan dialects of western Tibet. The extent of this spoken Tibetan is limited to the villages of Nasang, Kune and Charang only and adjoining Tibet. *Jangiam* dialect is spoken in Jangi, Lippa, and Asrang villages of Morang tehsil. The *Shumccho* dialect is spoken in the villages of Kanam, Labrang, spilo, Shyaso, Tailing and Rush Kalang, of Poo tehsil. A *Kinnauri-jangram* mixture is the dialect used in Rakcham and Chitkul villages of Sangla tehsil. The scheduled castes speak a dialect which is closer to that of certain parts of the adjoining areas of Kinnaur. *Milani* dialect of village Malana in Kullu has been grouped with *Kinnauri*.

In Lahaul and Spiti, four main dialects are spoken. These are *Bhoti*, *Gaheri*, *Manchat* and *Changsa*. Each dialect is quite different from other though it is spoken and understood by all. *Bhoti* (Tibetan) is spoken in Spiti, Bhaga and Chandra valleys. *Gaheri* is spoken around Keylong, *Manchat* and *Changsa* are spoken in Chenab Valley. Only *Bhoti* has a grammar and a script while the other three are just dialects. It is

taught in the monasteries by Lamas. It is gratifying to note that the people here are so different in their culture, even the illiterates can speak and understand some Hindi.

There is a considerable difference of opinion among linguistic experts about the origin of the *Pahari* language. G.A. Grierson traces its origin from *Dardi* and *Pishachi*. But according to scholars like Dr. Dharinder Verma, Dr. Udai Narain Tiwari, Dr. Hardev Bahri, Dr. Bhola Nath Tiwari and Dr. Govind Chatak *Pahari* language originates from Shorsenior Nagar apbhransha. Shorseni apbhransha has also been the basis of *Braj*, *Haryanavi*, *Punjabi*, *Rajasthani* and *Gujarati*. In the case of *Pahari*. However, a special feature has been a queer blend of that language with Kol-Kirati, the early dialects of the aborigines of this area. This blend has given rise to certain specifications in the *Pahari* language which makes it different from *Hindi* but also from *Punjabi*.

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