
**INSTAGRAM REELS – THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MEDIA
TOOL FOR DISSEMINATION OF KASHMIRI CULTURE
AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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ABSTRACT:

Social Media, the third space that has acquired all the space belonging to humans today, has transcended the year-long boundaries creating the new public sphere altogether. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and then finally Instagram, produced an endless loop that no one could escape from reacting – the extremely engaging Instagram Reels. And with every video seen and shared on the social media app, Instagram reels became an important aspect to share diverse cultures all over the earth, making millions know the existence of each other without even having a common language to do so. And today, while videos and reels belonging to different languages and cultures are common to be commented on, reels in Kashmiri language are making their place well lit, making people know about the meaning of distinctively beautiful Kashmiri words otherwise unknown to them before, thus making non-indigenous people interested in Kashmiri culture and language learning. In this research paper, qualitative analysis of one such popular Kashmiri Instagram account namely ‘Historeel’ has been explored showcasing language learning through code-mixing, code-switching and viewer’s reaction to unique names of folklore characters and its symbolism in Kashmiri language and cultural dissemination between different ethnicities has been studied.

KEYWORDS:

Social Media, Instagram Reels, Culture, Language learning,
Kashmiri language.

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Introduction

Language is not only the medium of communication but is also the identity of the people who speak it. It connects its speakers with their history, traditions and culture. It can rather be termed as the carrier of the culture of the people (Teli and Nisar, 2021). Kashmir had always been the land of desire. It attracted the rishis, saints and teachers. It is the land of rich folk culture, literature and rituals. The formal study of Kashmir folktales was first done by the British missionaries (Rana, n.d.). Today in the world of new media anything can reach far corners of the world in flash seconds. With Insta reels bringing never-ending information in seconds and minutes to masses, its same influence in disseminating cultural folklore will be studied in this research paper.

Literature review

Kachru (2003) through quantitative analysis states that Kashmiri language (KL) popularly known as “Kashur” by its inhabitant speakers in the valley of Kashmir. It is numerically a minority language. In other languages (e.g. Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, the language is called Kashmiri). The “Kashur” and its dialects are spoken in an approximately 10,000 square miles area, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir also has a fascinating historical legacy and cultural pluralism that is often characterized as Kashmiriyat (Kashmiriness)—an elusive term evoking a rich pluralistic literary, cultural and aesthetic tradition of the Pandits and Muslims of the Valley.

Shaika et al. (2020) through quantitative analysis discusses Kashmiri folk media in the twenty-first century where faster means of communication are available.

Bashir et al. (n.d.) states through qualitative analysis about key myths about Kashmiri culture. Kashmir’s culture is a mash-up of customs from India’s northern states, Pakistan’s northwestern provinces, and China’s Aksai Chin region.

Hikmah et al. (2024) through descriptive qualitative approach

found that Instagram is one of the mobile apps that assists in language learning among students.

Objectives

1. Studying about unique folk characters of Kashmir content being shown on Insta Historeel by Firdous Lone, acting as cultural dissemination terms showcasing any connection if there with folklore terms and stories of non-Kashmiris.
2. Analyzing usage of subtitles, code-mixing and code-switching to make non-Kashmiris know the meaning and help in Kashmiri language learning.

Methodology

Qualitative content Analysis of Instagram Reel named Historeel by Firdous Lone has been done to analyze Kashmiri cultural facts and folklore characters being shared and its impact on language learning by non-Kashmiri people. Along with this authentic comments showing learning interest by non-local people have been considered.

Sample

Purposive sampling of Eight reels showcasing folklore characters from Historeel account by Firdous Lone has been done.

Folk Lore Characters

Reel 1: Harmukh posted on 13th January 2026

Harmukh word is derived from combination of two words Har and Mukh explains Firdous Lone in Hindi. Here Har means Hara that is name of Shiva and Mukh stands for face. Written in subtitles source Shiva Sutra Vimarshini Ksemaraja Ed. Chatterji J.C. KSS01 and Tarikh Hassan, by Hassan Shah Khoihami. Subtitles have been used along with sources cited for each info provided. While in Nilmatpurana the name Harmukuta has been used that means Shiva's Diadem. 'kh' at the end of the modern name is due

to a phonetic law of Kashmiri which requires aspiration of every final tenuis.

Language used: Hindi / Urdu

Subtitles used: English

Code Switching or code Mixing: No

Caption: The mountains ancient Sanskrit name is Harmukuta which under influence of Kashmiri language changed to Harmukh. Both names are mentioned in sources where Har-mukuta means Shiva's crown and Har-mukh means Shiva's face.

Source: Nilmatapurana, Stein's Geography of Kashmir, Rajtarangini, Hassan Shah Khoihami, Shiv Sutra Vimarshini Ksemaraja Ed. Chatterji.

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

- No bro har is a Sanskrit word means 'dukh harne vala' (C 22, non-Kashmiri)
- Burushki mein HAR pahad ke us hisse ko kaha jata hai jha se selabi pani ata hai and MUKHL means ek qamatie phatar ka nam hai. (C 23, non-Kashmiri)

Reel 2: Khokh posted on 10 January 2026

Firdous Lone narrates in Hindi about Khokh, dreadful creature's name that Kashmiri mothers use to make their children sleep. Word is derived from Khokhar and Bomba tribe who used to loot natives of Kashmir during times of chaos especially during Sikh and Afghan rule.

Language used: Hindi and English

Subtitles: No

Code Switching or code Mixing: Code-mixing. Hindi and English.

Caption: Background story of Khokh or Boogyman of

Kashmir

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

1. I think both Khokhars and Bombas are Sunni Muslim Rajput Tribes. (C 9, non-Kashmiri)
2. Source? (C11, non-Kashmiri)

Our mothers and grandmothers. Pathan raiders regularly used to raid the houses and abduct children. (C 12, Kashmiri)

But the tribes mentioned are not Pathans. (C 13, non-Kashmiri, same user as C11)

Reel 3: Shahmar posted on 6 November 2025

Firdous Lone explains about mythological character ‘Shahmar’ when a snake is not seen by humans for 100 years it becomes Shahmar, when not seen again by humans for 100 years it becomes Ajdar, and when again not seen for 100 years it becomes Kulmar. And then Kulmar getting immense energy can transform their body to any other form but they mostly change their form to lady physique. These stories are inspired by Turkish and Central Asian stories. In Farsi Shahmar means “Queen of Snakes”.

Language used: Hindi

Subtitles used: No

Code Switching or code Mixing: No

Caption: Shahmar, Kulmar and Ajdar

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

1. I have seen the Turkish series on this named SHAHMARAN, surprised to know that Kashmiri folk tales were somewhat similar (C18, non-Kashmiri)
2. I know all these names.....but kabhi yeh story ni suni thi.... thanks, it’s interesting. (C 87, non-Kashmiri)

Reel 4: Queen Suryamati posted on 6 October 2025

Firdous Lone talks about Suryamati one of notable woman of Kashmir 11th century ruler's wife Ananta. When Ananta became weak she appointed capable ministers and brought stability in the dynasty. But the shift came when the queen asked Ananta to make their son Kalasa the next ruler. Under Kalasa's rule the dynasty came under complete chaos and civil war began, being an inefficient ruler Kalasa ordered his father to leave Kashmir and move to Poonch. Saddened by all this Ananta killed himself after which his wife Suryamati committed Sati at his funeral. Somdev wrote book Kathasaritsagara for Suryamati.

Language used: Hindi and English

Subtitles used: No

Code Switching or code Mixing: Code mixing

Caption: Notable women of Kashmir ft Suryamati

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

1. Good explanation. But very sad reality. Please share more historical information about jk. (C 4, non-Kashmiri).
2. Could you please provide the source and specify which dynasty it belongs to? (C 11, non-Kashmiri).

Reel 5 related to folklore phrase 'Sheen Peto Peto, Baya Yeto Yeto' posted on 8 January 2025

Firdous Lone starts with folk song "Sheen Peto Peto, Baya Yeto Yeto" narrating background story of phrase in Hindi that how newly wed brides of Kashmir used to wait for her brother all along year but being busy in farming activities she knew they would visit her only after arrival of first snowfall in valley.

Language used: Hindi

Subtitles used: No

Code Switching or code Mixing: No

Caption: Sheena pieto pieto, baya yeeto yeeto || Background story || Kashmiri folksong

Different versions:

sheena pieto pieto laala yeeto yeeto

sheena pieto pieto maama yeeto yeeto

sheena pieto pieto baya yeeto yeeto

sheena pieto pieto baaba yeeto yeeto

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

No comment by non-Kashmiri

Reel 6: Shin Pipin / Yakur posted on 3 January 2025

It is second reel depicting about Shin Pipin also called Yakur in Kashmiri language and in English it is called Streaked Laughingthrush, known for its singing. It is believed in Kashmiri folklore that its singing denotes that first snowfall is about to arrive.

Language used: Hindi

Subtitles used: English

Code Switching or code Mixing: Code Mixing (Hindi and English)

Caption: In Kashmiri, the bird is called Shin Pipin. It is also known as Yakur, which is the Streaked Laughingthrush. Famous for its melodic singing call, this bird holds a special place in Kashmiri folklore. Its name, Pipin, means “whistle,” symbolizing its unique call that is believed to announce arrival of snow in Kashmir. A harbinger of winter, Shin Pipin continues to charm with its beauty and significance in Kashmiri culture.

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

- In Gojri and Pothwari, the bird is called Sorhi. There are seven

winter days in Pir Panjal dedicated to this bird, also known as Sori. (C 2, non-Kashmiri)

- Right bat hai hamre Udampur main is ko parkoli bolte hain. (C 4, non-Kashmiri)
- In pahadi, this bird is called Soodi. (C 15, non-Kashmiri)
- Gojri ma sori kehte hai. (C 18, non-Kashmiri)
- Wow! Love the folklore knowledge you've shared brother. (C 28, non-Kashmiri)
- Pahari language Sori (31, non-Kashmiri)
- Good to know the folklore. A very common bird found in Himalayas. In himachal (my hometown), uttarkhand, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim too (35, non-Kashmiri)
- Pahari main ise Sori kehtein hain (C 41, non-Kashmiri)
- Hmm esa Sohdi keh taa hain. (C 64, non-Kashmiri)
- In Gojri is called, sori. (104, non-Kashmiri)

Reel 7: Rantas posted on 10th July 2024

Firdous Lone gives description about Rantas explaining she has long hair that cascades down to her feet. And her nails are long and sharp like knife. Her feet are inverted. Her breasts are elongated. It is said that during snowfall she comes near villages taking form of any known women she takes away men and children with her calling them by their name. But one who remains cautious should always take in notice her feet that always remain inverted no matter what form she adapts.

Language used: Hindi

Subtitles used: No

Code Switching or code Mixing: Code Mixing

Caption: Rantas Part I (Description) Mythical creatures of

Kashmir

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

1. Ya this is true and ya Gilgit Baltistan mai bi aisa dekha gya hai. (C4, non-Kashmiri)
2. Gujarat mai is se Jivani kehte hai. (C6, non-Kashmiri)
3. Same thing as Pichal Peri. (C50, non-Kashmiri)
4. In Nepali we call it Lamleme bhoot. (C121, non-Kashmiri)

Reel 8: Mushran posted on 23 April, 2024

Mushran is one of the interesting mythical creature of Kashmiri folklore. He visits his victim in form of an old man and hugs him thus bringing downfall in his life. His height is long. In Kashmiri it is said ‘Che panae Mushran pyath’ meaning wrong for someone. And other phrase is ‘Ye Chu Mushran hyuvan’ means ugly like him. Mushran is also the surname. After that he mentions about his YouTube channel Alpha Firdous to viewers who want to know more about mythical creature of Kashmir.

Language used: Hindi

Subtitles used: English

Code Switching or code Mixing: Code Mixing Hindi, English and Kashmiri

Caption: Mushran – Mythical creatures of Kashmir.

Comments showing learning interest by non-local people:

1. Confuse na ho bhaiyo masan ki baat ho rhi hai khali naam thoda ilake ke hisab se badal gya hai. (C8, non-Kashmiri)
2. Mashr plural Mashran is the village on tribal head in Pashto. (C16, non-Kashmiri).
3. Share some details about Masan also known as Jal Masan. (C 47, non-Kashmiri).

Result

- Similarity with folklore terms of Pahari, Gojri, Pothwari, Pashto, Burushaski and Sanskrit language observed along with similarity in stories with Gujarat, Nepal, Turkey and Central Asian countries showing interest in Kashmiri language.
- Video with English subtitles is getting more and diverse comments from different cultures and languages for instance that of Yakur.
- Code-mixing has been used instead of code-switching.
- Hindi language has been used predominantly to make non-Kashmiri people aware of Kashmiri culture.

Limitations

- Only eight reels have been studied from one Kashmiri account.
- No study has been done regarding similar terms word root and origin.

Conclusion

Instagram is a prominent tool in helping minority culture reach to world with comments from Nepal, Gujarat and similarity with Turkey folklore showcasing that along with similarity in terms with different languages. The research clearly showcases interest of people in learning about Kashmir culture along with various Kashmiri terms that they resonated with. Thus, Instagram reels are reaching masses making them know about unique Kashmiri folklore terms.

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