

Ecological Consciousness in Punchi Folksongs: Exploring Symbols, Myths and Traditions

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The study examines the underlying tropes of nature and cultural expressions occurring in the select folksongs of Punchi, a lesser-known language spoken in the Poonch district of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, in an attempt to document and revitalize the oral literature of the Punchi language. The Punchi folksongs are not only the reflection of their customs but also depict the emotional bond that the community shares with their natural habitat. Further, the paper traces the role that the folksongs play in framing the Punchi speaker's ecological consciousness. The primary data for this descriptive qualitative study has been elicited using various data collection techniques including interviews and observation methods and have been recorded in audio-visual forms. The study helps in understanding the human ecology relationship closely and also provides insight into how Punchi language has construed the perspective of Punchi speakers towards nature and environment.

Keywords: *folksongs; Punchi; ecological consciousness; ecolinguistics; language.*

1 Introduction

In a linguistically diverse country like India where multilingualism is nothing less than an asset, the decline in the linguistic diversity is a cause of major concern. UNESCO declaring 197 Indian languages as endangered further emphasizes the urgency of this issue. The Government of India has taken a number of steps to revitalize and promote the minority languages, through various schemes as well as institutions such as Central Institute of Indian Languages that encourage documentation of minority languages. However, language documentation is not the exclusive means to revitalize a language. A language can be revitalized through various ways such as the master apprentice programs, development of pedagogical books and study materials (Hinton 2013), or methods such as the immersion method, the bilingual method or the total physical response method (Tsunoda 2006). Besides looking at the grammatical structure of the language such as its phonology and morphology, it is also important to examine its socio-linguistic aspects including the kinship system, proverbs, folksongs, flora and fauna, and alike (Tsunoda 2006). Linguists (Nettle and Romaine 2000) have emphasized on the interconnection of the local languages with traditional knowledge embedded in their stories and folksongs which serve as domains of local literacy (Grenoble & Whaley 2005). These literary works when recorded and documented can help in language learning in order to revitalize a language.

According to the People's Linguistic Survey of India, a total of 780 languages are spoken in India which is the second highest after Papua New Guinea where 840 languages are spoken (Lalmalsawma 2013). Of these 780 languages, only 22 are recognized as the official languages by the Indian Constitution as per the eighth schedule while a number of others face the threat of extinction or endangerment. The Government of India is actively making efforts to revitalize and recognize the languages of India, for example, Dogri, a local language spoken in the Jammu region

of Jammu & Kashmir as well as in Himachal Pradesh, has been recently added to the list of scheduled languages. However, these efforts are more political rather than socio-cultural. Punchi is one such lesser known and vulnerable language that faces the threat of being endangered. It is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Poonch district of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, and also by a number of Punchi speakers who migrated from Poonch as an aftermath of the partition of 1947 and are settled in parts of Jammu province. However, a gradual language shift has been observed amongst the Punchi speaking community to more dominant languages of the region such as Hindi and English especially in the urban areas of the Poonch district.¹ Further, the lack of prestige associated with the Punchi language in the urban areas also induces the shift to the more prestigious language and reflects the language attitude of the speakers. Therefore, documenting and archiving Punchi oral literature such as folk songs, proverbs, folklore and alike, through audio and visual recordings can aid language learning in classrooms as well as within the Punchi community, and this form of language revitalization will help raise and maintain language vitality and protect language assets to prevent their endangerment or extinction (Siregar 2022: 3).

Language and culture play a significant role in human ecology as well, to the extent that they influence human behaviour. Therefore, culture cannot be examined in isolation but must be seen as an inextricable part of a larger world. Along the same lines, Sapir states that “language does not exist apart from culture” since culture is comprised of “the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives” (Sapir 1921: 207). Thus, it becomes imperative to explore the patterns of language that shape not only the worldview and the culture of its speakers but also build their environmental cognition. The present study offers an ecodescriptive analysis of the natural systems of the Punchi community using ecolinguistic parameters that provide an understanding of the human ecology relationship. The paper analyzes the metaphors of nature in the select Punchi folksongs and examines the ways in which the Punchi language construes its speakers’ view of nature and environment.

Rooted in collective memory and composed of succinct expressions of experiences, wisdom and emotions, folksongs are passed on through oral tradition to later generations within a specific community or region (Dundes 1965). They may be of no specific origins, sung individually or by a group of people on a particular occasion (such as on the festival of karva chauth²), with strong associations with religious festivities, wedding celebrations, birth or death ceremonies, and agricultural practices and alike (Maliangkay 2017: 52). However, the question arises, do these folksongs solely serve recreational purposes or does their significance extend beyond merely musical allure? According to folklorists (Dundes 1965; Okpewho 1992), folksongs do not merely entertain but also contribute in shaping societies and their respective environments from cultural, historical and sociological point of views (Teresa 2018: 2). They offer a commentary on the dynamic between humans and nature, and serve as markers of their cultural and ecological identity (Lei 2021). Here, ecological identity can be defined as a person or community’s attitude towards their natural environment and the ways in which they ‘construe themselves in relationship to the earth’ (Thomashow 1995), which is best reflected in the expressive cultures of the community such as in its folksongs.

¹ Based on the sociolinguistic data elicited through questionnaires while the researcher was working on the doctoral thesis titled “A Linguistic Grammar of the Punchi language”.

² An Indian festival in which the Indian wife fasts for the long life of her husband.

Folksongs are often loaded with cultural knowledge that is conditioned by the natural, geographic and economic settings of its people (Barankova 2022: 2). For example, in a study of 4,341 Slovak folk songs, nearly 26.4% (1148) of the songs mentioned landscape elements, clearly reflecting the mainly mountainous terrain of Slovakia (Barankova 2022). Similarly, the Punchi folksongs are rich in imagery of nature, whether it is in its extensive usage of soil or *mitti*, or in its repetitive refrain about moonlight (see song 1), thus reflecting the collective experiences and perceptions of its speakers. They depict the sentimental value that the Punchi speakers attribute to the natural elements that they are surrounded by, some of which can only be decoded in context to the culture in which they naturally thrive. Like folksongs all around the world, Punchi folksongs too comprise of repetitive patterns in a stylistic framework and these patterns (morphological and syntactic both) majorly include devices and figures of speech such as repetition, parallelism, alliteration, rhyme and exaggeration (see appendix 1).

2 Language and Ecology: The interplay of the two

The intricate relationship between language and ecology can be analyzed through ecolinguistics. Ecolinguistics identifies the part that language plays in the life-sustaining interactions of humans, diverse species and the environment (“About”). Relatively a new discipline, ecolinguistics first gained popularity with Halliday’s the seminal text *New Ways of Meaning* that talked about the ecological context in which language is embedded (Halliday 1990). As Haugen puts it, ecolinguistics deals with the study of existing interactions between a language and its environment (Haugen 2001: 57). It bridges the gap and attempts to create a more sustainable relationship between living beings and their physical environment. According to Panov, both anthropocentric as well as ecocentric components play a vital role in framing the ecological consciousness of a community (Panov 2013), and the present study throws light on the ecological consciousness of the Punchi community as projected by its folksongs.

According to Stibbe, ecolinguistics can explore “the more general patterns of language that influence how people both think about and treat the world” (Stibbe 2015: 1). It looks at human beings as not merely as constituent of the society but as a part of the larger ecosystem. It also dwells on the role that linguistics can play in dealing with the increasing environmental issues since linguistics provides the tools through which the texts surrounding us in everyday life can be analyzed. These tools further help in uncovering the ‘stories’ underlying within the text. Stibbe employs the term ‘stories’ to refer to the cognitive structures or mental models in the human minds that influence their behaviour and their perception of the world. Further, the stories that exist in the minds of multiple individuals across a culture are in Stibbe’s words the *stories-we-live-by*.

3 Methodology

The paper explores how Punchi folksongs serve as a means in safeguarding the cultural and linguistic diversity within a community. The paper also draws attention towards the linguistic features observed in the Punchi folksongs and attempts to identify any commentary on the

discourse that is prevalent within their community. Further, the research traces the “underlying stories” that lie behind the verbal repertoire of the select Punchi songs. The paper identifies the patterns of the language of Punchi folksongs that shapes the worldview of its speakers through an ecolinguistic framework (Stibbe 2015), to provide an understanding of the human ecology relationship. The primary linguistic data has been collected through field work conducted by the researchers in the Haveli region of the Poonch district while documenting the language. Face to face interviews and participant observation methods were employed to get an insight into the verbal behaviour of the speakers during naturally occurring discourses and to understand the context in which these songs are sung and the functions that they serve. The secondary data for the study was obtained from a Facebook page named “Apna Poonchi Parivar” (Our Poonchi family) which included videos of the Punchi folk singing a few Punchi folksongs. The data was recorded in audio and video forms along with field notes taken by the researchers and it was then interpreted and translated by the researchers using an empirical approach while avoiding any personal biases.

4 Data and analysis

The folksongs function as repositories of rich linguistic expressions and cultural knowledge. Just like other Indian folksongs, Punchi folk songs also possess a multitude of symbolic, economic and ecological values that contribute in creating a rich tapestry of meaning and connection with the environment. The paper undertakes the study of the select Punchi wedding songs and explores how these songs have the potential to enrich the ecological balance. The following section analyzes the nature vocabulary, metaphors and motifs; the relationships between words; figures of speech and then exposes the underlying ideologies that these features convey.

4.1 Natural elements in Punchi Folksongs

Punchi folksongs are interspersed with rich imagery of natural scenes that express the traditional cultural values of the Punchi community. They depict the rural lifestyle of the Punchi people and their interdependence on their natural environment. Their wedding songs also reflect the emotional attachments of its speakers to their land, their flora and fauna, and their ecosystem in general. Consider the following lyrics that depict the emotional closeness between the Punchi speakers and their natural habitat.

(1) *lahorã ni mutti, pãfora ni mutti*
 Lahore GEN soil Pishore GEN soil
 ‘Soil from Lahore, soil from Pishore’

mãngaji de bivo, rati tãan-ni a
 bring give bride night moon-lit be.AUX.PRES
 ‘Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon.’

Song 1 *Mitti* ‘Soil’ talks about a Punchi wedding tradition that is based on the largest biodiversity reservoir, that is, soil. Soil has nurtured innumerable cultures, civilizations and livelihoods

throughout history and the extinction of soil will ultimately lead to the extinction of these cultures and civilizations (Minami 2009). Soil plays a vital role in the Indian socio-economic, religious, and cultural setting and is also a significant tool in expressing creativity in the form of ‘art’, ranging from earthen pots to paintings made from soil (Bipin et al. 2019). The song is a traditional wedding song sung by the Punchi speakers who left their homes during the partition of the Indian subcontinent in the year 1947. It reflects sentimental attachment to the soil of their motherland Lahore and Pishore/Peshawar. The relatives of the groom celebrate the occasion by singing ritualistic songs. Going by Stibbe’s stories, the song is a reflection of an ideology that treats soil as a sacred element and the song serves as a source of beneficial discourse since it ‘encourages people to preserve ... the ecosystem that supports life’.

The next two lines of the song serve as a refrain and are repeated all through the song to create an intricate pattern of rhythm and poetic structure.

- (2) *rati can-ni a, mən pam-ni a*
 night moon-lit is, mind confused be.AUX.PRES
 ‘The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness’
- favo aja bivo rati can-ni a*
 groom come girl/bride night moon-lit be.AUX.PRES
 ‘The groom has come, bride, on this moon-lit night’

These lines describe natural elements such as the night that is lit up with the light of the moon in which the *mitti* ‘soil’ should be brought. The moon is a significant natural element with varied lunar legends and superstitions associated with it all around the world. Even as the moon is associated with womanhood and treated as a goddess in a number of cultures, the Indian mythology regards the moon as a God often embodying romantic qualities who goes by numerous names including ‘Chandra’ and ‘Soma’. The moon is believed to have a “subtle impact on the sap of plants, making him the lord of all vegetation” (“Lunar Tales”). Further, in the Hindu Vedic texts, Soma is considered as an herb that causes intoxication. Moreover, keeping a fast on the full moon night is considered auspicious and a number of Indian festivals such as ‘karwa chauth’, Ramzan, Deepawali and others, follow the lunar cycle.

Apart from soil, water also finds repetitive mention in the Punchi folksongs whether in the form of rivers and streams or as a resource for the building of a traditional house as in the following song.

- (3) *pani t^hoṛa cikkar̥ bə^hera*
 water less sludge plenty
 ‘Water was less, sludge was plenty’
- roi roi hal gəvaja ji*
 cry.PST cry.PST condition lost HON.
 ‘They cried so much they lost their senses.’

The given lines dwell on the tedious process of home building in traditional Punchi societies where the newly married couple would build their home together using raw materials such as clay, bricks, mud, soil and water. The construction of the house in the folksong symbolizes a rite of passage for the young couple who are ready to embark on a new journey that is full of duties and responsibilities (Crooke 1918). The song also reflects the interdependency of the Punchi community on their natural environment. The song further personifies the water that is speaking in the stream through the line /kæssia bole pani ji/ ‘in the stream water speaks’ and adorns the picturesque natural environment. According to the Vedic literature, the Hindi word for stream, that is /nadi/ is made of the root /nad/ which literally means “to make sound” since rivers produce noise while flowing (Dwivedi 2018). The concrete and specific words such as /kæssia/ ‘streams’ and /pani/ ‘water’ which Lakoff and Wehling (2012: 41) refer to as basic level words, evoke clear and salient images in the mind, thereby, bringing more-than-human world into the minds of the listeners in contrast to abstract descriptions that are generally less salient (Stibbe 2015: 165). According to Stibbe, by analyzing these linguistic representations in the form of concrete and vivid images, the salience patterns can be revealed that helps in reminding people that ‘an area of life is worthy of attention’. Further, the personification of water in the folksong (see Figure 1) helps represent the water bodies as a communicator and a ‘sayer’, thus providing agency to it (Goatly 2000).

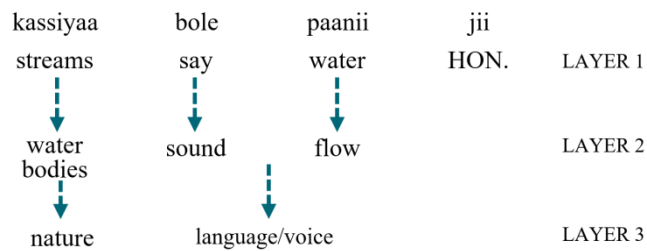


Figure 1: The layers of meaning in a Punchi folksong

4.2 Symbolic animals in Punchi folksongs

The Punchi folksongs are embedded with natural lexicon deep rooted in mythology. From an ecological perspective, these myths can be analyzed to delve into the delicate balance of nature. In a number of cultures, different elements assume a certain level of sacredness, whether it is veneration of animals, worship of trees or reverence for products of their natural environment. For instance, in India, cows play a vital role from both economic as well as a symbolic point of view. Consider the following lines:

- (4) *bavul mere daj-io ditta*
 Father mine dowry-that give.PST
 ‘The dowry that my father gave’
ky mejia ky gajia ji
 some buffalo.PL some cow.PL HON.
 ‘Some buffalos and some cows were there.’

The cow in agrarian and pastoral societies in India is seen as both symbol as well as sustenance (Lodrick 2005). The cow is considered as a sacred animal, and is often equated with mother since she provides milk and cow's milk is the first replacement for mother's milk, thus giving birth to the expression *Gaumata* 'cow mother' (Krishna 2010: 74). Cow's milk and milk products are also used in a number of religious rituals and are offered as oblations to the Gods (Lodrick 2005: 67). Further, five products of the cow including milk, curd, ghee (clarified butter), cow urine and cow dung are used in ritual purification in modern Hinduism (Simoons 1974: 251). Being a chiefly agrarian society, the livelihood of the Punchi community too depended a lot on cows. The cow is not only the provider of milk, but also symbolizes abundance, and is synonymous with earth, plenty, clouds, speech and light. The wealth of a person was estimated by the number of cows they possessed. Thus, the cow was often a part of the bride's dowry.

Other than the cow, the snake also holds a lot of significance in the Punchi society, most of which stems from the Indian mythology. The snake, often a symbol of wisdom, is considered as the custodian of buried treasures and symbolizes life as well as death. However, the Punchi song paints a different picture of the deadly snake through the following lines:

(5) *bagã* *de vic bõlbõl* *bole*
 orchard.PL inside nightingale speak.IMPF
 'The nightingale sings in the orchard'

kãssiã *bole* *pani* *ji*
 stream.PL speak.IMPF water HON.
 'The streams sing of water.'

bagã *de vic sãpni* *sui* *e*
 orchard.PL inside snake.F pregnant AUX.PRES.SG
 'The female snake is impregnated in the orchards'

kãrnie *menu menu* *ji*
 do.IMPF menu menu HON.
 'She cries menu menu.'

The stanza draws attention towards the birds (/bõlbõl/ 'nightingale) and animals (/sãpni/ 'snake') found in the orchards that effortlessly enhance the natural beauty of the place. The given folksong employs the honorific marker /ji/ repetitively to add rhyme to the song. The water is personified since it seems to say something (see 3.1) while the onomatopoeic words 'menu menu' depict the sound that a female snake makes, as perceived by the Punchi people. The lines describe an impregnated female snake in the orchard that produces a "menu menu" sound. The /sãpni/ 'female snake' referred to as /naqın/ in the Hindi language is generally known for its striking beauty. Even though the word 'snake' brings about reactions of fear and repulsion, yet, in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, they are revered as mythical and semi-divine beings that are both dangerous and beneficial to humans ("Naga" 2023). It is also commonly believed that snakes do not harm those

who worship them and therefore, they are worshipped both in temples as well as in their natural habitat through offerings of milk and prayers.

The Punchi folksongs are rich with references of both animals and birds. Common Indian birds such as the house crow, the sparrow and the nightingale often find a place in their folksongs. The following lines highlight instances of food being stolen by birds such as crow and sparrow.

(6) *nikka moṭa bajra majive koi khada kava ṭola*
 small fat millet dear some eat.PST crow dear
 ‘A little of my millet roti my dear, some crow ate it my dear’

k^hada kava majive mē tere maṭṭ^he lama ṭola
 eat.PST crow dear I your forehead put dear
 ‘A crow ate it my dear, but I blame it on you, my dear’

nikka moṭa bajra majive koi khada ciṛia ṭola
 small fat millet dear some eat.PST sparrow dear
 ‘A little of my millet roti my dear, some sparrows ate it my dear.’

k^hada ciṛia majive mē tere nal piṛia ṭola
 eat.PST sparrow dear I your with engage dear
 ‘Sparrows ate it my dear, I’m engaged to you my dear.’

The bride in the song complains to her partner that her food was probably eaten by a crow or a sparrow, but in a playful mood she declares that she will blame it on him. The crow is a sacred bird in the Indian tradition and feeding crows is considered as auspicious since it is identified with departed souls or ancestors (Krishna 2010). The crow is also referred to as the maternal uncle of children and is often offered rice and milk (Upadhyaya 1967: 67). They use their intelligence to procure a variety of food, and owing to their intelligence the crow also features as a hero in children’s stories such as *Aesop’s Fables* and *Panchatantra*. The crow is also considered as the messenger that carries messages to the lover, in a far away land. In the given lines, the crow has been attributed the thematic role of an agent of material processes and according to Stibbe, by giving the animals an agentive role, they are represented as actively involved in leading their own lives for purposes that are consistent with their nature, whether it is eating in the case of the crow and the sparrow or vocalizing as in the case of the snake and the nightingale (Stibbe 2012: 151).

Similarly, the sparrow is a common rural as well as an urban dweller. It shares its residence with humans and builds nests in human built structures as well. The sparrow plays a vital role in the functioning of the ecosystem as they maintain the food web and the ecological balance (“House Sparrow” 2022). Further, a number of birds, especially the sparrow often symbolizes the daughter or the bride who leaves her nest (the father’s home) and her flock (the family) when she’s of the right age and flies away to settle in a new nest (her husband’s home). Additionally, just as the crow, the sparrow is also commonly addressed as messengers that fly to places miles away to bring news and tidings about the loved ones. This reference is clearly reflected in the refrain of the song:

(7) *ʊr ni cɪrɛ pəŋ rəŋg-ɪe cɪrɛ*
 fly oh sparrow.VOC five colour-ed sparrow.VOC
 ‘Fly oh sparrow, five colored sparrow’

kɪdre mera bavɔl vekʰja si
 where my father see.PST is.PST
 ‘Where did you see my father?’

bavɔl tere fɛr bəʈale
 father your city Batala.INFL
 ‘Your father was in Batala city’

fɛr bəʈale gujrāvale
 city Batala.INFL Gujranwala.INFL
 ‘In city Bataala, Gujranwala’

daje da vəŋ kəre-da si
 dowry.PL of business do-PROG is.PST
 ‘He was arranging your dowry.’

The soon-to-be bride addresses the five coloured sparrow and asks it about the whereabouts of her father since the sparrow is free to fly anywhere. The sparrow seems to know the information and answers back to the bride that her father is in Batala city and he’s busy arranging materials for her dowry. In the remainder of the song, the bride asks about her brother, her maternal and paternal uncle and the sparrow reveals their location along with how they’re arranging materials such as clothes and bangles for her wedding dowry. The song endows high salience to the sparrow and personifies it as a living being that directly speaks to the bride, thereby assigning it an active participant role (Ghorbanpour 2016: 5). These direct encounters of human beings with animals and birds in their natural settings in the songs place them at a prime position, thus, contributing to the ecological consciousness of the PUNCHI speakers.

4.3 Traditional and ritualistic objects in PUNCHI folksongs

Humans are an integral part of the ecosystem but they are also dependent on the ecosystem and the ecological resources for their survival. A number of objects derived from plants hold traditional and ritualistic significance for the PUNCHI community. Some of these objects include the sacred thread, henna, and the palanquin. The following lines of a song throw light on the ritual of wearing a sacred thread during a wedding.

(8) *gana bəŋ neja kɔŋ koi aja bənnɪje*
 thread tie to who someone come.PERF girl
 ‘Who all came to tie the sacred thread, girl?’

pəna əpni te lok pəraja bənnɪje

sister.PL own and people outsider girl
 ‘The sisters are own, people are outsiders, girl.’

The given lines celebrate the tradition of tying a sacred thread on the wrist of the bride, often done by the sister or the friend of the bride. This sanctified thread or *gaana*, also known as *mauli* refers to a ‘crown’ that is ‘above all’, is made of cotton thread spun in a yarn and coloured red (Singhal 2020). Traditionally, worn as a protective charm, it is believed to ward off any evil or negativity and provide unwavering safety to the wearer. According to the Hindu mythology, Lord Vishnu bestowed immortality upon King Bali by tying the sacred thread on his wrist.

Henna also serves a significant function in traditional Punjabi weddings. The following lines highlight the usage of henna in Punjabi wedding rituals.

(9) *lāhora ni mēndi, pāśora ni mēndi*
 Lahore GEN henna Pishore GEN henna
 ‘Henna from Lahore, Henna from Pishore’

māngaji de bivo, rati can-ni a
 bring give girl night moon-lit be.AUX.PRES
 ‘Bring it for the bride, on this moon-lit night’

Henna or ‘mehandi’ is made by crushing the leaves of the plant (*Lawsonia inermis* L.) to a fine paste/powder and this paste leaves a stain on the skin and is thus used as a form of body art especially on the hands of the bride and the women around. Henna symbolizes traditional values, vitality and prosperity, and is a common adornment for married women. It is considered auspicious and is applied by women during traditional festivals, ceremonies and fasts. Henna is also traditionally used as a natural and organic hair colourant by Indian men and women.

A number of trees are worshipped in India since they are considered sacred or mythological. Others that are not attributed a sacred quality also have beliefs and superstitions related to them. The following lines talk about the /ḍoli/ ceremony wherein the bride is taken from her house to the groom’s house in a wooden palanquin also known as /ḍoli/.

(10) *lāhora ni ḍoli, pāśora ni ḍoli*
 Lahore of palanquin Pishore GEN palanquin
 ‘Palanquin from Lahore, palanquin from Pishore’

māngaji de bivo, rati can-ni a
 bring give girl night moon-lit be.AUX.PRES
 ‘Bring it for the bride, on this moon-lit night’

The /ḍoli/ ‘palanquin’ in which the bride is carried is made of wood extracted from the huge *Shalmali* tree or the silk cotton tree. The name *Shalmali* (Sanskrit) is derived from one of the hells of the same name discussed in the Puranas.³ It is believed that people who have committed sinful

³ Sacred literary in Hinduism comprising of myths, legends and genealogies of Gods and kings in India.

acts are pierced with the thorns of the *Shalmali*, known as *kuta shalmali* in hell (Upadhyaya 1964: 31). People are afraid to go near it since evil spirits are said to reside on this tree. Even though the wood from the silk cotton tree is used as a resource to make the palanquins, it does not diminish them to inanimate objects and the language of the folksongs continue to serve as reservoirs of local wisdom, spiritual values, superstitious beliefs, myths, etc. (Angin & Dewi 2020) and these values need to be preserved since they are what Stibbe refers to as “stories-we-live-by”.

4.4 Natural products in Punchi folksongs

The way in which animals and plants are referred to, says a lot about the people, as Fairclough (2003: 18) puts it “cultures exist as languages, or what I shall rather call discourses”. As discussed earlier, sacred animals such as cow or snakes occupy a special place in the Indian culture and tradition, and the discourses and ideologies around these animals can be seen as potentially beneficial. However, beyond the role that cow plays in the deeply religious beliefs of the Hindus in India, the cows also holds a lot of economic value. Milk and milk products are an important part of the diet of the Indian population. The given lines describe cow’s milk which is no less than nectar for the Punchi community.

(11) *tʰan nia de ləmkən loʔe*
 udder GEN like hanging pots
 ‘The udders of the cow hung heavily.’

pəɾən dʊde nia kəɽiã ji
 fill milk.INFL GEN pot.PL HON
 ‘We filled up utensils from that milk.’

dʊd una da mɨ kəri miʔʰɽa
 milk their of much so sweet
 ‘Their milk was so sweet’

ju miʔri diã dʊliã ji
 like sugar candy of.PL pearl.PL HON.
 ‘Like pearls of sugar candy.’

As with majority of the Indian population, milk along with other dairy products made out of milk is dietary staples for the Punchi community as well. The ancient scriptures describe the cow’s milk as *amrita* ‘elixir’ of life for it is believed to provide vitality and inner strength to fight diseases. Due to its association with the cow, the milk is transported to the realm of the sacred, thus making cow’s milk pious and pure. The Indian epics, along with other mythological and theological texts also talk about Krishna who is renowned for his love towards cows and cow’s milk and butter “all of which contributes to milk’s position as a divine substance” (Wiley, 2014: 15). Similarly, the Punchi people also celebrate milk and treat it as the nectar of life. The lines compare the sweetness of the milk to pearls of /miʔri/ ‘sugar candy’ also referred to as rock sugar. Rock sugar has many medicinal uses such as in curing dysentery along with various other vector-borne diseases and aids

digestion. It is also presented to deities in the temple as an offering and is served as ‘prasad’ after worship and thanksgiving to the Gods. Further, just like milk, *mishri* or misri is also associated with Krishna who is said to be fond of it. Thus, products like milk and mishri that are derived directly from plants and animals also hold intrinsic value, along with economic value which encourages people to protect their natural world, instead of erasing them (Stibbe 2015).

Batna is another natural product made with natural ingredients and forms a significant part of the PUNCHI culture and PUNCHI weddings.

- (12) *bəʈna laneja kən koi aja bənnije*
 batna apply who someone come girl.VOC
 ‘Who all came to apply batna, girl?’

The given lines talk about a ritual in the PUNCHI tradition in which *batna* is applied to the bride and the groom by their family and relatives. *Batna* is a mixture of gram flour, mustard oil and turmeric, and it is applied on the bodies of the couple to cleanse their skin and enhance their beauty. All the ingredients used in this mixture hold not only cultural significance but they also have medicinal properties. Turmeric is often used as an antiseptic and is applied over wounds as a curative and turmeric powder in milk is also consumed to cure internal wounds (Sharma et al. 2021). Like henna, turmeric or *haldi* is also considered as auspicious and in weddings ‘it operates primarily in terms of its colour’ (Werbner 1986). Further, mustard oil too is deeply ingrained in cultural and traditional beliefs and symbolizes purity and prosperity. The last ingredient of /bəʈna/ ‘gram flour’ is also considered good for skin as it improves skin elasticity. The usage of these traditional items in the folksongs helps in creating a beneficial discourse and promotes a non-destructive relationship of humans with nature.

A number of daily use items find a place in the folksongs of a community. The following folksong casually mentions the Grapefruit known as /goʈe/ in PUNCHI.

- (13) *pəcc^{hi} vic goʈe majive, dɪ re gəje t^hoʈe tola*
 basket inside grapefruit dear day remain go less dear
 ‘There is grapefruit in the basket my dear, only few days are left my dear.’

The given lines refer to /goʈe/ ‘grapefruit’ that is lying in /pəcc^{hi}/ which is a traditional handmade basket made using straw for storing and carrying goods. This environment friendly traditional basket, now considered as old fashioned, has been replaced by plastic baskets in the modern world but it can still be found in rural areas of Poonch. This shift from ecologically sustainable ways of life to ecologically destructive behaviours is clearly visible; therefore, such folksongs that capture the harmonization between humans and the nature must be shared and promoted. Since these objects are not commonly used anymore, by bringing them into the minds of the readers/listeners or by ‘re-minding’ them, attention can be drawn at their erasure and steps can be taken to bring them back into consideration (Stibbe 2015: 162).

5 Conclusion

The study analyzes few Punchi folksongs through an ecolinguistic framework to explore how the language of these songs construes the environment and ascertain how they encourage beneficial behaviour. The ecolinguistic analysis of the folksongs provides an insight into the ideas, perceptions and the beliefs of the Punchi people and emphasizes upon the centrality of nature within their traditions and culture. The paper throws light on the language of the folksongs that reflect different ‘stories’ such as ideologies and discourses (§ 4.1), the salience patterns (§ 4.1 and 4.2) as well as erasure (§ 4.4). Additionally, the paper throws light on the stylistic devices employed in these folksongs such as alliteration, rhyme, repetition, hyperbole and alike which helps in blending the rhythm of nature with the rhyme of the language. The study asserts that the way plants, animals and the nature in general are represented in the Punchi folksongs helps in creating a discourse of ecology that encourages people to respect the nature by vividly representing them at the basic level and also by evoking an ethical response. The language of these folksongs continue to serve as reservoirs of local wisdom, spiritual values, superstitious beliefs, myths, and alike, and these values need to be preserved since they are what Stibbe refers to as “stories-we-live-by”. The documentation and preservation of these folksongs is necessary to revitalize the Punchi language and create a long-lasting linguistic record for the generations to come.

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Appendix 1

S.No.	Literary device	Example
1.	Alliteration	<p><i>mayiive main mitti</i> ‘my dear, I’m going to collect soil’ <i>marodiye mayiive meri</i> ‘twisted my wrist my dear’ <i>saddo sayane</i> ‘call the wisemen’ <i>koi khada kaavaa</i> ‘some crow ate’ <i>vaagaa de vich bulbul bole</i> ‘bulbul sings in the orchards’</p>
2.	Personification	<p><i>dakhaa moj banaya ji</i> ‘the branches enjoyed’ <i>kassiyaa bole paani ji</i> ‘the water in the stream speaks’</p>
3.	Simile	<p><i>thaan nijaa de lamkan lote</i> ‘udders like hanging pots’ <i>dud una da inj kari miththda</i> ‘milk so sweet’ <i>juu mishrii diyaa daaliyaa ji</i> ‘like pearls of sugar candy’</p>
4.	Repetition/Refrain	<p><i>raati chaan-ni aa, mann paamni aa</i> ‘the night is moonlit, the mind is crazy with happiness’ <i>shaa aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa</i> ‘the groom has come since the night is moonlit’ ... <i>kun koi aayaa banniye</i> ‘who all came, bride’ ... <i>apnii te lok parayee banniye</i> ‘own, others are outsiders’</p>
5.	Metaphor	<p><i>chug laande muh kale ji</i> ‘the people who talk behind our backs have black faces.’</p>
6.	Juxtaposition	<p><i>pani thoda chikkad bathera</i> ‘water was less, sludge was plenty’</p> <p><i>penaa apnii te lok parayee banniye</i> The sister are own, people are outsiders, girl.</p> <p><i>dekh binni mayiive main marni ki jeeni tola</i> Look at my wrist my dear, look whether I live or die, my dear</p>
7.	Symbolism	<p><i>sapnii</i> ‘snake’ <i>chidiye</i> ‘sparrow’ <i>mendii</i> ‘henna’</p>
8.	Imagery	<p><i>thaan nijaa de lamkan lote</i> ‘udders like hanging pots’ <i>vaagaa de vich bulbul bole</i> ‘bulbul sings in the orchards’</p>

		<i>kassiyaa bole paani ji</i> 'the water in the stream speaks'
9.	Hyperbole	<i>saddo sayane mayiive meri dekh binni maroda</i> <i>dekh binni mayiive main marni ki jeeni tola</i> Call the doctors my dear, look my wrist is twisted. Look at my wrist, my dear, look whether I live or die, my dear
10.	Onomatopoeia	<i>vaagaa de vich sapni suiye</i> <i>karniye menu menu ji</i> The female snake is impregnated in the orchards They cry maenu maenu.

Appendix 2:

Folk songs discussed in the paper:

Song 1	Translation
Mitti Lahoraa nii mitti, Pashoraa ni mitti Mangaayii de bivo, raati chaan-ni aa raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa	Soil from Lahore, soil from Pishore Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night
Lahoraa naa gaanaa, pashoraa naa gaanaa mangaayi de bivo raatii chaan-ni aa raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa	Song from Lahore, song from Pishore Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night
Lahoraa ni mendii, Pashoraa ni mendii Mangaayii de bivo, raati chaan-ni aa raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa	Henna from Lahore, Henna from Pishore Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night
Lahoraa naa batnaa, Pashoraa naa batnaa Mangaayii de bivo, raati chaan-ni aa raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa	Batna from Lahore, Batna from Pishore's Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night
Lahoraa ne kapde, Pashoraa ne kapde Mangaayii de bivo, raati chaan-ni aa raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa	Clothes from Lahore, Clothes from Pishore Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night
Lahoraa nii janjh, Pashoraa ni janjh Mangaayii de bivo, raati chaan-ni aa	Baraat from Lahore, baraat from Pishore Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon

<p>raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa</p> <p>shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa</p> <p>Lahoraa nii dolii, Pashoraa nii dolii Mangaayii de bivo, raati chaan-ni aa raati chaan-ni aa, mann paam ni aa</p> <p>shaao aayaa bivo, raati chaan-ni aa</p>	<p>The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night</p> <p>Palanquin from Lahore, palanquin from Pishore Bring it for the bride, in the light of the moon The night is moon-lit, the mind is confused with happiness The groom has come, since it is a moon-lit night</p>
<p>Song 2</p> <p>Mitti Mitti aaneyaa kun koi aayaa banniye mata apnii lok paraja banniye</p> <p>gaanaa ban-neya kun koi aayaa banniye penaa apnii te lok parayee banniye</p> <p>mendii laaneya kun koi aaya banniye pabiala apniyaa lok paraye banniye</p> <p>batnaa laaneya kun koi aaya banniye seliyaa apniyaa lok paraaye banniye</p> <p>kapde paaneya kun koi aaya banniye penaa apniyaa lok paraaya banniye</p>	<p>Song 2</p> <p>Mitti Who all came to bring the soil, girl? The mother is own, people are outsiders, girl.</p> <p>Who all came to tie the sacred thread, girl? The sister are own, people are outsiders, girl.</p> <p>Who all came to apply henna, girl? Sister-in-laws are own, people are outsiders, girl.</p> <p>Who all came to apply batna, girl? Girlfriends are own, people are outsiders, girl.</p> <p>Who all came to put clothes girl? Maternal uncles are own, people are outsiders, girl.</p>
<p>Song 3</p> <p>meluu taliyaa mayiive, main mitti nu chaliyaa tola</p> <p>mitti aan-nii mayiive meri binni marodiye tola</p> <p>mitti khunna mayiive meri binni marodiye tola</p> <p>bini marodiye mayiive meri baa pann chhodiye tola</p> <p>saddo sayane mayiive meri dekh binni maroda</p> <p>dekh biinii mayiive main marni ki jeeni tola</p> <p>nikka mota baajraa maayive koi khada kaavaa tola</p>	<p>Song 3</p> <p>I have left home my dear, I'm going to take soil my dear While I was getting the soil my dear, I twisted my wrist my dear. While digging the soil my dear my wrist got twisted my dear Twisting my wrist my dear, I broke my arm my dear. Call the doctors my dear Look, my wrist is twisted. Look at my wrist, my dear Look whether I live or die, my dear Some of my millet roti my dear some crow ate it my dear</p>

<p>khada kaavaa maayive me tere matthe laamaa tola nikka mota baajraa maayiive koi khada chidiya tola khada chidya mayive main tere naal pidiyaa tolaa bag di e ravi mayive che kanda palai da tola main na jamdi mayiive tund kitthu vayai da tola bag di e ravi maayive vich retu teriyaa tola tu na jamdi mayive saanu aur batheriya tola pachchi vich gandlaa mayiive din reh gaye pandra tola pachchi vich gode maayive din reh gaye ne thode tola</p> <p>Song 4</p> <p>udd nii chidiye panj rangiye chidiye kidre meraa baavul vekhya si baavul tere sher bataale Sher vataale gujranvale daaje da vanj kare-da si</p> <p>udii nii chidiye panj rangiye chidiye kidre meraa vir vekhya si – 2 vir tere sher bataale sher bataale gujranvale suute da vanj kare-de si</p> <p>udd nii chidiye panj rangiye chidiye - 2 kidre mere maamaa vekhe si - 2 maamaa tere sher bataale sher bataale gujranvale chuude da vanj kare-da si – 2</p> <p>udii nii chidiye panj rangiye chidiye – 2 kidre mere chaachaa vekhe si – 2 chaachaa tere sher bataale sher baataale gujranvale daaje da vanj kare-da si – 2</p>	<p>A crow ate it my dear But I'm going to blame you my dear. Some of my millet roti my dear Some sparrows ate it my dear Sparrows ate it my dear, I'm getting married to you my dear. The Ravi river flows my dear, In it there are thorny plants my dear. Had I not been born my dear how would you have married me my dear? The Ravi river flows my dear, In it there are heaps of sand my dear. Had you not been born my dear I would have found other girls my dear. There is spinach in the basket my dear only fifteen days are left my dear. There is grapefruit in the basket my dear Only few days are left my dear.</p> <p>Song 4</p> <p>Fly oh sparrow, five colored sparrow Where did you see my father? Your father was in Bataala city City Bataala, Gujranwala He was arranging your dowry.</p> <p>Fly oh sparrow, five colored sparrow Where did you see my brothers? Your brothers were in Bataala city City Bataala, Gujranwala He was arranging your clothes.</p> <p>Fly oh sparrow, five colored sparrow Where did you see my maternal uncle? Your maternal uncle was in Bataala city City Bataala, Gujranwala He was arranging your bangles.</p> <p>Fly oh sparrow, five colored sparrow Where did you see my paternal uncle? Your paternal uncle was in Bataala city City Bataala, Gujranwala He was arranging your dowry.</p>
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Song 5

Eer

Chalo saiyo(n) chal vekhan chaliye
ranjhe mael chadaayaa ji
kede sheher niya iitaa aaiyaa
kede shehre naa gaaraa ji

Miirpuree niyaa(n) iitaa aaiyaa
Shehedpure naa gaara ji
Eeran bani iitaa towe
ranjha towe gaaraa ni

uchchiyaa lammiya kandhaa chadaniyaa
beech rakhaniyaaa aale jii
asii tusaa de tusi asaa de
chug laande muh kale jii

uchchiya lammiya kanda chadaniyaa
beech rakhaniyaa taaki jii

aasaa chhodeya aaman jaaman
tusaa chhodiya shanakti ji
chalo saiyo chal vekhan chaliye
raanjhe mael chadaayaa ji – 2

mitti thodi chikkad bathera
roi roi haal gavaya ji
pani thoda chikkad bathera
royi royi haal gavaayaa ji

bavul mere kastuuri peji
ju khola juu khashboo ganerii

juu tolaa juu poori ji

baavul mere daajiyo ditta
kuj meiyaa kuj gaaiyaa ji
us e patna gaaiyaa chadiyaa
us e patna meiyaa ji
us e patna raanja chadyaa
heer kudii na saaiyaa ji

than nijaa de lamkan lote
paran dude niya kadiyaa ji

Song 5

Let's go friends, let's go and see
Ranjha is making a house.
Which city are the bricks coming from?
Which city is the clay coming from?

The bricks are coming from Mirpur,
The clay is coming from Sherpur.
The bride is carrying the bricks.
The Ranjha/groom is carrying the mud mortar.

They will build high and tall walls
In the walls they'll create niche
We are yours, you are ours,
The people who talk behind our backs have black
faces.

They will build high and tall walls
In the walls they'll create a niche.

We stopped coming and going,
You stopped identifying us.
Let's go girls, let's go and see
Ranjha/Groom is making a house.

The soil was less, the sludge was plenty.
They cried so much they lost their senses.
Water was less, sludge was plenty,
They cried so much they lost their senses.

My father sent musk
The moment I open it, the fragrance densely
surrounds us.
The moment I measure it, it is whole.

My father sent me dowry.
Some buffaloes, some cows.
The cows climbed up from that way.
The buffaloes climbed up that way.
The Ranjha also climbed that way.
The Heer climbed with her friends.

The udders of the cow were like hanging pots.
We filled pots with milk.
Their milk was so sweet.

<p>dud una da inj kari miththda juu mishrii diyaa daliyaa ji</p> <p>baavul mere baag lagaayaa aaduu chote khatde mithde dakhaa moj banaya ji</p> <p>baagaa de vich bulbul bole kassiyaa bole paani ji baagaa de vich sapni suiye karniye menu menu ji</p> <p>baavul mere khat yo likhyaa padne athruu aayaa ji shaava shaava likhne valyaa padneya athruu aaya ji</p>	<p>Like pearls of sugar candy.</p> <p>My father planted an orchard. The peaches in it are small and sweet. The branches are dangling in joy</p> <p>The nightingale sings in the orchard The streams sing of water. The female snakes are impregnated in the orchards They cry maenu maenu.</p> <p>My father wrote such a letter Tears kept coming while reading it. Kudos to the writer, Tears kept flowing while reading it.</p>
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