

# THE ORIGIN OF THE PUNJABI LANGUAGE: ITS PROGRESS AND EXPANSION

ARTICLE

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the Punjabi language is not considered to be one of the ancient languages of India. Sikh theologians, researchers, and historians go back only to the time of Sufi Sheikh Farid of 12<sup>th</sup> century, whose verses (bani), written in Punjabi, have been incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1]. Nevertheless, according to the Kwintessential website, the Punjabi language is considered to be an ancient language. The exact date when it started cannot be estimated but the ancestors of the Punjabis have been known to have inhabited the Indus Valley as far back as 2,500 BCE [2].

It is invariably understood that the Persians named the land of five rivers as 'Punjab' and the people of this land were named 'Punjabi' and their language was also named 'Punjabi' [3]. Darius (521 BCE), Seleucus / Seleucid (305 BCE), Kushan (145 BCE), Kanishka (78 CE) from Persia ruled the Punjab [4] but when the Persians named the land of five rivers as 'Punjab' is not known.

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## ABSTRACT

*The theory that the Punjabi language is one of the branches of 'Apabrahmsa' (vernacular language) being derived from the so-called 'Prakrit', which was derived from 'Sanskrit', has been widely accepted by Sikh theologians, linguists and historians. This status of the Punjabi language as Apabrahmsa, makes the Sikhs and others to avoid writing and speaking in Punjabi. This paper will disprove the above theory by discussing the historical background of the development of the 'Indo-European Languages', especially in the area currently called the Punjab. The language which developed in the Punjab after the arrival of the Aryans from 4,000 to 1,000 BCE is called 'Proto-Indo-Aryan language'. In this paper, Proto-Indo-Aryan language is called 'Proto-Punjabi' since it developed in the Punjab. When Proto-Indo-Aryan or just Proto-Punjabi was used to write the sacred granths of Jainism and Buddhism it was called 'Pali' by the Buddhists. However, the same 'Proto-Punjabi' was named 'Punjabi' around 500 CE by the Persians and was used by the Sufi Sheikh Farid to disseminate his message to the people of Punjab - the land of five rivers, during the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. Subsequently, almost all Bhagats of India, Guru Nanak and Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak', used that 'Punjabi language' to write their verses (bani).*

However, this same land of five rivers was also called by another name, Pentapotamia, by the Greeks during their kingdom around 100 BCE, because of the five rivers that ran through it [5].

On the other hand, the protagonists of 'Sanskrit' have published large amounts of literature to convince linguists that 'Sanskrit' is the oldest language of India (and as such is Mother of all Indian languages), to the extent the claim is made that even Greek, Latin, etc. also originated from Sanskrit. Some call it the language of God. In this propaganda the name of the language developed by the Aryans, who started to settle in present day Punjab from 4,000 to 1,000 BCE [6], is lost in antiquity. Similarly, in the

context of this debate, the arrival of the Aryans in India, has also become a controversial debate [7].

The Sikh linguists, theologians and historians accept that the Punjabi language belongs to 'Apabhramsa' (a vernacular language: the everyday language spoken by a people as distinguished from their literary language.) derived from the so-called 'Prakrit', which was derived from 'Sanskrit'.

Now the question to be resolved is: What was that language, which was developed after the arrival of Aryans in the Punjab?

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### The Concept of the Protagonists of Sanskrit

The general concept established by the protagonists of Sanskrit is as follows:

Around 400 BCE, Panini [8], a grammarian from Shalatala near Attock, now in Pakistan, synthesized a new language from the language spoken by the people of the land of seven rivers from Sindh to Saraswati then called Septa Sindhvaha (Septa Sindhu) [3]. After giving it a grammatical form he named it 'Sanskrit'. The language spoken by the people at that time was termed 'Prakrit' which means without grammar, vernacular and vulgar. Although the Vedas were written in the so-called Prakrit, Sanskrit propagandists started to call that language of the Vedas 'Vedic Sanskrit' or 'Old Sanskrit' and the language which was put into a definite grammar rule was named 'Classical Sanskrit'. On the other hand the language spoken by the people, 'Prakrit', was further downgraded by modern scholars who named it

'Apabhramsa' – the corrupt or non-standardized language. The irony is that the Sanskrit propagandists completely kept the linguists of India in the dark about the real name of language developed in the land of five rivers, the Punjab.

In fact the language of the Rig Veda, written around 1,500 BCE, was not "Vedic Prakrit" nor "Old Sanskrit" but the spoken language of the Punjab developed on the arrival of the Indo-Aryans and there was no word, "Prakrit" or "Sanskrit" at that time. The word "Sanskrit" was coined by Panini around 400 BCE when he arranged the spoken language of the Punjab people under 3,995 rules of grammar. The spoken language of the people was named "Prakrit". Thereafter, all the Vedas, which were written in so-called "Prakrit", were translated into "Sanskrit". Sanskrit remained the language of the few elite but the so-called Prakrit continued to progress and remained the spoken language of the people. As the so-called Prakrit moved towards other regions of India where it changed a lot and started to be called by different names according to the region or after the name of group of peoples. These different languages were denigrated by the protagonists of Sanskrit by labelling them as "Apabhramsa", the vernacular or languages of ignorant people.

Sanskrit never became the spoken language of the people of the Punjab and rest of India, Around 500 BCE Mahavira and the Buddha were using the spoken language of people, so-called Prakrit. The Buddhists called this language "Pali".

The so-called Prakrit continued to develop on its own until 1000 CE, having progressed under the influence of different regions of India and assumed various names; Magdhi, Shourshani and Maharashtri were the major languages.

### Concept of Sikh Scholars

It appears that in Sikhism Prof Sahib Singh [9] was the first Sikh theologian to discuss the origin of the languages of India in 1939:

- He said that the language of the Veda is called "Old Sanskrit"; this implies that the language in India started as Sanskrit right from the beginning.
- He further said that the scholars of Vedic time called it "First Prakrit"; however, the word, Prakrit, is not found in the Vedas.
- He says that by the time of Ashoka the Great (304-232 BCE) this language was called "Second Prakrit" or "Pali" in which the sacred granths of Buddhism were written. But he failed to mention that Mahavira (599-527 BCE) and Gautama Buddha (563-480 BCE) appeared before Ashoka and they used the spoken language (not so-called Prakrit) of the people for spreading their messages. The irony is that Padam has not given any name to the language spoken by the people before and during the Vedic time.
- Prof Sahib Singh continued to write that during the time of "Second Prakrit" other languages appeared: Magdhi, Shourshani and Maharashtri. But the protagonists' of Sanskrit named such languages "Apabhramsa" - denigrated languages.
- Prof Sahib Singh did not mention the time of the origin of the Punjabi language in his study of the grammar of the languages used in

the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

- Many linguists fell into the trap of the protagonists of Sanskrit and accepted their term “Parkrit” for the natural language spoken by the people and the other term “Apabrahmsa” for the various dialects of natural languages spoken by the people in different regions of India.

In 1954, 15 years after Prof Sahib Singh’s work of 1939, Principal Satbir Singh Padam [10], wrote an extensive study of the origin of these languages. He refuted many of the claims of the protagonists of Sanskrit. Nevertheless, he recognized the explanation of First and Second Prakrit and about the Apabrahmsa as reported by Prof Sahib Singh. However, Padam had placed the origin of Punjabi Language at a time somewhere between these two languages: Shourshani and Peshachi. (p 86)

Principal Satbir Singh Padam [10] condemned the views of some Western scholars who were of the opinion that Sanskrit is an artificial language constructed by grammarians (p 55). It appears that he is one of protagonists of Sanskrit. Besides broadly speaking in the same sense about the concept of Indian languages, he has a number of references which go against that general concept about Sanskrit.

On page # 55 he reported the opinion of Mahavir Parshad Dewedi that Sanskrit is a reformed form of Prakrit, the spoken language of the Punjabi people. Dewedi was also of the opinion that Sanskrit was used by the elites of society but the so-called Prakrit was also developing among the people of the Punjab. During the time of Mahavira (599-527 BCE) and

Mahatma Buddha (563-383) a new language developed which was called “Pali”. It is guessed that Pali was constructed around 477 BCE by the scholars of Buddhism. Thereafter, their sacred granths were written in Pali, the spoken language of Punjab people, but not in Sanskrit, the language of Brahmins (p 57).

Padam had extensively dealt with the importance of so-called Prakrit by poets, who preferred to write in Prakrit rather than Sanskrit since their work in Prakrit was easily understood by the people.

While many scholars treat Apabrahmsa as Prakrit but Padam refused to accept this concept. He was of the opinion that Apabrahmsa, a new language, appeared from Prakrit. Here again he is on the same bandwagon of Sanskrit protagonists (p 62). He also accepts the system of languages, First Prakrit, Sanskrit, Second Prakrit and Apabrahmsa, similar to that of Prof Sahib Singh.

About 58 years after Prof Sahib Singh, Dr Harkirat Singh [11] of Punjabi University, Patiala, was still accepting the old concept of Prof Sahib Singh regarding Vedic Sanskrit, Pali, Sanskrit and Apabrahmsa. He had also accepted that Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujrati, Marathi, Hindi, Bihari, Orya, Bangali, Assami, etc had originated from Apabrahmsa around 1000 BCE.

More recently, after 75 years, Harinder Singh, et al [12], a group of the Sikh Research Institute, USA, have come up with almost the same concept as that of Prof Sahib Singh about the development of Indian languages without providing any

information about the origin of the Punjabi language. However, they have identified a large number of Indian languages belonging to “Modern Indo Aryan languages” and the Punjabi is one of them.

It appears that up to 2014, the old concept, propagated by protagonists of Sanskrit, prevailed among Sikh scholars. I frankly admit here that I am unaware of the existence of any work regarding the origin of Punjabi language done by the Punjabi University, Patiala, or any other university in the Punjab or elsewhere which contradicts the above concept of the protagonists of Sanskrit. I am confident that much new information about the origin of Punjabi language will be reported in this World Punjabi Language Conference.

#### **Concepts of Non-Sikh Scholars**

According to Rao, [13] because of the tall claims of the Brahmins, Sanskrit became the “Mother of all Languages in India” (Mother Sanskrit Theory – MST) so much so that they also claimed that Greek, Latin, and other world languages were derived from Sanskrit. Rao further expressed his opinion about the European scholars as follows:

*“All these Brahmin fantasies were eagerly copied down by their European collaborators, who placed these absurdities in academic garb. Max Mueller and William Jones were only the pioneers in this movement, which, whilst displaying a superficial novelty in Europe, were in fact based on Puranic notions. Virtually all efforts of the European colonialists towards studying India were devoted towards studying Brahmanism; non-Sanskrit civilizations were given scarcely any attention.”*

Despite this, the Brahmins continued to propagate that Sanskrit somehow

developed into Prakrit, simultaneously developing into Pali. Prakrit then somehow gave birth to a new language called Apabrahmsa.

However, Rao [13] has disproved this concept of the Mother Sanskrit Theory (MST) that Sanskrit did not exist prior to 500 BCE because of the following facts:

1. The word 'Sanskrit' does not occur anywhere in the Vedas.
2. Vedic language was referred to as 'Chandasa' even by Panini himself.
3. Buddhists were advised to translate the Buddha's teaching in Chandasa (now called Sanskrit). But they refused and used the spoken language of people called 'Prakrit'. The word 'Sanskrit' does not exist in Buddhist texts nor was known to the people of Buddha's time.
4. The first inscriptions in Indian history are in so-called Prakrit (spoken language of the people) but not in Sanskrit and that too, in Brahmi script (not in Devnagri - the script of Sanskrit) during Mauryan King Ashoka (273- 232 BC). And two inscriptions were in Kharoshtri.
5. The first Sanskrit inscription appeared in 150 CE during the time of Saka Mahakshatropa Rudraman at Junagarh in Gujrat.
6. According to the Mother Sanskrit Theory (MST) Apabrahmsa is a derivative of Prakrit but according to Rao, Apabrahmsa is not a derivative of Prakrit but actually a contemporary with the so-called Prakrit.
7. Some scholars hold that more than 50 % of the vocabulary of Sanskrit is Dravidian and of foreign origin. Rao said that 70 % is non-Vedic (40 % is Dravidian and 30 % is Prakrit); only 30 % is old Indo-Aryan.

The point I would like to make here is that the language spoken by the

Punjab people today is the result of a continuous development of the language from the time of the arrival of the Aryans (during 4,000-1,000 BCE). When the Aryans of Central Asia came to Punjab they brought their language with them, which had been influenced by Persian, because the Aryans, who came to the Punjab, had come through Persia (Iran) after settling there for some time. Their language contained dialects of the old Indo-Aryan language [10, 14-17] but the protagonists of Sanskrit named it Apabrahmsa (vernacular) [17]. However, these languages had the phonetic and morphological system analogous to that observed in such languages as Greek, Latin, Celtic, etc.

Padam [10] had recorded the following statement of Suniti Kumar Chatterji from his book, *Indo Aryan and Hindi*, which is worth consideration by the Sikh researchers (p 51):

*"The stream of linguistic influence has flowed in India generally from the West, from Punjab, the fountain-head of Aryan influence and expansion in India, to the East, and the pre-dominance is partly traditional, partly due to energy of the Punjab People."* (Page 115)

The most outstanding information available from this short statement of Suniti Kumar Chatterji is that it was the Punjab, the West, where the today's Indian languages developed and spread towards East, and rest of India. In other words it was that language which is called Punjabi today but was named Prakrit, Pali and Apabrahmsa by the protagonists of Sanskrit. Therefore, this Punjabi, which was spoken by the people of Punjab, should have been called "Archaic Punjabi" or

"Proto-Punjabi".

### Link of the Punjabi Language with Central Asia

The Punjabi language has very strong relationship with the language of Central Asia. For example, the word 'Darya', used for two rivers 'Amu Darya' and 'Syr Darya' in Central Asia, is also used for all the five rivers of the Punjab, e.g. Sutlej Darya, Beas Darya, Ravi Darya, Chenab Darya, and Jhelum Darya. This suggests that 'Darya' is the word of the language of the people of Central Asia (the Aryans) who were ruling Central Asia, Iran (Persia), Afghanistan, Punjab, Rajasthan, later becoming a word in the Punjabi language. Although, in Sanskrit these rivers were named: Sindhu for Sindh, very similar to the Punjabi name; Vitasta for Jehlum; Asikni for Chenab; Parusni for Ravi; Vipas for Beas; Sutudri for Sutlej; these names are quite unfamiliar to the people of the Punjab and in its history.

Let us look into a treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni (between Suppiluliuma and Matiwaza 1380 BCE) in which the deities *Mitra, Varuna, Indra* and *Nasatya (Ashvins)* are invoked. *Kikkuli's* horse training text includes technical terms such as *aika (eka, one), tera (tri, three), panza (pancha, five), satta (sapta, seven), na (nava, nine), vartana (round)* [18]. These deities and numerals also became the part of the religion of people of Punjab since the Hittites Mitanni kingdom included Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Many Punjabi words resemble very closely with French words also, e. g. 'deux' (*du* - Two), 'trois' (*trois* - three), 'cinq' (*panj* - five), 'sept' (*sat* - seven),

'nauḥ' (*nao* - nine), 'dix' (*das* - ten); 'savon' (*sabon* – soap, V and B are interchangeable in Punjabi); 'Qu est tu ?' in French is pronounced the same way, 'ਕੀ ਏ ਤੂ ?' (*Ki ai tu*) and has same meaning, Who are you?, as in Punjabi.

In Punjabi the style of respectfully speaking to elders and speaking formally is also similar to French, e. g. 'vous' (you) in French and *tusin* (you) for respectful or formal speech and 'tu' (you) in French and *tu* (you) for informal speech. The use of the adjective after the noun in the old Punjabi (*Gur Purae ki Bani... AGGS p 616 – Bani of Guru complete...*) and also as *Mata Shri* (Mother Shri) in the TV Ramayan Series, etc. was very similar to the grammar of French. However, during the Rama time Sanskrit was not spoken by the people. The change of the verb form with the change of gender and from singular form to plural form is common in the both Punjabi and French. The counting system is also the same in French and old Punjabi. For example, the number '80' is pronounced as 'quatre-vingts' (four-twenty), similarly in Old Punjabi '80' is pronounced as 'char-vian' (four-twenty).

Now this asks the question: why is there so much similarity in the system of numerals and the style of the French language with that of the Punjabi language? It indicates that some Aryans (Caucasians) from Central Asia moved to the Punjab while others moved to Europe (France) and those who moved to the Punjab brought such words and numerals with them.

Let us look into another aspect of the movement of Aryans (Caucasians)

from Central Asia. Some Aryans belonging to tribes or families like Bains, Dhillon (Dillon), Gill, Kang, Mann (Maan), Roy, etc. moved to the Punjab and some members of the same families moved to Europe and from there they further moved to the New World – North America. Now in North America and UK such names, like Bains, Dhillon (Dillon), Gill, Kang, Mann (Maan), Roy, etc. are very common in some families of Europeans and Sikhs. This certainly indicates that these people have common roots in Central Asia.

### DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION OF THE PUNJABI LANGUAGE

It has already been discussed that around 400 BCE, Panini (450-350 BCE), a Punjabi grammarian of Shaltula near Attock (now in Pakistan) [8], synthesized *Sanskrit* or Perfect Language (*Sans + Krita* means adorned, cultivated, perfected), from the local spoken language of the Punjab. At the same time he named the spoken language (Old Indo-European Language) of the people of the Punjab *Prakrit* (means not adorned or arranged) [10, 14, 16, 17]. However, Prakrit, so-named by Panini, continued to be spoken by the people of the Punjab and underwent many stages of development. Therefore, the language spoken by the people of the Punjab during the time 4,000 to 1,000 BCE should have been named 'Archaic Punjabi' or 'Proto-Punjabi'. Thereafter, The Dravidians, Aryans, Greeks, Latin, French, Persians, Afghans, Arabs, and Kushans further strengthened this 'Proto-Punjabi', which became 'Punjabi language' of today's Punjab.

About three centuries before Guru

Nanak (1469-1539 CE), the language used by the Sufis and Bhagats from various parts of India was very similar to that used by Guru Nanak. This language was named 'Sant Bhasha' by some linguists; in fact it should have been named 'Punjabi' instead since the Sufis and the Bhagats used the language which was spoken by the people of Punjab. About 1,900 years ago the scholars of Jainism and Buddhism never used Sanskrit to preach their doctrine. They used the language spoken by the people, 'Proto-Punjabi', but this language was named as '*Prakrit*' by Panini and was called 'Pali' by Buddhists.

Pei [16] has mentioned that Prakrit flourished between 300 BCE and 1200 CE., continuing to absorb new words, terminology and phrases from Persian, Arabic, English, French, Greek, Latin, etc. and finally attaining its present form. Prakrit should be called Proto-Punjabi because it was developed and spoken in the area that is now called Punjab. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, the Buddhist canon was written in the same language, i.e. Proto-Punjabi (so-called Prakrit) that was spoken during that time in the Punjab where Buddhism flourished. Since the Buddhist canon was known as Pali canon, therefore, its language was also called Pali [10]. The Pali is in fact Prakrit (Proto-Punjabi) which meaning 'in line', ਪਾਲ (*pal*) in Punjabi or series in English, since the Buddhist canons are in series.

Without taking into account the history of the languages of the Punjab, many scholars erroneously link the origin of Punjabi from Sanskrit. The comparison of some words of Punjabi with Prakrit, Pali and Sanskrit [10] indicates that it was closer to these ancient languages

(Prakrit and Pali) from which Sanskrit was evolved. It means Panini synthesized Sanskrit from Proto-Punjabi (which was named Prakrit by him). In other words Punjabi gave birth to Sanskrit. The newly synthesized language was adorned with 3,995 rules, becoming so difficult that it remained the language of some elites (the Brahmins) only and the common people continued to speak the original language, Proto-Punjabi, which was called Prakrit by Panini.

### **Expansion of the Punjabi Language**

When the Proto-Punjabi (Prakrit) moved away from the Punjab, it underwent great dialectical changes: towards the West it became Lahndhi, Sindhi, Multan; in the hilly areas of the North it became Dogri; towards West-South it became Haryanvi, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujrati; towards East it became Braj (Hindi), Bengali, Assamese, and so on. However, the language of the Punjab remained Punjabi. Therefore, the roots of these languages are in Proto-Punjabi developed in the Punjab.

Nevertheless, the languages of Southern India have originated from a source (Dravidian) other than Indo-European or Indo-Aryan or Proto-Punjabi (Prakrit) or Sanskrit.

It is worth noting that the Vedas were written in Proto-Punjabi (Prakrit), the same is true about Brahmins, Upanishads and some sutras. All these great religious works were later translated into Sanskrit from 200 BCE onward. This is supported by the fact that Sanskrit was synthesized around 400 BCE by Panini and these great works were written before 400 BCE when there was no Sanskrit [10, 14-16].

### **Importance of Understanding of Proto-Punjabi**

The current and modern Punjabi is quite different than that used by Indian Sufis, Bhagats, Guru Nanak and the other Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, in their bani (verses). Therefore, it is very important for the Sikhs researchers to study seriously the origin of the Punjabi language and its dialects, right from the time around 4,000 to 1,000 BCE after the arrival of Aryans in the area the Punjab. Unfortunately the protagonists of Sanskrit called that language Prakrit or Old Sanskrit while these words were not found in that language till the time of Panini when he synthesized a new language, Sanskrit, around 400 BCE. Hence, that language should have been called as Archaic Punjabi or Proto-Punjabi. Proto-Punjabi was that language, which was spoken by the people of the residents of the Punjab and developed from 4,000 to 400 BCE before the name, Prakrit, was applied by Panini.

It has been noticed that a translation and/or interpretation of Gurbani into English and other languages can differ from scholar to scholar. The primary reason for this inconsistency is the incomplete understanding of the old Punjabi language of the Gurus' period. To interpret Gurbani in its authentic perspective, it is very important to understand Proto-Punjabi of that time.

### **Research on the Punjabi Language**

It was Puri [19] who told the audience of the International Punjabi Conference held during January 2003 that according to T. Grahame Bailey, Punjabi is a tonal

language like Chinese. This fact was mentioned by Baily in the Introduction to an English-Punjabi dictionary compiled in the early part of the twentieth century. Puri further said that, amazingly, no serious research has been done on the origin of the Punjabi language, nor the reasons why it is multi-tonal. Perhaps the origins of multi-tonal Punjabi lie in the first and second century AD, during the Kushan rule of the territory known as the Punjab, with their capital at Purushpura, now Peshawar.

The Kushans were part of the Yueh-chi group of tribes from somewhere in central China. Some of these moved westward to Central Asia, coming down to Afghanistan and the Punjab. Much of eastern Afghanistan and almost the entire Punjab acted as the hub of their empire when they went further afield, and remained the hub when their empire shrank. The Kushan kingdom included parts of China, Russia, Europe, Middle East, Punjab, Rajasthan, UP, and central India [20]. There is scope for serious research on the subject.

It is evident from the above information that there is a strong influence of the languages of Central Asia, Europe (including French) and to some extent of Chinese on the development of Punjabi. During the Kushan time the Saka Calendar was used. This Calendar was introduced as the national Calendar by the Calendar Reform Committee in 1957 for the government of India. But the Bikrami calendar, which is named for Vikramaditya, remains popular with the religious people of Hinduism.

## THE PUNJABI: A Natural Language

The present day Punjabi has its roots in the Indo-Aryan languages and Indo-European languages. It would be more appropriate to call the language, spoken by the people of the Punjab from around 2,500 BCE to 400 CE, as Proto-Punjabi. In spite of the fact that it never received any financial support for its development from any Government during the last 4,000 years it continued to develop further to become a favorite language of the Punjab people. In fact, at present very little is being spent by the Punjab government for its development and it is almost neglected in the adjoining states of Punjab and by the central government of India.

Because of its inherited characteristics of smoothness in flow, being pleasing to the ears and the ease of expressing one's views (philosophy), Proto-Punjabi (Prakrit) was accepted as the language to disseminate Jainism and Buddhism under the name *Pali*. Although this language was called Punjabi by Persians since 500 CE, it became well established as a spoken language of the Punjab by the time of Baba Shiekh Farid, a Persian Sufi, during 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. Thereafter, almost all the Bhagats of India used Punjabi during the Bhagati Movement to spread their messages; and then by all the Sikh Gurus to spread their bani (philosophy) to the people of South-East Asia.

This language appears to be easily acceptable and understandable by almost all people of Aryan origin. It is evident from the present trend in the Indian movies that no movie is a hit unless it has a *Bhangra* dance and a Punjabi song and even some Hindi

songs are based on the tunes of Punjabi songs with some Punjabi words to make them hit songs. Moreover, the Indian youth belonging to Aryan origin, in particular Sikh youth, of the West will start dancing at the first beat of the drum with a Punjabi song even if they have some problem understanding it properly.

The survival of Punjabi for more than 4,000 years is attributed to its entirely natural and innate characteristics described above that make Punjabi to be called a natural language.

## FUTURE OF PUNJABI Is Punjabi An Endangered Language?

Dhaliwal [21] reported that Kuldip Nayar, a noted journalist, was invited by the *Punjabi Bachao Manch* seeking his help to save Punjabi in Chandigarh, capital of Punjab, a state carved out on the basis of the Punjabi language. Nayar said:

*"I have gone through a report prepared by UNESCO which says the Punjabi language will disappear from the world in 50 years. It shocked me. I am out to save Punjabi language and culture."*

It is very strange that Kuldip Nayar, would say that he has gone through the report prepared by UNESCO whereas there is nothing mentioned about the disappearance of Punjabi in that report. However, there are many languages, which are spoken only by few thousands of people mostly in the Assam, Bihar and hilly areas of Himalaya, have been named as endangered languages. But no language from the Punjab or any other state of India has been mentioned in this list of endangered

languages.

## The Future of Punjabi

Nevertheless, a UNESCO report on 'Language Vitality and Endangerment' is worth examining to predict the future of Punjabi [22]:

- A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children.
- About 90% of the languages of the world are being replaced by dominant languages.
- Language endangerment may be the result of *external* forces such as military, economic, religious, cultural, or educational subjugation, or it may be caused by *internal* forces, such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. Many indigenous peoples, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining. They abandon their languages and cultures in hopes of overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate to the global marketplace. (This is what is happening in Punjab now.)
- Raising awareness about language loss and language diversity will only be successful when meaningful contemporary roles for minority languages can be established, for the requirements of modern life within the community as well as in national and international contexts. Meaningful contemporary roles include the use of these languages

in everyday life, commerce, education, writing, the arts, and/or the media. Economic and political support by both local communities and national governments are needed to establish such roles.

Punjabi is passing through all the phases listed above and the number of its speakers is decreasing steadily. It will be progressing towards endangerment if Punjabi is not used in everyday life, commerce, education, writing, art, and /or on media and without economic and political support by state and national governments.

The percentage of Punjabi-speaking people in Pakistan in 1998 was 44.15%. It is showing a continuous decrease since 1951 when its percentage was 57.08%. The trend is similar in India. The percentage of Punjabi-speaking people in India in 2001 was 2.83%. It is also showing a continuous decrease since 1981 when it was 2.95%.

The Punjabi language, the Indo-European language, is at the 15<sup>th</sup> position among the first 30 languages of world, which is spoken by 103 million people of India and Pakistan [23].

What will the position of Punjabi be among the world languages in another 50 years? It is very difficult to predict.

### Punjabi in Canada

There are roughly 450,000 Punjabi speakers in Canada. Punjabi is already the third most spoken language in Canada; but it has also become the third most common language, after English and French, in the Canadian House of Commons after 20 Punjabi-speaking candidates

were elected to the Parliament in October, 2015 [23]. However, one must understand that there are only two official languages of Canada: English and French [24]. Now four Punjabis are in the Canadian Cabinet: Harjit Singh Sajjan, Minister of Defence; Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Infrastructure; Navdeep Singh Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development; and Bardish Chagger, Minister of Small Business and Tourism [25]. These very important positions are in the hands of Punjabi Canadians for the development of Canada and its defence. This is very good opportunity for the Punjabi Canadians to show their contributions towards betterment of Canada. [They are Punjabi Canadians of Punjabi origin?]

### CONCLUSIONS

- The origin of Punjabi can be traced back to the time of the arrival of the Aryans who brought their language, now called Indo-European since its development started from Central Asia and the adjoining areas in around 4000 BCE. That is long before Panini (450-350 BCE) when he synthesized Sanskrit from the language spoken by the people of the Punjab (Septa Sindhu / Pentapotamia).
- The synthesized language was named as *Sanskrit* and the mother language was termed as *Prakrit*.
- This *Prakrit* became *Pali* during the time of the Buddha and became Punjabi when the Persians started to settle permanently in the Punjab.
- The comparison of the language used by the Sufis and the Bhagats of the time before Guru Nanak

and that of the contemporaries of Guru Nanak clearly indicates that Punjabi was spoken and written in the Northwest, Central and Eastern part of India except the Southern part where languages of Dravidian origin was common.

- The Punjabi language is written in Arabic or Persian script now called *Shamukhi* by the Muslims in Pakistan and *Gurmukhi* script by the Sikhs in the Punjab, India, and other countries.
- Gurmukhi script is very close to that of the *Takri* scripts.
- Since the language developed in the area of 7 or 5 river called Septa-Sindhu then Pentapotamia and thereafter Punjab should be called "Proto-Punjabi" rather than "Priakrit" – the name assigned by Panini during 400 BCE.
- There is great need for the establishment of a research institute to discover the roots of Punjabi and to find its proper position in the Indo-European languages and for its development to use in technology and science.

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