

## Evolution of Balochi Broadcast Media

**Zakir Hussain<sup>1</sup>, Jeeyand Kashif Sajidi <sup>1</sup>  
Abdul Naeem Sadiq<sup>2</sup> & Tahir Jamaldini<sup>3</sup>**

### Abstract

*This paper attempts to throw light upon the history of electronic media of Balochi language. Balochi broadcasts started in 1949 from Karachi. Balochi programs were given only 45 minutes from which 20 minutes were for music, 10 minutes for news, 05 minutes for the regular program 'Hamara Pakistan' (Our Pakistan) and the remaining ten minutes were for talk shows, features and etc. On October 17, 1956 Quetta Radio Station began and the Balochi programs were suspended from Karachi Station. PTV's Quetta Station was started as pilot station in 1974. Vsh News televised various range of programs including news, talk shows and programs on current affair. Sabzbaat Balochistan, based in Quetta, was run by a group of people who owned "The East Films Pvt Ltd", a television advertising agency in Hub. Furthermore, this paper will discuss hurdles which Balochi broadcasts faced during the time of their evolution.*

**Key Words: Balochi, Broadcast Media, Radio Pakistan, PTV-Bolan, Vsh News**  
**Introduction**

People receive more and more news from electronic sources with the growing importance of broadcast media. Broadcast media is made up of radio and television. Radio and television broadcasting include the production and transmission of educational, entertaining and news-related programming (Study.com). Broadcasting is defined as "communications to the public of sound or images or both by means of radio diffusion, including communication by telecast" (Abrar, 2016, p.9).

This study discusses the evolution of broadcast media in Balochi language which at least have 25 to 30 million speakers all over the world and is one of the sixty richest languages of the world (Khamosh, 2015, p.6). In 1910 radio was used as a medium for mass communication to convey various messages. Many countries established their radio stations between 1925 and 1929

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturers, Department of Media Studies, University of Balochistan, Quetta

<sup>2</sup> Chief Editor Daily Gwadar Times

<sup>3</sup> M.Phil Scholar, University of Balochistan, Quetta.

(Badar, n-d, p. 322) but the Balochs got a chance to utilize radio as a mean of promoting their language in 1949.

### **Aims and objectives of the study**

1. To explore the genesis of Balochi Broadcast Media.
2. To highlight the contribution of Baloch broadcasters who served as the pioneers of Balochi broadcasts.
3. To know what hurdles Balochi broadcasts faced during their evolving time.

### **Data Collection Method**

Due the historical nature of the study, the data was collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, magazines and online sources.

### **The First Radio Broadcasts in Balochi (1949)**

The first regular international broadcast started in 1927 from Radio Netherland (Hussain, 1997, p.1). In Indo-Pak Subcontinent, organized broadcasting was started on July 23, 1927 from the Indian State Broadcasting Service's Bombay Station. The Indian part, which was separated as Pakistan, got its first broadcast station in Peshawar on March 6, 1935 (p.1). In December 16, 1937, a broadcasting station was organized in Lahore and in December, 1939, another station was established in Dhaka (Badar, n-d, p.325). Pakistan introduced Karachi station with two 50-kilowatt short-wave transmitters, after the partition in 1949 (Hussain, 1997, p.7).

Radio Pakistan from its Karachi station introduced a daily 45-minute program in Balochi on December 25, 1949. The contents of program were music, talk-shows, features and news bulletins (Baloch, 2015). The Balochi program was produced by Maulvi Khair Muhammad Nadvi and Ali Muhammad Chagala was the program in-charge (Dad, 2013, p.11).

Balochi program were of 45 minutes, 20 minutes for music, 10 for news, 05 for a regular program, called, '*Hamara Pakistan*' (Our Pakistan) and the other 10 minutes were for features, talk shows and etc. (Hashimi, 1986, p.245).

*Table: 1 Time devoted to Balochi broadcasts (1949), Radio Pakistan Karachi*

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Programs contents</b>
20 minutes	Music
10 minutes	News

05 minutes	<i>Hamara Pakistan</i> (Our Pakistan)
10 minutes	features /Talk shows etc.
45 minutes (total)	

*Source: Hashimi, 1986, p.245*

After Maulvi Nadvi, Sayed Zahoor Shah Hashimi produced the Balochi program. When Sayed Hashimi shifted from Gwadar to Karachi, Maulvi Nadvi requested, in written, the then director, Qutab Hussain to replace him with Sayed Hashimi. He wrote:

Mr. Zahoor Shah Hashimi has come from Gwadar who is a scholar of Balochi. I think he is the most competent person to run the Balochi program. Therefore, I recommend him to be appointed on my position... (Dad, 2013, p.19)

Zahoor Shah Hashimi served Radio Pakistan for five years even when he was in a conflict with himself because of that job but reconciled with himself owing to his love for the Balochi language. He observed the narrow-mindedness of the officials of Radio Pakistan against the Balochi language (Hashimi (1986, p. 245).

According to Sayed Zahoor Shah Hashimi, the officials of Radio Pakistan produced difficulties for the Balochi program from time to time and they succeeded in their mission by suspending the 45-minutes Balochi programs of Karachi Station in 1956 (Hashimi, 1986, p.246). Hashimi (1986) writes, “suspending the Balochi program and depriving four million Baloch listeners of Sind was just an act of narrow-mindedness, they did it as if the programs were illegally being broadcasted” (p.247).

The Balochi broadcasts suffered heavily. The Baloch working for those programs, who were government employees, were asked to bring separate written permissions for every program (Hassan & Ahmed, 1951, June). It was beyond one’s understanding that why the controller took this decision even though the employees had submitted their departmental permissions once and there were just few educated Baloch, who were doing those programs.

However, Balochi programs were a great experience for the initiators. They recruited college students to translate and narrate news. The news was translated from English. With the passage of time a variety of the contents were enhanced. Features, short stories, romantic ballads, plays, music and Islamic tales and other specific programs for children and women were broadcasted regularly (Baloch, 2015). According to B.A Baloch:

The Balochi program of Radio Pakistan Karachi Station served as a great boon to the Balochi language and the development of its literature and music. The Balochi broadcasts helped to generate great interest and enthusiasm amongst the poorly educated but spirited Baloch population of Karachi.

In an editorial of August 1951, *Monthly Oman* requested government of Pakistan to establish a radio station in Quetta. It wrote:

It is the need of the hour that a radio station should be established in Quetta... as the neighboring countries, India and Afghanistan are preparing to attack on Pakistan; we have to increase our broadcasting and have work on this medium to propagate for uniting the people in Balochistan. (Hassan & Ahmed, 1951, August)

On October 17, 1956 Quetta Radio Station began and the Balochi programs were suspended from Karachi Station.

*Sangat Labzanki Majlis* in Turbat held a meeting on December 8, 1990 in which major problems regarding Balochi language were discussed and an appeal was made before the government to restart the Balochi broadcasts for Karachi stations which were suspended in 1956. It was also requested to start Balochi programs on TV (Baloch, *et al*, 1991, January/February) but to no avail. Suspension of Balochi broadcasts from Karachi deprived 4 million Baloch (excluding the Baloch listeners in Gulf countries) of the programs of their mother tongue.

### **Balochi Broadcasts from Radio Pakistan Quetta**

The Quetta Radio Station of Pakistan was inaugurated on October 17, 1956 by the then Commissioner of Quetta Mr. Muaz-ud-Din Ahmed. A 1-kilowatt transmitter was installed in a rented building in Makaran House at Saryab Road Quetta, covering a broadcasting area of only thirty miles (Tahir, 2006, p.97). Initially, there were only two studios, one for news and talk shows and the other for music dramas etc. The broadcasts were only in Urdu and Balochi (p.298).

According to Bashir Baloch, "Though there were limited facilities but the qualitative planning and production of the programs proved the hard work of the initiators of the Balochi broadcasts and most of the programs were broadcasted live" (as cited in Tahir, 2006, p.298). Programs for women and children were also designed including news, talk shows and features.

Mr. K.H Ansari was the first news editor at Radio Pakistan Quetta, who was replaced by Kazmeen Naqvi in 1957. After Mr. Naqvi, Azam Ali became the in charge of the news section in 1961. There were three translators in this

section, one for each language including Balochi, Brahui and Pashto, who were employed on contract basis. It was surprising that the news was not broadcasted in English but was written in English first and then was translated into the local languages (Tahir, 2006, p.298).

Quetta Station was shifted to its present building on August 1962 leaving a receiving center at Saryab Road with a 10-KW medium wave transmitter which was inaugurated on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1962 by the then Information Minister, Chaudhary Fazal ul Qadir. This enabled the station to cover an area of two hundred sq. miles (Ahmed, 2015, p.294). In 1962, with the establishment of a receiving center in Saryab Road, the number of radio sets increased to 7,202 from 5,417. After the installation of another 10 KW shortwave transmitter, till 1963 the number of radio sets in Quetta and Kalat region increased to 10,703 (p.196).

In April 1974, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto inaugurated a 150-kilowatt transmitter at Yaro, a place twenty miles away from the provincial capital, Quetta, increasing 1,000 miles in the coverage area. The Radio Pakistan Quetta Station, was listened in the neighboring countries including, Iran, Afghanistan and the Gulf States (Tahir, 2006, p.298).

Just a 23 percent time was devoted to Balochi language on radio, and the Balochi program was on aired such a time that most of the people could not benefit that (Bugti, 1995, p. 52). During sports seasons the Balochi programs were suspended because the sport news, reviews and analysis were broadcasted from the same channel which carried the Balochi programs (p.173).

According to an official of Radio, "It has a national mindset, not local and remains the state's mouthpiece, translating national news in local languages instead of doing local news, and limiting itself to promoting local languages and culture" (as cited in Khan, 2010, p.10).

The purists also criticize Radio Pakistan saying that the culture and language promoted by the radio have influences of other languages and culture (Khan, 2010, p.20). Prof. M. Aziz Bugti (1995) states that, "Balochi language is given the least time on radio and such news are narrated which are beyond understanding (p.164)...It is felt that the Balochi programs are a burden on the station" (p.165).

The following table shows the language wise complexion of programs broadcasted from Radio Pakistan Quetta during 1978-80.

**Table:2 Language wise broadcast of Radio Pakistan Quetta 1978-80.**

Languages	Time Devoted (percentage)
Urdu	30
Brahui	20
Balochi	23
Pashto	23
Others	04

Source: Shamsuddin (n.d), Radio Pakistan, A survey

However, this limited time helped many young Baloch writers who had started writing dramas for radio. Some of the early dramas and their writers are as follows; *Durdana* (a Balochi name for girl) by Amanullah Gichki, *Lala* (Brother) by Amanullah Gichki, *Shab Kay Charpas Int* by Amanullah Gichki, *Bahut* (Asylum seeker) by Atta Shad, *Sang* (Engagement) by Atta Shad, *Mual* (purpose) by Atta Shad, *Hani o Shay Mureed* by Basheer Ahmed Baloch, *Kia o Sado* by Ghous Bakhsh Sabir, *Mehruk* by Ghous Bakhsh Sabir, *Bebarg o Granaz* by Abdul Hakeem (Shahwani, 2012, pp.229.230).

### **Turbat Station**

The second station of PBC was commissioned on Turbat on January 4, 1981 which was inaugurated by the then Chief Secretary of Balochistan, Raja Ahmed Khan. A 250-watt medium wave transmitter was installed in a two-studio rented building broadcasting in Balochi and Urdu languages (Naseebullah, n-d).

In an editorial of *Zamana Balochi* (1981, February) it is written, “The station is a New Year gift for the people of Turbat... but the voice is mostly listened in Hindi languages and the people must know what the intentions of the government behind this are...”, and to listen the programs one has to carry the radio set and stay by the station building (Bugti, 1995, p. 52).

### **Khuzdar Station**

Khuzdar station was established with a 250-watt medium wave transmitter on June 17, 1981 which covered 15 to 20 miles radius at the time of its inception (Naseebullah, n-d). On December 6, 1986 a 300 KW transmitter (costing 32.5

million rupee) fabricated by PBC engineers was unveiled by the Federal Information and Broadcasting Minister (Shamsuddin, n.d).

### **Balochi broadcasts from FM Radio**

There were five FM stations (three private and two state-owned) on air until 2010 in Balochistan which are as followings:

1. FM 91 Gwadar
2. Sachal FM 105
3. Chiltan FM 88 Quetta
4. FM 101 Gwadar (PBC-owned)
5. FM 101 Quetta (PBC-owned)

FM 101 is a state-owned entertainment channel based in Quetta. It is promoting local culture and traditions, broadcasting folk music and poetry in regional languages. Women, students and house wives are the most listeners of this station who send bags of cards on festivals; such as Eid (Khan, 2010, p.39).

The FM stations have more music than current news, views and affairs. According to Khan (2010), People want news and information but little is available on FM radio stations, either private or state-owned (p.41).

### **PTV Bolan**

PTV's Quetta Station started as a pilot station in 1974. Its regular transmission was started on January 2, 1975 with five hours daily programs in five languages including, Balochi, Brahui, Pashto and English (Khan, 2010, p. 24). The role of PTV Quetta, like Radio Pakistan, was also restricted to the projection of local culture and entertainment with a missing political discourse and awareness (p.26).

Balochistan is a multi-lingual province where Balochi, Brahui, Pashto and Hazargi are spoken as local languages. The people needed such a TV channel in the province, which could promote their culture, customs, language and literature. For this purpose Pakistan Television Corporation Limited went to launch PTV Bolan on August 14, 2005 in PTV Quetta Center at Hali Road, Quetta (PTV, official site).

The transmission of PTV Bolan starts from 4:00 PM to 12:00 MN. In this duration recorded programs and live programs are telecasted in Balochi, Pashto and Brahui which also include nine live news bulletins in this eight hours' transmission. The same transmission is repeated on the next day (PTV, official site). The following table shows the transmission pattern.

*Table: 3 Daily transmission pattern of PTV Bolan*

Program	Timing	Duration
Bismillah + Sirat-e-Mustaqeem (Balochi Religious Program )	04:00PM to 04:25PM	25 minutes
Children Program + Documentaries	04:25 PM to 04:55 PM	30 minutes
Regional Slot on PTV-I Home & PTV Bolan	04:55 PM to 06:00 PM	65 minutes
Brahui Time	06:00 PM to 08:00 PM	120 minutes
Balochi Time	08:00 PM to 10:00 PM	120 minutes
Pashto Time	10:00 PM to 12:00 MN	120 minutes

Source: PTV (official site).<http://www.ptv.com.pk/public/userView/ptvCorporate/ptvBolan>

Aurangzeb Khan (2010) writes, “PTV Quetta’s biggest contribution is the promotion and introduction of regional culture, literature, history, poetry and music to the wider world” (p.26). It reaches 75% of Balochistan’s population through 15 boosters in various districts (p. 26).

### **Sabzbaat Balochistan (Balochistan’s first TV channel)**

*Sabzbaat Balochistan*<sup>1</sup>, a private Balochi language TV channel, was launched. It was a big step forward as the Baloch population was demanding that for a long time (Khan, 2010, p. 82). *Sabzbaat Balochistan*, based in Quetta, was run by a group of people who owned “The East Films Pvt Ltd”, a television advertising agency in Hub. It was primarily an infotainment channel having programs in three languages, Balochi, Brahui and English (two hours for each), covering Pakistan, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia and the Gulf (p.82).

The channel, despite lacking advanced equipment and trained professionals, got some popularity because it was the first private local TV channel in Balochistan, other than the state-owned PTV. It aimed to highlight the issues which were missing from the national channels. Its vision statement was:

To channelize a development friendly environment from the coasts of Arabian Sea to the core of Central Asia by exploring Balochistan as an integral part of more developed and integrated Pakistan. Sabzbaat Television

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<sup>1</sup> Balochi for “Long Live Balochistan”



Network will interpret the soul of nation and the ideas of its heroes in order to place Pakistan on the world's developed nations' map.....will set up new norms of media – viewers' reliability, particularly in Balochistan, to let the people own this medium as a true ambassador of peaceful and prosperous future.....the daily air slot...covers all aspect of entertainment, infotainment, documentaries, studio interviews, business and economic reviews, family entertainment, features, sports, analysis, news and news programs. (As cited in Khan, 2010, p. 83)

### **Vsh News**

Vsh News is the first Balochi satellite Television News Channel launched by Visionary Group Pakistan in November 2009 (VSH News). Vsh News televised various range of programs including news, talk shows and programs on current affair. According to its online profile:

A group of talented and highly skilled people work 24 hours for this news channel to inform, entertain and educate the vast Baloch community with daily regional, national and international affairs along with various other family entertainment programs like health, education, religion, music, sports and infotainment, round the clock all seven days a week covering all segments of our society. An endeavor like VSH NEWS is a commendable effort in the direction of safe guarding the Balochi language, culture and heritage. (VSH News)

Vsh News is popular among the Baloch because of its cultural and current affairs programs.

*Table: 4 The Viewership of Vsh News in Pakistan <sup>1</sup>*

<b>Area/region</b>	<b>Viewership</b>
Interior Sindh	more than 50%
Karachi	30%
Punjab	more than 35%
Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa (KPK)	15%
Balochistan	90%

*(Source: Vsh News)*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

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<sup>1</sup>Besides Pakistan, a huge VSH News viewers who are residing abroad, mainly in U.A.E, Bahrain, Iran, Afghanistan, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, India and Saudi Arabia.

Other than then above, Radio Kabul also has broadcasts in Balochi and Radio Zahidan has a daily program in Balochi since 1960s. According to Carina Jahani (2013), “these broadcasts are viewed with suspicion by the Baloch, as they are regarded as “official propaganda tools of the respective government” rather than as genuine concern for the Balochi language”.

Before print and electronic media the Baloch practiced a traditional communication system which was called “*Hal-o-Ahwal*”, giving and receiving news when one met another (Janmahmad, 1982) or narration of news. This traditional communication system could easily serve as the basis for electronic media in Balochi language but owing to various reasons it could not do so and the most factor is of Balochi language’s unofficial status and not being the language of administration and education.

On July 14, 1955 *Ustaman Gal*, a political party was formed by Prince Abdul Kareem, which demanded to separate province for the Baloch on linguistic, cultural and geographical basis and where Balochi should be the official language (Janmahmad, 1989, p.196). In early 1960s, when the Baloch Educational Society and *Warna Waninda Gal* (Educated Youths’ Organization) demanded for the recognition of Balochi as the official language, same demand was raised for Brahui from its speakers and Ghous Bakhsh Raisani, a tribal chief who served as a governor of Balochistan, opposed Balochi to be recognized as an official language (Janmahmad, 1989, p.260). When Ghous Bakhsh Bezinjo was the governor of Balochistan, he declared Urdu as the language of official correspondence (Rahman, 1996, p.165).

Another hurdle behind the development of Balochi broadcasts were the absence of private broadcasting, and core reason behind this was the absence of advertising industry. The revenue of newspapers, magazines, television and radio are generated from advertising. For instance, 25 per cent of TV in the United States consists of advertisements (Casey *et al*, 2004, p. 3).

There is more music on broadcast media than current affairs. “News is becoming entertainment, and entertainment news. Journalists bonuses were increasingly tied to profit margins, not to the quality of their work” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p.3). From the very first day Balochi programs of Karachi station were given only 45 minutes from which 20 minutes were for music. Even till today there is more music than current affairs in Balochi broadcasts. However, Vsh News, the first Balochi language news channel, has come up with more current affair programs.

It is said, “People want news and information but little is available on FM radio stations, either private or state-owned”. The role of PTV Quetta, like

Radio Pakistan, is also restricted to the projection of local culture and entertainment with a missing political discourse and awareness.

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