

## Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal: A Baloch Linguist and Critic

Language and Literature

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### Abstract

*The objective of this paper is to focus the literary and linguistic services of Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal. He was viewed as one of the main Balochi Linguist and literary pundit among the Baloch people. He gave his life to redo Balochi as a standard language to be worthy to the whole Baloch people. His lucrative endeavors truly are considerable. In this paper a short draw of his life and scholarly works will be discussed.*

### Introduction

Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal was born on 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1937, at a residential area of Nushki to the west of the capital city of Quetta, Balochistan. He was the offspring of Martyred Lawang Khān Zagr Mēngal and nephew of Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr, the incredible Balochi writer, poet, Journalist, and politician.

The early life of Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal is very unique in relation to that of his peers at a young age. He was not partial to games amid his life time, particularly when he was a kid of 8-12 years. In his initial age, he was interested to study books on language, linguistics, poetry and history. He used to review the aggregated verses of Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr by heart.

Amid the late spring season, underneath the twinkling moonlight, Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal recounted the poetical verses of Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr on his couch, at the yard of his home. He never missed even a solitary verse of Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr.

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He did his early education in Naushki, and then he went to the Government Islamia College Lahore to earn his BA degree. He was designated room no.76 at the Islamia College dormitory, the same room which had been assigned to his uncle Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr previously, where he saw the poetry of his uncle on the notice boards of the hostel room. This thing rejuvenated his enthusiasm and love for education.

He was attached to mulling over books from right on time age, when he was a student of Islamia College Lahore, he would go to Urdu Bazar every Sunday to procure books on language, linguistics, and history. In the late spring excursions when he returned back home, he would bring numerous books for his companions and home library.

When he was pondering over the pathways of Urdu Bazar Lahore, all of a sudden he saw a book entitled as "Popular Poetry of the Baloches" written by Mansel Longworth Dames, in addition to different other books. He took the book out and inquired the price to the Punjabi bookseller.

He asked to the Bookseller, what this is about? The bookseller stated, "I don't know what this is about? I don't have any knowledge of it whether it is in Sanskrit, German or in Latin" it however cost just one rupee. Finally, Mīr Āqil purchases the book for half the price.

Immediately after earning his bachelor degree from Lahore, he went on to Quetta to pursue his master's degree from University of Balochistan. After graduating with a MA from University of Balochistan, he accepted an assignment as a lecturer in the department of Pakistan Study Center at University of Balochistan. His love and passion for Balochi language was quintessential. He, therefore, later on in 1985 made a transition to Department of Balochi, to quench his thirst by fulfilling his life-long affection and dream of working for the progress and development of Balochi language and literature. He is considered as one of the founding fathers of the Department of Balochi at University of Balochistan.

He was a truly committed, assiduous and insightful educator. He dedicated his life for the advancement and development of the Balochi language and literature. He strived day in and day out for an inception of a master's program in Balochi. He endeavored restlessly to admit master's students for the Balochi language. He furthermore formulated the curricula of Balochi and fortified the enrollment of Baloch students to ensure the commencement of a master's degree in Balochi at University of Balochistan.

In 1972, when Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr approached a Convention about the Balochi Roman Orthographic framework and Standardization of the Balochi language, Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal volunteered for the task and was one of the key figures among the others. He introduced his report to the Convener of the Convention and pinpointed a few points pertaining to the Roman Script.

1. Firstly, Arabic script is not a revealed script to the Arabs. History teaches us that the Arabic script is pre-Islamic, when the Qur'an revealed, this script was changed and received as the present day script for Arabic. In the Umayyad Dynasty, the famous oppressive governor of Iraq, Hajjāj son of Thaqafī (661 AD-716 AD) transformed the modern Arabic script and formally implemented to the Arab and Islamic world.
2. Balochi is considered one of the Old Iranian languages. It was composed as Mechean, Xroshti, Avestan, Old Persian and Pahlavi scripts thousands of years prior to its composition in Arabic; however, the bounteous writing was composed in Roman script in the nineteenth century than that of Arabic.
3. A few Baloch writers are of the view that Roman Script creates obstacles to recite the Holy Qur'ān and other Islamic literature; therefore, we ought to obtain Arabic script. However I need to enlighten them that Arabic and Roman Scripts both are being taught in our educational institutions.
4. Changing of an orthographic framework or script does not influence the social, cultural, and religious values of a people. As the Arabic script was transformed in distinctive times; it however did not influence the Islamic teachings.
5. For the orthography of Balochi, it is extremely vital that it should be written in Roman script where the Balochi phonetic sounds are maintained or written in a great way. Each language has its own particular script and each language has its own essence; yet, unfortunately Balochi does not have a unique script in this respect.
6. Balochi has seven vowel sounds and diphthongal sounds as well. These sounds cannot be composed in Arabic script intelligibly. There is no different letters in order for the vowels in Arabic and the consonants are utilized to demonstrate the vowels. In this way,

it would be exceptionally troublesome for Balochi to record it in Arabic script.

7. The Baloch can't pronounce some Arabic letters, for example, ث، ء، ض، ط، ظ، ع، غ، ف، ق، ذ، ح، خ، ص.
8. Evidently composing of Arabic script for Balochi constitutes numerous challenges; therefore, Balochi script ought to be formed in Roman script which would make a near association with the European as well as other languages of the globe. (Nasir, Mir Gul Khan, 1972:Balochi Script Convention report , p-57-59)

Apart from this, Mir Aqil Khan Mengal with his colleague Abdur Rahman Barkar spent four years at McGill University, Montreal, Canada researching and developing "A course in Baluchi" published in 1969 for the students of Balochi. They combine composed a book in the name "A Course in Baluchi", in two volumes. In the apropos book, Rakhshani dialect of the Balochi was centered and numerous sections have additionally taken to educate the students about other dialects of Balochi. A glossary was moreover made for the students at the end of the second volume.

He had compiled a Persian (Pahlavi), Balochi Vocabulary which was published in 1990 by the Balochi Academy Quetta. It was the first volume and the second volume however never materialized to get published. I found out that Mir Aqil Khan Mengal has a son named as Mir Lawang Khan Junior. I managed to approach him at his residence after great exertion only to learn that all of his father's literary works had been sold to the retailers or basic supply shops.<sup>1</sup> The time energy spent of locating his son for search of his works was all in vain.

A few writers indicate that he had in fact compiled the second volume of the "Persian-Pahlavi, and Balochi Vocabulary", but after his death all of his intellectual properties were appropriated and plagiarized by some writers who were close to him.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I discussed this matter to Lawang Khan Son of Mir Aqil Khan Mengal, during a sojourn stay at Nushki.

<sup>2</sup> Different contemporary writers opine this view.

Mīr was the only Baloch professor who worked together with the foreign linguists, like Josef Elfenbein, Prof. Dr. Adriano Rossi, Ela Fillipone, Carina Jahani and Abdur Rahman Barkar.

Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal was an incredible man in historical linguistics particularly in the field of accurate etymology. His book '*A Course in Baluchi*', and *Persian-Pahlavi and Balochi vocabulary* demonstrates that he was a paragon in the verifiable semantics. Some of his critical etymological articles are as per the following.

*Hāmādī zubān ay drōšum* (The shape of Hamdadi language), *Kurdgālī zwān ay āryāī drōšum*(The Aryan Structure of Kurdgali/Brahui language), *Túrwālī zwān*(The Turwali Language), *Pahlavī Túrwālī, Balúčī*(Pahlavi , Turwali and Baluchi), *mā o šā ay bun o bunčik*( the Etymology of ma(we) and sha (you), *Balúčī o āsiyāī zubānānī siyādī* (Similarities among the Asian and Baluchi language), *Balúčī ay siyālī*(Similarities of Baluchi to other languages ), *Balúčī lawzānī tal o tōk*( the morphological structure of Balochi).

Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal is truly thought to be one of the incredible language specialists among the Baloch literary figures. He was perceived as critic in the Balochi and Brahui scholarly circles. He also used to teach the students in the Balochi, Brahui and Urdu Departments.

As per Dr. Abdul Hameed Shahwání (a retired professor of the department of Brahui) in a meeting expounded that Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal was the main rather sole critic who could teach this subject at the University of Balochistan. His few basic articles are as following.

*Ērād ay gir o čīll*(the problems of critics), *istār yā istāl*( istar or istal), *šā'irīā hamgōnagī*( Similarities in the Poetry), *šēlōn ay Bandīg* (The Prisoner of Chillan)<sup>1</sup>, *Balúčī šā'irīā Randgīrī*(following of someone in Balochi poetry), *Balúčī ay kađdē kitābānī sar o bun* ( Background of some Balochi Books ), *Balúčī ay čakkās ay wahd atkag* and ( the time of examination for the Baloch has come). His book on Balochi *ērādgīrī* (Balochi Criticism) is a fundamental and basic book for the students of graduation and masters. This book is also the part of Balochi syllabus in M.A level at the University of Balochistan.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the Balochi translation of Lord Byron's long poem, when he was on a visit to Switzerland, where he wrote down this poem.

He has also written a lot about the Balochi culture in different Balochi magazines, but it is unfeasible to give detail accounts of his innumerable and voluminous cultural articles.

According to his close colleagues, Abid Shah Abid and Nazar Muhammad Panezai<sup>1</sup>, and Abdul Halim Sadiq<sup>2</sup>, Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal also had a command over the Pashto language; he used to deliver lectures on Pashto criticism.

Brahui was his native language<sup>3</sup> but he preferred to write his articles in Balochi. According to Yousuf Aziz Gichki, one of the relatives of Mīr Gul Khān Nasir, elucidates that when Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal was fallen ill with cancer, he was very disturbed and apprehensive about the future of the Balochi language. He a diligent and prolific researcher and educator; he worked day and night while he was ill.

The Baloch literary men, linguists, and the language never forget services of Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal. The Balochi department of University of Balochistan is indebted to him, because he played a crucial role in establishing the department.

He took his last breathe on 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 1996 and was buried in Nuskhi at Killi Mēngal graveyard, on the right side of Mīr Gul Khān Nasīr's mausoleum.

## **Conclusion**

Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal was the key figure, originator of the Balochi critics and linguistics at the University of Balochistan. His insightful works are fundamental. He was also the first man who created the Department of Balochi and instigated classes and courses in Balochi. He also systematized and perfected the curricula for master's and bachelor's classes.

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<sup>1</sup> Abid Shah Abid and Nazar Muhammad Panezai both are the Ex-chairpersons of the department of Pashto, University of Balochitan and now retired.

<sup>2</sup> Ex-Chairperson of the Department of Brahui.

<sup>3</sup> The Baloch always use the term "home language" for the language which is only spoken in homes. Baloch are basically bilingual in Balochistan. Brahui is called to be the home language and Balochi is the Lingua Franca of the Baloch people. So, Mīr Āqil Khān Mēngal never used Brahui as the Lingua Franca, while he was a Brahui speaker at home.