

Syed Zahoor Hashmi

Sayad Zahoor Shah was born on 21 April, 1926, in a religious and literary family of Treasury Gwadar. He obtained his basic education from his father. Besides distinguished poet and prominent writer of Balochi language he was a renowned scholar of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. After deporting from Gwadar due to his activities against social evils he was exiled from Gwadar by then Muscat Administrator, in 1948, came in Karachi. Initially He was associated with Radio Pakistan, Karachi as Balochi program producer.

There is no doubt he was dedicated, talented person and devoted in Balochi language. He worked hard for simplifying grammar and manuscript of Balochi language. In this connection he wrote a comprehensive book BALOCHI RAST NABISAG-E- SIAYAG. In this regard he travelled extensively all over Balochistan, Mascot, Dubai, Bahrain and part of India.

Courtesy to Balochistan Information Network

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Balochi literature is very rich in oral tradition but comparatively poor in the printed form. It was only in the early twentieth century that Balochi began to be transcribed in books. Under such trying conditions, it wasn't easy for anyone to devote his entire life to the promotion of Balochi literature. Syed Zahoor Shah Hashmi was a man with the commitment to do that.

Syed Hashmi just not modernized Balochi poetry by giving it a new contemporary direction, but he also freed Balochi poetic diction from the influence of Persian and Urdu. He set a mile stone by writing the first Baloch novel in the language. He also developed the standard Baloch script, standardized Balochi grammar, syntax and authored the first comprehensive Balochi dictionary, with thousands of entries spread on 833 folio size pages, supplemented with a guide on pronunciation and punctuation etc.

Syed Hashmi born in 1939 A.D. in the coastal town of Gwadar, which was then, lay in the territorial jurisdiction of the sultanate of Oman. He received elementary education at home from his father, Syed Mohammad Shah, who was a learned man in the oriental tradition. He was enrolled in a local school, where he taught Arabic language as a compulsory subject, besides Persian and English. When he was in juvenile, he acquired a fondness for Persian poetry, particularly that of Hafiz Shirazi, Shaikh Saadi and Allama Iqbal, which led his writing Persian as well as Urdu poetry.

He forms a social welfare organization for the development of Gwadar with the help of other inmates of Gwadar. Soon, he was very popular in Gwadar for his truly commitments to their people. The wali of Gwadar took notice this and realized that he might be dangerous for him by creating this type of awareness in the people of Gwadar. In a very short span of time, Syed Hashmi, not just established a library in the town, but he also changed this library into a centre of political activities. With the order of Wali of Gwadar, he was arrested and sentenced into imprisoned. This act wormed the atmosphere of Gwadar and Wali of Gwadar soon realized that this might be changed into a worst scenario for him and his Government position in the Gwadar. With this immense fear, the Wali of Gwadar not just free him but also sent him into exile.

Syed Hashmi came to Pakistan and joined the Radio Pakistan Karachi as in charge of Balochi Service. During his services of Balochi transmission, he learned, that the Balochi language is very poor in form of

prose and modern literature. He also feels the shortage of any standard Balochi script and grammar. With the aims of providing a standard script to Balochi language and promotion of good Balochi literature, he started writing not just Balochi poetry but modern prose as well. He also started research about classic Balochi poetry. He also took efforts for the merger of two Balochi organizations Halqa-i-Adab and Balochi Bazm-i-Adab to form a one organization Zuban-i-Sarchamag. In 1954, he compiled a basic Qaida of Balochi language. This Qaida was much wormed welcomed and approved by Sarchamag and veteran Balochi writer and researcher i.e. Gul Khan Nasir and Mohammad Hussain Anqa. He and his linguist colleague Abdul Samad Amiri visited different area of Balochistan for the search of different dialects of Balochi language. In this journey, they gathered valuable knowledge about the classical as well as contemporary language and literature. Syed also visited Iran to study the Balochi literature of that area.

Due to harsh disputes between the members of Sarchamag, he left the Karachi and spent many years of his life in Bahrain.

During his last years of life, he devoted his days and nights for the development of Balochi language. Tuberculosis caught him and his health was deteriorating day by day, but he speeds up his works. During his ailments, he compiled a book about Balochi grammar named Balochi Siyahag-i-rast nibisag.

After discharge from hospital, he came once again in United India, but this time his destination was Bombay, where he published his books. These books were Balochi Siyahag-i-rast nibisag, Sistaagen dastonk, Angar-o-trungle, Trapkanen trimp, Balochi bungeji, Mirgind and Balochi translation of Quranic para, Ain Meem.

In 1963, a European orientalist Dr. John Strasser came to Pakistan to study the Balochi language. He visited the different Balochi-speaking areas of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, and held meeting with the Balochi writers. Strasser also met Hashmi and was greatly inspired by hid insight into Balochi language and literature. Later, Strasser went to Pune (India) and invited Hashmi to join him there. There the latter had meetings with the prominent linguist Dr. N.S. Shukla and learnt a lot about the language of Indo-Iranian origin from him, which deepened his knowledge of Balochi language.

In 1970, he married with Banul Dashtyari. In Karachi, Hashmi published Nazuk, the first novel in Balochi language, and finalized Sayad Gung (Balochi dictionary), Balochi Zuban-o-Adab ki Tarikh and other books. Sayad Gung is the most precious labor of his life, which took 26 years of extensive research, challenging journeys across the Balochi-speaking world and countless discussion with the scholars, and the common folk to complete.

Syed Hashmi died April 1978 A.D. in Karachi. He is no more now, but his countless efforts for the promotion of Balochi language will remain in our minds.

Books and Author (DAWN Karachi)

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