

## The Virile Language of Dr. S. Z. Taizi

By

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(Daily Statesman 16/11/2003) Pushto/Pukhto is the mother tongue of over 40 million people, living in the heart of Asia and divided by Durand line into Afghanistan, the tribal belt, the North West Frontier province (to be named) and the Baluchistan province. Agriculturally, mineralogically and intellectually Pukhtun's homeland is very fertile. On one hand its mountains are popular for the precious stones embedded in them and on the other hand for its proud inhabitants standing firmly against some very popular invaders of human history like Alexander The Great, the British Raj, USSR and so on since centuries. Unfortunately, the lack of industry and job opportunities in these areas under Pakistan rule, and continuous war and drought in Afghanistan not only damaged the local economy and culture but also forced Pukhtuns to leave their fertile land and moved them to almost every corner of the globe. Consequently, their virile language spread to almost every part of the world from Kandahar to California, from Abaseen to Thames and from Peshawar to Bombay. In spite of leaving their land and living with so many problems, the Pukhtun culture and language is blooming and this is due to the enormous contribution of our virile writer, scholars and custodians who sacrifice what they have for their language and culture.

As a language Pukhto stands 43<sup>rd</sup> on the list of over 6000 languages spoken throughout the world and is 4<sup>th</sup> on the list of languages first spoken in space. Although, on official level, there are very few organizations working for the promotion of Pukhto as a language but as a code of Pukhtun culture and life it is being promoted by every true Pukhtun. Most of the organizations established for this purpose seem to loose their credibility day by day because of various administrative and political reasons, however, individual efforts are keeping it alive and blooming. For example, in the words of a great Pukhto poet Rahmat Shah Sayel

منورين خو يا كتاب خوري يا كتاب وخواړه  
پښتو ژوندی ده په هغو چې کتاب نه پېژني

Roughly means that *the enlightened ones (scholars) could not get a chance to come out of their books but Pukhto always kept on blooming through the hands of those who do not even know books.*

Rahmat Shah Sayel is right and there are numerous names who could not even write or read but promoted and enriched Pukhto to their best but the author of NARA XJEBA (the Virile Language) is one of the very few highly qualified scholars of our times who has contributed a lot to Pukhto. NARA XJEBA is one of the great research books I have come across so far written in Pukhto on Pukhto language. It is a very realistic reflection of the very research-

oriented mind of its author, Dr. Sher Zaman Taizi. The author has got a very versatile personality. Among common Pukhtuns, his popularity comes from his great novels like “Gul Khan”, “Rahman Koroona”, “Ghonday” and “Wadeh Ona Sho” but in intellectual circles, he is known for his very critical and realistic approach towards current affairs. In mass-media he is known for writing and editing some very unique literary pages and articles for the popular English Dailies like Frontier Post and Dawn but to me his research book “NARA XJEBA” is one of the great gifts Pukhtuns can ever have. It is comprehensive, realistic and very well referenced. A reader can go through it in a matter of hours but the information it carries covers the whole span of the history from today’s internet-age to BCs.

Dr. Taizi explains that as a language, Pukhto is one of the pre-historic languages that survived many revolutions. Rag-vedh written during 1500BC-1900BC mentions the presence of ten groups or tribes with one of them called PAKHAT or PAKHT, very similar to the present day Pukhto or Pukhtun synonymous to Pakhto/Pashto. The absence of the alphabets for the pukhto sounds KHEY or KHEEN in Romans indicates that the tribe mentioned in Rag-vedh is very similar to the today’s Pukhtun/Pakhtun. There are also opinions relating Pukhto and Dari to AVAISA of ZARTUSHT (559BC-530BC), which bring Pukhto and Dari very close in age to Sanskrit.

This virile language has survived many revolutions throughout the history starting from pre-historic Sanskrit to modern day English. History reveals that in fact, Pukhto like its speakers has grown significantly only when it has been challenged. For example, when Persian took over as the language of court during Maghul and other rulers of Iranian origin Pukhto witnessed its most fortunate and fertile days in the form of the great Khushal Khan Khattak and Abdur Rahman Baba-the unique and evergreen poets of Pukhto. Similarly, when Arabic came as the language of religion and people attempted to neglect Pukhto for their vested interests, Pukhto found Pir Rokhan and Mirza Khan Ansari like great scholars and poets who used Pukhto for the first time as a medium in religious sermons and poetry which forced even their opponents to learn Pukhto and thus aided Pukhto promotion. Pukhto did not care even for borders and when the environment was not convenient for Pukhto during the first few decades of Pakistan, we saw DA PEENJREY CHAGHAAR (The Screams of the Cage) and DA GHAIIRAT CHAGHA (The Cry of Honour) by great poets Abdul Ghani Khan and Ajmal Khattak published from Kabul. Even today, when various circles threaten the status of Pukhto, great scholars like Dr. Taizi along with many others work for the promotion and survival of their mother tongue and prove Pukhto to be in no way contradictory to our religion or international norms. From time to time, Dr. Taizi has continuously discussed and condemned the hostile behavior of Pukhtun rulers towards their mother tongue. Pukhtuns ruled or had influence in various parts of the world, particularly regions surrounding Afghanistan but never bothered to promote their mother tongue. Ghaznawids, Ghaljees, Saadaats and Lodhyaan’s rules extended to centuries but most of them enjoyed playing with swords and ignored pen while others were busy in jokes about their mother tongue. In his humorous style Dr. Taizi narrates that someone (obviously a non-Pukhtun) asked a Pukhtun “why are you speaking the language of Hell?” The simple Pukhtun responded that if Pukhto is

the language of Hell then what is the language of Paradise? The person speaking Hindi Urdu replied “Arabic”. Then the Pukhtun advised him “when Allah recognizes only two languages (Arabic for Paradise and Pukhto for Hell) then what the Hell are you speaking, violating His laws? Ghiat-Uddin Balban’s was a great Pukhtun ruler but showed no interest in the promotion of his mother tongue. Ahmad Shah Baba ruled regions from Mash-had to Kashmir and was himself a great poet of Pukhto but did nothing officially for his mother tongue. Even his own historian was a Persian. Interpolating this situation to our present circumstances, we see that whenever Pukhtuns have demanded something for their mother tongue or identity, they have always been blamed and labeled as separatists/extremists and against other languages but most of us forget that Urdu originated through Amir Kkusro’s pen during Allaiddin Ghaljee’s rule, a Pukhtun who facilitated Urdu to grow and bloom but never cared about his own Pukhto. We really feel proud of our broad-minded leaders but would have been thankful as well if they could have given a little attention to their own mother tongue. Only Pukhtuns of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries realized the importance of their mother tongue and promoted it considerably.

Dr. Taizi reveals that one of those pioneers, was the great Jamal Uddin Afghani who advised Sher Ali Khan, the then Amir of Afghanistan, to promote Pukhto along with many other issues which resulted in the publication of first Pukhto Newspaper “Shamsul Nihaar in 1873. This prompted the Habibia School in Kabul to introduce Pukhto as a subject. This consideratory gesture of Amir, lead Saleh Mohammad Hotak, a teacher to write Pukhto books for up to level 3 along with the grammar and furthermore, the same teacher started the publication of Tuloo-e-Afghan Newspaper from Kandahaar. The journals “Pukhto Xjeba” and “Zairay” also came from the same period. It was Ghazi Aman Ullah Khan who declared Pukhto as the national language of Afghanistan and ordered to write the constitution of Afghanistan in Pukhto. During Ghazi Amanullah Khan times, Arab Khan voice was the first ever Pukhto voice broadcasted from German Radio. In 1936, King Zahir Shah gave Pukhto the status of an official language in Afghanistan. Although Pukhto Society Kabul had not survived the political instability during the last days of Ghazi Amanullah but the merger Pukhto societies of Kandahaar, Heraat and Kabul in 1938 into a single great Kabul Pukhto Tolana compensated that loss to a great extent. Dr. Taizi has not forgotten the British contribution in the promotion of his mother tongue in his book. British Pukhto scholars not only internationalized Pukhto by relating it to English but also wrote several good basic, grammar and history books. Mir Ahmad Redzwani, Munshi Ahmad Jan and Movlwi Ahmad (known as 3 Ahmads), very popular names in the history of Pukhto language promoted Pukhto during the same British rule. Similarly, Fazal Mahmood Makhfi, Haji Sahib of Torangzai and Bacha Khan not only translated courses for Daarul Olum-e-Dewband into Pukhto but taught them in their Islami Madrassas as well. During the same British rule, Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan (Kota, Sawabai) founded the Islamia collegiate school, Peshawar in 1913 which was later on upgraded to Islamia College Peshawar, then to Peshawar University and ultimately Pukhto Academy Peshawar came into being in 1955. Describing the significant events in the history of Pukhto, Dr. Sahib writes that it was 1917, when the publication of Pukhto part in Daily Khybermail started in Peshawar. Abdul Akbar

Khan Akbar's Drama "Drey Yateemaan" (three orphans) was staged in Othmanzai Maddrassa school. Pir Abdul Sattar Shah founded the first Pukhto society at Peshawar in 1933, which produced great poets like Hamza Baba in Pukhto who openly and decisively challenged all the ambiguities and wrong-feelings about Pukhto by his well couplet

وائی اغیار چي د دوزخ ژبه ده  
زه به جنت ته د پښتو سره ځم

*(Whatever the others call my mother tongue but I will go to the paradise with the same Pukhto).*

In 1930, the first Pukhto Drama "Da Veen Jaam" (the pot of blood) written by Aslam Khan Khattak was broadcasted from all India radio (Peshawar). According to Dr. Taizi, it was the then Chief Minister of NWFP, Dr. Abdul Sattar Khan (known as Dr. Khan Sahib and elder brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) who declared Pukhto as a compulsory subject in NWFP schools. General Fazle Haq (1980s) also tried to promote Pukhto officially in NWFP but teachers and experts of different mentalities involved in the process nullified his efforts. Now-a-days, Pukhto is broadcasted by more than 20 radio stations throughout the world and as its international recognition; UNESCO publishes a Pukhto journal "Payaam". There are many heroes doing their best to promote Pukhto, some of them even not Pukhtuns but I would like mention the name of Noor Rahman Liwal (a young devoted Afghan) for his valuable contribution in the form of Pukhto-Microsoft-Windows-a job expected from a government sponsored organization but that talented pukhtun did it on his own and is trying his best to keep Pukhto shoulder to shoulder with other languages on the modern machines of computer and information technology. Writing great research books like NARA Xjeba has never been a full stop to Dr. Taizi Sahib's continuous and untiring struggle.

Dr. Taizi's not only produced some great Pukhto novels and current affairs books but the appearance of his day-to-day articles on various issues regarding literature, health and awareness in various forms provides us with new directions Pukhtuns need to understand and promote.

Using his vast knowledge and logic to clarify various issues about Pukhto by anti-Pukhto elements within and outside Pukhtunkhwa, Dr. Taizi has presented verses from the Holy Qua'n to support his argument that the development and use of one's mother's tongue as a medium has never been discouraged or forbidden but has been encouraged by our religion. Furthermore, highlighting the importance of mother's tongues he explains that human beings are given the high status of *Ashraf-ul-Makhluqat* (the best of the creatures) only and only because of the language they speak. He goes on to explain the question of identity quoting versus from the holy Qura'n that one's identity is not a sin and according to the holy Qura'n

[49.13] O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.

Presenting holy verses from chapters Yusuf (a.s.) and Ibrahim, Dr. Taizi argues that the revelation of the Holy Qura'n in Arabic was because of the addressees mother's tongue (Arabic) and with the spread of Islam, the problem of medium of guidance was solved by *ulema* who translated the Holy Qura'n in the language of the people where it reached, keeping the original Arabic text intact. The Saudi Arabia follows this principle and has arranged translation of the Holy Quran into different languages of the world – including Pushto. The Pushto translation in two volumes carry a note “King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz A'l-Saud, the King of Saudi Arabia and the servant of the two Holy Shrines, was blessed with the opportunity of approving the order of conducting translation of exegesis of the Holy Quran in Pushto.”-----

After establishing the importance and non-contradictory status of Pukhto from the Islamic point of view, he informs us of the worries (about the loss of languages and cultures) being felt in the international community. According to the *Atlas Of The World's Languages In Danger Of Disappearing* by Professor Stephen A. Wurm, “Close to half of the 6,000 languages spoken in the world are doomed or likely to disappear in the foreseeable future. The disappearance of any language is an irreparable loss for the heritage of all humankind.” This clearly means that the promotion of one's mother tongue is not only necessary for one's identity and development but for the Preservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as well. I will use this opportunity to advise every Pukhtun to read NARA XJEBA and know about the virile nature of his/her mother tongue.

<http://www.geocities.com/turlandi2000/index.html>