



Kashmir -Behind The Vale

M.J. Akbar

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Kashmir lies at the edge of India's borders and at the heart of India's consciousness. It is not geography that is the issue; Kashmir also guards the frontiers of ideology. If there was a glow of hope in the deepening shadows of a bitter partition, then it was Kashmir, whose people consciously rejected the false patriotism of fundamentalism and made common cause with secular India instead of theocratic Pakistan. Kashmir was, as Sheikh Abdullah said and Jawaharlal Nehru believed, a stabilising force for India. Why has that harmony disintegrated? Why has the promise been stained by the blood of rebellion? M.J. Akbar, the celebrated author of India: The Siege Within, Nehru: The Making of India, Riot After Riot and The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict between Islam and Christianity delves deep into the past for the roots of Kashmiriyat, the identity and culture that has blossomed within the ring of mountains for thousands of years. He records Kashmir's struggle in the century to first free itself from feudal oppression and then enter the world of modern India in 1947. Placing the mistakes and triumphs of those early, formative years in the perspective of history, the author goes on to explain how the 1980s have opened the way for Kashmir's hitherto marginalised secessionists. Both victory and defeat have their lessons; to forget either is to destabilise the future. Kashmir and the mother country are inextricably linked. India cannot afford to be defeated in her Kashmir.

Kashmir -Behind The Vale Details

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From Reader Review Kashmir -Behind The Vale for online ebook

Suresh Kakkar says

Its one of the few books which help you have a detailed insight into the kashmir issue. I wouldn't say that this book is enough to wholly comprehend the matter but surely a short in the arm for those going deep into Kashmir.

Aakar says

Fascinating history of Kashmir over the ages in the early chapter, followed by the turbulent times of partition. Bit of a shock to read that Sardar Patel was actually not interested in Kashmir's accession to India, and it took a massive effort from Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah to achieve that. In hindsight though, Patel may have been right. Tough to pinpoint what led to such degeneration, seems like a combination of Indira Gandhi's dictatorial streak and Farooq Abdullah's lackadaisical approach. More I read about Nehru, more I respect the way he handled the country (including Kashmir) in really tough times. Which leader doesn't blunder? You cannot erase his legacy as one of our best leaders, as the right wing is currently trying to do. Thoroughly researched, insightful book that clears the Kashmir picture.

Vikas Lather says

good read

Mandar Deokar says

This book is excellently narrated by Mr. M. J. Akbar. I did not find a single line where I feel he is exaggerating. Very reasonable book that every Indian should read to clear their point of view towards Kashmir and Kashmir conflict. I was living those decades (especially 1947-1985) since last 3 months.

Vandita says

Enjoyed this well researched, well written history of Kashmir by MJ Akbar. *Kashmir: Behind the vale*, is short for a history book (300 pages) but packs a punch to bring historical perspective to understand the evolution of 'Kashmiriyat': Kashmiri identity which through centuries was nothing to do with religion (with its emphasis of culture, poetry, crafts, Kashmir's own brand of Sufism). It canters through the long history of alternate rules of afghans, Mughals, hindu Dogras who seemed to almost compete with each other to be more brutal than the previous regime. The strength of the book is to delve in details, quoting from primary and secondary sources (govt papers, letters, UN speeches, books etc), the build of the 'Kashmir issue' and more interestingly, the role of all 'players' on the stage spanning 3 generations (1930-1960 era: Singh, sheikh abdullah, Nehru, Patel. Menon, Jinnah, Mountbatten etc, to later 1970-80s phase: Indira Gandhi, bhutto, ayub

khan). The tale of miscalculations, missed opportunities, vicious cycle of events, politics winning over well being of people almost gives rise to frustration as one reads the book which indeed is the tragic story of this issue. My only gripe with this book is that whilst the new edition was published in 2010, the author says that he hasn't added an 'afterword' to update the commentary since the original book (which covered events till 1990). Thus I felt a bit cheated as the build up till 1990 misses the update of last 2 decades or so in which, if anything, the situation actually deteriorated (whilst it seems to have stabilised a bit now for last 2 years). The author should have taken the effort to update the new edition to fill in for 1990-2010 phase. Nevertheless, I was looking for history book on Kashmir to accompany me for my visit to that lovely state and this was the right book for it. Recommended it.

Koustubh says

Very good book with history and deep insights of the region which has not been left for itself for peace and for tranquility with itself or with others..

Samyuktha jayaprakash says

I'm really impressed. But then i know nil about Kashmir - only whatever i read from this book. The author has brought breakneck speed in a non fiction book xD while the content plays a major role his handling has made it simple and entertaining for a beginner to learn about the indian pak relations over kashmir. The process and confusion on either sides is quite revealing. I found lots of anecdotes and less sources - what with it being a non fiction book - and also found the author to be pretty biased on certain levels :P Learnt a lot and enjoyed this book thoroughly. Shows reality > fiction history politics <3 my favorite the conditions of kashmiri ppl after independence could've been highlighted more.

Anil Swarup says

Kashmir evokes complex thoughts and feelings. The issues involved are complex but it is to the credit of Akbar that he articulates his thoughts and arguments cogently and lucidly. The book makes an extremely interesting reading.

Jeff Clay says

Beautifully written, eloquent, and fair-minded this is a chronicle of missed opportunities, duplicitous behavior, and ineptitudes, well-intentioned and otherwise. It is also a book that ended a quarter century too early. For, Akbar starts at the literal beginning of the history of Kashmir but ends at the beginning of troubles in early 1990. A lot has happened since then, though many might say that it is much of the same. Regardless, if ever a book needed updating, this is it.

Regardless of the reasons for the current cycles of violence (including most recently in July 2016 where I happened to be spend 5 days 'under curfew' before finally slipping away in the dark hours), Akbar goes a long way to explaining the general trends and strands of communalism (for me, just another word for

tribalism, whether religious, ethnic, or both) and secularism in this beautiful but benighted land. One thing that comes clear is that despite Pakistan's best (worst?) attempts the majority of the Kashmiri people consider themselves to be first and foremost Kashmiriyats and not Islamic (or Sikh or Hindu). Or, at least that was the case when the book was first published.

Ram Pee says

One of the finest account on Kashmir history. MJ Akbar brings into life the finest details in a very beautiful manner. A must read for all who really wants to know about history of Kashmir.

Girl from Mumbai says

Agar Firdaus bar ru-e zamin ast
Hami ast o-hami ast o-hami ast.

If there is paradise on earth it is this, it is this, said 'Amir Khusrau' when he saw Kashmir for the first time. And like any paradise it has been cursed. The book "Kashmir – Behind the Vale" By M J Akbar is an amazing read about this disputed Paradise. It is a very well researched historical account from the history of Kashmir to its politics. The author gives us a complete background of what Kashmir was from mystical poets like Lal Ded, Sufis like Nand Rishi, benevolent kings like Bud Shah and idealistic men like Shaikh Abdullah who gave Kashmir its identity of not being a Muslim or a Hindu state but a state that valued it's 'Kashmiriyat' which gave it, its unique identity. M. J Akbar goes in detail about the love that Pandit Nehru had for Kashmir and how he fought all his life for doing what he thought was right for it. The politics in the book is intriguing, whether it is Sardar Patel being indecisive about getting Maharaja Hari Singh to align with India and to the immature politics of a very young Farooq Abdullah. The book grips you, taking you deeper into the realms of the deluded human hearts that have shaped what Kashmir is today. A fabulous and MUST read for anyone who wants to understand the mystery that Kashmir is and how things fell apart.

Ashok Pandey says

A basic tract to understand the history and present of Kashmir. Not good for academic understanding but very useful for a general one. One of the first books one should read to start his kashmir research.

Sarvjeet says

M J Akbar discusses and describes Kashmir with the acumen of a scientist and heart of a poet.

Neha says

Take a politics-friendly person, add to his opinion of Kashmir an extensive history of the land, and you'll

have Kashmir - Behind The Vale.

Memorable quote: "The Kashmiri nose is a long one, but is there no one who can look beyond it?"
I still don't know what the quote means, but the fascination for Kashmir and her (very hot) long noses has this planted in memory!

Chandrasekhar says

A good book for someone interested in the history of Kashmir. Starts right from the beginning with Lal Ded and includes the early history (chapter 2 seems a thriller straight from bollywood and with its turns and twists seems like a comedy).

Post independence, India's handling of the situation is an eye-opener. Its really surprising how many errors Nehru and party committed.
