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**Qasim Sajaad “Lamhaat ke Saath”: An enquiry into Kashmir Turmoil.**

**Abstract:** The history of Kashmir is one of the most intriguing history of the world. It has been the subject much historical scholarship and enquiry. There are more than a thousands of accounts of the history of Kashmir concerning the period after the independence of India. This period is the most exciting in the history of Kashmir. Recently a book named “Lamhaat ke Saath: A Diary of Events and Incidents” was published by a senior journalist and editor of a weekly “Shihab”. This book is one of the most important works ever to be published in this genre. It may be an eye opener for the new generation which is most susceptible to the victimization of Kashmir dispute. The author has courageously given an unbiased and honest criticism of all the events that has witnessed Kashmir during this turmoil. This article tries to analyze his perspective into the history of Kashmir. The purpose of this article is to describe the main events mentioned in this book that have a drastic effect on course of Kashmir history. Particularly the Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah’s leadership, involvement of Jamiat-i-Islami in political scenario, fraudulent elections, exodus of Pandits are the most important aspects of Kashmir history that have influenced the course of its history.

**Keywords:** Kashmir history, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, exodus, elections, historical.

In his epigraph to *Areopagitica* (1644) A Speech of Mr. John Milton For the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing to the Parliament of England, A greatest English poet after William Shakespeare, John Milton mentions some verses from ancient Greek writer Euripedes from his book *Hicetid*. He writes:

This is true liberty when free born men

Having to advise the public may speak free,  
Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise,  
Who neither can nor will, may behold his peace;  
What can be jester in a state then this? (Eurip. Hecetid)

Freedom of press is the basic foundation for the stronger democracy as well as most important to propagate the violation of basic human rights. Democracy can't be legal and upto the aspiration of the people until it doesn't recognize the importance of the freedom of press. It doesn't mean that the people engaged in press and media can take undue advantage from this freedom but actually it gives it greater responsibility for honest and unbiased criticism of social and political events. In a race of competition between the different press, news and media agencies, the temptations to gain more customer field, media jumps to dishonest means to get ahead in the competition. But whatever is the job of press it can't be denied that it is the most important part of the modern society. It is not easy to be honest and straight forward at the helm of affairs, it needs unusual mettle and daresness to speak against the tide. It is been said that a great leader is that who leads the people towards the way they want to, but a greater leader is he who leads the people towards the way they don't want to but to the way they ought to go. The same is the case with media.

In a disputed territory like Kashmir the role of press becomes even more important and responsible. The question is not only in regard to government, but equally important are the aspirations of the people. Ever since the British left India and divided the nation into two, the question of Kashmir is has remained the most burning international political dispute. Millions of people have become the victim of this political and to some extent social dispute. Thus it needs a greater mettle and courage to be unbiased in such a scenario.

History of Kashmir has been one of the most intriguing in the history of mankind. It has seen many rises and falls in its course. But one thing is historically proven that whenever Kashmir came under foreign domination it was always because of the conspiracy of native people, be it Mughal invasions in the sixteenth century, Afghan invasions in the second half of eighteenth century, and sikh rule in nineteenth century. And this holds true even to other nations. After the departure of Britishers the Kashmir became the most violent grounds for political dominance. The issue is still burning in the same way as before hundred years. This is the reason why the importance of press is more important in Kashmir.

Recently a book in urdu language titled *Lamhaat ke saath- A Diary of Events and Incidents* written by an eminent Kashmiri journalist and editor of local weekly *Shihab*, Qasim Sajad, was published by him. The book is kind of judgement day document as well as an eye opener for the new generation youth in Kashmir who have not so much knowledge about the events at ground level, and easily become the victim of this situation in Kashmir. There have been thousands of publications on Kashmir and Kashmir issue, this book is unusually striking because of its local flavour and scholarly simplicity. Like a great American writer Ernest Hemmingway, he tells the grave story with utmost simplicity which is at the same time most

brave expression. The writer bravely exposes the leaders who took political career for their own worldly ends and at the same time fooled people by their cunningness. He also without being psychophant gives a vibrant account of good people, who deserve it. He has given the account of different incidents and events in most appropriate language. His contribution is noteworthy to the extent of his honest criticism.

The book is divided into short chapters concerning the events and incidents that happened in Kashmir during this turmoil. The author has generally narrated the majority of events that happened in his local district Anantnag and particularly the town of Islamabad and the events that were indirectly linked to Anantnag. He has dealt with every important issue that happened in Anantnag as well as its relation with the events that concerned the whole of Kashmir. The first chapter of the book is concerned with the establishment of Shabina Darsoh in Ratnipora area of Pulwama by Syed Jallal-Ud-Din. This Darsoh was established with purpose of imparting the teachings of Islam and Holy Quran. The second chapter seems to be the largest chapter. In this chapter the author has given an account of his best friend Professor Abdul Gani Madhosh. His acquaintance with Madhosh Sahib happened in Shabina Darsoh. The author has included a letter by Madhosh Sahib to his friends. Regarding the importance of letter the author writes, "The letter written by Madhosh Sahib to his most intimate friends, was found necessary to be included in this book. Because from this letter there is a clear reflection of the feelings and emotions of Madhosh Sahib's youth.

There are a number of chapters related Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the leader of the Kashmir's freedom struggle. At that time the author was still a child and hung posters of the movement with his friends. There is also a chapter on Indira Sheikh Accord of 1974 which was signed between Sheikh Abdullah and then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi when Mirza Afzal Beg failed to restore Sheikh Sahib his lost Chair of Chief Ministership as he had served in jail for period of eleven years with Afzal Beg and others. Actually before Indira Sheikh Accord, Sheikh Sahib had sent Afzal Beg to talk to Parthasarthy who was chosen by Indian Government. Without yielding any conclusion the meeting was a failure. Regarding this the author writes:

Meeting for half a year, considering the points of agenda between Delhi and Kashmir did not yield any solution. When Afzal Beg returned to inform Sheikh Sahib about the failure of his meetings and told him that Delhi was not prepared to give him the Chief Ministry. On this, in the words of Afzal Beg, Sheikh Sahib was very angry and told to Beg Sahib that for period of half a year he wasn't able to restore him his Chief Ministry.

It was after the failure of Beg Parthasarthy meeting that Sheikh Abdullah himself went to Indira Gandhi and signed the Indira-Sheikh Accord in 1974. The result was this that the then Chief Minister of state Mir Qasim was forced to leave the chair for Sheikh Sahib. The author has rightly given reference from the national papers with respect to the Indira Nehru Accord: "Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah bent his head to Indira Gandhi." (Quami Awaaz: Delhi Edition, 7 August, 1975). There is a chapter on 1977 election when congress drew their support to national conference within two years of Indira-Sheikh Accord. The author has

mentioned the fool proof victory of National Conference by two third majority and the worst defeat of Indian National Congress. As an eye opener to the crisis within the National Conference and hegemony of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah on the party, the author has given full chapter on the expulsion of Mirza Afzal Beg from National Conference. The author has brought to light that Mirza Sahib was suspended from the party when he was sent by Sheikh Abdullah to Delhi and he had some agents to keep watch on him. And Afzal Sahib too was suspicious on Sheikh Sahib's intention. With respect to some information Beg Sahib was expelled from the party. According to the author this was the great sorrow for Beg Sahib. The Author gives Beg Sahib's own words to prove his point:

Sheikh Sahib acts like an army general and now to provide benefits for his relatives and close friends he has made all party members as hostage. His sons and brother in laws were engulfed by the grief that on Sheikh Sahib's death, Beg Sahib may become the Chief Minister of the state, due to which their interests may be endangered. Thus they made a plan to expel me from the party.

As we see today that Jamiat-i-Islami is a pro Freedom party but majority of today's youth are illiterate of the fact that it contested parliamentary elections under the constitution of India in 1971 and regarded the pro freedom party of that time, The Plebiscite Front as an Islamic. They contested elections when majority of parties boycotted elections and all the pro freedom leaders were behind the bars. It is strange to understand why both the antagonist options are correct for this party. Either it can be the best of the plans or the worst mockery on humanity. But stranger than this, is the fact that Anantnag faction of this party boycotted the election. This defies the very unity of this party. The author says on the authority of local gossip that congress party had brought Ghulam Rasool Baba of Bijbehara, who was the Ameer of the District Anantnag Jamiat-Islami into their confidence to boycott elections. There is a worst moral allegation against one of the leaders of this party,

He mentions that Mufti Muhammad Syed who leader of Pradesh Congress at that time bribed Ghulam Rasool to proclaim the boycott of election. However, the party lost due to unfair elections. In the next Legislative Assembly election held in 1975, Syed Mir Qasim decided to give four assembly seats to Jamiat. Regarding the elections held in Anantnag the author is self evidence to the fact that a person named Muhamad Shafi Qureishi took some urchins to beat and expel the Jamiat agents from a polling booth and himself casted about two hundred votes. And when he was asked by the author about this incident, he replied that politics is dirty game.

One of the crucial stages in the history of Kashmir was the 1987 elections. If we can blame jamiat-islami for contesting election during 1970's, but this time the main stream parties did the most grievous of political acts. During this election Muslim United Front also participated. Although the party had the support of the people, due to unfair means National Conference won the elections. The divisional commissioner of Kashmir Abdul Majeed Khan Banhali directly went to Khanabal Counting Centre and proclaimed that National Conference

should be regarded victorious although they were losing. Regarding this the author's own words are best to explain. He writes:

Not only this, the unfair election results that came forward engulfed the whole of Sub-continent with Kashmir and till now Kashmir is suffering its outcomes. Although the government was possible by coalition of Congress and National Conference, but the general public had lost their faith in them. On this, the scholars from India and Outside said that if the election scandal had not happened, then the situation which is now would have been different.

The author has at the right moment given the reference of the great Indian political thinker Kuldeep Nayar regarding the election fraud in Kashmir. During his visit to Islamabad in 1987 he gave a valuable prediction. He said:

To defeat Muslim United Front, whatever means and plans were used here, will result into disastrous consequences. Whosoever did this job are worst sinners and this situation will have an effective impact on the future of Kashmir

If people had freely drawn their votes in favour of their choice, the acts of restricting this freedom is undemocratic and this can prove to be a Himalayan mistake.

This is what Kashmir is facing today. Even a layman can predict the consequences of such a grave mistake, but at that time making such a prediction is equivalent to prophecy. Such was the insight of those people.

The author has expressed his solidarity with the exodus of Pandits from Kashmir and is grieved for their massacre. The author has given a number of accounts of his Pandit friends who were afraid of the political uncertainty after the 1987 elections. Some of his Pandit friends also regarded the freedom movement as pro-muslim. The murder of Pandits from across the valley like Tikka Lal Palu from Srinagar, Justice Neel Kanth, a social worker Mr Wanchoo, Prem Nath Bhat, poet Saruanad Kaul and his son created a sense of threat among the Pandits of Kashmir and within few days all the Pandits migrated from this Valley. The writer has given full chapter on a Pandit Chaman Lal Kantru who did not migrate with the Pandits. He established a school at Mattan in 1995 which continued till 2008. Chaman Lal showed a letter to the author about the threatening to close the school. Although the author had said that it is the work of another school administration but he didn't take care of his suggestion and left Kashmir. There also an account of another Pandit Pyare Lal Gojha who left in 1990 and who wrote to Shihab till his death in Chanderkote.

Apart from this the author has narrated all the important events and incident in the same courage and simplicity. He also refers that the printing presses were also the biggest targets of threat restricting them to express their criticism and views freely. Even authors press was the victim of this dictation. Manzoor-ul-Islam named Liberation Front Leader threatened him to ratify the report published in his paper *Jo Chup Rahegi Zuban-I-khanjar*, which raised its voice against the atrocities of Front. On not accepting their warning his press was burnt late night. Similar was the case with other presses who spoke out the truth.

Thus, the author has spoken with lionheart, and exposed all the people who are at the helm of affairs with a nice language. The voice is straight from the heart of a common man, but needs a pure and brave courage. The book is a must to be read by new generation so that they can contemplate a little bit about who are to be blamed for the present crisis, so that they may not repeat the sins of their previous leaders and get easily fooled by their leaders about the history of the ongoing movement. Because as Bishm Sahni writes in his novel *Tamas* , “Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.”

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