#### Nazir Ahmed Bulbul

### Knowledge generation and preservation of Wakhi cultural heritage

It is a great honour for me to be in Berlin to present my views among the prominent figures and brains having lifelong efforts and love for the Pamirians. Especially, I am indebted to this unique university and the faculty who made it possible for us all to share our viewpoints on challenges and opportunities in the Pamir Region. Above all, I am thankful to Professor Hermann Kreutzmann for his selfless efforts in strengthening our school, language and pride in identity.

The context of knowledge generation and heritage preservation is characterised by several challenges such as identity crises, heritage degradation, youth engagement, climate change, security issues for the community, and difficult political and economic conditions.

As a Wakhi poet, a school head and President of the Local Council I would like to focus my talk on my experiences about knowledge generation and preservation of Wakhi cultural heritages both tangible and intangible. However, some other initiations would also be touched.

# 1 As Wakhi poet

As a poet, I have had immense love and respect from Wakhis around the globe. Being Wakhi, I felt that most of our people are a bit shy about their identity as shepherds. Now, most of them sing that

#### **Translation**

I was shepherd, I am shepherd
I am proud that I am Wakhi, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
I am the language of absolute faith, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
In the past I owned cattle, now I am in the pasture-hut of knowledge
Herding thoughts and ideas, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
Holding stick of pen in hand, my luggage of voyage are my books
Exploring the butter-store of knowledge, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
Skimming the butter of intellect, from the delicious curd of knowledge
Decanting the milk of ideas, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
The entire world is our green field, everywhere we nestle to herd
In every field, at every slope, I was shepherd, I am shepherd

The aim of this poem was to illustrate the pastoral life, convey message with preserving the unique words that were endangered due to economic migration.

There are several poetry-specific challenges which I have to face such as to choose a script for Wakhi language, to generate knowledge, to preserve and present the language, to illustrate the mountain life through words, to arise pride in identity, to step into knowledge society and to inspire young generations to write books like my collection of Wakhi poetry 'Biyoze Bulbul' published in 2014.

### 2 As teacher

As school head of the community based Al-Amyn Model School I and the school staff have taken the several measures to boost cultural identity, such as the use of traditional cap as uniform and traditional robe (*chupan*) in ceremonies, teaching Wakhi language in school, stimulating students to conduct small scale research and documentation about their area and culture, supporting the revival of local games and local music in school.

# 3 As president of local council

The Local Council governs the community socially through different portfolios managed by volunteers. The activities have the following targets: guidance about harmonious life for security of the community, economic progress through economic planning board, youth engagement through youth and sports board, women empowerment through women portfolio, ensure health and education through education and health boards, helping people in need through social welfare board, and preservation and promotion of culture through cultural portfolio.

The main initiations by the council are arrangements of festivals and celebrations for harmony and brotherhood like the revival of old festivals and addition of new ones like the blossom festival, community mobilisation towards civil society efforts accompanied by school, health and drinking water-related self-help projects, women entrepreneurship such as ladies shops, restaurants and handcraft centres, the initiation of a Wakhi music school (*Bulbulik*) with collaboration of the Gulmit Educational and Social Welfare Society, as well as patronising boy scouts and girls guides and other youth programs such as youth camps. In collaboration with FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance, we are conducting awareness sessions and train youth to any manageable calamity to meet climate change-related hazards. Finally, we promote culture and heritage for tourism, and work on the establishment of a new museum.

In a developing country like Pakistan, we need to believe in ourselves and strengthen civil society programs at large.