

The future of the Balochi language and literature

By: Ayub Baloch (Dawn)

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Ayub Baloch believes that the future of the Balochi language and literature lies in the coordinated output of literary organizations and individuals.

1961 saw the establishment of the Balochi Academy in Quetta by a group of dedicated and enlightened writers who had been to the best educational institutions of the subcontinent. Mohammad Sardar Khan Giskhori, a renowned historian, was the first chairman of this academy which soon began to dominate the literary scene and proved to a milestone in the progress of Balochi literary; its predecessor, the Balochi Academy, Karachi, had also considerably contributed to the development of Balochi literature. The first publication of the Balochi Academy, Quetta, was Durcheen, a compilation of verses of famous Baloch poet Jam Durrak by Mir Bashri Ahmed Baloch, who was also the first general secretary of the academy.

Almost all literary giants of Balochi language had at one point or the other been associated with this organization. No other institution in the province has so far managed to match the Balochi Academy in terms of literary contribution. Having published more than 150 books it has emerged as the flagbearer of Balochi language and literature.

Coming of age: pre-eminence of the verse

One feature common to the three periods mentioned above is pre-eminence of the 'sher' or verse. Literature in Balochistan, in the last 50 years, has been synonymous with poetry. Most of the literati like Mohammad Hussain Unqa, Mir Gul Khan Naseer, Azat Jamaldini, Zahoor Shah Hashmi and Ata Shad, despite being multidisciplinary, got prominence through their poetry rather than prose.

Besides the names already mentioned, a host of other poets who emerged on the literary scene owing to the quality and force of their work include Murad Sahir, Mir Esa Qoumi, Akber Barakzai, Malik Touqi, Karim Dushti, Haji Momen Buzdar, Peral Zubairani, Ghous Baksh Sabir, Ahmed Zaheer, G.R. Mullah, Naseer Shaheen, Ismail Mumtaz, Bashir Baidar, Mubarak Qazi, Saba Dishtiari, Dr Fazal Khaliq, Dr Ali Dost, Allah Bakhsh Buzdar, Ghani Perwaz, Ulfat Naseem, Idrees Zeb, Ibrahim Abid, Karim Azat, Sultan Naeem Qaisarani, Razaq Nadir, Peeral Shaytegrri and Sadiq Mari. Most of these have published more than one volume, and Balochi literature will always be proud and thankful of their valuable contribution. They composed verses on varied themes, ranging from mysticism, patriotism and resistance to romantic poetry. Even experimental prose-poetry and haiko are commonplace with these budding poets of today. Urdu and English literature as well as various literary movements, like the Progressive Writers Movement, has

influenced the thoughts and works of many of these contemporary Baloch poets.

Writing prose: a later development

Prose writing in Balochi is a post-Independence development. Short story, drama, novel, criticism, travelogue, etc. were introduced by writers familiar with the modern literary traditions, particularly those of English and Urdu. Literary history and commentary writing came next, completing the circle of literary development. Among the pioneers were Mir Gul Khan Naseer, Syed Zahoor Shah Hashimi, Azad Jamaldini, Moulana Khair Mohammad Nadvi, Sardar Khan Giskhori, Mir Sher Mohammad Marri, Abdullah Jan Jamaldini, Bashir Ahmed Baloch, Haji Abdyul Qayyum Baloch, Mir amanullah Gickhi, Abdul Hakim Baloch, Ata Shad, Dr Naimatullah Gichki, Abdul Ghaffar Nadeem, Tahir Mohammad Khan, Akbar Baragzai, Ismail Mumtaz, Karim Dushti, Agha Naseer Khan Ahmedzai, Mir Mitha Khan Mari, Malik Mohammad Panah, Mir Aqqil Khan Mental, Surat Khan Mari, Munir Ahmed Badini, Ghous Bakhsh Sabir, Aziz Bugti, Munir Isa, Jan Mohammad Dushti, Saba Dishtiari, Yousuf Gickhki, Banuk Gohar Mali, Dr Shah Mohamamd Mari, Ghani Perwaz, Gulzar Khan Mari, Abdul Khaliq Baloch, Ghulam Farooq Baloch, M. Baig Begul and many others.

Balochi literature got a setback when the monthly Ulus was discontinued. Despite being a government-sponsored magazine, it was like a nursery for new writers. However, the gap was later bridged by a number of magazines like the revived Nawa-i-Watan, now a daily, Balochi, Noukin Dour, Sought, Labzank, Chagerd, Aasap and Zindman.

The literary organizations that have since then come up for the support and promotion of Balochi language and literature include the Syed Zahoor Shah Academy Karachi, Azad Jamaldini Academy Karachi, Mulla Fazil Academy Turbat and Izzat Academy Panjgur. Hopes for the future of Balochi language are pinned on the young writers associated with these institutions.

The Pakistan Studies Department, University of Balochistan, Uppsala University, Sweden, Balochistan Studies Naples University, Italy, and the Academy of Letters, Islamabad, have also been quite active in the promotion of Balochi literature. The contribution of overseas' literary organizations such as those in the Gulf countries, Iran, Afghanistan, UK, Canada, Turkmenistan, Tanzania etc. is also of immense significance.

The future of Balochi language and literature lies to a great extent in the coordinated output of various literary organizations, individuals and institutions working for it. Taking advantage of modern technology, particularly the Internet, this may not prove to be an impossible task.

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