



Unity in Diversity Among the Jaunsari Tribe of Uttarakhand: Elevating Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar

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Abstract:

The Jaunsari tribe is one of the culturally rich tribes of Uttarakhand, located in the northern region of Dehradun district. The tribe is known for its unique practices, customs, traditions, and culture, which highlights its diversity from other tribes and communities around the world. Major dialects found in the tribe are *Jaunsari*, *Bawari*, *Kandmani*, and *Devghari*, which are diverse in tone, words, pronunciation, etc. But collectively these dialects are known as the *Jaunsari* language. The study was conducted using a qualitative method by sending questionnaires, along with personal discussions with the co-author², who is a native Jaunsari speaker and understands the language very well. The findings revealed that the Jaunsari tribe has 39 *Khats*, each *Khat (Patti)* has its own uniqueness and identity and has variations in dialects in terms of tone, speed, rhythm, and fluency in spoken words. This paper highlights the diversity of the *Jaunsari* dialects in the region, and also presents the unity among them since time immemorial. The common features among the dialects alongside their diversity create a sense of unity and elevate *Bhartiya Bhasha Pariwar*.

Keywords: Jaunsari Tribe, Language, Culture, Unity in Diversity, Dialects, Uttarakhand.

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Introduction

India is a multilingual and multicultural country, which is why it is called the land of cultures, languages and religions. Due to the country's rich culture, alongside its rich diversity, each state has several languages, making India a unique and multilingual nation and home to 1369 languages. Article 343 of the Indian Constitution recognizes 22 official languages. According to the Chairman of Bhartiya Bhasha Pariwar, “All the 1369 languages of India are national languages. The concept of the National Language is emotional, not constitutional” (Shastry viii).

...India as a linguistic area, where languages belonging to various language families showing common linguistic traits irrespective of their genetic affiliation. The shared features in the Indian linguistic area are a great advantage and boon that has never been seen in any other part of the world. Though India has become one linguistic area, none of the languages of the country has become a threat to the other neighbouring languages, except the colonial-imposed language (Bapuji et al. 12).

In India, individuals are multilingual due to the country's linguistic diversity. A Child first learns their native language, or mother tongue, in the place where they were born. The second language is usually the one which is common in their surroundings, and then the third language, which is called a foreign language, mostly learned in the confined classroom. So, one can see that every individual in India knows more than one language, but still all are Indian, as “Ragas are many, Bhakti is one. Rupas are many, Satya is one. Names are many, Ishwar is one. Systems are many, purpose is one. Languages are many, Bhav is one. Paths are many, destination is one. There are many regions, Bharat is one. There are many Indian languages, but their family is one, which is called Bhartiya Bhasha Pariwar” (Shastry x).

Knowing multiple languages enhances and enriches language in various ways, as well as fostering appreciation for different cultures. People of India, sometimes use more than one language in a single sentence; it has become common to adopt various languages in a conversation due to multilingualism. However, “Indian languages have never thrived in isolation; they have always engaged in multilingual conversations, borrowing freely, adapting rhythmically, and nurturing mutual intelligibility without compromising their unique identities” (“Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar” 242).

According to the 2011 census, there are 705 scheduled tribes in India, and among them, five tribes are found in Uttarakhand, which is the 11th hill state of India and considered the heart of the Himalayas. The Jaunsari tribe is one of the tribes inhabiting in Uttarakhand. The tribe is known for its unique practices, customs, traditions, and culture, which highlights its diversity from other tribes and communities around the world. The uniqueness in the region provides a unique cultural identity to tribal people. The tribe is located in the northern region of the Dehradun district, covered by the Tons River from the north-west and the Yamuna River from the south-east. It is bordered by Uttarkashi district to the north, Himachal’s Sirmour district to the west, Dehradun to the south and Tehri Garhwal to the east.

The Jaunsari tribe has spread into two divisions: Jaunsar and Bawar. Jaunsar region is from Chakrata to the southward Kalsi tehsil, and the Bawar region is from Chakrata to the northern region till Tyuni tehsil. Chakrata is the central point that divides the two regions. However, “for administrative purposes, the British government divided it into 39 *Khats* in 1860; there are 387 villages in these 39 *Khats*” (Negi 51).

According to Indra Singh Negi in *The Languages of India*, there are four dialects in the Jaunsar-Bawar region, namely *Jaunsari*, *Bawari*, *Kandmani*, and *Devghari* (Negi 62). All four dialects are mostly written in the *Devanagari* script, with around 1,37,000 speakers as

per the 2011 census. “The [Jaunsari] language may be written in the Nagari character, but the usual script is that known as the ‘Sirmauri’, or script employed in Sirmaur. It is allied to the Takri character of the Punjab hills, but in some respects it agrees better with *Nagari*, while in others it has struck out on independent lines” (Grierson 387). The scripts used in Jaunsar-Bawar are especially used for astrology, as well as for conducting prayers and rituals, with the help of astrological calculations. This script in the tribe is known as *Sancho* and *Bagoi*. The alphabet of the script is given in Fig. 1:

JAUNSAURI (SIRMAURI) ALPHABET.					
3	a	ख	kau	म	tha
3, 3, 3	ā	ख	kā	न	da
6	i	ख	ka	र	dha
6	ī	ख	kha	न	na
6	u	ख	ga	न	pa
6	ū	ख	gha	न	pha
३, ३	ē, ē	—	na	न	ba
३	ai	ख	cha	न	bha
३, ३	ō, ō	ख	chha	न	ma
३	au	ख	ja	न	ya
३	~	ख	jha	न	ra
३	ka	—	ṛa	न	la
३	ku	ख	ṭa	न	wa
३	ki	ख	tha	न	śa
३	kī	ख	ḍa	न	sha
३	ku	ख	ra	न	sa
३	kū	ख	ḍha	न	ba
३	kē, kē	ख	rha		
३	kai	ख	ṣa		
३	kō, kō	ख	ta		

When used before consonants of their own class, nasals are, as usual, represented by Anusvāra (◌ं). As ॐ and ॐ occur only in this position, they have no special character

Fig 1: Alphabet of the Jaunsari Tribe (Source: Grierson 388)

Literature Review

Umadutt Sharma, known as 'Satish', authored a book in 1990 titled *A Linguistic Study of Jaunsari*, which includes a detailed analysis of the phonology and morphology of *Jaunsari* dialects. Grierson's compiled and edited *Languages of Uttarakhand*, also examines the languages present in the state, including a thorough discussion of the *Jaunsari* language.

People's Linguistics Survey of India, edited by G.N. Devy, has published several volumes that explore the various languages spoken across India. In *The Languages of Uttarakhand* Volume 30, Part II, Indra Singh Negi highlights the major dialects spoken by the Jaunsari tribe, providing examples along with some folk songs and tales. However, the above-mentioned works have, on one side, described the importance of the Jaunsari language and mainly to preserve it; on the other side, the researchers found that no one has written about the dialects that are found within the Jaunsari tribe in different *Khats*.

While only a few works focus specifically on the linguistic survey of the Jaunsari tribe, several efforts have been made to preserve the language. Some notable contributions include *Jaunsari Lokgeet* by Rattan Singh Jaunsari, *Suneri Chalkudi* by Sunita Chauhan, *Aamare Jaunsari Geet* by Dr Nand Lal Bharti, *Harul: Paunranik Veer Gathayein* and *Lokgeet: Sanskritik Virasat avem Lok Gathayein* by Keshar Singh Rai, as well as *Chumka Layana* by Bhajandas Verma, and the *Jaunsari Aakhar* (a collection of Jaunsari poetry), and many more.

The most recent publication, *Jhikkal Kaamchi Audaayli*, edited by Uma Bhatt and Chandrakala Rawat, features a collection of words from 13 languages, including Jaunsari, found in Uttarakhand. The study found that all the above works highlight the language of the Jaunsar-Bawar, however, one has to distinguish the language within the tribe, as in many Jaunsari language works, dialects are different. Hence, to distinguish the dialects between the tribes, research has been conducted.

Methodology

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach by sending questionnaires via social media to various members of the *Khats* (Patti), along with personal discussions with the co-author², who is a native *Jaunsari* speaker and understands the language very well. The questionnaire included short-answer questions, which required some translation of the

wording for all age groups. A total of 24 respondents participated in the questionnaire; some were from similar *Khats*, and some were from different ones. Questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section 1 collected contextual data about the *Khat*, village, age, and sex. Section 2 asked respondents to translate the sentences into their native language, and section 3 asked them to write some words in their dialect.

However, the researchers were not satisfied with the responses from the questionnaire. So, they conducted personal interview instead, which they were able to do through phone calls and personal visits. The samples of the second round of data collection included 5 participants from *Jaunsari*, 5 from *Devghari*, 5 from *Bawari*, and 7 from *Kandmaani*. This methodology enabled the researchers to explore deeper aspects of the language, and the findings were analyzed through detailed discussions with the co-authors.

Findings

The *Jaunsari* dialect is primarily spoken by the residents of the Jaunsar region, which encompasses a total of 29 *Khats*: Dwar, Uparli Athgaon, Rangau, Dhunau, Dasau, Maletha, Taplar, Chultar, Baundur, Bishlar, Bangaon, Buraswa, Birmau, Kothi, Shili, Samalta, Koru, Behlar, Lakhwar, Fartar, Bana, Haripur-Vyas, Panjgaon, Shili Gothan, Bamtar, Udpalta, Silgaon, Vishayal, and Athgaon-Chando.

In addition, the *Bawari* dialect is spoken in the Bawar region, which includes five *Khats*: Bawar, Banadhar, Lakhau, Silgaon-Bawar, and Fanar.

Kandmani is another dialect spoken by people who once lived between Chakrata and Tyuni, covering the Kailu, Mohana, Mohso, and Bharam *Khats*.

Devghari is spoken by the inhabitants of the Devghar *Khat*, which consists of 17 villages located along the border and is connected to the Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh.

Reflections of these dialects can be seen in adjacent areas too. For instance, the *Jaunsari* dialect influences the Sirmaur district of Himachal and vice versa, due to their shared history, as well as marriages that also occur between these two regions. Similarly, the southern Uttarkashi district, Rawain and Jaunpur areas also shares cultural and dialectal similarities with the *Khats* of the Jaunsar.

As there are multiple dialects, which are diverse in tone, vocabulary, pronunciation, and mouth opening, the pronunciation differs, which can be explained in the table below:

Table 1: Pronunciation of word ‘Our’ in regional dialect

Regional dialect	Romanised Hindi Letters Pronunciation	Regional Letters Pronunciation	Regional Pronunciation of the Word ‘Our’
Southern Jaunsari	<i>Ha</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>Hamaare</i>
Kandmani	<i>Ha</i>	<i>aa</i>	<i>Aamaare</i>
Bawari	<i>Ha</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>Aumaare</i>
Devghari	<i>Ha</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>Omaare</i>
Note: Exception in Baundur <i>Khat</i>	<i>Ha</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>Umaare</i>

From the above table, one can understand that the pronunciation of the letter ‘*Ha*’ in the tribe is different in different areas. However, this does not mean that every word in the

dialects that starts with ‘*ha*’ is pronounced as shown in the table. Some words are pronounced as they are in Hindi, while most are spoken in the regional tone and vocabulary.

There are two types of communication, which can be found in every language. Similarly, the Jaunsari tribe uses both formal and informal forms of speech. The formal form of dialects is spoken to the elders and with people whom they hardly know by using ‘you’ as ‘*tum*’ as a sign of respect. The informal form of dialects is used with close friends and family members by using ‘you’ as ‘*tu*’. For instance:

Formal: *Tum koke /koike jaande?* (Where are you going?)

Informal: *Tu koke /koike jaanda?* (Where are you going?)

Both sentences convey the same meaning, only difference is in their use of formal and informal form of speech. Some more examples of formal and informal speech are:

Example 1: Formal: *Tume khaanok khaipo/ Khaipao?* (Have you had your meal?)

Informal: *Te khaanok khaipo/ Khaipao?* (Have you had your meal?)

Example 2: Formal: *Tumu bhetkari aacho laago* (Nice to meet you).

Informal: *Tauke/ taunkhe bhetkari aacho laago* (Nice to meet you).

The difference in dialects can be seen not only in the above-mentioned dialects but also in various *Khats*. As mentioned earlier, there are 39 *Khats* in the Jaunsari tribe; each *Khat* has variations in terms of tone, speed, rhythm, and fluency in spoken words. For instance, the *Jaunsari* dialect is spoken in 29 *Khats*, but there are variations in pronunciation in several *Khats*, which can be explained in the following table:

Table 2: Variations found in Jaunsari dialect region

S. no	Word	South-eastern Jaunsari dialect region	South-western Jaunsari dialect region
1.	<i>Isne</i>	<i>Aemne</i>	<i>Ine</i>
2.	<i>Usne</i>	<i>Temne</i>	<i>Tine</i>
3.	<i>Idhar</i>	<i>Aeshae</i>	<i>Aetaim</i>
4.	<i>Udhar</i>	<i>Tashain</i>	<i>Tataim</i>
5.	<i>Kidhar</i>	<i>Kaushain</i>	<i>Kautaim</i>
6.	<i>Unko</i>	<i>Tiyunk</i>	<i>Tinuk</i>
7.	<i>Unke</i>	<i>Tiyunke</i>	<i>Tinuke</i>
8.	<i>Ise/ Isko</i>	<i>Aeske</i>	<i>Aesik</i>
9.	<i>Inke</i>	<i>Iyunke</i>	<i>Inuke</i>
10.	<i>Gaon ke Upar</i>	<i>Gaon ke auchodi</i>	<i>Gaon paand</i>
11.	<i>Subah (Morning)</i>	<i>Ratiyein</i>	<i>Jhisha</i>
12.	<i>Sham (Evening)</i>	<i>Beuko</i>	<i>Bekhauko</i>

How the variations occur in the four languages that are found in the tribe are explained in the given examples:

Table 3: Variations found in dialects in the tribe

S. No	English	Hindi	Jaunsari	Bawari	Kandmani	Devghari

1.	I live in a small village near the mountains.	मैं पहाड़ पर एक छोटे से गाँव में रहता हूँ।	आँउं टीमै पाँदै ऐक नान्दरै गाँअं दा रौऊं।	आँउं टिरा डाई ऐक नैन्दिशै गाँउंऐदि रौउं।	आँऊ टीमे पुण्डा ऐक नैनौडै गाँअं दा रौऊं।	आंव पहाड़ के एक छोटे से गांव दा रौऊ।
2.	The river floods during the rainy season.	बरसात के मौसम में नदी में बाढ़ आ जाती है।	चौमासै कै रीति नौदिआँदो हाड़ आँअं।	चोमासे की रितांदि नौइउंदि आळ-खाळ आए।	चौमासै मुझ गाड़ा दो हाड़ आँअ।	झडओ के भिन्ने दे खोटे हौलडानी आजो है।
3.	We celebrate festivals with music and dance.	हम त्योहारों को नृत्य और संगीत के साथ मनाते हैं।	आमै तिआरूक नाच-गाणै साथै मौनाउं।	आमै तिआरूस नाची औनि गाजै-बाजै कै साथै मौनाउं।	आमै तियार नाचे गायरै मनाऊं।	आमे तिआरो नाचियो ओनी गीतो लाइओ मिनाऊ है।
4.	He walks early in the morning.	वह सुबह-सुबह टहलने जाता है।	से जिशा-जिशा हाण्डदा जाँअं।	सैउ जिशा-जिशा आंडदौ नौए।	से जीशा- जीशा हाण्डदा जाँअं।	से झिशी-झिशी घुमदा डेओ है।

5.	The children play outside after school.	बच्चे स्कूल के बाद बाहर खेलते हैं।	लाड़कौटे स्कूलौ बासिया बाहरै खेलौं।	नौनाउळ स्कूल बासिआ बारै खेलै।	छेड़ स्कूलों के आये बाहरे खेलों ऐ।	नानोडे स्कूलो बासीये बाईडें खेलो है।
6.	There is an ancient temple at the top of the hill.	पहाड़ी की चोटी पर प्राचीन मंदिर है।	दारा कै टीमै पाँद पुराणे देउटे औ।	दारा कै टिमै शैई पुराणी देउटी ओसे।	टीमै शीऐ ऐक पुराणी देऊटी ऐ।	टिम्बे गाये एक पुरानों मंदिर ओसों।
7.	Birds sing melodious songs in the forest.	जंगल में पक्षी मधुर गीत गाते हैं।	बनाया दै चलकुड़े मीठे गीत लांअं।	जौनगलैदि चौड़िया बठिआ गीत लाओं।	जौंगलौन्दै चलकुड़े बाँके बाँके गीत लांअं।	जंगलों दे चौड़ो गीतो ने ओरे बाशो।
8.	My grandfather tells stories in the evening.	मेरे दादाजी शाम को कहानियां सुनाते हैं।	मेरा नाना बैखौकी काणिआ शुणांअं।	मेरो नाना फिरी काणिआ शुणांऐ।	मैरा नाना बेईकै काणियाँ शुणाअं ऐ।	मेएरे नाना फिरी काणियाँ सुनाओ।
9.	The sun has set.	सूर्यास्त हो गया है।	दूस उछाऐ गो।	दूस ओड़ी गो।	दूस औछाऐ गो ऐ।	दओ होछाई गौई।

10.	It rains heavily in July and August.	जुलाई और अगस्त में भारी बारिश होती है।	शाँअणैं बादोऐ बोउते बौरशौण लागौं।	शांउण बाद्रौ बौरी बौरशै।	शांऔण बादोऐ बोउते भोरा लागौं ऐ।	शाऊण बाद्रौ हद झोडो लागौं।

The table above illustrates the variations in the dialects that are found in the tribe. The variations differ not only in pronunciation but also in the movement of the mouth during speech. Moreover, there are also similarities in the regions and dialects that have remained unchanged despite regional differences. It remains as it is, as explained in the table below, which illustrates similar words:

Table 4: Similar words in every dialect found in the tribe

S. No	English	Similar words in every dialect
1.	Namaste	<i>Dhal</i>
2.	Day	<i>Doos</i>
3.	Air	<i>Bagur</i>
4.	Forest	<i>Banai</i>
5.	Marriage	<i>Jojoda</i>
6.	Beautiful	<i>Baanka / Baanki</i>
7.	Fog	<i>Kurer</i>

8.	Sky	<i>Gayiin</i>
9.	Hearth	<i>Chūl</i>
10.	Farm	<i>Dhokro</i>

Conclusion

The Jaunsari tribe contains dialectal variations that are distinct from the main language because some regions of the tribe, which are clusters of *Khats*, have their own identity, which shapes them. This is why it is often described as a unity in diversity. The tables above show the variations in the multiple dialects that are found in the tribe, while also highlighting some of the similarities.

For instance, Table 1 illustrates how the ‘*Ha*’ sound is pronounced differently in different dialects. The researchers also found that there are differences not only in dialects, but also within a single dialect. Table 2 highlights the differences in the *Jaunsari* dialect, the most widely spoken dialect among others, which is used across 29 *Khats*. Table 3 further clarifies the differences in the dialects, i.e. *Jaunsari*, *Bawari*, *Kandmani*, and *Devghari* in the Jaunsar-Bawar region. However, apart from these differences, the researchers also found similarities, as shown in Table 4. Together, these dialects are known as the Jaunsari language.

So, even after finding diversity and uniformity, there is a unity as well as richness among them that reflects their core identity. This unity is strengthened by shared cultures, traditions, customs, and rituals. Jaunsari tribal people unite in fairs, festivals, and events like *Bissu*, *Jagara*, *Jatra*, *Maroj (Paush Tiyyar)* and *Maun*, where they share, interact, and communicate in multiple dialects. In addition, relationships are fostered through marriages between different communities.

“India’s linguistic landscape is unmatched not just in the unity of languages spoken, but in the profound sociocultural unity that binds them. Across scripts and sounds, Indians speak many languages, yet echo as one” (“Bharatiya Bhasha Pariwar” 241). Thus, this concept of unity in diversity is prominently reflected in the Jaunsari tribe.

Hence, unity in diversity is evident in the Jaunsari tribe through their language and culture. This diversity elevates and enriches the Bhartiya Bhasha Pariwar and helps ensure that the culture and dialects of the tribe remain vibrant, preserved and sustained. It is now necessary to understand the language of the tribe as it holds historical, political and social significance for the regional people. Nevertheless, the dialects within each *Khat* of the Jaunsari tribe require deeper research, particularly concerning their phonetic qualities, including the movements of the mouth, tongue, and lips required to articulate specific words, despite the proximity of the communities.

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