

**MIR GUL KHAN NASEER: HIS LIFE AND LITERARY SERVICES****Hassan G. Eshrat***Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan***Zia ur Rehman Baloch***Assistant Professor (Department of Pakistani Languages), AIOU, Islamabad Pakistan***Abstract**

*Mir Gul Khan Naseer was born in 1914 and died in 1983. He was a prominent politician, poet, historian and journalist of Balochistan. He was at the forefront of Baloch Movement. He participated in the Baloch struggle for national independence and remained behind bars for several years. He was a staunch socialist and opposed tribal system. His contribution to Baloch political awareness is overwhelming. He was committed to guide common Baloch man towards social awareness and to achieve their political rights. Mir Gul Khan Naseer is an institution in Balochi poetic history. His poetry is the greatest manifestation and the most profound expression of Baloch political and social approach. The main subjects of his poetry are nationalism, revolutionism and progressivism.*

**Keywords:** Cultural, Mir Gul Khan, Baloch, Balochistan, Language, Magsi**Introduction****Subject Matter of the Poetic works of Mir Gul Khan Naseer**

It is evident that the cultural environment, in which a poet grows, leaves a deep impact on his mind and, therefore, he cannot possibly project his thoughts outside the contours of that culture and civilization. This probability assumes even greater importance when it comes to the present age of higher socio-political consciousness. In other words, in the modern era of sophisticated cultural advances it is becoming increasingly difficult for a poet to alienate himself from his socio-political and cultural environment. It was probably this realization that convinced Mir Gul Khan to become a strong voice for his people and highlight in his poetry their social, political and economic issues. Being a prolific and versatile writer, he

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deeply loved Balochistan, the land of his birth, and its honorable and brave people and as such the deprivation of Baloch and the promotion of their language (Balochi) became the central message of his poetry. To bring to the forefront the problems of Balochistan, he not only used the vehicle of poetry, but also tried his hands at politics, journalism and historiography and devoted all his skills and energies to this end.

Mir Gul Khan was a staunch and vocal supporter of the “Freedom Movement” and his poetry covers a period ranging from the era of World War I till the close of the twentieth century. He adopted a style of his own and his poetry is purposefully imbued with the consciousness of all shades of modernity such as Marxism, Science, Freedom Movement, etc. Besides, he eloquently spoke for the ordinary people of Balochistan which makes it abundantly clear that he was acutely conscious of the class based society of Balochistan. His nationalistic spirit urged him to participate vehemently in the ‘Progressive Movement’ and take active part in practical politics. Owing to his political views he was confined several times, but he continued to write daring verses even behind the bars. As a representative poet of Balochi language he almost touched every strain of poetical thought, but, as he was practically involved in politics, most of his poetic compositions carry a strong stamp of his personal social-political considerations. A significant part of his poetry consists of nationalistic, progressive and revolutionary content.

**Progressive Approach**

Mir Gul Khan was basically a progressive poet and was most impressed with the style of progressive writers, but the scope and content of his poetry required a style and approach that stretched far beyond mere progressivism. After matriculation he went to Lahore for further studies, but, unfortunately, he could not complete his studies due to an eye disease, yet the literary environment of Lahore left much of an impression on his mind. On his return to Balochistan from Lahore, he found that the movement for political freedom had already touched a chord with the people of Balochistan and the wave of social and political consciousness was visibly surging. At that time Balochistan had completely fallen into the hands of the British as the system they introduced to offer itself as a better alternative than the obsolete tribal system of Balochistan. The majority of Balochs had bowed before the British government and had thoroughly accepted their dominion. The local *sardars* became part and parcel of the new system and ruthlessly exploited their population through local and royal *jirgas*.

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In such a situation it was not possible for Mir Gul Khan Naseer to become a silent spectator and resist the urge to give voice to the suppressed people of Balochistan. Therefore, he joined the movement started by Mir Abdul Aziz Kurd and Nawab Yousuf Ali Magsi and addressed his people like a ferocious tiger:

Friends! I have come up with a new voice and a fresh vision  
My songs of freedom are full of glory and passion,  
Courtesan poets! Give up the eulogies of kings and their ministers  
Stand by and speak for the helpless and suppressed people.  
Fight against the oppressors,  
And strengthen the cause of the peasants and workers

At another place he roars to the exploiters in a similar fashion:

O, Lords and arrogant chieftains,  
Wealthy blood suckers;  
Blinded by comforts and luxuries  
Leave your luxurious palaces

And account for the wealth you have piled up. (Naseer, 1996: p, 11- 12)

Mir Gul Khan speaks not only against the injustices that had permeated into the social fabric of Balochistan, but also expressed his anger against racial discrimination, rampant corruption and ruthless exploitation throughout the world. He considered this exploitative system as the root cause of all evil and thus revolted against the notable *Sardars*, *Khans* and *Nawabs*. He did not fight this battle alone rather stirred the conscience of workers, peasants and shepherds and urged them to join him in his struggle against the exploiters and oppressors:

These palaces, these spacious bungalows,  
This pomp and show and this abundance of wealth  
All this has not been the result of their efforts  
But has been raised on our sweat and blood (Naseer, 1971: p, 151)

Mir Gul Khan always supported healthy trends in society and strongly resisted the forces of despotism. He was against any kind of reconciliation with the exploiters. He says:

Reconciliation with despots and tyrants is not possible  
Never appeal to them for mercy  
Snatch your rights through the barrel of the gun  
If you are aware and possess reason (ibid, 115)

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Mir Gul Khan Naseer continually struggled for the uplift of the Baloch people so much so that even in his dreams he used to sing about the pathetic plight of his people. In one of his dreams he saw Jam Durak who inquired him (Mir Gul) regarding the Baloch people to which he replied in these glaring words:

Oh my invaluable poet  
 The condition of this mundane life is not worth telling  
 All the ethics of this living have turned turtle  
 The lust of wealth has made us blind  
 The state of the field is the replica of the miseries of a peasant  
 And the same is the worst condition of the shepherd also  
 Half naked barefooted, so pauper to arrange foods  
 Anguish and shows anger at his fate  
 Wealthy and rich classes are leech of the society  
 Who extract his hard earned money like leeches? (Naseer, 1996: p, 21)

Mir Gul Khan was not in favor of personal endeavor against oppression and injustice, but believed in a joint struggle against this exploitative system. He wanted to take along with him all the suppressed, including the shepherds, peasants and workers to take head on the exploiters. He urges his fellows to unleash their wrath against their joint enemy:

Fellows rise with new determination  
 And symbol of the red flag in hand  
 The wealthy are parasites and cruel  
 They suck our blood and control our resources  
 And lead a luxurious life  
 Therefore, rise with fresh vigor and energy  
 To throw them away from power (Naseer, 2011: 106)

**His Revolutionary Spirit and Mass Appeal**

Ideological maturity of a person plays an important role in the development and growth of his person. Since Mir Gul Khans ideological orientations were both progressive and revolution, therefore, a significant part of his poetry is marked with an intense revolutionary zeal which ignited the hearts and minds of his readers. However, his revolutionary spirit did not provoke him to indulge in petty sloganeering. On the contrary, he carefully and masterly handled the sensitive subjects of his poetry. His poetry is not a propaganda that serves any particular political interests, but is a common heritage of Baloch people.

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The element of social and political awareness was there in Baloch poetry right from the beginning, yet Mir Gul Khan, Naseer put it on a sound ideological basis. It was natural for a man like Mir Gul Khan, who carried a deep love of humanity in his heart, to be influenced by the progressive and revolutionary movement because at that time all scholars of India were united and were busy in a joint struggle against British imperialism. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a colossus event in human history, which was warmly welcomed throughout the world by the subjugated and suppressed nations. Mir Gul Khan's poetry in Balochi language, particularly "*šap girók*" shows that Marxism had left a visible mark on his mind. Having been influenced by Marks' theory of dialectic materialism he would interpret the struggle between various classes of society in the light of the actual designs of the feudalists.

Mir Gul Khan was most probably the first among the new Balochi literature who established the foundation of protest, rebellion and resistance in modern Balochi poetry. His poetry carries a strong protest against political pressures, social injustice, economic exploitation and overall suppression in society. In one of his poems "*Ustamān šā'ir*", a poet of the masses, he not only identifies himself with the weak and less privileged but also wrote that any poet who does not highlight the pathetic plight of his people in his poetry is not in essence a poet but a mere slave of personal desires.

It is not possible to write happy songs in such a situation  
Praise the braids or beautiful face of my beloved,  
Or talk about pleasant companies of my companions  
I cannot sale my conscience (ibid, 17)

I cannot compromise with a life full of luxuries and comforts rather I am a companion of the deprived and the subjugated. It is true that Mir Gul Khan was driven by passion and anger, and in his quest for social and political revolution made tall claims and, at times, even violated the artistic and aesthetic principles but on the whole his poetry embraces the principles of aesthetic and creative art.

As mentioned earlier, every poet is a product of his environment and times and as such draws his spiritual food from his surroundings. This fact does not allow a poet to remain isolated from his environment. Mir Gul Khan is not an exception to this generalization and followed the national tradition in which a poet is very much there in battlefield along with the public. Apart from being a poet, he was also practically involved in politics and, therefore,

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fully participated in the nation's struggle for their rights. He considered the *sardars* as the representatives of the exploitative system.

Children are counting their tears  
The old are facing innumerable sufferings  
And mothers silently bear their losses.  
The poor, neither get alms nor loans  
O brother  
Only the *Sardar* rules (p, 65)

As Mir Gul Khan was a poet of the masses, therefore, he presented his revolutionary philosophy to the masses in the language of the ordinary people. In one of his poems "*bagi aan*" 'I am a rebel' he presented his tempestuous views in an artistic manner, but in a very simple language:

I am a rebel! rebel! rebel!  
I am fire, and sword  
I am cannon of revenge  
I fight against tyranny  
I am a rebel! (p, 111-113)

The audience of Gul Khan Naseer's poetry is the masses and there is not a shadow of doubt that he was a representative poet of the masses who strongly identified himself with the ordinary people. Due to his strong commitment with Baloch people, Gul Khan Naseer has not only got the honour of being a representative poet of Baloch culture but had also got other feathers in his cap. For instance, he was an intellectual, a journalist, a writer, a historian, a researcher, a politician and a son of the prominent Sardarkhel tribe. But it is his greatness that in spite of being a member of that tribe, he stood against it along with the masses in favor of them and advocated their cause till the end

Mir Gul Khan was a brave man and talked to the masses without any fear.

Whether we go astray  
Or fell into a deep gorge  
Whether we get lost in  
A desert or jangle and get destroyed  
But we don't accept  
A traitor as our leader (Naseer, 2014: p, 116)

**Mir Gul Khan Naseer and Nationalism**

Before the partition of India most poets of Balochistan wrote poetry in Urdu. For example, Mir Yusuf Aziz Mugsli, Mir Muhammad Hussain Unqa and Gul Khan were much impressed with these poets, therefore, he began to compose poetry in Urdu to create unity among the Baloch and make them love their motherland. But after the partition of India and the departure of British he realized that freedom had merely changed the faces of their masters. The manner of exploitation was changed, but the exploiters were still there. He felt that they did not get rid of imperialism and poverty. Similarly, the hardships and miseries that had made life difficult for the poor and downtrodden did not subside. In such a situation it was indeed difficult for Mir Gul Khan to become a silent spectator and see his people suffering. Therefore, he picked his pen again and began to write daring verses against the ruthless rulers.

Although he belonged to Sardarkhel tribe but he was by nature a free man, that's why he stood by the weak in their struggle. Meanwhile, he also raised his voice against the *Jirga* system and those who promoted this system. He was against the advocates of *jirga* system because he did not want the fate of the poor to be decided in these jirgas.

Initially Gul Khan Naseer's poetry had a tribal shade to it, but very quickly he turned this tribal shade into a national one and became a nationalist politician. In this way his national poetry and nationalism became one. Gul Khan, Naseer opens his Balochi collection "Gulbang" with a prayer, he says:

Oh Lord creates amongst Balochis such a brave one  
 Who is intelligent, sacrificing and merry hearted?  
 And enlightened and whose vision is as vast and  
 As endless as the oceans. His thinking is free of  
 Out dated culture and tradition and ancient tales.  
 Who is joyous and lively in the toughest of times?  
 Whose heart is free from the dangers of the storm?  
 Oh Lord, keep the Balochis alive and shining  
 And humiliate the ones with bad intentions for them.(Naseer, 1986: p,6)

**Conclusion**

Gul Khan, Naseer adored his nation and made Balochis the basic center of attention of his poetry. But Gul Khan Naseer's Baloch vision is not just racial but also class based. Gul Khan Naseer's Baloch is an ordinary

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Baloch, i.e a camel driver Baloch, a Farmer Baloch, and a Fisherman Baloch. He repeatedly mentions the laborers Baloch but never mentions the Governor Baloch, Inspector Baloch, Deputy Commissioner Baloch, etc. According to Mir Gul Khan Balochs are high spirited and have chaste character. Therefore, he urges them not be lazy, defeated and low and opportunistic. Mir Gul Khan Baloch is fast and swift like an arrow leaving the bow who should always act like an arrow shooting from an iron wall. Mir Gul Khan's Baloch is like a thunderbolt which burns everything to ashes.

In short, most of the topics of Gul Khan Naseer's poetry are concerned with progressive approach, revolution, masses and nationalism.



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