

Language Endangerment: A case study of Gawarbati, Kalasha and Yadgha languages of Chitral

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Abstract

Chitral valley, located in the country's extreme north, is Pakistan's linguistically diverse region. The half-million population of the valley is divided into 12 language groups belong to different language families. The number of speakers of some of these languages is decreasing. The speakers are shifting to Khowar, the lingua franca of Chitral, and Pashto, another major language spoken in the region. This paper examines the endangered status of the Gawarbati, Yadgha, and Kalasha languages in the valley, as well as the contributing factors to their endangerment. The main causes are intermarriages, lack of writing system; language and education policy, the speaker's attitude towards their mother tongue, contacts and interactions with others; Kalasha religion; the speaker's livelihood; war, and migration. This research employs a mixed-methods methodology for data collection, incorporating case studies as well as information obtained through participant observation, literature review, and informal interviews conducted with the speakers of the languages.

Keywords: Chitral, language diversity, language endangerment, language shifting, Gawarbati, Kalasha, Yadgha

Introduction

Chitral Valley, situated in the extreme north of the country, is culturally and linguistically a diverse region of Pakistan. The valley hosts 12 languages primarily from the Indo-Aryan (such as Khowar, Palula, Kalasha, Gawarbati, Gojri, Pashto) and Iranian (Yadgha, Madaklashti, Wakhi) groups, along with some Nuristani languages including Kati and Komviri. The number of speakers of these languages ranges from thousand to hundred thousand. While the overall population of the valley, according to the latest government census (Pakistan Bureau of

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Statistics, 2023) is 515,935 individuals, comprising 320,407 in Lower Chitral district and 195,528 in Upper Chitral district. Some of the languages are indigenous, others are immigrants from nearby countries and regions (Kreutzmann, 2005) and the speakers of some others have penetrated into Chitral from its adjacent areas (Liljegren & Akhunzada, 2017).

Khovar – a North-West Indo-Aryan or Dardic language - is the dominant language and lingua franca of the valley (Decker, 1992b; Bashir, 1996; Liljegren & Khan, 2017). Speakers of other languages used it their second language. The language was used as an official (oral) language during the traditional ruling system. The rulers supported and contributed to develop and document the language (Razi, 2021) that enhanced its influence over other languages and the speakers of some languages learned it at the cost of giving up their mother tongue to raise their status. Currently it is the largest language with 80 per cent population of the valley. Since 2017, Khovar has been included as subject in government schools throughout Chitral, in accordance with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's language policy for education (Akhunzada, 2021).

In the extreme north Pashto is increasing its influence. The language is used as a lingua franca in Arandu Union Council (a sub administrative unit) that is located adjacent to the Pashto speaking areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Five language groups—Gawarbati, Dameli, Gujari, Komviri and Khovar—live in the union council are fluent in the language. There are also some isolated villages of Pashto speakers who immigrated to the locations in the beginning of last century (Akhunzada, 2023). The villages are monolingual and do not know other language. In the villages they practice their own social system and culture like their native villages. According to the census data (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023), there are 29,906 Pashto speakers residing in the Chitral valley, with 29,799 individuals in the Lower Chitral district and 107 in the Upper Chitral district. That makes it the second largest language in the valley.

Because of the language diversity, bilingualism and multilingualism is also very common. Speakers of a village learn the language of the nearby village because of interaction and relationship with them, the lingua franca of the valley 'Khovar' and provincial language 'Pashto' and national languages 'Urdu'. Urdu is used as a medium of instruction in school. Almost all educated people know Urdu and some also know English.

Situated at the latitude 35.852287 N and the longitude 71.787107 E, the valley is surrounded (Fig 1) by multilingual regions. To the east of Chitral is Gilgit-Baltistan province and Swat; to the west is Nuristan province of Afghanistan; to the north is Badakhshan province of Afghanistan and to the south is Kunar province of Afghanistan and Upper Dir District of Pakistan. A narrow strip of Wakhan (Afghanistan) separates Chitral from Tajikistan. All these adjacent regions have influenced Chitral linguistically and culturally. Many language communities have immigrated to Chitral from the regions. The communities have established their isolated village and speaking their language.

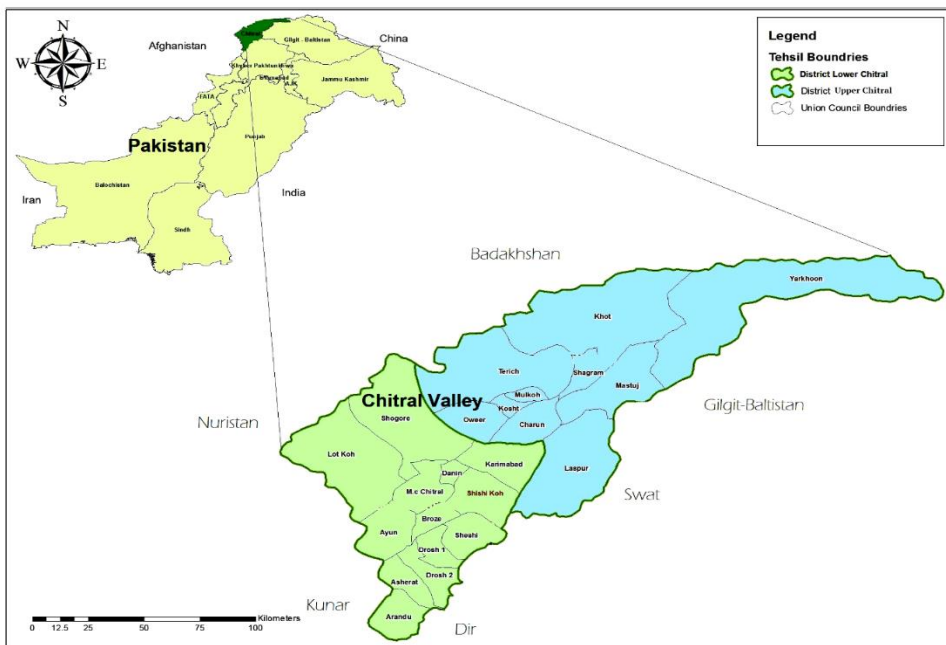


Figure 1: Map of Chitral Valley

Some languages of the valley are facing definite endangerment. The number of speakers of the languages are decreasing. Many native villages of the languages have given up their mother tongue completely and shifted to Khowar or Pashto. This paper examines the current status of language endangerment and analyses the factors contributing to this phenomenon. By focusing on the Gawarbat, Yadgha, and Kalasha languages in the Chitral Valley, it provides detailed insights into the challenges these language communities face. The research also highlights how

external influences and internal community dynamics accelerate the decline of minority languages in the region.

Data has been collected through mixed-methods methodology incorporating case studies as well as information obtained through participant observation, literature review, and informal interviews conducted with FLI staff and partners.

Language endangerment situation

Presented below are the descriptions and current endangerment statuses of the languages.

❖ Gawarbati

Gawarbati (ISO 639-3: gwt, glottocode: gawa1244) is an Indo-Aryan language that belongs to the Kunar subgroup of languages. The villages of the language are laying along the Pak-Afghan border. Except Ram Ram, which is situated inside a side valley, Arandu Gol, all the villages are located in the main valley, along the river Chitral or Kunar. Inside Pakistan, the villages of the language are Arandu and Ram Ram. The speakers live in Dokalam, Birkot (Bailim), Narai (Narisat) on the Afghan side. When traditional rulers ruled Chitral, the Gawarbati speaking area was part of Chitral state (Biddulph, 1977) with the loose control of Mehtar on the language community (Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001). In 1895 due to the new boundary demarcation between Afghanistan and Chitral the villages became part of Afghanistan (Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001). Dokalam village was part of Chitral state until 1932 and a bilateral commission assigned it to Afghanistan (Murtaza, 1962). The language has either completely disappeared or near to disappear from some villages, as reported in the research in the past, being villages of the languages (Morgenstierne, 1950). The language is close to extinction from Birkot and has completely extinct from Nishagam villages in Afghanistan. It also reveals from Cacopardo & Cacopardo (2001) reports that the use of this language was declining from both of these villages and Pashto speakers were increasing. There is no village on both sides of the border where all speakers are monolingual with Gawarbati. In the Narai village, more than 50 per cent of the population of the language speakers have shifted to Pashto. Some portions of each village have lost their mother tongue. Pashto in Afghanistan and Khowar or Pashto in Pakistan replacing the language. Almost all the population of Gawarbati is bilingual. The highest ratios of speakers are in Arandu and Ram Ram,

where the percentage is around 80 while the remaining are Pashto and Khowar speakers. These are the villages where the speakers of Gawarwati speakers are comparatively in the highest ratio. In other villages, the speakers' fraction has further squeezed. There is no official record dealing with the number of Gawarwati speakers but according to the community people's estimation, the number is around 4000 in Chitral (Pakistan). Speakers in Afghanistan estimate their population at 15,000 to 20,000 (Liljegren & Soan, 2025), though this may be an overestimate.

❖ Kalasha

Kalasha (ISO 639-3: kls, glottocode: kala1372) is also an Indo-Aryan language that belong to Chitral subgroup of languages. Kalasha language used to be a language of the majority of people in the southern Chitral in the past (Cacopardo, 1991; Di Carlo, 2010). Nowadays it has been confined to only four sub valleys, Urtsun, Birir, Bumboret and Rumbur. The language is surrounded by Khowar and other languages even in these sub-valleys and is facing high pressure. Intermarriages and religious conversions cause sudden language shift and Kalasha speakers switch to Khowar quickly. The number of speakers have reduced to 7,466 individuals according to the census report 2023 (PBS, 2023). All population of Kalasha are bilingual. They know Khowar and the Kalash of Urtun also can speak Pashto as second language. The language is now not spoken in Suwir, Lawi, Shishi, Jinjeret, Jinjeret Koh, Nagar, Uzurbekandeh, Birga, Gromel and Kalkatak villages as had been reported in past being the villages of Kalasha (Morgenstierne, 1965; Biddulph, 1971; Cacopardo, 1991; Cacopardo, 1996) and was about to extinction from some of these villages according to Decker (1992a). Cacopardo(1991) also reported that the language was spoken in most of these villages until the formation of Pakistan in 1947. Maybe a few older people in the village of Kalkatak, Suwir and Jinjeret Koh still know the language as their former mother tongue but they do not speak it.

❖ Yadgha

Yadgha (ISO 639-3: ydg, glottocode: yadh1238) language is the South-East Iranian language belong to the Pamiri subgroup. The villages of the language are situated to the extreme western portion of Lot Koh (Injigan Valley) eastward from Chitral town at a distance of 30 km. The language is decreasing from many of its native villages and not transferred to children. In some villages elderly people are the youngest generation know the language. According to the community people, the language

of majority speakers of Burbanu, Zitur, Parabag, Gistini, Gologh and Waht is Khowar. Gurdon (1904, cited in Morgenstierne, 1938) reported them being the villages of Yadgha in the past. The young generation of the village does not speak Yadgha. In the past the language was used to be spoken in farther eastward in the villages of Drushp, Chirwal and Murden (Morgenstierne, 1938). The speaker estimated their number around 6, 000. Ethnologue (Eberhard et al, 2025) has classified its vitality as an endangered language. According to a survey (Wayne et al, 2020) the language has been categorized 7 in EGID scale that mean all the Children from the community are bilingual. In most domains the the language is not used.

Factors causing language endangerment

Several factors contribute to the endangerment of languages. Decker (1992a) identified specific reasons for the decline of the Kalasha language, and Janjua (2011) also noted factors leading to a shift toward the Yadgha language. This paper discusses additional factors affecting both of these languages, as well as the Gawarbati language in the valley.

❖ The speaker's intermarriages with others

Intermarriage is a main factor causing endangerment to all three languages. Except between non-Muslim Kalasha of present Kalasha valleys and other Muslim language groups, there is no restriction to marry a person from another language community. There are intermarriages among Yadgha and Khowar; Kalasha and Khowar; Palula and Kalasha; Pashtun and Gawarbati and Kalash of Urtun and Pashtun. In the case of Pashtun and Kalasha of Urtun, the children are growing-up bilingual. In the case of marriage between Kalasha of Kalkatak and Palula of Biori, the children completely shifted to Palula. In the case of marriage between Yadgha and Khowar, children are shifting completely to Khowar. In the case of Gawarbati and Pashtun marriage, the children are shifting to Pashto. Yadgha speakers prefer to marry Khowar women (Janjua, 2011) and it is also ideal for Gawarbati of the Pakistan side to marry Khowar women. In the past, it used to be an ideal for the Kalasha speakers of Kalkatak to marry Khowar speakers. Usually, the dominant languages, Khowar or Pashto, becomes the language of children because of intermarriages. The villagers of Kalkatak switched easily to Palula because there were already many intermarriages between the Kalasha of Kalkatak and Palula of Biori and it had resulted in the Palula speakers' children. There are also very often intermarriages between Pashto and

Gawarbati speakers in both side of the border and in such situation, children grow up bilingual.

❖ **The languages lack writing systems**

Until the recent past, the lack of writing systems was another cause of endangerment for these languages. Literary people, especially poets from the language communities, were interested in writing in their mother tongues, but the lack of writing systems was hurdles in fulfilling their passions. The writing systems of other languages, especially Urdu, the national language, was not completely supporting drafting materials in these languages. As these languages have specific sound, the Urdu writing system was not fully supporting in writing in the languages. Due to not having a writing system, the literacy people of Yadgha and Kalasha were creating materials in Khowar language and Gawarbati were creating in Pashto. In 2015, Form for Language Initiatives (FLI) helped Yadgha and Gawarbati communities develop and update their writing systems. After a series of orthography and writer's workshops, the communities created alphabet books and wordlist of their mother tongues as first vernacular publications in the case of Yadgha and first vernacular publications in the revised writing system in the case of Gawarbati (Liljegren & Akhunzada, 2017; Liljegren, 2018). FLI also equipped the writers of these two languages with PC keyboards after finalizing alphabets. Now, writers from the communities have started transcribing folklores and other materials of their languages in the newly developed writing systems. Some writers of communities also published their material in book forms. Texts in the languages are appearing in social media pages. In another project, run by a community-based organization, FLI also helped the Kalasha community in removing issues in their orthography. In the past, people were drafting in Urdu when was using postal letters for communication. because they were not able to write in their own mother tongues. Nowadays it has been almost replaced with cell phones direct calls and SMS in vernacular language.

❖ **The speaker's attitude towards their mother tongue**

The attitude of the mother tongue speakers toward their mother tongue is another cause of endangerment for these languages. Researchers (Decker, 1992b; Janjua 2011) reported that Yadgha speakers believe that speaking Khowar for the young and future generation is good for their education. Yadgha men want to marry Khowar speaking women so that their children learn Khowar. Until the recent past two or

more Yadgha speakers were hesitating to speak Yadgha among themselves when they were among Khowar speakers, to hide their Yadgha identity. They used to switch to Khowar in such a situation. Recent language activism and awareness ceased this attitude. Similarly, many elderly former Kalasha from Kalkatak, Suwir and Jinjeret Koh (Akhunzada & Liljegren, 2009) villages do not speak their former mother tongue to hide their identity as Kalasha. Khowar speakers used the term 'Kalash' as a derogatory term in the past. The Kalasha people could not bear the pressure and suffered an inferiority complex. It resulted to distance themselves from Kalasha culture and language. The main reason for giving up collectively Kalasha language by the villagers of Suwir is their inferiority complex as well. According to Decker (1992b) two Kalasha speakers from Urtsun refused to be part of his study on Kalasha to hide their Kalasha identity. Until recently, the public communication language in Arandu was Pashto. In the speech in political gathering and religious sermon Pashto was used. In the lectures in educational institutions, speeches in the political gathering and religious sermon, people switch to other languages, like Urdu, Khowar and Pashto because they considered that their mother tongue is not a suitable language on such occasions. They use these dominant languages to make themselves more powerful. Educated people also switch to Urdu or English in their general conversation because they believe that it reveals them being literate people.

❖ **Language and education policy of the government**

The government policies not fully recognize the language and cultural diversity of the country. Urdu is the medium of instruction in government-owned schools while governments gave the remaining languages very little attention. Most of the indigenous languages are not part of the schooling of children in government-owned schools. According to Coleman (2010:17) "A very effective way of killing a language is to deny it any place in the education system".... Until the recent past, no any language of Chitral was part of children's schooling. Only Kalasha is taught in a community school in Bumboret (Rehman & Sagar, 2015) as a subject but the number of the schools is not many. Recently Khowar has been included as a subject (Akhunzada, 2021) in government schools. Urdu thus being made medium of instruction in the government-owned schools, children of all other languages had to learn it from day one in their schooling. The policy caused endangerment for the majority of indigenous languages. People preferred to learn the languages over their mother tongue. The policies caused marginalization for the mother tongues of indigenous people (Jan, 2016). Yadgha and Gawarbati (both sides) never remained

part of schools. Also, there is no institute established by the government to preserve and promote these languages. The subject is also the least important for public universities in the country.

❖ **The speaker's interactions with others**

Contacts and interaction between the speakers of different languages is also causing language endangerment. In Chitral, people of different villages keep contact with one another for various purposes. One reason is that villages are not fully self-sufficient to fulfil their all need and depend on other villages. Therefore, there are always contacts among people from different villages. In many cases in southern Chitral, each village has a different language. The Yadgha and Kalasha speakers use the markets where the communication language is Khowar. The Yadgha people come to Garam Chashma and Chitral town where they have to speak Khowar with shopkeepers. Similarly, the Gawarbati speakers come to the market where Pashto or Khowar are the main languages. They either come to Arandu or Drosh Bazar where the languages are Pashto and Khowar respectively. All three communities come to the Khowar speaking areas for hospitals, public offices, and study. Higher-level educational institutions have the majority of Khowar speakers and the students from the three languages also have to study in the same institutions. In all these three communities, in most cases, the schools at higher levels lack local teachers and the teachers are non-mother tongue speakers. The language between teachers and students is Khowar in the case of Kalasha and Yadgha and Pashto or Khowar in the case of Gawarbati. In all three language communities, there are other public offices like police stations and hospitals where the communication language is Khowar. The Kalasha of Kalkatak switched easily to Palula language because they already knew the language because of the social contacts. The eastern village of Yadgha speakers, the Kalasha of Bumboret, and Gawarbati of Arandu interact daily with Khowar and other non-mother tongue speakers. Villagers of Kalkatak and Biori people attend each other wedding and death ceremonies, it is not only happening because of blood relationships also because of frequent interaction. The same is the situation in Gawarbati and Yadgha villages where they attend the ceremonies in their neighboring village and vice versa.

In Urtsun the communication language in the police station and schools is Khowar. Most people of Urtsun are multilingual due to interaction with non-mother-tongue speakers. In addition to their mother tongue, they speak Pashto and Khowar.

❖ **The speaker's livelihood**

The livelihood needs of the mother-tongue speakers is another cause of language endangerment. The speakers of all three languages are migrating to other non-mother-tongue-speaking areas for jobs or other business. Sometimes they also permanently migrate with their families to relocate to their new job location. The seasonal migration of Yadgha speakers was very common in the past. The young men of the community use to migrate down cities in winter for earning. For the jobs in public and private organizations, the people have to go to Khowar or Pashto-speaking areas.

In the past, when the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan was normal, people in the Yadgha area had a closer relationship with Kati speakers of Hama Diwana Baba in the Nuristan province of Afghanistan. They were travelling there to buy wool, butter oil and farming animals. The Kati-speaking people also used to come to the Yadgha area to buy various items, mainly groceries. The Yadgha people also have close contact with the people of Gobor, a Kati speakers' village situated at the extreme west of their valley. The communication language with them is Khowar.

The summer pasture of the Kalkatak villagers lies at the eastern end of the Biori Valley—the valley of Palula speakers. The shepherd from Kalkatak were using the valley to reach the pasture. The shepherds of both language communities were interacting with one another in the pastures. The same is the situation of Kalasha and Gawarbati. Shepherds have to interact with non-mother-tongue speakers in the pastures. In Chitral, in most cases, summer pastures are shared by villages.

❖ **Kalasha religion**

Kalasha language is caused endangerment by Kalasha religion (Di Carlo, 2010). Kalasha is the only remaining of ancient religion in Chitral valley. With the arrival of Islamic religion in the region, Kalasha people started converting to the new religion. By giving up their ancient indigenous religion, they also gave up the Kalasha language to further distance themselves from the Kalasha identity. The speakers want to erase completely their Kalasha identity (Di Carlo, 2010). They are doing so to get rid of their Kalasha identity. According to Cacopardo (1991) the group is determined to erase the existence of their past relation and they even want to eliminate their material culture like housing pattern and switching to Khowar. In

many villages in Southern Chitral older people still know their Kalasha language as their former mother tongue but they do not speak the language to hide their association with the Kalasha group. The term 'Kalasha' not only used for a language but also for an ethnicity / group who were considered infidel before the new religion. Speaking Kalasha meant being perceived and infidel. The whole villager of Suwir took an oath never again to speak Kalasha. The villagers collectively gave up the language (Decker, 1992a; Decker, 1992b). Behind this act of oath was a Muslim religious clerk who wanted to disassociate the people from the culture and tradition of their former religion. The Kalasha language still exists in the Urtsun Valley among the Muslims who are ethnically Kalasha. A reason for survival of the language in the valley is because of the new name for the language. In the valley, the language has been renamed as Urtsuniwar means the language of Urtsun. This name does not reveal that the people were having an association with Kalasha religion in the past (Akhunzad & Liljegren, 2009).

❖ War and migration

Gawarbati speakers always live in a war situation due to being on the disturbed border. At the end of the nineteenth century, the land of Gawarbati speakers remained stage of war between the rulers of Afghanistan, Dir, Chitral and Kafirs of Bashgal (current Nuristan). It ended with the occupation of rulers of Afghanistan over most of the area of Gawarbati speakers (Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001). In 1919 Chitralies backed by British and Afghanistan fought a war in the homeland of Gawarbati speakers (Murtaza, 1962). In 1979 when USSR occupied Afghanistan, Gawarbati speakers were among the people who did not accept Russian interference in Afghanistan and started fighting against Russians. All the villagers to the Afghan side immigrated into Chitral and stayed in the UNHCR refugee camp in Kalkatak for more than a decade and some families are still in the camp (Akhunzada & Liljegren, 2009). They lived in the camp with non-Gawarbati speakers. The communication language among them was Pashto.

The Russians war in Afghanistan also affected largely the Gawarbati speakers of Arandu. In Birkot—a Gawarbati village located just across the river from Arandu to the west—there was station of Red Army of U.S.S.R. Mujahidin 'Muslim fighters' were hitting Birkot from around Arandu. Two important war fields Kanda Kasai Mahaz and Dokalam Dafu Mahaz were laying just west and south respectively of Arandu. The people of Arandu watched and heard the noise of this war for 12 years

from the other side of the river. On many occasions, Arandu was also hit by Russian jets dropping heavy bombs, killing people, and destroying buildings. The bombing killed 35 people in Arandu. Many families from the village moved to the other villages in Chitral and stayed with non-mother tongue speakers.

The other tension the Gawarbati people faced between 1982 to 2005 is the dispute between Mushmani (Jigali) Pashtun tribe and the Gawarbati people of Arandu for the ownership of summer pasture called Yousuf Shahi in Arandu Gol. The dispute started when a Pashtun 'Pashto speaker' killed a Gawar man. Then Gawar man killed a Pashtun and injured others. The dispute peaked during the first half of the 1990s when the Afghan border lacked a law enforcing authority. Both the Pashtun and Gawar of Mashadam and Ram Ram respectively evacuated their villages, Gawar moved to Arandu and the Pashtuns went across the border to Asmar. The Pashtun fired rockets into Arandu from across the border repeatedly (Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001). Many people from both communities lost their lives. When the Taliban got the power in Afghanistan the war stopped. The dispute is settled in May 2005 by the elders of Chitral and Kunar at the cost of fining both the tribes. Each group was fined two lacs for a murder. The number of deaths was counted 40 from both sides. Now both tribes moved back to their villages.

The US-led NATO war in Afghanistan started in 2001 disturbed the Gawarbati speakers again. A base of NATO forces was laying nearby Narai and Pashingar, the Gawarbati villages at the Afghan side, while the Taliban has a stronghold of Nuristan province the nearby valley. The Gawarbati speakers again suffered this war very closely. Now every Gawarbati speaker believes that any time war will break out again in their land and they feel unsafe there. They want to move somewhere else in a peaceful area. Many families from both sides of the border--those who can afford have--shifted to other places: to Jalalabad and Kabul by Gawarbati of Afghanistan and to Drosh and Chitral by Gawarbati speakers of Pakistan. Nasir Ullah Nasar, a language activist, has recently counted that 80 families out of 487 (about 16%) have left their native area inside Pakistan. The number can be higher in Afghanistan because of the worse situation.

The Russian war in Afghanistan also impacted Yadgha language. A great number of Dari and some Munji speaker refugees from Badakhshan province of Afghanistan came to the Yadgha speaking areas as refugees during the Russian war in Afghanistan in the 1980s through Dorah Pass, which connects Lot Koh valley with

Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. The road that passes through the area was a refugee's route and also an ammunition supply for the Afghan Mujahidin. Many Yadgha speakers learned Dari language from the refugees. Some intermarriage also took place. Some of the shopkeepers and hotel owners in Garam Chashma are still Dari speakers and know Khowar now. Yadgha got a social-cultural impact from the people.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Kalasha speakers of Bumboret and Rumbur also got non Kalasha speaker because of War. The extreme west-ends of the Bumboret and Rumbur have villages of Kati (Shekhani) speakers. The villagers immigrated to the area from Nuristan (formerly called Kafiristan) because of War. When Amir Abdur Rehman, the ruler of Afghanistan occupied Kafiristan at the end of nineteenth century and forced to convert the people from their indigenous religion to Islam, people from some villages escaped in groups towards Chitral and settled in the high mountains close to the border of Afghanistan (Decker, 1992b). Later on, the people voluntarily converted to Islam but have still maintained their socio-cultural identity. They speak the language they brought with them and consider it a prestigious language. A similar story is associated with Gobor village at the extreme west of Yadgha speaking area in Lot Koh valley. The Kati speaker of the village arrived on the location in the beginning of twentieth century because of fighting between two groups in Nuristan. One group left their native land and settled there. Possibly the people are first who brought a new language to both areas where Kalasha and Yadgha were living in Isolation. The people started sharing the resources of the valleys with indigenous or first comers' people. The Kalasha and Yadgha people have contacts and interactions with the people, in some village daily interaction. They switch to Khowar language for communication.

Discussion

The reason of the selection of these three languages for the study is that it has been observed as well as has been reported by researchers that these languages have either disappeared from their many native villages or the people in the existing majority villages are bilingual. The selection is not based on the size of (the number of speakers) languages currently have. The speakers of Dameli, Madaklashti, and Wakhi languages of Chitral are numbering 6,000, 4500 and 1100 respectively are also either close or less than the number of speakers of these languages but there is no evidence that later group of the languages is disappeared or number of speakers

decreasing from their native villages. Currently their situation is stable and is transferred to new generations in all villages. The speakers of Wakhi language live in Broghil, adjacent to Wakhan Corridor and the homeland of Wakhi speakers. In addition to Wakhan, the language speakers have also spread to Tajikistan, China, and Gilgit-Baltistan (Backstrom & Radloff, 1992).

Researchers have also reported that the speakers of Palula are also decreasing from Kalkatak, Purigal (Decker, 1992b; Liljegren, 2016) and has completely disappeared from Guos (Liljegren, 2017) but the overall situation of Palula is different. The inhabitants of Kalkatak are ethnically Kalasha and not Palula descendants (Decker, 1996; Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001; Akhunzada & Liljegren, 2009). The villagers adopted Palula to get rid of Kalash identity because Kalash was associated with their former belief (Decker, 1992b). So Kalkatak was not native village of Palula. Now the villagers are again shifting to Khowar. Kalkatak is the only village in southern Chitral where Kalasha speakers were shifting to Palula while in all other villages they are shifting to Khowar (Decker, 1996). Purigal and Guos are tiny villages as compared to others with populations of 503 and 677 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023) respectively. Both of these villages are non-adjacent to Biori or Ashret, the main Palula centers. Due to locating at distance and lack of direct interaction, the impact of these two villages on the overall Palula community is not significant. Palula is stable in Biori and Ashret valleys. In Biori, women and children are monolingual and the non-Palula speaker immigrants have completely adopted Palula language and culture. In Ashret, the non-Palula immigrants included speakers of Pashto, Khowar, and Gujari know Palula (Decker, 1992b). Possibly the communication language between the language groups is also Palula. According to the estimation derived from the government census 2017 (PBSGP, 2018), the population is around 11,000 which shows an increase in its speakers as compared to the number reported in the past that was 10,000 (Liljegren, 2017). Decker (1996) also said that the speakers of Palula are increasing.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study revealed that the three languages, Gawarbati, Kalasha and Yadgha in Chitral valley, face definite endangerment situations. The number of speakers of the languages is decreasing. Many native villages of the languages either have completely shifted to other language or they are in transition to shift. The villages

are adopting Khowar, the lingua franca of Chitral or Pashto another major language Spoken in the region.

The main factors this study identified are intermarriage; lack of writing system; language and education policy; speakers' attitude towards their mother tongue; contacts and interaction, speaker's livelihood, Kalasha religion and war and migration. These factors are pushing the speakers to shift to the dominant languages of the valley and region. Some other languages of the valley have fewer speakers than these three languages, but there is no evidence that the speakers of the languages are decreasing. They are in stable situation.

The shift in future may increase because of recently occurred other reasons. Khowar language has been included in the government school curriculum. Government has distributed the course book of the language among the students of non Khowar speakers in the valley. It may further increase the shifting of these three languages to Khowar. Another reason might be the Lowari Tunnel, that has connected Chitral directly with Upper Dir, the Pashto speaking district. The increase in the communication between the two regions may further enhance the influence of Pashto on Chitral. Future research should investigate the impact of these two factors on overall language diversity situation of the valley.

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