

## **Kashmiri Language: Indo-Aryan vis-à-vis Dardic Perspective**

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### **Introduction**

Indo-European family of languages shows a sharp breakup into a number of language groups in South Asian region. These groups include Indo-Aryan, Dardic and Iranian. G. A. Grierson places Dardic as an independent group between Indo-Aryan and Iranian. The proposed thesis holds the view that Dardic family shares the linguistic features both from Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages but simultaneously has evolved certain linguistic traits which are absent in either of these groups. S.K.Chatterjee supports Grierson's proposition of classification of Dardic languages. George Morgnsterne did not find any linguistic or ethnographic justification of Dardic group. Thus, while discarding the term "Dardic", Morgnsterne classified most of the languages spoken in the Karakorum region within Indo-Aryan group of languages. According to this hypothesis Kafir group may comprise a special group distinct from other Dardic languages. M. B. Emeneau and Julius Bloch share the similar view. After Grierson(1906), the term "Dardic" appeared in the writings of Braj. B. Kachru (1966,1969),Turner(1972),Colin Masica(1976), George Cardona(1974), Koul and Schmidt(1984). Whatever be the historical and linguistic affinity of Dardic group of languages, it is the cover term in which a large number of languages and dialects spoken in the Northern region of Indian subcontinent, Karokorum region and around Indus valley are grouped.

### **Dardic: A Conceptual Orientation**

Karakorum which comprises the part of Great Himalayas is a large mountain range stretching its borders to Pakistan, India and China. This

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region is inhabited by the population of different ethnic, geographical and linguistic diversities. The cover term “Dardistan” is often used to refer to this belt of the Himalayan region as apparent from many sources and references. In the Greek literature the terms like “Dardikai”, “Daedala”, “Dardea” had been mentioned to refer to the races living across this region. Herodotus (4<sup>th</sup> Century BC), Strabo (64BC to AD 23) and Pliny (AD23 to AD79) had mentioned these terms in their writings to refer to the races and tribes of the present day Dardistan. According to various sources, the term Dardistan had earlier appeared in Sanskrit epics and Purans.

According to Mock, Herodotus’ “Dardikai” may be the Persian name for the “darada” given in the Puranic lists, which Strabo and Pliny applied to war-like people whom they equated with Curtius “Assakenoi”. Hence, Herodotus’ original citation appears to have been derived from Puranic sources” (2010:2).

The ancient inscription on the rocks of the present day Gilgit and Skardu indicate the mention of the Dardic Kings. The word “daradaraya” inscribed on these rocks has been deciphered as “the King of Dards”. The Inscription is in Kharoshthi script –an ancient Indic script used by the Ghundara Culture of ancient South Asia (modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) to write Ghandari language (a dialect of Prakrit and Sanskrit language).

As quoted in Mock (2010), Hinuber in his translation works has mentioned the historicity of the Kings of Dards. Hinuber’s primary source of this historical account has been the rock inscriptions found in Brahmi script. These inscriptions were found on Alam bridge connecting Gilgit and Sakurda in which the names of the Dard kings had been inscribed. Similar inscriptions have been discovered in Chilas, Thalpan, the area on Indus River, and Thalpar across the Indus river. Some of these inscriptions are in Brahmi script. These inscriptions are treated to be the source of immense significance for tracing out the genesis of Dardistan and its people.

The historian of the middle period of Kashmir, Kalhana, had also mentioned "The Darda Country" in Rajtarangni. Rajtarangni is considered as the first written history of Kashmir. The history is in the form of chronicle and has been written originally in the Sanskrit language.

Stein (as mentioned in Grierson (1906: 234)), who translated Kalhana's Rajtarangni gives the following account about Dards:

"Their seat (the location of the Dardistan) which does not seem to have changed since the time of Herodotus extend from Chitral and Yasin across the Indus regions of Gilgit, Chilas and Bunji to the Kishanganga valley in the immediate north of Kashmir. The tribes inhabiting the valley are mentioned in the chronicles as Dardas or Darads."

Kalhana's historical descriptions imply that Karakorum is the nucleus of Dard settlements since ancient period. Travel dairies and description of G.W.Leitner support the notion about Dardistan and Dards as documented earlier.

Grierson(ibid) believes that:

".....the whole of Dardistan was once inhabited by the ancestors of the present owners of Hunza and Nagar. It is not impossible that they were identical with the "Nagas", who, according to Kashmiri mythology, were the aboriginal inhabitants of the happy valley before the arrival of Pisachas, and after who every mountain spring in Kashmir is named....."

Mock has quoted the following reference from the writings of Stein to ascertain the region and race of Dardistan. "Their [Daradas or Dards] seats, which do not seem to have changed since the time of Herodotus, extend from Gilgit, Cilas, Bunji to the Kishanganga valley in the immediate north of Kashmir. The tribes inhabiting the later valley are meant in most passages in which the chronicle mentions the Daradas or Darads" (2010:3). On the basis of various historical accounts Kalhana establishes that the races and tribes inhabited in the Karakorum region and North West of Kashmir are Dards. It is noteworthy to mention here that the term "Dard" is found in the colloquial form of Kashmiri speech to refer to the tribes and races hailing from various areas of Karakoram region.

### **Kashmiri Language in Dardic Perspective: Linguistic Basis**

The term Dardic has taken strong basis in the literature that has appeared during 20<sup>th</sup> century on this subject. Frederic Drew, Mir Izzet Ullah, H. H. Wilson have made mention in their writings about Dards and Dardistan. G. W. Leitner established the link between the past and present views of Dards and Dardistan to establish the ethnographic and political identity of the region. According to Leitner as quoted by Mock, "Dardistan or the Daradas of Hindu Mythology, embraces, in the narrowest sense of the term, the Shina speaking countries (Gilgit etc); in the wider sense; Hunza, Nagar, Yasin and Chitral; and in the widest, also parts of Kafiristan" (2010:4).

Leitner although tried to establish the ethnographic, geographic and political identity of Dardistan, but it has become the basis of classifying most of the languages spoken in the geographical terrain in a single geneological group. G. A. Grierson took the lead in this perspective. Grierson (1906) conceived the theory that Dardic should form a separate linguistic group in Indo-Iranian subfamily of Indo-European family of languages with its linguistic similarities and dissimilarities with both Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages.

In the larger configuration of languages classified in the Dardic group, Kashmiri language comprises the majority language with its rich and documented literary and cultural legacy in comparison to other languages like Shina, Kohistani, Kati, Narasti, Chitrari etc. Kashmiri speaking region also occupies the transitional linguistic space between Indo-Aryan language belt and other Dardic languages. These factors have become pivotal for making Dardic linguistic inquiry as Kashmiri-centric. Grierson has been confident in classifying Kashmiri among the languages of Dard sub-group of Dardic group similar to Shina and Kohistani. He holds the following opinion about the linguistic affinity of Kashmiri language:

"Kashmiri is a mixed language, having as its basis a language of the Dard group of the Pisacha family allied to Shina. It has been powerfully influenced by the Indian culture and literature. And the great part of its vocabulary is now of Indian origin and is allied to that of the Sanskritic

Indo-Aryan languages of the northern India. As, however, it's basis,----- in other words, it's phonetic system, it's accidence, it's syntax, it's prosody,....is pisacha, it must be classed as such, and not as a Sanskritic form of speech" (1919: 234).

9. According to Grierson following is the linguistic classification of Dardic Languages:

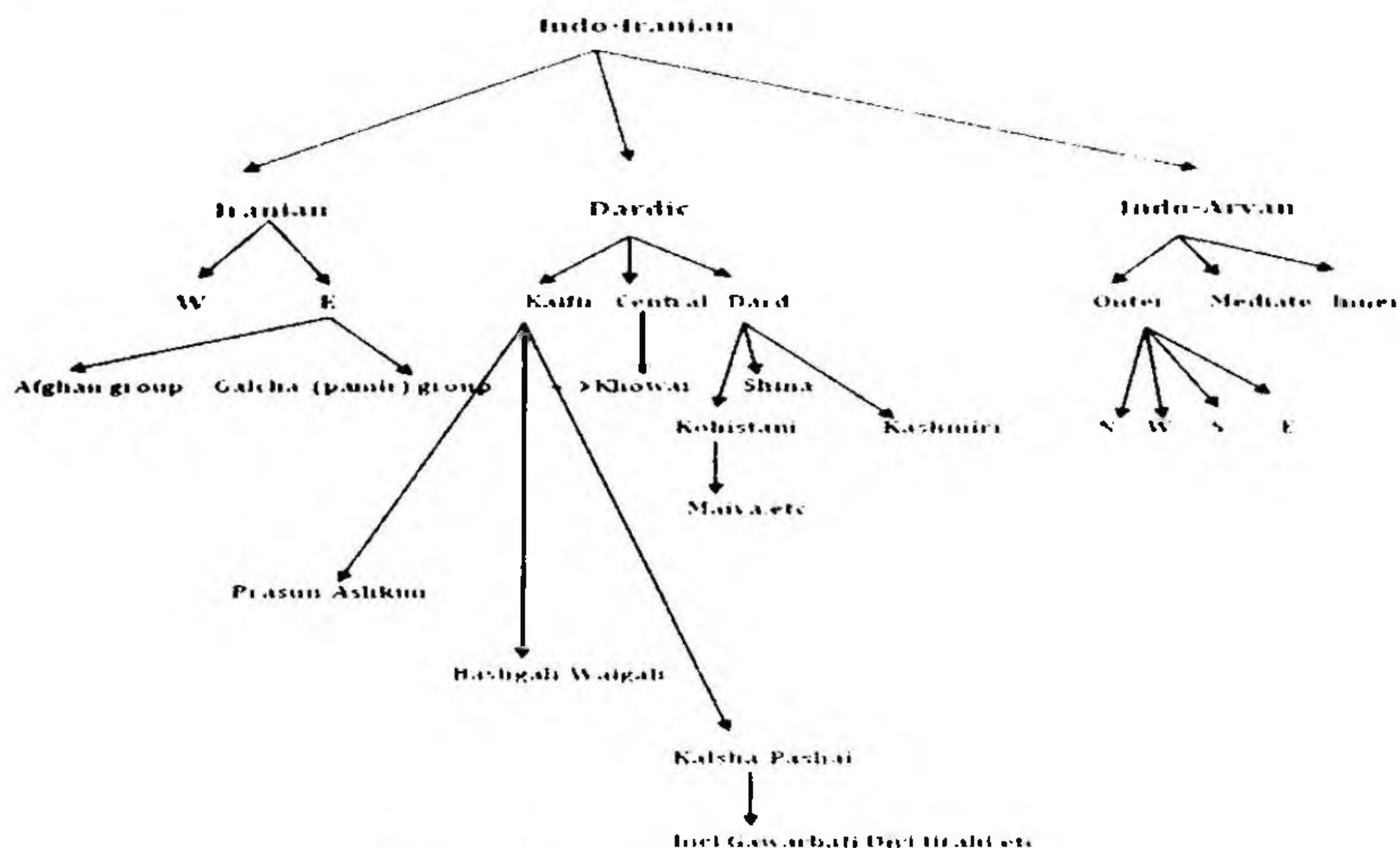


Fig: "Dardic", according to Grierson

S.K.Chatterji supports this view as follows:

"As a language, Kashmiri, at least in it's basic stratum belongs to the Dardic section of Aryan or Indo-Iranian. Possibly, one section of the Aryans who came to India before 1000 BC and who spoke dialects very much like the language of Rig-Veda but with certain special characteristics( which later gave rise to the Dardic branch of Aryan) became established in the valley of Kashmir, and in the surrounding mountainous tracts; and very early , possibly from after the Vedic age, Brahmanical Aryans with their Indo-Aryan "spoken" Sanskrit ( and subsequently with the prakrits) came and settled in Kashmir and other Himalayan areas. In this way, Kashmiri, in spite of a Dardic substratum in it's people and in it's speech, became a part of the Sanskritic culture-world of India. The Indo-Aryan Prakrits and Apabhramsa from the Midland and from Northern Punjab profoundly modified the Dardic bases of Kashmiri,

so that one might say that the Kashmiri language is a result of a very large over-laying of a Dardic base with indo-Aryan elements" (1962:221).

Grierson has based his observations on the following linguistic features. These features are largely absent in most of the Indo-Aryan language. Kachru (1969:286-7) has enumerates these features as under:

- i. Lack of voiced aspirates in Kashmiri, which otherwise has the inherent role in othe Indo-Aryan languages. e.g. [bh], [dh], [gh].
- ii. Confusion between cerebral and dental letters
- iii. Consonantal epenthesis, i.e., the change in a consonant under the influence of the vowel or semi-vowel.
- iv. Aspiration of stops in final position.
- v. No vowel change or germination of Prakrit borrowing in Kashmiri.
- vi. In the environment V+V, t is not dropped.
- vii. [n] is "liable to illision".
- viii. [a] as an indefinite marker.
- ix. [r] preceding another consonant is not dropped.
- x. The presence of large number of post-position in Kashmiri which are peculiar to Pisacha.
- xi. The numeral system is typical of Pisa:cha.
- xii Unlike other Indo-Aryan languages, some Dardic languages including

Kashmiri exhibit a three-way contrast of the demonstrative pronouns.

For example Kashmiri /yi/ "this", /hu/ "that within sight" and /su/ "that out

of sight". All these forms take inflections for number, gender and case.

- xiii A three fold past tense in Kashmiri

e.g. kh<sup>o</sup>on 'to eat'(stem verb)

Kh<sup>o</sup>ov      kheyo:v      kheyeyo:v

Por      par<sup>o</sup>:v      pare:yo:v

Past      Immediate Past      Remote Past

- xiv Different word orders, e.g. Kashmiri follows SVO, e.g.

me kər kə:m.  
 I did work  
 S V O  
 I did (my) work.

In its contrast to Hindi/Urdu etc.

mē:ne ka:m kiya:  
 I work did  
 S O V  
 I did (my) work.

The linguistic affinity of Kashmiri proposed by Grierson (1919) may be further supported by the following linguistic features which occur in Kashmiri language and are likely absent in most of the Indo-Aryan languages.

- i. Occurrence of central vowels like: high-central short /i/ in Kashmiri  
 For example [tsi] “you”
- ii. Occurrence of high-central long /i:/ in Kashmiri  
 For example [ti:r] “cold”
- iii. Occurrence of Mid-central short /e/ in Kashmiri  
 For example tsər “sparrow”
- iv. Occurrence of Mid central long /e:/ in Kashmiri  
 For example tsə:r “selection”
- v. Occurrence of mid-back short /o/ in Kashmiri  
 For example hoT “throat”
- vi. Heavy palatalization.

According to Grierson’s view Kashmiri has close linguistic proximity with Shina and Kohistani. These three languages and their dialects form the Dard group of Dardic languages. During last few decades; different comparative studies of Kashmiri and Shina have been initiated. Koul (2000-2001) has documented the following view on this subject:

“Schmidt (1981) and Koul and Schmidt (1984) represent the most recent work on Kashmiri, Shina and their dialects. Their analysis is based on the

comparison of phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary count, which previous scholars have used to define the so called Dard group. Their findings confirm that both Shina and Kashmiri possess phonological and morphological features that characterize the so called Dard group. (i.e.: Indo Aryan languages of the Dard area), though there are certain differences between the two. Shina, for example, has developed a tone system and has preserved a three way contrast among sibilants. Kashmiri, in contrast, has developed a system of palatalized consonants. The most striking differences, according to these authors, is the occurrence of a verb second word order, which is peculiar only to Kashmiri and its dialect Kishtawari”.

Ahmad and Dhar (2009) have unfolded the following linguistic similarities of Kashmiri *visa-vis* Shina language.

1. Palatalization, as a phenomenon, is present in Shina as well as in Kashmiri. (This phenomenon has also been reported by Peri Bhaskar Rao and Carla Redloff have also identified palatalization in shina spoken in Gurez. )

2. Shina as well as Kashmiri are postpositional languages. postpositions used are also slightly similar particularly the agentive postpositions *ei* and *si* ‘by’. The postposition *paton* ‘after/behind’ is almost synchronous with Kashmiri equivalent *pati*.

3. Both shina and Kashmiri have intransitive verbs e.g.

Shina

zo        mu:vo:  
he (nom) died.  
‘He died’

Kashmiri

su mu:d  
he (nom) died.  
‘He died’

4. It is interesting to hear certain Shina speakers use the pronoun /su/ ‘he’ against /zo/- the actual Shina pronoun for ‘he’.

5. In pronominal system, Shina of Gurez has much resemblance with Kashmiri e.g. the word for 1st person genitive in Shina is *mið* ‘my’ which is similar to the one in Kashmiri, i.e. *mʷo:n* which is shown by Grierson as



myon – again the use of ‘y’ after consonant at the onset which in modern Kashmiri is shown by Palatalization of the consonant.

6. Kashmiri has a SVO word order which, however, is not the case with Shina which is SOV language. It shares this features with a hitherto unknown language/dialect Kash spoken in Doda village of Jammu and Kashmiri state.

7. In Kashmiri, third person pronouns exhibit a three-term distinction of the participants in speech acts namely proximate, remote 1 (within sight) and Remote 2 (out of sight).

Shina too has this feature present. It is shown like this.

Kashmiri	Shina	Gloss
yi	ano:h/ani:h	this
hu	zo:/su	that (within sight)
su	pera:sulo	that (out of sight)

/su/- used in Kashmiri for Remote 1 is also used in Gurezi Shina for 3<sup>rd</sup> P.sg pronoun (within sight).

### **Kashmir Language: Indo-Aryan Perspective**

Goerge Morgenstierne on the basis of his study revised Grierson’s classification. He made the distinction between Kafir and Dardic group. He moved Kalasha, Pashai, and GawarBati to the Dardic group. According to him Dardic is, “simply a convenient term to denote a bundle of aberrant Indo-Aryan hill languages” which “contain absolutely no features which can not be derived from old IA” (Morgenstierne, 1961: 139). Morgenstierne does not consider Dardic as a linguistic group as he states, “There is not a single common feature distinguishing Dardic , as a whole, from the rest of the IA languages” (ibid: 138).

Toshkhani (1977) states that Kashmir was a part of the Vedic Aryan world at least in the geographical sense. Linguistically the lexical and the phonetic elements of Kashmiri can be directly traced to Vedic source.

The hypothesis to trace the Vedic origin of Kashmiri is based on large number of linguistic evidences a few among which are mentioned below:

1. ‘yodvay’- “if” occurs in Kashmiri has roots in Vedic form Yaduvay which is similar to yedi of sanskrit and Hindi.

2. basti "skin" correspondence to basti "goat" or bastijin "goatskin" of Vedic form.

3. syun "cooked vegetable" used in Kashmiri corresponds to Vedic form sin.

4. son or sron "deep" used in Kashmiri corresponds to Vedic san.

5. tacha "to scratch" used in Kashmiri corresponds to Vedic tash.

6. Kashmiri contains several Vedic words which have Pali or Prakrit origin.

For example:

Vedic	Pali	Kashmiri	Gloss
atyeti	achheti	a-eun	'to enter'
prastav	patharo	pothur	'On the ground'

7. Retention of the original r in Kashmiri pritsh (Skt. pricheha = to ask) and prang (Skt. paryank = bed) are other notable examples. this tendency (in Kashmiri) to preserve original phonetic elements.

8. The word tomul "cooked rice" has retained initial ta- of sanskrit tandulam which corresponds to cha- in other modern Indo-Aryan languages.

9. Kashmiri shows certain syntactic similarities with Sanskrit particularly for negative sentences.

Examples:

Kashmiri	ati	ma	par
	there	neg	read

"Do not read there"

Sanskrit	atri	maha	parha
	there	neg	read

"Do not read there"

According to Toshkani (1977) Kashmiri language shows phonetic feature that can be diachronically similar to that of old Indo-Aryan. He states, "Phonetic aspects of how Kashmiri retains some of the most archaic word forms that can be traced only to the Old Indo-Aryan speech have been analyzed at some length by Siddheshwar Verma. Citing word after word, Verma provides evidence on how Kashmiri shows contact with older

layers of Indo-Aryan vocabulary. The Kashmiri word Kral (potter) derived from the Vedic Sanskrit Kulal is one of such words which he has examined in detail, taking help of Turner's Nepali dictionary. While all other modern Indo- Aryan languages, except Nepali and Sinhalese, have for it words derived from the Sanskrit kumbhakar, Kashmiri alone preserves remnants of the relatively older kulal, which appears for the first time in the Vedas”.

Mock has made the following observations in this context

“This classification[ Indo-Aryan base of Kashmiri Language] is accepted by scholars today, whose further field work has supported and refined Morgenstierne’s view (Fussman 1972, Strand 1973, Edleman 1983, Schmidt and Koul 1983, Koul and Schmidt 1984)” (2010:5).

### **Conclusion**

Dardic zone (the author is convenient with the term Dardic) is a fertile area for linguistic research. Most of the languages of this region have remained unexplored or partially explored. The linguistic classification of most of the languages/dialects of the region so far seems to be contradictory. The focus of the present paper being Kashmiri vis-à-vis Indo-Aryan and Dardic contexts and it is apparent that SVO word order of Kashmiri is the unique feature that separates it from Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi/Urdu/Punjabi etc and Dard languages like Shina/Kohistani etc. These languages share SOV word order for the simple declarative sentences. Kashmiri language also shows unique phonological traits particularly in vowel inventories and occurrence of matra vowels which are absent in Shina/Kohistani and among Indo-Aryan languages. It is safer to say here that revisiting the subject matter of Linguistic Survey of the Karokaram region including Kashmiri is an indispensable need. The fresh approach with modern linguistic tools and comparative methods including intensive field work is of immense importance to discover many interesting linguistic facts which may result in a fascinating linguistic map of this part of South Asia.

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