

# A Study of the Special Features of Nagpuri Language of Jharkhand

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is an attempt to study the special features of Nagpuri, a tribal language spoken in Jharkhand state. Nagpuri belongs to the family of Indo Aryan family of languages. These tribal languages might become extinct if immediate measures are not taken to preserve these languages. These indigenous languages are a storehouse of ancient wisdom and ancient way of living as there is immeasurable wealth hidden in their literature in the form of folk tales, folk songs, short stories etc. Research on the syntax, vocabulary, parts of speech, tenses, rules of grammar, glossary of words for seasons, places, colours, time etc will help in making primers. These primers can in turn be used for imparting education to Nagpuri speaking tribal students in schools, preparing Nagpuri – Hindi or Nagpuri – English dictionaries so that their invaluable literature can be translated to mainstream Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, Oriya and even English. This will increase awareness throughout the country about the need to preserve these indigenous Indian languages.

**KEYWORDS:** Indo – Aryan, tribal language, Chotanagpur, apabrahmsha

## I. INTRODUCTION

The state of Jharkhand is home to three language families- Indian Aryan, Munda and Dravidian. Neelu K<sup>1</sup> states that over 96% of the population in Jharkhand communicates in tribal and regional languages at home. The tribal languages including Santhali, Ho, Mundari, Kurukh, Kharia etc. are spoken by about two-third (65.7%) of the population and regional languages such as Nagpuri, Khortha, Panchparganiya, Bangla, Odiya, Urdu, etc. are spoken by 30.6 of the population. Only 3.7% of the people communicated in Hindi as their mother tongue.<sup>1</sup> Every tribe has its own aboriginal language, which it uses to express its thoughts and feelings. This native language has been a part of the tribe's existence since generations. Along with the development of the native language, parallel development of the tribe's culture, traditions, literature and documentation of historical developments have also been observed. Tribes or Adivasis in India do not form a neat, homogenous sociocultural category. No one can demarcate a clear divide between the tribal and the nontribal in India. According to Abbi. A,<sup>2</sup> "Tribe in India is a significant reality, characterized by a distinct way of life, rather than by virtue of forming a constituent part of the hierarchical structure of society as in the rest of India. They are outside the "caste," or "jati" system. The term "tribe" is thus employed by the Constitution of India to refer to certain communities. These tribes are "scheduled" as per Article 342 of the Constitution by the President and the parliament. The concept of tribe in India is an administrative, judicial, and political concept, which is applied to sections of the population that are relatively isolated."<sup>2</sup>

## II. JHARKHAND STATE: BORDERS AND DISTRICTS

Jharkhand, being one of the 29 states of the Republic of India, came into existence on 15th November, 2000 after being bifurcated from the state of Bihar in 2017.<sup>15</sup> The state is bordered by West Bengal in the east, Chattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh in the west, Bihar in the north and Odisha in the south. Banerjea D,<sup>3</sup> opines that at present, Jharkhand has 32 groups which come under the constitutional criteria of scheduled tribe.

Jharkhand has twenty two districts. The state is rich in natural resources and is imbued with a distinct culture of its own. A large part of Jharkhand is covered with forests which are occupied by myriad groups of tribals, sects and communities. Since the state is rich in minerals and industries like coal, iron and steel, people from all parts of the country have made Jharkhand their home in order to earn their livelihood in the industries. Despite having

diversities in communities and culture, what has made Jharkhand occupy a special place in India’s map is its linguistic diversity. The number of language families found in the Jharkhand’s twenty two districts cannot be found anywhere in the country.<sup>4</sup>

**III. LANGUAGE FAMILIES OF JHARKHAND**

1. Indo Aryan language family: Nagpuri, Panchparganiya, Kurmali, Khortha, Angika, Magadhi, Bhojpuri.
2. Austro Asiatic language family: Mundari, Santhali, Ho and Kharia
3. Dravidian language family: Kurukh

Among these languages, the Indo Aryan language family has got the maximum cultural and syntactical diversity.<sup>5</sup>

**IV. SCRIPT: DEVANAGARI**

Just like Hindi, Devanagiri script is used for Nagpuri language. Though in the present century, Nagpuri was never considered worthy of literary development, a small but dedicated group of writers are using Nagpuri language for writing short stories, plays, poetry etc. Nagpuri is also widely being used among Christians for writing religious literature.<sup>6</sup> Nagpuri has several numeral classifiers. According to Navarangi P S,<sup>7</sup> Nagpuri words like ‘go’, ‘got’, ‘gor’ and ‘tho’ are used freely while ‘mur’ is restricted to counting cattle, while the word ‘khar’ for pieces of cloth. The sentence below illustrates the use of numeral classifier in Nagpuri.<sup>8</sup>

Table 1 <sup>8</sup>

S.no	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Mor dui go betamanahai.	Mere do bête hain.	I have two sons.

**V. REGIONS WHERE THE LANGUAGE IS SPOKEN**

Nagpuri is spoken in Ranchi, Khunti, Lohardaga, Gumla and Simdega districts. It is also spoken in the Jharkhand – Odisha border districts of Gangpur, Bamda, Sundargarh etc, border districts of Chattisgarh like Jashpur, Surguja, Korea, Assam’s Silhat, Golpada, Amroop, Darang, Navgav, Shisagar, Lakhimpur, Nagaparvath, Khasi, Jayantiya mountains, tea gardens of Lusayi mountains, West Bengal’s tea gardens in Siliguri, Andaman and Nicobar islands and Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. Nagpuri is the link language of three language families of the world that is, Indo Aryan, Austro Asiatic and Dravidian. During the reign of Phani Mukut Rai, (0064 AD), it used to be the official language of Chotanagpur, till the British invasion, for around 1800 years. Not less than 4 to 5 crore people speak Nagpuri. It is difficult to find the actual number of Nagpuri speakers, as the Government has not conducted Language Survey since 1961. Nagpuri should be given the status of tribal language, as it is used by more than ten tribes as a Mother Tongue.<sup>13</sup>

**VI. HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE**

Origin of the language can be traced to ancient Prakrit.<sup>5</sup> According to Navrangi P S, Nagpuriya Sadani or Nagpuri has originated from ancient Prakrit. Pandey R K<sup>9</sup> opines that just as water comes out from the ocean and goes back to it, similarly, all languages come from nature, go back to nature.

Singh K K<sup>10</sup> believes that Nagpuri is an apabrahmsha (non grammatical form ) of Magadhi, just like Magadhi Maithili. The Merriam Webster’s dictionary defines Apabrahmsha “as an indic language that was spoken approximately between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, which differed from the literary Prakrith”. Goswami S K<sup>11</sup> has held the opinion that Nagpuri might have originated between 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and would have developed into the full fledged language, as we know today by the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. To quote the words of Tiwari Y N, <sup>12</sup> “The Nagpuri language would have been in existence before Jharkhand or Chotanagpur started being known as Nagpur. But as more and more people started using the language, new words were added, which has in turn resulted in present day Nagpuri as we know today.

According to Pandey R K, <sup>9</sup> Nagpuri is an ancient language, which has originated from Prakrith or Jharkhand Prakrit. The Nagpuri language can be understood through two meanings; Prakrit = Prak + Kruth meaning a language originated during ancient times. On the other hand Sanskrit means that the language is rich in cultural heritage as well. This also means that Prakrit was the language of the masses.

**VII. NAGPURI AS A PIDGIN OF JHARKHAND**

Baraik S<sup>13</sup> has stated in his paper, “Comparative study of Nagpuri Spoken by Chik-Baraik & Oraons of Jharkhand” that Nagpuri is a pidgin of Jharkhand. Villagers like Munda, Oraon, and Chik Baraik use Nagpuri as a mode of communication. Thus it is also a lingua franca among the different tribes of Jharkhand speaking different languages. Those Munda, Kharia and Oraon tribes residing not only in Jharkhand but also in Odisha, West Bengal, Assam and Chattisgarh use Nagpuri as their mother tongue since they don’t know their own language.

**VIII. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LANGUAGE**

**9.1 Similarities between Sanskrit, Apabrahmsha and Hindi**

If the chronology of Prakrith language is to be observed, several developments occurred in the Nagpuri language; Maharashtri Apabrahmsha from Maharashtri Prakrith, Shauraseni Apabrahmsha from Shauraseni Prakrit, Magadhi Apabrahmsha from Magadhi Prakrit.<sup>5</sup> Nagpuri is considered a distinct Apabrahmsha of Prakrith. The configuration of alphabets and letters are the same in both the languages. For example, apart from ‘a’, ‘ru’, ‘lu’ and ‘aha’ sounds, rest of the sounds are in the Prakrit Apabrahmsha itself. Thus these sounds are present in Prakrit Nagpuri as well. In Nagpuri language, unlike Hindi, the alphabet “aye” is replaced by “I”, the alphabet ‘ru’ (as in Rushi), is replaced by “re”, the alphabet “jna” is replaced by “gya” etc. Several similarities can be found between words in Hindi, Nagpuri, Apabrahmsa, Prakrit and Sanskrit.<sup>5</sup> This has been illustrated in the following table.

**Table 2<sup>5</sup>**

S.no	Nagpuri	Hindi	Aprabrahmsha	Prakrit	Sanskrit	English
1.	Pache	Peeche	Picchu	Pacha	Pashcha	Behind
2.	Beyir	Surya	Beri	Rabi	Ravi	Sun
3.	Sapna	Sapna	Supan	Suvan	Swapna	Dream
4.	Dharam	Dharm	Dham	Dhamm	Dhamme	Religion
5.	Aayinkh	Aankh	Aankhi	Akiv	Akshi	Eyes
6.	Didh	Drudh	Didh	Didh	Dhairya	Courage

**9.2 Tenses**

Magadhi, Nagpuri and Jharkhand Prakrit, which are apabrahmshas of Prakrith language, use “la” in the past tense, “ta” in the present tense and “ma” in the future tense.<sup>5</sup> The words have been arranged in the order, Nagpuri : Hindi : English in the table below :

**Table 3: <sup>5</sup>**

S.No.	Past tense	Present tense	Future tense
1.	Gelo: गया: went	Jatho: Ja raha hoon: I am going.	Jhamu : जाऊंगा I will go.
2.	Sutalon: सोया : slept	Sutatho: सो रहा हूँ: I am sleeping.	Sutam: सोऊंगा: I will sleep.
3.	Peelon: पीया: drank	Piyatho: पी रहा हूँ: I am drinking.	Pimu: पीऊंगा: I will drink.

4.	Khalo : khaya : ate	Khatho: Kha raha hoon: I am eating.	Khamu: Khaonga: I will eat.
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**IX. GLOSSARY OF WORDS**

Given below are some words translated from Nagpuri to Hindi and English.

**Table 4: Names of Relationships <sup>5</sup>**

S.no	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Aayo	Ma	Mother
2.	Baap	Pita	Father
3.	Badi	Pardadi	Great grandmother
4.	Pitiya	Chacha	Father's younger brother
5.	Dadi	Didi	Elder sister
6.	Chot Bahin	Choti Bahen	Younger sister
7.	Puth	Putra	Son
8.	Nani	Nani	Maternal grandmother
9.	Kaniya	Nayi Dulhan	Bride
10.	Beti Chahua	Ladki	Girl
11.	Beta Chahua	Ladka	Bou
12.	Aadmi	Aadmi/ pati	Man/ Husband
13.	Chotka	Choti	Small (feminine)
14.	Letha	Chota	Small (masculine)
15.	Dheeya	Beta	Daughter
16.	Jani	Patni/Mahila	Wife/ woman
17.	Jetha	Bada	Big
18.	Sayis	Saas	Mother- in - law
19.	Kaniya	Dulhan	Bride
20.	<b>Bhauji</b>	<b>Bhabhi</b>	<b>Brother's wife</b>

**Table 5: Common words used during day to day communication <sup>5</sup>:**

S.No	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Chordeviyan	Chor Devata	Lord of the thieves
2.	Debi	Devi	Goddess
3.	Randi	Vidhwa	Widow
4.	Randa	Vidhur	Widower
5.	Sakhi	Saheli	Friend(woman/girl)

6.	Dayi - mayi	Gali me prayukt	Swear word
7.	Kheldi	Nartaki	A female dancer
8.	Bhagwan	Eeshwar	God (Lord Shiva)
9.	Java Phulglaichi	Genda Phool	Merigold flower
10.	Chandi	Parityakth	To quit

**Table 6: Names of Colours <sup>5</sup>**

S.No	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Charka	Sweth	White
2.	Gola	Bhura	Brown
3.	Peeyar	Peela	Yellow
4.	Laal	Laal	Red
5.	Taamba rang	Tambe jaisa rang	Colour of Copper
6.	Rang	Rang	colour
7.	Leel	Neela	Blue
8.	Bhanta rang	Baingani	Purple

**Table 7: Time related words <sup>5</sup>**

S.No	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Bachar	Varsh	Year
2.	Aayij	Aaj	Today
3.	Aekhane	Abhi	Now
4.	Sarorayith	Sari rath	Whole night
5.	Sagar din	Sara din	Whole day
6.	Adhberiya	Dopahar	Afternoon
7.	Sanjh	Sandhya	Evening
8.	Pakh	Paksh	Side

**Table 8: Names of Places aspects of nature <sup>5</sup>**

S.No	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Uunch Thav	Uuncha Sthaan	High place
2.	Pokhiyer	Talaab	Pond
3.	Payin	Paani behne vaala naala	Water flowing through a channel

4.	Bavuuli	Seedhidaar kuan	Well with steps
5.	Pethiya	Bazaar	market
6.	Pachari	Chardiwari	Four walls
7.	Pahar	Pahad	Mountain
8.	Nadi	Nadi	River
9.	Masna	Kabristan	Graveyard

**Table 9 : Names of Seasons** <sup>5</sup>

S.No	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Jjadh	Jaada	winter
2.	Barkha	Varsha	Rainy season
3.	Poorba	Nakshatra	Star
4.	Dhoondhuka	Aandhi	Storm
5.	Dhidhkek	Baadal ka garjan	Thunder
6.	Basanth	Vasanth	Summer
7.	Rayith	Raath	Night
8.	Paala	Paala / him	snow
9.	Sorah Bharjaad	Deepawali ka jaada	Winter during Deepawali festival

**Table 10: Names of Days** <sup>5</sup>

S.No	Nagpuri	Hindi	English
1.	Somaar	Somvaar	Sunday
2.	Mangar	Mangalwar	Tuesday
3.	Viraspayith	Bruhaspatiwaar	Thursday
4.	Budh	Budhwaar	Wednesday
5.	Din - rayith	Din - raath	Day – night
6.	Suk	Shukravaar	Friday
7.	Parna din	Upwas ka doosra din	The day after fasting
8.	Ayethwaar	Ravivaar	Sunday
9.	Sanichar	Shaniwaar	Saturday

**X. CONCLUSION**

The tables mentioned above can be used for preparing primers for teaching children belonging to Nagpuri tribe. Since the children will be taught in their own mother tongue of Nagpuri language, this can help in preserving the

Nagpuri language and literature. During the British regime, several British research scholars undertook works done for Nagpuri, but sadly, today the language has been neglected. Historians like Conrad Buckout compiled grammar as well as dictionary and folklores but after their death, it was not even printed.<sup>13</sup> Nagpuri should be given the status of tribal language, as it is used by more than ten tribes as a Mother tongue. Nagpuri literature is found in Meghalaya, Assam, West Bengal, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. The translated Nagpuri Bible was printed in Meghalaya in 1908 by Fr. P. Ponnette. Thus we can see the importance of Nagpuri as early as the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Surprisingly, this book can be no longer found in Churches of Jharkhand from where the language actually originated in.<sup>13</sup> For documentation and revitalisation of the languages of the indigenous, nomadic and marginalised people, Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Baroda had undertaken People's Linguistic Survey of India, a nationwide survey, in Jharkhand. In this survey, eighteen endangered and marginalised languages were identified. However, some of these languages such as Asuri, Birhori, Korwa, Sabari, Malto, Angika, etc, including Santhali, are being taught in universities. Even though a lot still needs to be done, this is a good initiative, and has given hope that these endangered languages will be documented and their vocabularies preserved.<sup>14</sup>

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