

# **Pashto and Ancient Aryan Languages and the comparison and evaluation of certain words**

Abdul Hai Habibi

In past issues (of *Toloa' Afghan*) I compared Pashto with Sanskrit and Avesta on the basis of history and comparative linguistics and showed the closeness of these languages. In this article I compare Pashto with two other ancient languages, Medic and the old language of Fars. All these issues are a part of the literary history of the language which will be published separately in the form of a book.

(Habibi)

## **Pashto and the Medic language:**

As we know the Medians were Aryan people who established a monarchy in western Iran at the beginning of the seventh century of the Christian era. According to historians these people had gone to this area ten centuries before Christ<sup>1</sup>. The Medic people are not a part of the discussion in this article but since they composed ancient Aryan tribes and after Avesta their language is considered to be an ancient Aryan language. Hence, based on the age of their language, it can be compared to Pashto.

Darmesteter states that in the beginning Avesta was also written in the Medic language and this language has close affinities with Old Persian. The present day Kurdish language is also derived from Medic language.<sup>2</sup> After their general migration, which the Aryans conducted from Bactria, these people settled in Iranian pastures. Hence it is possible that their languages contained Bactrian elements.

Unfortunately we do not have any documents from the Medic language which can be compared with Pashto. The father of historians, Herodotus, has recorded one word from this language, *spaca*, (*spei* in Pashto) which means a female dog.<sup>3</sup>

Greisson states: The Medic languages were spoken in the eastern parts of Iran. On the basis of this he considers the Pamir and southern Hindu Kush mountains languages, such as Ghalja, Urmurri, Baluchi and Pashto, as part of the Medic family of languages. According to him these are non-Persian languages. He affiliates the closeness of these languages to the fact that *spuk* in

Urmurri and *spei* in Pashto are close to the Medic word *spaca*. In Pahlavi and Persian languages a dog is called *sug*, which is different from Medic.<sup>4</sup> If we had other Medic words in our possession, we would have been able to present a good comparison of this language with Pashto. In this discussion we can only count on one word which has closeness to Pashto.

### **Pashto and Old Persian (Old Farsi)**

According to historians, Old Persian, was spoken in proper Iran (Fars) and it was the official language of the Achaemenid period. All documents and rock engravings from that period are in this language. Monarchs also used the language. The only relics regarding this language are in the form of rock engravings.<sup>5</sup> Linguists have been able to derive only 400 words from the language which have been written in Cuneiform script.<sup>6</sup> Old Persian is close to the Zend language and alike Zend it has 24 letters. It is somewhat simpler than Zend. Inscriptions available from this language in Iran date to the time Cyrus (559-528 B.C.), the establisher of the Achaemenid period. They have been written in three or four languages in Cuneiform script, indicating that one statement has been written in Old Persian, Assyrian and Elami languages.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that Old Persian developed further from the land of the Pashtuns in Pars and it should not be close to Pashto. However, since its roots are related to Avesta and its source is linked to Bactria, therefore these languages have linguistic closeness. Here I compare some Old Persian words with Pashto, which remain from that old language. You will be able to see the relationship of these old languages with Pashto from this comparison.

1. Aurmazd (اورمزد): This word is Ahura Mazda in Avesta. The first part of this word is the Pashto *aur* (اور), meaning fire. This word has been inscribed as *aurmazd* (اورمزد) in the ancient Old Persian inscriptions of Iran.<sup>8</sup> The root of *mazda* (مزدا) derives from prayers.
2. Mun (من): Meaning a person.<sup>9</sup> The root of this word in Sanskrit and Vedic is in the word *manu* (منو), whose general meaning is a person and it is present in Pashto until now. In Pashto *mannu* (مانو) means a person. The root of the infinitive *manalu* (منلو) is similar to this word.
3. Aabi (آبی): Meaning water. The Sanskrit and Avesta words for water are close to this word.<sup>10</sup>
4. Ho (هو): Meaning okay. In Sanskrit it is *soo* (سو) and the Pashto syllabic word *ho* (هو) is in use until the present time.
5. Drokar (دروکار): Meaning lies. It was *durwagha* in Avesta, *durwa* in Sanskrit and *durogh* in Pahlavi.<sup>11</sup> In present day Pashto both *durwagh* (درواغ) and *durwa* (دروه) are in use.
6. Waspa (وسپا): Meaning a horse. It was *asho* in Sanskrit, *aspa* in Avesta and is *aas* (آس) and *aspa* (اسپه) in present day Pashto.

7. Putra (پوترا) : Meaning son. This word has been used in Darius' swimming pool inscription under the meaning of son.<sup>12</sup> It is *pothahra* in Avesta, *patra* in Sanskrit, and *pur=pos=posh* in Pahlavi.<sup>13</sup> The Pashto *puth* (پوت) has the same meaning which has been used in a poem by Khushal Khan Khatak meaning a son.

8. Pisu (پیسو): Meaning leprosy. This word until the present time in Pashto is *pis* (پیس). In Arabic this disease is called *baras* (برص). In Avesta it was *pasisa* and *pisak* in Pahlavi.<sup>14</sup>

9. Pamon (پمون): Meaning a wolf. Pamon is in use in Pashto at the present time and *paman gurgein* (mangy wolf) is also used.

10. Namka (نامکا): Meaning name. This word is *naman* in Avesta and Sanskrit. It is *naam* in Pahlavi and Persian. In Pashto it is *nuum* (نوم). In Old Persian it was *namka*. In the Achaemenid inscriptions the name of one month was *anamaka* meaning nameless.<sup>15, 16</sup>

## References

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