

**Development of Khowar as a Literacy Language,
Results of interaction between linguists and language community:
Case study in Chitral, Northern Pakistan**

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The loss of vocabulary and folklore are two phenomena indicating towards the first stage of extinction and endangerment of a language; that had evolved after thousand's of years in human experience. Many languages spoken by smaller and weaker communities in the ancient world have disappeared into extinction during the past few centuries; Sanskrit in the Indian sub-continent being an example problem with this is that Sanskrit is not a POLITICALLY very important language in India, and some claim it is growing in importance and many languages such as Kalasha and Yidgha spoken in Northern Pakistan are facing the threat of extinction in the 21st century.

Khowar is the language of a small community (0.5 million people) in the Chitral and Ghizar districts of northern Pakistan has been passing through the stage of the loss of vocabulary and folklore. Had there been no effort to preserve its cultural heritage through conscious exercise and steps by language explorers and linguists in the 19th and 20th centuries; it would have lost much of its oral traditions. In 1860, Khowar was a language, threatened by the predominant Dari, Shina and Pashto spoken on the borders of its geographical zone. Today Khowar is a literacy language, with books, magazines, Radio Programmes, Audio video documentation and digital communication facilities, made possible through a few decades of interaction between explorers, anthropologists and linguists with the language community in remote and isolated valleys of the Hindukush Mountain range in Central Asia, Northern Pakistan.

In the 19th century, the language community of Chitral was passing through a stage of inferiority complex. They believed their language was of no use because they could not communicate with their close neighbours beyond the boundaries of their geographical zone. They thought, no body knows their language except for themselves; being adept in their language is of no use and it is a hurdle in their way to learn modern languages therefore they believed their children would abandon their language when they will look beyond the boundaries for better opportunities and bright future. A father in 1860 would advise his brilliant son to learn foreign languages and do away with Khowar because it will lead him to nowhere in future. A wise man would advise his fellows to abandon Khowar because they will not be able to converse with outer world in their native language; they thought it was impossible

to be bilingual or to converse in more than two languages. I think this section is good and interesting, but wondered what evidence do you have of this? It also might be interesting to make comparisons with the present day.

The language community of Khowar was given first ever psychological boost up by western explorers and orientalist who visited the valleys of the Karakoram and Hindukush mountains in late 19th century. Later, it was the contribution of specialists in the fields of archaeology, anthropology and linguistics who helped the community in being proud of their identity. The social transformation phase can thus be divided into three stages awareness of cultural values, revival of cultural heritage and promotion of language which was conceptualised as offering a better future for a distinct community.

1. Awareness on Cultural Values

Although 90% of the (0.1 million population) in 1860 was illiterate yet very few people who had learnt how to read and write in oriental languages were inclined towards Persian (Dari) and Arabic, the languages taught in the cemenaries of central Asia for centuries. Poets of Kho (Chitral) community would compose and write poetry in Persian. Mohammad Shokoor Ghareeb (1710-1782) and Mohammad Siyar (1797- 1856) were two prominent poets among the kho Community who also composed and wrote Poetry in Khowar apart from their major works in Persian. However none of them attempted to write typical Khowar sounds in typical letters for each sound. They tried to express such sounds through Arabic letters maybe you could give examples of distinct Khowar sounds and the letters these early poets used to represent them in Arabic/Persian.

GW Lietner was first European explorer who surveyed the area inhabited by kho community in 1866 and explored that there were six peculiar and typical sounds in Khowar which needed letters or symbols not known in Arabic, Persian or other scripts being used by literate people in the area. (Lietner 1889: 58-62) John Biddulph, a Political officer in the service of British India, was the second person who surveyed the Hindukush and Karakoram valleys of Chitral and Gilgit in 1876-78 and published his work in 1880 two years later. (Biddulph 1880:) D.L Lorimer was another explorer of this area who worked on the languages of Dardistan and published his collection on the folklore of Khowar as official document in 1924. (Lorimer 1924) BEM Gurdon, a Political Officer in Chitral (1894-1902) also published notes on Khowar language. (Gurdon 1902)

British Officers serving in the Hindukush region were supposed to learn Khowar for better communication with the local people. Author of the “heart of a continent”, Captain Frank E Younghusband (1885-1894) records his memoirs and tells how he

used to engage the ruler of a tiny hilly state and his courtiers in purposeful dialogue through his interpreter with the help of photos, pictures and illustrated pages of British and Indian newspapers. He also discusses how the illiterate people of the area in 1886, were keen and eager to know about their own land, language and people. (Young husband: 1896: 357-58) This era, from 1866 to 1895, gave the people of Kho community opportunities to aware themselves on the importance of their language in their identity and significance of their folklore for explorers, officers and travellers visiting their land. This awareness resulted in their psychological and social resolve to preserve, revive and promote their language.

2. Revival of the cultural Heritage

The 20th century dawned in the mountainous region of northern Pakistan as a new era in terms of exposure to the outer world. During the first half of this century, many specialists in humanities undertook their work on the kho and their land. GA Grierson, Aurel Stein, Halfdan, Siiger and George Morgenstierne pursued their research and published their works on the land and its people. Grierson conducted field work through his local assistant Abdul Karim Khan and placed Khowar in the category of Dardic group in the Indo Aryan branch of the Indo European family. (Grierson 1903-28) Gerierson's work put Khowar on the list of languages affiliated with Pisacha group and his research established its historic link with Sanskrit. Later researchers based their scientific works on the foundation laid by Grierson. Some educated persons among the younger generation of the language Community of Khowar, were inspired by the findings of Grierson. Nasirul Malik , graduate of Islamia College Peshawar (1924) was one of the educated youth in Chitral, who based his work in the first orthography of Khowar on the research of Grierson. He introduced six letters for the peculiar sounds of Khowar in the Arabic Script and compiled the first alphabet of Khowar in 1921. (Nasir: 1921)

Thus, during the first quarter of 20th century, Khowar got its orthography in Arabic script. Earlier explorers and researchers had adopted the Roman vernacular script. The work of Nasirul Mulk was first attempt to revive the heritage of Khowar as non-material cultural asset. In the third decade of the 20th century, Norwegian linguist George Morgentiene highlighted the connection between aspiration and low rising tone in phonemes and pronunciations of Khowar. (Morgenstiene: 1932: 48-50). Giving examples of Paz, (breast) phan (Palm) Troi (Three) Choi (Six) chir (Milk) and numerous other words, he discards the idea that Khowar had lost the aspiration of mediae: he rather assumed that in Khowar aspiration is connected to low rising tone. Such scientific findings contributed to further research on Khowar. George Morgenstierne remained in touch with Nasirul Mulk and Hisamul Mulk in order to persue his academic studies an Khowar at South Asia Institute of Oslo. His meticulous correspondence inspired another native speaker of Khowar, Wazir Ali Shah to take

the research forward. Wazir Ali Shah was a former student of the Doon School in India. He had worked as interpreter with Halfden Siiger, Miss Jennet Poot and other scholars, working on the folklore and architecture of the Kalash and Kho people in Chitral. During the first half of the 20th century many items of folklore were revived and preserved through his conscious efforts. It was due to the collaborative work of George morgenstierne, Hisamul Mulk and Wazir Ali Shah that in 1957, exactly 14 years after the death of Nasirul Malik (1943) the native speakers of Khowar got together to form an association for the promotion of Khowar give the Khowar name.

3. Promotion of the language

Second half of the 20th century proved to be the era of the promotion of Khowar and this period started with the scientific work of an eminent German linguist, Prof. Dr. George Buddruss of the Mainz University who did his field work in late fifties and early sixties. By this time, Hisamul mulk , Wazir Ali Shah and other researchers in the language community had promoted the cause of Khowar through lobbying and advocacy. They stressed the need to promote Arabic Script of Khowar by publishing some material in Khowar. This led to move a case for Khowar programme in Radio Pakistan and publishing of journal in Khowar. The local intellectuals also initiated a case for teaching Khowar in elementary schools as part of curriculum what happened to this proposal, why did it not develop?.

In the sixties, Khowar became the language of media and education and the step went a long way in transforming Khowar into a literacy language how did it become a language of EDUCATION. George Buddruss published the results of his research on Khowar, and emphasized to carry on the process of promoting Khowar as literacy language (Buddruss: 1982). His work “Khowar in Arabischer schrift” gives useful scientific information on the orthography of Khowar and the need to further promote the script. The work of Prof. Buddruss was also supplemented by ethnographic study of Karl Jattmar on Kho culture in Chitral and rock inscriptions in the Indus Valley. Wazir Ali shah was invited to attend the first international HinduKush Cultural Conference in Moesgard Denmark in 1970. He also made a trip to Norway and visited the museum of ethnology at the South Asia Institute and held detailed discussions with Georg Mrogenstierne. This exposure gave further boost to the research of a writer from the speech community of Khowar (Jattmar K & L. Edelberg : 1974 120-23) Gradually more writers began to emerge in the language community and Anjuman-e- Taraqi-e-Khowar (the Association for Promotion of Khowar) started to hold regular literary meetings and poetry reading sessions (Mushaira). In the meantime the Government of Pakistan had launched radio programme in 1965 and monthly journal Jamhoor-e- Islam Khowar in 1969 and it had attracted writers and poets to a great extent. (Hayat: 1969) What type of programmes did this radio programme have?. In the eighties, David Munnings, a Canadian student of linguistics

at the University of Texas Dalas, did his fieldwork in Chitral. His work was focused on lexicography. Apart from his main unpublished work, he as a co-author compiled and published two booklets. First booklet was on folk stories for Children with Urdu translation. (Rahmat & David: 1987). The other booklet was on famous sayings in Khowar, original text along with Urdu version. (Rahmat & David: 1988)

Unlike his predecessors, David Munning had the opportunity to interact with a large group of educated people, writers, poets and activists of Khowar language community and his filed work proved to be exceptionally helpful in promoting literacy in Khowar language community. Another linguist who is perusing the cause of Khowar is Fulbright scholar, Dr. Elena Bashir. Dr. Elena Bashir had also the opportunity to interact with a large group of writers and intellectuals of the Khowar speech community. Apart from her main work “a reference grammar of Khowar”, she also published papers on topics related to a real position, typological perspectives, and other topics. She joined the group of intellectuals in the community to organise the 2nd and 3rd Cultural Conferences in Chitral in 1990 and 1995 respectively. She also edited the proceedings of the 2nd International Hindu Kush Cultural Conference as principal author (Bashir E and Israruddin: 1996). She also trained her interpreters and informers in conducting research on linguistic topics and collected valuable material on folk songs, and stories of Khowar.

Outcome of the interaction between linguistics & the language community of Khowar

The field work of 19th century explorers and 20th century linguists in Chitral Northern Pakistan went a long way in boosting the morale of the native speakers of Khowar in preserving, protecting and developing their mother tongue as a literacy language. If we look back at the situation prevailing in 1904, we find that there were only a few Khowar texts by western writers in Roman vernacular transcription. There were folk poets of Khowar, folk singers and storytellers, but there was no one among the language community who could write a few sentences in Khowar. Today there are more than 200 writers, Poets, intellectuals and activists writing creatively in Khowar, working on Khowar and actively perusing the cause of Khowar in the mainstream media networks of the country and worldwide. The association for the promotion of Khowar has published 43 titles 30 in Khowar, 10 in Urdu and 3 in English. There are 2 student magazines, 3 newsletters and 2 websites dedicated for the promotion of Khowar (Siddiqui:1996).

The first generation of writers headed by Nasirul Mulk, Wazir Ali Shah, Baba Ayub, Ghulam Umar and Hisamul Mulk has passed away. A second generation of writers headed by Israruddin, Fakhrul Mulk, Gul Nawaz Khaki, Aminur Rehman Chughtai and Naji Khan Naji is in the prime of its creativity, while a 3rd generation of writers

headed by Zakir Zakhmi, Javeed Hayat, Fidaur Rehman and Saadat Hussain Makhfi is grooming up maybe it would be good to give some titles of their work and examples about what they write, and the themes they are interested in, maybe quite farishto ponga parim rem tan ajal achi boghe! And the controversy it resulted in?. The association for the promotion of Khowar has 12 branch Offices in the country and radio Pakistan broadcasts daily programmes of 3-hour duration in Khowar. All this was made possible simply through the positive interaction of linguists and the language community.

The impact

Long-term impact of interaction between linguists and speech community of Khowar in Chitral Pakistan has been very eminent and can be tangibly traced in the Society. Fifty years back, there was sense of inferiority among the speakers of Khowar. They believed their language would lead them to nowhere in the future. Now the language community is proud of their language and is determined to preserve and promote their language for the prosperity. People who seldom cared about folk stories and folk songs of their language are now talking on preserving distinct words, phrases and metaphors of their language. The society is using Audiocassettes, Videocassettes, recording tools and digital systems to record and document a variety of items in Khowar. Another impact of the interaction between linguists and language community is visible in the mainstream literary life of the country where Khowar was considered as negligible language in the early fifties, is now regarded as one of the important Pakistani languages. The Pakistan Academy of letters has recognised the literacy potentials of Khowar. The directory of the writers of Pakistan has more than 75 entries for the writers of Khowar, (Anon:1992) National Institute of Pakistan studies at the Quad-I-Azam University Islamabad has a chapter on Khowar and Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad has Khowar courses on its Curriculum for M.phil in Pakistani languages.

Way ahead

The Modern age is the age of specialisation and expertise in scientific studies in the field of humanities, and the role of Linguist is very crucial in the protection, preservation and promotion of any language in the world. However the linguist does not only records language material and makes typological, phonetically and grammatical analyses of the material, he, in the process, also interacts with the language community, and though not directly, but indirectly influences the native speakers in giving inspiration for preservation of the language and promotion of the culture. Recording oral traditions and folkloristic incomplete sentence.

Material for scientific study does have its positive effect on the psychology and morale of the native speakers of a language and this case study on Khowar shows that interactive collaboration between linguists and native speakers of an Indo Aryan language contributed greatly towards the preservation and promotion of a language which was suffering from the loss of folklore, vocabulary and identity. It reveals that a linguist, being highly scientific and technical in his approach, has tremendous potentials in influencing social attitude of community members towards their mother tongue. Looking into future, it is vital to find out complementarities between scientific work and generalist's approach in development of languages. In case of endangered languages like Kalasha and Yidgha it could be work on technical footings, however in case of ignored languages, like Khowar and Shina, it could be initiated as a holistic approach.

Future Strategies

The future strategy for ignored or endangered languages needs focus on three aspects of a language.

1. Technical aspect.

Technical aspects will comprise scientific study by specialists and technical experts. The pace of work has to be compatible with the pace of mechanisation, urbanisation and pressurisation through electronic media. Smaller communities in mountainous and sub Saharan regions of the world are facing tremendous pressure by alien cultures. Therefore regional linguistic research institutes are in demand in national universities of such countries. Such institutes will give greater opportunities to the students and researchers of the language communities for focused work on different aspects of the language as participant observers. This will create more interest among the native speakers of a language. Frontier Language Institute (FLI) in northern Pakistan is contributing towards this goal; however, its plan is in embryonic stage.

2. Capacity building for language documentation.

So far it has been generally observed that a clear line has been drawn between technical expertise of scientist and indigenous knowledge of poets, writers and intellectuals of language community and there is a gap between these categories. This gap needs to be bridged or minimised through greater interaction between experts and generalists. Regional moots, seminars, workshops and other opportunities of continued interaction need to be enhanced and institutional mechanisms need to be put in place for such opportunities on the pattern of Fund for Endangered Languages (FEL) annual moots.

3. Strengthening local institutions.

At present there are learned community-based organizations, bodies and institutions established by native speakers and writers of smaller, ignored or endangered languages in different parts of the world. They work in isolation and there is lack of coordination, linkages and synergies among these organisations. For instance association for the promotion of Khowar in northern Pakistan sees no window available to look beyond the geographical boundaries of its community for sharing information and managing the knowledge base.

Conclusion.

Although there may be different experiences across the globe, the results of interaction between linguists and language community in case of Khowar in Chitral, Northern Pakistan have been very encouraging. Here a linguist emerges as harbinger of change. Capitalising on this experience, technical expertise, in future can be wisely used for attitudinal change and behavioural adjustments in boosting up the morale of native speakers of smaller or endangered languages of the world. It is neither the linguists nor the speaker of a language, who can make change alone, it is rather the combination of both, which can really bring about a tangible change.

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