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Foreword by General David H. Petraeus

پيشگفتار توسط ستر جنرال ديويډ اچ پتريس

Proverbs and sayings are the linguistic equivalent of a "key terrain district," a place where culture and language meet. This is certainly true in Afghanistan, where Afghan proverbs and their use so profoundly reflect the people and their character.

This book reveals the richness of meaning and human emotion found in Afghan proverbs. These proverbs provide insights into the resilience, independence, and pride that have enabled Afghans to survive and overcome innumerable challenges over the years. Indeed, Afghans have suffered much over the last thirty years, in particular, as well as during many periods prior to the past three decades. However, they have also achieved a great deal over the centuries, during which they have displayed the remarkable combination of strength, faith, and optimism that has carried them through the hard times. These traits are in full view in the richness and variety of Afghan proverbs.

As a student of world cultures for several decades, I have long recognized the need for cultural understanding between peoples. This is especially true when those peoples are working together to achieve common goals. In view of this, and to foster mutual understanding here in the shadow of the Hindu Kush, the United States created the "Afghan Hands" program in 2009. This program helps improve Afghan-American relationships by immersing an elite group of US military officers in Afghan languages and culture before they deploy, and by then assigning them to positions here in Afghanistan where their expertise can be used to best effect. Upon completion of their tours here, they are assigned to billets in the United States that make use of, and help to maintain, their Afghan expertise.

Captain Edward Zellem of the United States Navy was among the first of our Afghan Hands to deploy to Afghanistan. His personal interest in and clear love of Afghans and Afghanistan, together with his impressive understanding of Afghan ways, are representative of the best of our Afghan Hands. This book began as a personal hobby for Ed, and it then blossomed into a wonderful example of how cultures can be bridged – at the human level, person to person. Indeed, I have found, as Captain Zellem has, that the *process* of understanding and the *willingness* to understand are fundamental to effective communication, the establishment of true friendships, and the development of sincere partnerships. In fact, a foreigner who reaches out to an Afghan with trust, respect, and genuine interest will almost always be greeted with the same in return. Knowledge and use of Afghan proverbs can be an effective tool in such outreach.

I am very pleased to be able to introduce Captain Zellem's book to the Afghan people and to coalition forces. In so doing, I emphasize recognition that, as we work together to help our Afghan colleagues bring peace and security to this great nation, we must always try to understand each other as friends, partners, and, most importantly, fellow human beings. As one of the Proverbs in the book states, "Dil ba dil roh darad" (دل به دل راه دارد) - "There is a way from heart to heart."

I hope you enjoy the book as much as I have.

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