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Prof. Preshan Khattak

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## An Evaluation of Life and Works of Prof. Preshan Khattak

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### ABSTRACT

*Prof. Preshan Khattak wrote four books in Pashto including two of his poetry books and eight books in Urdu language mostly related to Pashto language, literature, Pashtun history and Pashtunwali. He also remained in prison for three times on various reasons where he wrote his revolutionary and historical poetry. He was an embodiment of Pashtunwal. Regarding the origin of Pashtuns, he was of the opinion that Pashtuns are a culture group made up of various ethnic groups combined by Pashto language and Pashtunwali. This article attempts to highlight his literary works and achievements in life as well as his views regarding Pashtuns and Pashtunwali.*

**Key Words:** Pashto poetry, Preshan Khattak, Pashtun history, Pashtunwali, Pashtun culture.

### INTRODUCTION

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Professor Preshan Khattak, a teacher, educationist, poet, writer, critic, researcher, historian and orator, born on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1932 in Ghundi Mir Khan Khel village of District Karak. His name was Ghamay Jan but he was known as Preshan Khattak. His name recorded in national identity card is G.J. Preshan Khattak (Khattak, 2015:4). His father name is Malak Hassan Khan. He was a true patriot and loyal to his soil. His patriotism was a beautiful combination of *Pakistaniyat* and *Afghaniyat* (Khattak, 2009:72). He had two brotherds (Haji Purdil Khan and Saifullah Khan) and two sisters (Khattak, 2015:4). He was married at the age of 24 years. His wife died in 1999. He has four sons (Javed Hassan, Khushal Khan Khattak, Shahbaz Khan, Bahlol Khattak) and two daughters (Nasrin Khattak and Gul Panra Khattak).

## **EDUCATION**

Preshan Khattak started his early education from a *maktab* school which was located in his hujra. He studied there till fourth grade. He passed his 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes from Government Lower Middle School Dab. He passed 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> classes from Government Middle School Mithakhel. He passed exam of Honours in Pashto from Punjab University in 1950. He passed his metric exam in 1951 and intermediate exam as a private candidate in 1953. He completed his graduation in 1955 and got master degree in history from Peshawar University in 1961. He got Master degree in Pashto during his service in Pashto academy university of Peshawar in 1963 (Khattak, 2015:6).

## **CAREER**

After passing his middle exam, Preshan Khattak started teaching at Government Middle School Mithakhel. He served as untrained teacher at Government High School Methakhel (Khattak, 2009:56). He taught at various schools for eight years. Later on he was appointed as a lexicographer in Pashto Academy University of Peshawar on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1958. While he was preparing himself for master Pashto exam but when Peshawar university started master Pashto classes, he started teaching Pashto to master classes. He was promoted to the position of Senior lecturer in 1962. Similarly he got promoted as Reader/Assistant Professor in 1969. He became Associate Professor in 1970 and Professor in 1975. He became Chairman of Pashto department and Director of Pashto academy in 1974 when both of them were merged. He also tried to separate both of them. He was appointed as Vice Chancellor of Gomal University on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1980 by the then Governor Fazal Haq. On 13<sup>th</sup> August 1980 he was appointed as Chairman of the VCs committee (Khattak, 2015:7). He resigned

from the position of VC in December 1981 and joined back the department of Pashto university of Peshawar as Professor. He was appointed as chairman of Pakistan Academy of Letters in 1986. He became advisor of higher education in 1988. Later on he became VC of Azad Jamu and Kashmir University. He became member of University Grants Commission in 1990. After 1990 election, he became Chairman of University Grants Commission and retired from UGC on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1992 (Khattak, 2015:8).

As already mentioned, he started his career from a middle school teacher but reached to higher ranks of Vice Chancellor and Chairman University Grants Commission (Huma, 2009:45).

## **BOOKS IN PASHTO**

Preshan Khattak has written four books in Pashto. They are: Tanrake, Hagha Dwa Malale Starge, Drana Pukhto and Lik Dod. A brief introduction of these books are given as below.

### **1. Tanrake [Taṇāke]**

It is first poetic collection of Preshan Khattak. For the first time it was published in 1973. Significant historical poems have been published in this book. Few of the poems in this book are: “Peshawar University”, “Pukhtana Kochai”, “Karbala” etc. Its fifth edition was published in 2006. Considering its literary and historical importance, it has been included in the M.A Pashto course of the department of Pashto University of Peshawar.

### **2. Hagha Dwa Malale Starge**

It is his second poetic collection first time published in 1979. Like his first book, this one also contains poems related to different aspects of life.

### **3. Drana Pukhto**

It was published in 1978 by Pashto Academy University of Peshawar. In this book the author has raised important questions regarding Pashtuns and Pashto language. These questions are related to the religion of Pashtun before Islam, Pashtunwali or Pashto as a civilization or a constitution. When it was started calling Pashtuns to Pashtuns. The place of their origin and many others. Features of Pashtunwali explained in this book are based on Pashtun society. He has described prominent historical figures. Pashtun female characters such as Malala, Shaburai, Zarghuna abai and Merman Ji are skillfully described in this book (Khattak, n.d.:83).

### **4. Lik Dod**

This booklet contains two parts. In the first part, history and evolution of orthography has been described. Second part contains Pashto script and Pashto manuscripts. Its second edition was published by Pashto Adabi Markaz Sarai Naurang in 1989. Pashto has its long tradition of writings on its script and orthography which is traced back to Bayazid Ansari. Numerous writers have continued this tradition with their innovation and valuable input. Similarly, Preshan Khattak has also contributed to this particular tradition in the history of Pashto language and literature.

## **BOOKS IN URDU**

Prof. Preshan Khattak has written eight books in Urdu. They are: Pashtun Kon, Sarhadi Qabayel ke Rasam wa rewaj, Nazriya Pakistan, Pashto Shaeri ki Tarikh:Aik Tahqiqi Jaiza, Atot Lisani Rabta, Urdu awar Pashto ke Mushtarik Alfaz and Khushal Nama. These books have been briefly introduced in the following lines the following lines.

### **1. Pashtun Kon:**

A small number of books available on Pashtun history. This book is a valuable addition in this regard. It is divided into two parts. The one contains the history of Pashtun as a whole while the other part describes the history of Khttak tribe of Pashtuns. It was published by Pashto Academy University of Peshawar in 1984. It consists 620 pages. The author has evaluated various theories regarding the origin of Pashtuns. Neither he has completely rejected these old theories nor accepted but questioned various aspects of these theories. He considers Pashtun as a culture group or mixed race having impacts of different ethnicities like Aryans, Iranians, Greek, Sakas, Huns, Kushans, Arabs, Turk, Mongol and Punjabi etc. Many questions raised in this book needs further investigation and discussion.

### **2. Sarhadi Qabayel ke Rasam wa rewaj**

Preshan Khattak, himself a Pashtun and belonging to a rural area, was well versed in all aspects and features of Pashtunwali. He has described all the values and norms of Pashtunwali in detail in this book. It was published in 1979. Different customs and traditions of Pashtuns have been described in details in this book.

### **3. Nazriya Pakistan**

This booklet was published by Fikar Milli Trust Pakistan in 2007. It has briefly discussed various aspects of the ideology of Pakistan.

### **4. Pashto Shaeri ki Tarikh:Aik Tahqiqi Jaiza**

This book is about the brief history of Pashto poetry. The history of Pashto language and literature also needs special focus of the researchers. As Preshan Khattak studied history, that is why his research work on the history of Pashto literature is also considered valuable. It was published by Pakistan Academy of Letters in 1988. This book is important for two reasons. The first is that it is written by an expert and the second reason is that it is written in Urdu language so that the Urdu speakers may know about the history of Pashto literature.

### **5. Atot Lisani Rabta**

It was published by Pashto Academy University of Peshawar in 1977. It contains common words in Urdu, Pashto, Balochi, Sindhi and Punjabi. It was a sincere struggle for bringing closer all Pakistani language. English translation of all these words have also been given. Words of these different languages have been written in their respective script and style. This book is co authored by Purdil Khattak and Mulvi Ishaq.

### **6. Urdu aur Pashto ke Mushtarik Alfaz**

It was published by National Language Authority Islamabad in 1986. It is a catalogue of 5022 common words in Pashto and Urdu. It also contains common words derived from other language like Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, Turkish, and English etc.

### **7. Kalam Khushal Khan Khattak (Urdu Tarjuma)**

It is the translation of Pashto poetry of Khushal Khan Khattak into Urdu. It consists on eight volumes. It was published by Pakistan Academy of Letters in 1987. Its first volume includes seventy pages introduction about the life and poetry of Khushal Khan Khattak. It is a translation in prose in a simple and easy language. As it is evident that Khushal Khan Khattak has used vocabulary of its particular Khattakwala dialect of Pashto which is not easily known to the people of other tribes. In this translation, the translator himself belong to the Khattak tribe. Therefore, his translation can be considered accurate one as compared to others. The translation of first verse is given below as a specimen to show its simplicity of language.

صورت گر چي بڼه صورت په ديوال ساز کا  
کل عالم يي په صفت زبان دراز کا  
جب مصور ديوار پر کوئی اچھی تصویر بناتا ہے تو لوگ اس کی بہت تعریف کرتا ہے۔  
(Khattak, 1987:71)

Translation: when a painter paints a masterpiece on the wall. The entire world generously praise him.

## **8. Khushal Nama**

It was published by Abasin Arts Council. It is a collection of articles regarding Khushal Khan Khattak. It is a compiled book by Preshan Khattak.

## **PREFACES**

He has written prefaces and introduction to many books. Among them a few are given below.

### **Dibacha da Dewan Khwaja Muhammad Bangash**

This dewan was first time published by Pashto Academy University of Peshawar. It was edited by Khyal Bukhari and preface was written by Preshan Khattak.

### **Dibacha Pashto Shaeri: Qadim wa Jadid**

Poetry of classical and modern Pashto poets, translated by Prof. Purdil Khattak was published by Pakistan Academy of Letters in 1987. Preshan Khattak wrote a preface to this book.

### **Dre Nangyali**

Azam Khan Afridi has written this book about three heroes: Kamal Khan, Multan Khan and Ajab Khan. Preshan Khattak in his preface to this book has not only praised his effort but also appealed to other writers for praising and preserving the history of their more heroes.

### **Adabi Panga**

*Adabi Panga* has been written by Abdul Akbar Khan. Preshan Khattak in his preface evaluated his poetry and personality.

## **AS A POET**

Preshan Khattak is placed among top poets of modern Pashto poetry (Khattak, 2009:7). At early age when he started poetry he was trying not to disclose his poetry to people and was keeping it secret (Khattak, 2009:9). He has not used his poetry as a tool for promotion of particular ideology or a political party but he has written poetry for people (Khattak, 2009:9). He has published two books of poetry. They are: *Tanrake* and *Hagha dwa malale starge*. Although he has written both *nazam* and *ghazal* but he is known for his *nazam* (Shah, 2009:39). He is a versatile figure in modern Pashto literature. Basically he was a *nazam-go* poet. He



has an art of skillful description of emotions and subtleties. He is expert of imagery and events description in his poems. Most of his poems are based on historical incidents. He has openly described social evils in his poems. Love, desertion and patriotism are main themes of his poetry. There are various aspects of his poetry including historical, critical and reformative aspects (Abid, 2006:236). Dominant themes in his poetry are historical, reformative, Pashtunwali, and love (Khattak, 2000: 2000-216).

### **AS A HISTORIAN**

Preshan Khattak has master degree in history that is why he was interested in history. Although some people said that he was not a perfect historian but he has tried his best (Shah, 2009:39). Besides his famous book on Pashtun's history one can also see his interests in history in his poetry book *Tanrake* and his another book *Drana Pukhto*. In his famous history book *Pashtun kon*, he has rejected Semitic and Aryan theories regarding Pashtuns and has declared Pashtuns as a culture group of mixed races. His theory regarding the origin of Pashtuns is actually the continuation of such theories presented by Mawlana Abdul Qadir (Dawud, 2009:111). He considers Pashtunwali an important factor in establishing his theory about Pashtuns. In this regard he has said that if a Pashtun does not follow these codes of Pashtunwali he is not considered as a Pashtun. His new theory is also reflected in his poetry. In his poetry he has written about prominent Pashtun political, literary and historical figures like Mirwis Khan, Khushal Khan Khattak, Malala, Durkhanai, Khisro, Zarghuna, Aimal Khan and Darya Khan etc. He has also mentioned historical places in his poetry.

### **BOOKS WRITTEN ABOUT HIM**

Following books have been written about his life and works.

#### **1. Professor Preshan Khattak (Ahle qalam Ki nazar mi)**

This is the first book compiled by Gul Bakhshalvi in March 1993. This book has articles, essays and impressions of various people regarding Preshan Khattak. This book is written in Urdu language.

#### **2. Life and Works of Professor GJ Preshan Khattak**

It is a master level thesis written by Nasar Humayun submitted to Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar in session 1993-95.

#### **3. Preshan Khattak: Zama Ror**

It is a book written by his elder brother Purdil Khan Khattak. It is published in 2006.

#### 4. Preshan Khattak: Shakhshiyat, Fikar wa fan

It was compiled and edited by Wazir Shadan and Banaras Khan Khattak. It was published in 2009. It is a comprehensive book covering various aspects of his life and works.

#### 5. Da Preshan Khattak da Nazamnigarai fani aw fikri jaiza

It is M.Phil thesis written by Siraj Khattak, submitted to the department of Pakistani Languages at Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad in 2015.

### IMPRISONMENT

One of the important turn in his life came when he was imprisoned. It has also influenced his literary works. He has been imprisoned three times for various reasons in 1951, 1954 and 1975. Last time he was imprisoned in the death accusation of Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao but he was released very soon and he joined university. He has described his imprisonment in his poetry. His book *Tanrake* consists of poems such as *sparlay pa jail ke* (Spring in Prison), *da jail spogmai* (Moon in Prison), *da jail baran* (Rain in Prison), in his book *Tanrake*. In one of his poem *sparlay pa jail ke* he writes:

سپرلے پہ سل رنگه راخي په مونږه جبل کښي راغے  
د موسمونو فاصلې دي وي به تېري به شي  
هر پرېشان پښتون چې وتري خوشحال خټک شي  
جبل د مغلو ډکوسلې دي وي به تېري به شي  
(Khattak, 2006:138)

Translation: There are hundred ways of coming of spring, it came to us in prison/  
these are rotations of seasons, it will pass away/ whenever a worried Pashtun is  
tied he becomes happy/ Mughal's prison is just a deception and it will pass away.  
In a poem *da jail baran* he writes.

د جبل په تورو دروازو، تورو جنگلو دننه  
تورو تيارو کښي بله چاره بي له داره نشته  
د لوړو لوړو، دنکو دنکو دېوالونو خواکښي  
داسي خزان دے چې سپرلي ته پکښي لاره نشته  
(Khattak, 2006:149)

Translation: Behind the black doors and black bars of prison/ in the darkness, there is no way out except to be hanged/ near to these long walls/ there is an autumn that has no way for spring to come.

It is also said that he was imprisoned for his revolutionary ideas and thoughts. He produced numerous literary works during his imprisonment. After spending two months, he was released from prison (Aman, 2014:376). In his following verses, he expresses his feelings of prison life.

دا د څو ورځو کښالي دي، وي به تېرې به شي  
زما زرگيه سلسلې دي، وي به تېرې به شي

سپرلي په سل رنگه راځي په مونږ په جېل کېنې راغې  
د موسمونو فاصلې دي، وي به تېرې به شي

لکه خوشی غمونه هم په یو پړاو نه اوسي  
دا مسافري قافلې دي، وي به تېرې به شي

سبا کېدې شي چې په زرو کېنې یوه هم نه وي  
دا نن چې گنې، مسنلې دي، وي به تېرې به شي

هر پرېشان پښتون چې اوتري خوشحال خټک شي  
جېل د مغلو ډکوسلې دي، وي به تېرې به شي  
(Khattak, 2006:138)

Translation: These are temporary problems of a few days. It will be passed. These are series which will be passed. Spring comes in different ways which we saw in prison. It is a rotation of seasons which will be passed. Like happiness, sorrows are also not constant. One day these caravans will be passed. Possibly, tomorrow there will be no problems which exist in abundance today. Every Khattak with imprisonment becomes a brave like Khushal Khattak. Prison for them is deception of Mughals.

In the following verses he has symbolically described a peepal tree inside the prison. In these lines he has compared himself with the peepal tree inside the prison.

هغه پيپل د جېلخاني چې يې دنيا پېژني  
چې يې تور سري په دعا کېنې زبادوي يادوي

څوک يې گلاب غواړي او څوک تري کشمالو جوړوي

مجبور يادونه د قيديانو چي خيلوان ژروي

که هر څو ډېره دعا کېږي لا څه زياته دې شي  
په خپل وطن کېنې بې وطنه دې قېدي پېپل ته

څوک يې له حاله خبر نه شو په ده څه تېرېږي  
څومره دردونه رسېدلي دې زخمي پېپل ته  
(Khattak, 2006:141)

زمرې د سردرو په زنجیرونو کېنې راځي  
سپرلي په شا زلمو باندي جېلونو کېنې راځي  
(Khattak, 2006:202)

Translation: As a peepal tree in the prison is known to every prisoners, similarly myself is remembered by every man and woman. Some people demand roses for making garlands. Memories of prisoners compel their relatives to weep. More prayers are needed for this imprisoned tree of peepal. No one knows how much he is suffering. How much pains have been given to this wounded tree of peepal. Lions are being brought in chains. Youths' springs comes in prisons.

## VIEWS ABOUT PASHTUNWALI

Preshan Khattak himself was an embodiment of Pashtunwali. Love for his soil and Pashtunwali was part of his belief (Khattak, 2009:7). His hospitality and generosity are very famous (Khattak, 2009:13).

زه ورته حال ونېلې نه شم چي پښتو وخورم  
ته خو هم ځکه په پښتو کېنې رانه ډوبه شولي  
(Khattak, 2006:12)

**Translation:** I can't express that I spent my life while following *Pukhto*/ that is why I also lost you in *Pukhto*.

He has defined *Pukhto* as *put*, *khigara*, *tura* and *wafa* (Khattak, 2006:55). He further elaborates about *Pukhto* in the following verses.

انسانیت او مساوات جمهوریت پښتو ده  
سرفروشي او قرباني او حریت پښتو ده  
پښتو خو دود دے او دستور او هم انین دے پښتو  
مسلماني ده هم زمونږه ثقافت پښتو ده

(Khattak, 2006:55)

**Translation:** Humanity, equality and democracy is *Pukhto*/ sacrifice and liberty is *Pukhto*/ *Pukhto* is custom, tradition and constitution/ *Pukhto* is Islam and our culture.

### VIEWS ABOUT PASHTO LANGUAGE

Preshan Khattak has a deep love and reverence for Pashto language. In the following verses he has a complaint against those Pashtun kings who have ignored Pashto language.

پښتو چې تاج ورته په سر کړو نو غوري پرېښوده  
چې هند یې پښو کښی ورته کښېښود بیا خلجي رېښوده  
د چا په ذهن کښی هم دا ناشونکی نه ځانیري  
لودهي د تخت د لاندې دوی په کړه سوري پرېښوده  
(Khattak, 2006:56)

**Translation:** Ghawri left Pashto when he wore crown due to Pashto/ When this Pashto language put India in front of Khilji, he left it/ no one can think about it/ Lodhi buried it under his throne and Sori also left it.

In this poem titled *Ranzora Pukhto* he further said:

یه مشرانو گوري بیا د امتحان ورځې دي  
دا د زلمو او د مزدور او د دهقان ورځې دي  
هسي نه تاسو په مړه خپته پارسو شروع کړئ  
نن د پښتو ورځې دي، دا د پرېشان ورځې دي  
(Khattak, 2006:55)

Translation: O elders! remember, once again these are testing days / these are days for youths, labourers and peasants/ lest you should start speaking Persian while you are rich/these are days for Pashto and these are days for Preshan. He conclude one of his poem titled *Dozakhi Pukhto* with the following couplet.

زه به له خدايه هم بخښنه په پښتو کښی غورم  
کله ولاړ چې پښتو په سر د دار یمه زه  
(Khattak, 2006:105)

**Translation:** I will seek forgiveness from God in Pashto language/ when I am standing to be hanged.

### **COUNTRIES VISITED**

During his service he has visited Afghanistan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and India (Khattak, 2015:8). Besides he also visited other countries which he has mentioned in his poetry.

### **AWARDS**

He was given many awards. Among them a few are given below.

For recognition of his educational services he was awarded Tamgha-e-Imtiaz on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1980.

Pakistan Writers Guild Award was given in 1977 to his book Atot Lisani Rabta.

Abasin Arts Council Award was given to his book Tanrake in 1973.

### **DEATH**

He died on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and buried at hayatabad, Peshawar on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2009 (Khattak, 2015:16). After his death, seminars were held in different parts of the country and paid tribute to him. Numerous columns were published in newspapers highlighted his achievements and services.

### **CONCLUSION**

Preshan Khattak (1932-2009) died at the age of seventy six years old. He started his education from a maktab school located in his hujra and completed it in University of Peshawar. He started his career from an untrained primary school teacher and reached to the position of professor. He served on various administrative positions such Vice Chancellor (Gomal and Kashmir Universities), Chairman (Pakistan Academy of Letters and University Grants Commission), Director (Pashto Academy) and many others. He was a poet and published two books in poetry. Being a researcher and translator he published many books. His main area of research interest was Pashto language and literature. He has also written about the common linguistic and cultural background of Pakistani languages for bringing them closer to each other for sake of national integration and national unity. He was trying to promote ideology of Pakistan and has written about it. He has presented a new theory of *culture group* regarding the origin of Pashtuns. He has written a few books including translation of Khushal Khan Khattak poetry into Urdu language for wider understanding of Pashto literature and Pashtun culture.

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