

Father of modern Kohwar

By Sher Nawaz Naseem

"The late Shahzada Hisamul Mulk was a man who loved Kohwar very much and took the initiative in his lifetime to put it into a written form, and all his efforts for the development and shaping of this language will always be remembered in the years to come" said Professor Israr-ud-Din of the University of Peshawar, paying tribute to this great literary stalwart.

Touching the personality of a man belonging to the former royal family of Chitral, this article perhaps will invite criticism from some people of the area but the services of Sir Nasirul Mulk in the field of education and the late Hisamul Mulk for the Kohwar language cannot be denied. It was the prophetic genius of the late Nasirul Mulk, who while laying the foundation of Government High School Chitral in September 1939 near Chitral Fort, sensed the danger of this institution and declared it a "bomb" for the Fort. Later his prediction was confirmed when the young, people educated at this insti-

tution rallied around the banner of the Pakistan Movement, leading the state to join Pakistan.

Having a good command of Persian literature Nasirul Mulk also took an interest in the Kohwar Language. The credit for infusing a new spirit into young however, goes to the late Shahzada Hisamul Mulk. He established the Kohwar alphabet and made efforts to introduce it at primary level in various schools of Chitral. This met with failure because of unfavourable circumstances. According to Sam-samul-Mulk, the son of Shahzada Sahib, he was studying in Islamia College in Peshawar, when Mr. Abdul Qadir, then the director of the Pushto Academy, asked him to design a script for Kohwar. With the help of his late father Hisamul Mulk, a prominent educationist, the late Ghulam Umar and Professor Israr-ud-Din, he prepared a Kohwar grammar and it was published by the academy. After the publication of this grammar Shahzada's interest in his mother tongue increased and he began to write many articles on various topics touching different aspects of Chitrali culture.

The late Hisamul Mulk was born in

1902 and was the third son of Sir Shujaul Mulk. According to the royal tradition he was fostered by the family of Feroz Khan, grandfather of the famous Kohwar poet, Baba Ayub. He studied at Islamia Collegiate School and his B.A. from Lahore as a private candidate. He began to involve himself in the affairs of the state and took part in the Afghan war of 1919. Fighting in close co-ordination with the British Indian Army units, he not only threw back the enemy but captured the strong Afghan defences at Birkot along with a large amount of booty, including many weapons.

In 1926, he was appointed governor of Mastooj in Chitral and became President of judicial Council Chitral in the next year. He carried out the responsibilities of the state Chief Secretary during 1928 and was given the assignment of the governorship of Drosh in 1929. When the possibility arose of the out break of war and a possible Soviet invasion seemed to threaten the security of the state the ruler Sir Nasirul Mulk (his brother) appointed him defence minister.

In order to improve relations with Afghanistan, Shahzada went to Kabul leading a delegation in 1939. It was agreed in Kabul that timber would be allowed to float from Chitral to Kabul along the Chitral (or Kunar) River and goods from Afghanistan would be transported to Chitral via Jalalabad. However, this agreement annoyed the British as it was against their interests. Hisamul Mulk was confined in Loralie Jail for about three years. Following his release he was appointed governor of Drosh again. When Pakistan came into being in 1947 he decided to spend the rest of his life at home and give his attention to the promotion of Kohwar.

Shahzada laid the foundation of *Anjuman-e-Taraqi-e-Chitral* in 1956, and remained its president until his death in 1977. Under the auspices of this organisation, *mushairahs* and literary gatherings were held from time to time and produced devoted workers. He translated the Holy Quran into Kohwar but was unable to publish it in his lifetime. *Gulshan-e-Chitral*, *Tamadun-e-Chitral* and *Khawn-e-Chitral* are his famous contributions to Kohwar and Chitrali culture. All his written materials have been placed in the library of *Anjuman-e-Taraqi-e-Kohwar* and will be published soon. He also wrote a book on prayers while completing a jail term in Baluchistan. It is said

that he recited *Kohwar Na'at* for All-India Radio in 1936.

With the help of Shahzada Hisamul Mulk the role of the monthly *Jamhoor-e-Islam Kohwar* published by the Press Information Department in Peshawar, cannot be denied. *Jamhoor-e-Islam* has enabled Kohwar speakers to add more to their language when it is still its nascent stage. The credit to operate this channel goes to Kazi Sarwar, who then worked for the Press and Information Department. He realised the importance of Chitral and took many steps to expand publicity of this area so that it could become an integral part of the country despite its geographical isolation. When the Kohwar *Jamhoor-e-Islam* was started in 1969 it was a section of *Jamhoor-e-Islam* in Pushto. Later *Jamhoor-e-Islam* became a separate monthly journal and while the Pushto journal became the monthly *Abasin*. The Kohwar language *Jamhoor-e-Islam* was well received and according to Kazi Sarwar, it helped in reviving Kohwar and enlivening its literature. At the same time it created enthusiasm among Chitralis giving them positive publicity which was totally unknown before.

The late Hisamul Mulk can be considered the father of modern Kohwar and Kazi Sarwar has pointed out his valuable services to the people of Chitral and to the Kohwar language. Recalling his impressions of Hisamul Mulk, he said, "He was a great lover of art, literature and good and beautiful things in life. He had a refined taste for all that was sublime. He loved his country and people and always had high hopes for their welfare, peace and prosperity. On more than one occasion I had the unique honour of being his guest in his ancestral palatial house in Drosh. His warm-hearted hospitality, friendliness and regard for his guests can hardly be described in so many words. He was a noble soul who served his people well and left behind a rich heritage which will always be treasured by his grateful countrymen. May his soul rest in eternal peace".

Kohwar is now spoken by 3,50,000 people in Chitral, Gilgit and other parts of the country. *Anjuman-e-Taraqi-e-Kohwar* Chitral, *Anjuman-e-Taraqi-e-Kohwar* Ghezoor, Gilgit and other literary societies are proof of the development of this language. It is all due to this great man who is not today among us to see the flower planted by his own hand in his lifetime, now become a fragrant blossom.



The late Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk of Drosh, Chitral