

# A Brief History of Pashto Literature

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## Abstract

*This research is conducted under the title of “Brief History of Pashto Literature”. I have tried enough to collect and concise the necessary information about the history of Pashto literature from the most authentic and reliable sources. The first written literary poem in Pashto Literature is that of Amir Kror’s (Praise) written in about 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijre Islamic century accords with (9<sup>th</sup> A.D Century). Suliman Makoo’s Tazkirat-ul-awlya is the earliest sample of Pashto Prose exists today is written in the 7<sup>th</sup> Hijre Century accords with (14<sup>th</sup> A.D Century). It does not mean that Pashto literature had no poems and prose before these. The truth is that, this land has been invaded by the plunders and invaders so often across the time. It was the major cause that most of the physical and spiritual properties of the Pashto culture was ruined and destroyed. And the above mentioned literary works are the only earliest works we have at our hands.*

*Many literary figures and authors have written a lot about the history of Pashto literature and have divided it into several periods in order to be easily studied. Currently, the most acceptable division is that of Mohammad Sediq Rohi, Chief Researcher, each division contains four periods. In each of the periods there were several individual patterns that have been followed by a group of writers and poets and finally have become individual schools. Lots of artistic prose and research works have come into being and hundreds of rhythmic and poetic books (Divan) have been published and this sequence is still going on.*

## Introduction

Literature is the mirror of life and the most developed and highly promoted nations are the ones which are the owners of standard and quality literature. Pashto language is also the owner of rich and standard literature as other languages in the world. More specifically, based on the view of homely and foreign professors and literary figures, Pashto oral folkloric literature is the unique one and the competent one to the world’s well-known literary genres. Here in this article, I briefly describe the history of Pashto written literature.

## Importance of Study

The importance of this work is that it gives us brief information about the history of Pashto literature and furthermore it indicates us the professors and researchers who have worked on this subject.

## Research Questions

- What is the starting point of Pashto written literature?
- Who are the professors and researchers that have patterned and categorized the history of Pashto literature?
- By which and by how many periods is the Pashto literature divided?

## Objectives

- To know the starting era of Pashto written literature, which begins from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijre century and prolongs at the present.

- To know the researchers and professors who have put forward their ideas about the divisions of Pashto literary periods.
- To determine the history of Pashto literature.

## Methodology

This is a library research work which is fulfilled using authentic sources from several reliable resources. The data has been analyzed using descriptive and comparative method.

## Discussion

Before talking about the history and starting time of Pashto literature (prose and poem), it is better at first to have overall look on the state and current position of Pashtoon people and the geographical areas where they live. This would make our discussion more academic.

### Pashto language and Pashtoon people

Pashto language and Pashtoon people have an interesting ancient culture and history. Pashtoons are taking their origin from Aryaee ethnic group, and the historic properties of this nation reach to about 5000 BC. Most of the ancient monuments and remaining works of this nation are found in Bakhtar and Bukhdi.

Pashto language is an ancient language which has rich folklore and oral literature in which there are some hints that points the coexistence of Aryaee people at that time. Here, I precisely write about the state of Pashto language and the living communities (where Pashtoons live) of Pashtoons.

Pashto language is a major part of eastern-Aryaee language family and it is formally used together with Dari language in Afghanistan. In addition to Afghanistan, Pashto is largely used in Pashtonistan; north-east of Pakistan, Iran and India. (ref 1: page 410).

Pashto language has been organized in Arabic-Pashto orthography and special characters and symbols have been additionally assigned to some phonemes. However, it is still being used differently in pronunciation which has famed with different styles as (Afghani) and (Peshawari-Pakistani). Some special letters and symbols refer to Bayazid Ansari or Peer Rokhan. (ref 1: page 410)

It is estimated that about 70 million Pashtoons live in all around the world and Pashtoons form about 60 percent of Afghanistan's population and Pashto is a national and formal language of Afghanistan.

There are different ideas about the history of Pashto literature (prose and poem) but based on authentic and reliable sources, the (139 Hijjre Qamari) date has been mostly emphasized for the beginning of Pashto literature. The reason is that, this is the date when Amir Kror wrote the (praise) in Pashto which is considered the first poem in Pashto language.

However, prose is first to poem, the first prose work in Pashto language is that of Suliman Makoo's prose named (Tazkiratul Awlya). Although some names of works have been cited in 3<sup>rd</sup> Hijjre Century's literary histories but unfortunately we do not have their written documents and samples.

For the simplicity of the study of Pashto literature, Pashto experts have divided Pashto literature into different historical period. However, the scholars are not having a single idea about this but still there are some points they share in common. Here we write concisely about some of the writers and experts who have categorized and divided literary periods and have given some ideas about the history of Pashto literature.

### 1. Professor Habibi's division of Pashto literary periods

In his two volumes book about history of Pashto literature, Professor Habibi divided Pashto literature into four periods as follow:

- (1) First period: This period marks the pre-Islamic era of Pashto language and gives us details about Pashto literature before Islam.
- (2) Second period: this period is marked by the revelation of the holy religion of Islam and reaches to 1000 Hijre Year.
- (3) Third period: this period begins from 1000 Hijre to 1300 Hijre year.
- (4) Fourth period: this period begins from 1300 Hijre and continuous up to now.

Chief researcher Mohamad Sediq Rohi writes about the literary division of Prof. Habibi “Prof. Habibi has considered the word philosophy, proverbs and background of language in his division”.

Today, only artistic literature is being considered in the history of literature. This is why the first period can't be count as a literary period. (ref:5 page 23)

The second professor who has posed his idea about literary periods of Pashto literature is Prof. Sediqullah Rekhteen. In his work, history of Pashto literature, Rekhteen has divided it into five periods. Professor Habibi in his work, named “Pashto literary periods and eras” draws “every time, language and its literature is being affected of the political, social and religious events and the literature of one era differs from the literature of the other. Therefore, based on the era, Pashto literature is divided into four periods”.

The first period: from 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijre century (139) to the 900 Hijre. Accords with (718 AD to 1494 AD).

The second period: from 900 Hijre to 1100 Hijre. Accords with (1494 AD to 1688 AD).

The third period: from 1100 Hijre to 1250 Hijre. Accords with (1688 AD to 1834 AD).

The fourth period: from 1250 Hijre to 1350 Hijre. Accords with (1834 AD to 1934 AD).

The fifth period: prolongs from 1350 Hijre (1931 AD) up to now. (7:37)

Chief researcher Mohammad Sediq Rohi writes about the periods into which Prof. Rekhteen has divided the history of Pashto literature. “There are some points in this division but in general it is acceptable”. Prof. Rekhteen has taken an interesting logic about the characteristics of the first period. He has started the second period from the time of Mia Rokhan. It is also a logical idea but I have to say that it was not suitable to relate the second period to Babur Bacha's era. And has related the fourth period with Mohammad Zai's dynasty, and the fifth period also includes in this dynasty. The writer has connected the literary periods to kingdoms' dynasty. In this division, the effects of political and economic factors on literary periods have been ignored or has given little worth. Sometimes by changing kingdoms, the literary periods of a teacher and his student (Ahmad Shah Baba and Mohammad Younus) also changes. (5: 24)

Chief researcher Dost Shinwari has divided Pashto literary periods into three stages in his book “principles of literary theory”.

First stage: in first stage, the discussion of (Malanda Panho) and engraved stone letter (lithograph) is also considered as Pashto wealth and begins the first stage from Amir Kror.

Second stage: the beginning is from Bayazid Rokhan and has sub titles as Rokhani School, Rahman Style, Indian Style, Hotakies Style and many more...

The later (new) stage: It begins from the time of King Sher Ali Khan.

The candidate academist Muhammad Anwar Nomialy has also presented his theory of literary periods. He believes on three stages of Pashto literature:

1. Oral literature stage
2. Khushal Khan's written literature stage
3. Contemporary written literature stage

Assistant professor Noor Muhammad Ghamjan Tamil has divided Pashto literary periods into three periods in his book named (Afghan Yaad).

First period: starting from 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijre Century to 950 Hijre.

Second period: from 950 Hijre or from (Rokhani Movement) to 1250 Hijre.

Contemporary period: from 1250 Hijre to 1357 Hijre. The reason point of this period is that of first invasion of British on Afghanistan. And the modern or contemporary period is marked by the coup of first Afghan president Dawood Khan.

Chief Researcher Mohammad Sediq Rohi presents two designs. We will draw both of them. (5:30)

1. First period marks the Old (ancient) songs
2. Second period refers to the elegy genre
3. The third period is that of lyrics
4. The couplet's period
5. Quatrain's period
6. Rokhani period determines (Cnquain, octave, pentagon and other genres)
7. Twentieth century's blank verse, free verse, novel, short stories and other genres' period.

Mr. Rohi points to some defects in above design and does not emphasize more on this categorization and he believes that someone may work later on this and make it rich. But he emphasize more on his second division.

Second design: Rohi says "I think that we must divide the history of Pashto literature into three major periods in which each period contains some stages. Ancient period, middle period and contemporary period. Each of these periods is concerned with political, social and economic status."

Sir Rohi explains the historic, political, economic and cultural status of these periods.

We presented the theories and ideas of some famous professors, researcher and literary figures on the division of Pashto literary periods, but among them the second division of Mr. Rohi is comparably most acceptable and mostly used in academic sessions. Some of the literary experts criticize that literary periods shouldn't be named old, middle and contemporary and instead we need to say first, second and third period. They believe that time passes, conditions are being changed time to time and some other periods might be created in the future which may cause the middle and contemporary period not to be stable, it must be changed then.

- (1) The first/ old period: the first/old period of Pashto literature begins from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century of Islam and continuous up to 16 AD century. In the history of literature, the first period starts from Amir Kror (139 Hijre) and reaches to the appearance of Bayazid Rokhan's movement.

We have lots of evidence from the ancient period but it doesn't mean that Pashto did not have anything in its literature before the ancient period. The fact is that it was rich enough of literature before the ancient period but the successive invasions of foreigners on this land caused the ruining and eradication of Pashto culture and literature.

We have little or no evidence of some limited poets and writers of that time. Some of the male poets of that time are: Amir Kror, Asad Sori, Khkarandoi Ghor, Akbar Zamindawari, Malakyar Gharsheen, Bait Neeka, Qutbuddin, Bakhtyar Kakay, Dost Mohammad Kakar and others... and female poets are: Rabia Balkhi, Bibi Nebakhta and Zarghonal Kakar.

Although we have physically little of the first period but it worth a lot spiritually. It covers all sides of life and picks up important themes as: religious, moral, advices and some sort of epic and rejoicing themes.

The poem of that time has several types both thematically and structurally like, couplets, lyrics, sonnet, quatrain, elegy and some other rhythmical songs.

We have some prose works from old period as well. But unfortunately only names of some of the prose works are remained. Tazkiratul Awlya's some pages of prose are remained as samples.

- (2) The second or middle period begins from 16 AD century to 18 AD. In 16<sup>th</sup> century, in Mughuls' monarchy, in the east of Pukhtoonkhwa (India) feudalism dominated and some changes were seen to come in literature too.

The important stages in the second literary period can be marked by some mental, political and artistic characteristics. In which some important figures follow Rokhan in mental, Khushal Khan Khatak in politician and Abdul Hamid Mumand and Kazim Khan Shida in artistic side and some others...

Four major schools have been created in the middle period which has a lot of followers and each of the schools is having some special characteristics. The four leading Pashto poets and competitors are leading these schools.

- (a) Rokhani School of Literature and Sufism and its followers:

In 10<sup>th</sup> Hijre Century, Bayazid Rokhan begins his movement in ancient Afghanistan under the political, social and cultural inspiration. He continued the mentor and discipleship process and through his Pashto, Dari, Hindi and Arabic works he founded a school which attracted countless followers.

Peer Rokhan founded this school of culture and Sufism, created numbers of prose work and completed divans (poetry books). In this school, there is strong declaring and description of Monotheism, unity, wisdom and Sufism. Much effect of Persian and Arabic is seen in these works. Some of the followers of this school are: Arzani Khuishki, Mirza Answari, Dawlat Lwani, Ali Mohammad Mukhlis and others...

- (b) Khushal Khan Khatak Literary School:

The second great school in the middle age is that of Khushal Khan Khatak's Literary school which made the Pashto literature be in the list of great language literatures around the world. He himself wrote lots of literary, academic and cultural subjects and his family members and followers did well too.

The representatives of this school are: Ashraf Khan Hijree, Abdul Qadir Khan Khatak, Sekandar Khan, Sadar Khan Khatak, Halima Khataka (female), and Mesri Khan and others...Khushal Khan Khatak's school is leading school where nationality, pashtoonhood, sword, honor and bravery is given priority and these themes are moving as fast as waves of Abasin River and honorable life is given much worth than any other thing.

In their poems, humanism, love, good moral, good lesson and advice, weakness, smartness, freedom, Sufism and keeps all aspects of life in their poems.

- (c) Rahman Baba Literary School:

After Khushal, a new school of Rahman Baba came into being. Rahman Baba was a humanitarian and strong lover of the god (Allah). He accustomed a style in Pashto literature where plainness, fluency and simplicity is a major feature which was later followed by many poets and finally constructed the school of Rahman Baba.

The followers of this school are: Peer Mohammad Kakar, Abdul Rahim Hotak, Mohammad Younus, Matiullah, Abdul Azim, Maazullah and others...

Rahman Baba's school is the great indicator of Pashtoon cultural and environmental colors of Pashto. Raman Baba's poems are such museums of true love, Sufism and true lover where the pious is always amused of seeing the glory and beauty of his true lover. There is a music of good habits, great morals, humanism and goodness. Plainness, smoothness and fluency are the great characteristics of this school.

- (d) Hamid Literary School:

It is the fourth literary school in the middle age which is famous for its delicacy. It has experienced the features of Hindi literary school in Pashto literature and is successful. Abdul Hamid Momand is the founder of this

school and Kazim Khan Shida has reached it to the highest peak. In Pashto literature, Kazim Khan Shida, Qalandar Momand, Ali Khan Khatak, Merza Khan, Kamgar Khatak, Faqeer Ali and Mohammad Ali Sahibzada are the followers of this school.

Highest imagination, delicacy, innovation, uncommon figurative language, simile and dialogues are the major credits of this school. Much exaggeration (hyperbole), poetic colors, Persian literature styles, metaphorical love and superficial affection and love images are seen a lot in this style.

This school has entered the Hindi School's lights into Pashto literature and has followed them. Rahman Baba and Hamid Momand's styles are the evident examples of Idealism and Classism in which Rahman Baba's realism first and secondly romanticism's lights were accompanying them. There is much similarity and likeliness between these styles. (6:22)

### **Pashto Contemporary or current period:**

When in 1893 AD, the nasty Durand Line was drawn and imposed on Pashtoons, it separated this proud region into two zones the Lower Pakhtoonkhwa (Peshawar) and the upper Pakhtoonkhwa (Afghanistan). Pashto contemporary literature is being studied in these two zones and take on progressive steps in historic and cultural conditions.

The contemporary period of Pashto literature begins from the second tenth of the twentieth century. It has to be said that after the imposed Durand Line, Pashto literature doesn't equally progress in both zones, lower and upper pakhtoonkhwa, but the beginning of both is at the same time. (5:35)

Pashto literature in above two zones begins at the same time in about 1910 or 1911 and continuous up to now. The political, economic and cultural conditions are not the same in both zones. In Afghanistan, Pashto contemporary period develops in four stages, but unlikely in Lower Pukhtoonkhwa it develops in two stages.

Professor Sediq Rohi write: "the contemporary period of Pashto literature in Afghanistan has three stages: Stage of Brightness, stage of Alertness and the stage of Revolution"

The stage of Brightness in Afghanistan begins in 1911 AD when Sarajul Akhbar Newspaper was published. The physical and mental conditions for the birth of modern period was quite suitable at this time. (5:35) Afghanistan experienced development culturally as newspapers were published, modern schools were constructed, roads and factories were built.

The second stage of the contemporary period (Age of Alertness) related to the movement of awake youth. It begins in second tenth of Zahir Shah's Kingdome in 1943 AD. The literary method of the age of alertness was critical and realism. The major topics were: Administrative corruption, autocracy, injustice, violence, colonialism...Liberty demand of Pashtoons and Balos, women rights and others...(6:87)

The stage of Revolution: the age of revolution in Pashto literature began when Dawood Khan's government was ruined by coup and Noor Mohammad Taraky got the power. The later or fourth stage is called the stage of reformation.

We study the contemporary literature in two stages in Lower Pukhtoonkhwa. The first stage begins from the twentieth century and comes to 1947 AD and the second stage begins from 1947 AD up to now.

In general, in contemporary Pashto literature, there are signs modern life. In Modern history, new prose genres like (short story, novel, and literary pieces...) and also free verse, blank verse, Hiku and other forms come from English and Urdo literature into Pashto.

### **Conclusion**

Plenty of literary histories have been written in Pashto literature. But the research methodology is different. In addition, professors and literary figures have divided the history of Pashto literature based on different norms

and standards as Prof. Habibi mentioned four periods in Pashto literature, Prof. Rekhteen points five, and Chief researcher Mohammad Sediq Rohi describes three periods of Pashto literature which is currently the most acceptable one.

Still there are some points in these divisions that they share in common. They have to be reconciled and a group of literary experts and historian should write the history of Pashto literature together.

### Suggestions

1. The history of literature has to be written by a group of literary experts in order to stop the individualism.
2. The lower and upper zone literary experts have to communicate with one another and determine the literary periods based on current norms and standards.
3. The contemporary period of Pashto literature is rich enough which has not been researched well. It has to be researched and investigated with full concentration.

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