



Manifestations of a Lingua-Franca: Hindrance to Folk, Oral Tradition and Cultural Memory of Kinnaura Tribe

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Abstract

The tribal communities face the dichotomy of quest of phenomenal emancipation via integration to the outer world and conundrum of losing the oral traditions and cultural memory, and eventually the diminishing identity. The heterogeneous tribal community of Kinnauras living in high altitude area of Himachal Pradesh. The socio-ethno-linguistic profile amongst kinnauras found with remarkably diverse and multilingual dialects of the *Tibeto-Burman* family of languages. Kinnauras have profound roots in Indian intellectual and religio-cultural traditions and texts *Bhagvatpurana*, *Bhavicopanishad*, and Indian epics of *Ramayana and Mahabhatrata*. Kinnaur, or kanawaring, as in local dialect, district is inhabitant of the land is known as kanawara or kanawaras, mentioned in ancient literature as demi-gods or half-human-half God appearance of the inhabitants of the land.

Emergence of hindi as the lingua-franca have helped kinnauras integrated into urban India, finding jobs, education and better working opportunities, however the community found it challenging to transfer the tacit knowledge of folk and oral traditions, like; music and socio-linguistic profile of their forefathers to the next generation, one of the reasons emerges as the language homogeneity amongst the Kinnauras. Increasingly, community members converse in hindi and amalgamation of hindi words in songs and daily lives of kinnauras is the new normal. The paper aims to examine the following:

1. An etic perspective of manifestations of the lingua-franca.
2. Quest of Emancipation-Ethno-linguistics analyses and folk knowledge of the kinnauras.

Keywords – Mother tongue, Regional Languages, Indian Culture, Multilingualism, Hindi Language

Introduction:

The emergence of a Lingua Franca, a common language opens a door full of potential, an utmost opportunity to group or community. The opportunity can be of economical, employment, integration amongst sub-groups of a heterogeneous community. Lingua-franca formation absorb in a community to facilitate and connect and exchange each other socially. The complex and layered realities of a community and or a clan founds a lingua franca as link language,

the local language, intertwined to the oral, folk tradition and most importantly the retention of cultural ethos of a community, especially a tribal community mostly entrenched in a historical and mythological tradition of a civilisational nation. The *Kinnaur* tribe of Himachal Pradesh in the

Kinnaur district¹, roots in Indian epics and Puranas, encountering a complex phenomenon of emergence of a lingua-franca, Hindi, and to keep their cultural memory intact for the next generation of kinnauras. Researchers and scholars have found many substitute names of the language spoken in Kinnaur, popularly known as Kanauri², the language has been classified in west-himalayish (WH), sub group of Tibeto-Burman family of language³ and the documentation of some of the endangered languages in Kinnaur (Huber, n.d.) district. The challenge is both within the community amongst the young people, and external factors the information age, fusion of tribal songs with Hindi have become extremely popular in day-to-day life of Himchali people, non-tribal also enjoy the songs and fond of tribal music.

The emergence and rise of Hindi have not the only one affected the Kinnauras, and their native language. UNESCO in its 2017 survey, thirty-three languages are endangered, and four are on the verge of extinction in India. Emerged circumstances, there are significant initiatives underway at the preservation and documentation of native languages in the state.

Hindi as link language and its large population size is not only a social dimension of integration amongst communication facilitation. The language also offers a large market and hence potent to be the universal lingua franca of India (Nayar, 1968). Lingua -franca aids to the mutual mundane exchanges between the Hindi and non-Hindi speaking population. Hindi has developed as the main lingua franca in the region, used for inter-region communications (H. K. Negi, 2012).

Link Language: Status of Lingua Franca

¹ Total Area: 6,401sq km., and the population is 84,298 (2011 census), population density 13 per sq km (H. K. Negi, 2012)

The blur boundary of a link language -and a status of lingua franca differs on its socio-cultural milieu of a community. The link language status for Hindi has emerged as great support and facilitator in interstate communication of people of Kinnaur. Hindi started as link language status and fetching a Lingua-franca avatar has renewed entanglement in a society well entrenched in culture and traditions. Lingua Franca brings its own complexities and native language speakers (Modi, n.d.) Tribal communities follow their cultural traditions and method of worship very hyperlocal in nature and bounded with oral tradition and years of cultural memory intact for further dissemination. Ethnic identity requires both the objective and subjective factors and ethnic symbols (Edwards, 1985) and compelling tools, like; language decides the denseness of the cultural folk reminiscence.

Cultural Memory – Identity and Institutionalisation of Heritage

Cultural Memory, a concept and term coined by German Egyptologist Jan Assmann to analyse “the textuality of the past” (memory, historical consciousness, identity, and culture), described as “the individual storage of texts, images and rites that are meant for reuse related to various societies and epochs.” By cultivating this storage, Cultural Memory ensures cultural tradition and “stabilizes its self-image and conveys a collectively shared knowledge.” (“Cultural Memory | SpringerLink”) (Ißler, 2019). Cultural memory does appear to be a static phenomenon and remain in the past, it forms in collocation of time-space -causality in the flow of time in past-present-future. Jan Assman also states that the dynamic attribute of cultural memory finds its expression in durability and symbolic aspects of it, and hence embedded

² Substitute names- Kanauryanu-skad, Kanawari, Koonawure, Malhesti, Milchan, Milchanang, Milchang.

³ Linguistic lineage for kinnauri- <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/kfk>

features in the construction of identities. Cultural memory preserves the folk knowledge, tradition, rituals, folk music and dance of community and its heritage. Subtle conscious remembrance of cultural memory positively asserts certain guidelines and rules of performance and behaviour to comply for individual's relation to the community.

Religion plays interwoven role in Kinnaur society (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2019), people immerse in ritual and tradition. Oblations to God and Goddesses is through music and dance. Music and dance play a role of identity with Kinnaura tribe, inquiring about their music and dance, unable to offer any lexis to the subtlest feeling and emotions (Chauhan, 1973). The subtlest feeling and cognitive experience of inexplicable phenomenon of their music and dance, an embodied marks of traditions. Ethnomusicological studies may offer an imprint of indelible cultural impressions of a community of their migration and influences of races upon intermingling and overlays⁴ of practices and traditions. The folk traditions of music and dance finds resonance to the ecology and environment (Bande, 2006) and enriches the cultural memory and folk knowledge of Kinnaur tribe. Musicology and tribal communities categories (Bhattacharya, 1968), primitive tribes, semi-tribes and semi-castes. Musical rhythm varies in degree and nodes of symmetrical and asymmetrical beats of music amongst the tribe categories. Kinnaur people and their socio-linguistic profile suggest us of semi-castes socio profiling exists in Kinnaur tribe. Original folk music has a predominant role and beats of Tetratonic, and pentatonic tunes played in songs and dance of Kinnaur people. Linguistic study in combination of ethnomusicology offers an in-depth understanding of cultural memory. The typological perspective of the kinnauri language illustrates (H. K. Negi, n.d.), that the

language demonstrates the incessant connection of past, present and future results into the relation between identity and cultural memory. Cultural memory is an embodied experience, and a phenomenon of cognitive faculty, and is a narrative picture of their heritage and traditions and through this process develop a make belief in image and identity for the community (Meckien, 2013).

Ethnolinguistic Profile of Kinnaur and Case for a Lingua-Franca:

Kinnara or Kanaura or the Kinnauris is the alteration of the original and ancient name, Kinnara (T. Sen Negi, 1976). The present status is that the district of Kinnaur has now a bilingual space (H. K. Negi, 2012). The factors of linguistics loyalty may have political demands and developmental issue, and to preserve the identity and socio-religious cultural retention of the community. Kinnaur tribe found the later factor of great relevance and concern. The diminish usage of a language results in an irreversible dilapidation of cultural memory, ecological and the unique identity of a community. It also led to the loss of folk tradition and folk knowledge, preserved through generations of reminiscent stories and chronicle.

The genesis of the ancient name of the region derived its name from the inhabitants who are known as the Kinner or Kinnaura. name of the district was Kimpurusdesh or Kimpurusvarsa i.e., the land of the Kimpurusa⁵ in ancient India. The place was mentioned with varied names in the travelogues of the British administrators, like; *Kunavur, Koonawur, Kanaur and Kunawar* (Raha & Mahato, 1985 p,9). The present name Kinnaur region has a very diversified profile of ethnicity (Encyclopaedia, 1995) and cultural milieu. The district constitutes into three zones- Zone-I includes the Pooh sub-division; people

⁴ Musical Scales and study of migration pattern- A. Danielou (Introduction to the study of musical scales, 1943).

⁵ The travelogue of Rahul Sankritayan (Sankritayan, 2000)

follow Buddhism here (Lamaism). Zone-II which covers Hinduism worshiper in Nachar sub-division, and Zone-III has a mixed religion of both Buddhism (Lamaism) and Hinduism (Raha & Mahato, 1985, p 8).

The inhabitants spread over the three-micro area; lower Kinnaur, middle Kinnaur and upper Kinnaur. The three sub-areas have diversity in ethnic background, upper Kinnaur, borders with Tibet and influence of Tibetan emanates in their spoken language known as Bhoti-kinnauri and are Buddhists. The inhabitants of middle and lower kinnaur are hindus and their spoken language known as khosiaskad or hamskad or lower kinnauri, also known as popular kinnauri (H. K. Negi, 2012). The region has high intensity of heterogeneity of language⁶, the high density of multi-linguistic vernaculars has also paved way for a lingua-franca to fill the space for inter-communication.

Folk cultural memory is a subjective cognitive experience of individual and integral part of collective consciousness of a community. Traditions, rituals, narratives, folktales, mythologies, and customs together contribute to the cultural memory. Language plays a subtle role in the cognitive experience and edifying the cultural memory. Attaining folk knowledge is a process of sub-conscious learning of customs and values embedded in the community consciousness. Social behaviours, observations and interaction amongst different generations forms the foundation of folk-knowledge. The changing nature of external and internal factors into the practices of a community due to interaction with the external environment and changing socio-economic situation in the society. The lingua-franca effect on the kinnauri language visible and consequences of an endangered language (UNESCO, 2010) The Endangered and

vitality test framework of language (UNESCO, 2003) stage Kinnauri as definitely endangered category, finds it grim status of an endangered language.

Conclusion:

Kinnaur has transformed into a geographical space where increased people speak language other than first language. The functional purposes of interacting with Tourists and emerged Hindi as language of people in Kinnaur. The influential role of a lingua-franca is undeniable in the Kinnaur region. The pervasive nature of the overwhelming use of lingua-franca in the context of a folk traditions and cultural memory. The new education policy 2020 offers now an institutional framework for primary education in native language and hence kids in Kinnaur region must have an opportunity to study in native language. The region has multi dialects of the kinnauri language belonging to Tibet-Burma family of language, Hindi's emergence as a lingua-franca may help kinnauris to solve some their economic and social integration within Himachal Pradesh and obviously in their inter-state communication. The folk knowledge and specially in their music and dance, in contemporary trends the fusion songs of kinnauri with Hindi have become immensely popular in Himachal Pradesh.

The quest of emancipation with the all-pervasive emergence of a lingua-franca offers the opportunity to integrate with the outside world, and much needed financial realisation. The new social environment both inside the region and people of the region living outside encounters, the upheaval of retaining their cultural memory intact and hence keeping their identity, folk knowledge, and traditions in harmony with changing times.

⁶ Kinnauri language has other varieties such as rakcham-chitkul kinnauri, shumcho, spoken in upper kinnaur. Sunnam kinnauri spoken in the Sunnam village of upper kinnaur

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