
Journalistic Services of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai

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Abstract

Although Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai is known for his political services, yet the journalistic services of his are countless. The history of journalism in general and that of Balochistan and Pashto language in particular is incomplete without mentioning the services of Samad Khan Achakzai. This prolific journalist endeavored for the enforcement of Press Act which consumed his energy, time and money. He achieved the arduous task of setting up of a modern printing press. He sold his property and collected donation from general public for the accomplishment of this task. The initiation of weekly Istaqlal is unforgettable service of Achakzai. This newspaper played the role of a nursery where all early journalists of province Balochistan learnt journalistic work. Khan Shaheed, the title used for Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, faced many difficulties in his journalistic life.

Key Words: Abdul Samad Khan, Achakzai, Khan Shaheed, Balochistan, Press Act, Printing Press, Weekly Istaqlal, Journalism, Pashto

Introduction

The cardinal purpose of this paper is to highlight on the services of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai which he had rendered in the field of journalism. Moreover, light will be put on Achakzai's struggle for imposition of Press Act in Balochistan. The endeavors of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai for the purpose of establishment of printing press will also be discussed. Weekly Istaqlal of Khan Shaheed is also to be discussed in this paper. Another aim of this paper is to shed light on the difficulties which Achakzai faced during his journalistic career.

Struggle for the imposition of Press Act

Samad Khan Achakzai wanted to launch his own newspaper but Press Act did not exist in Balochistan till 1937.ⁱ And, it was impossible to launch a newspaper without

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the imposition of the Press Act. Therefore, he started struggle for the imposition of Press Act. Khan Shaheed sought the help of different political leaders belonging to various political parties including Indian National Congress, Muslim League and Muslim Conference.ⁱⁱ He met Molvi Shafi, the then secretary Muslim Conference, and Molvi Sir Muhammad Yaqoob, the then secretary of Muslim League, in order that he might seek their assistance and help for the enforcement of Press Act in Balochistan.ⁱⁱⁱ He also sought the help of Syed Murtoza Badoor, Sir Muhammad Amin, Doctor Sir Zia Uddin and Sir Shafahat Ahmad Khan. The most essential role for the imposition of Press Act on the request of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai was played by Mian Sir Fazal Hussain, member Government of India.^{iv} Molvi Shafi and Molvi Sir Muhammad Yaqoob on the request of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai met Sir Abory Mitacaff, the member Government of India, and pursued him to take measures for the imposition of Press Act in Balochistan.^v The role of Sir Abory Mitacaff cannot be denied. He also took serious measures for the enforcement of Press Act in Balochistan. In fact his stance paved the way to the enforcement of press act in Balochistan. He once told Samad Khan Achakzai, “You do not know how difficult it was to convince the authority to enforce the Press Act in Balochistan.”^{vi} Finally, the efforts of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai bore fruit and Press Act in Balochistan was enforced when he was detained in jail as a political detainee.

Struggle for Establishment of Printing Press

Before 1935, there was no modern and lithograph printing press in Quetta, the center of journalism in Balochistan. Only a few hand press and treadle machines mostly used for English typing were present.^{vii} It was impossible to launch any standard newspaper in the presence of those low quality printing presses, so Samad Khan Achakzai decided to initiate his own printing press. Samad Khan laid the foundation of “Aziz Electric Press” in Quetta. He, in fact, named the press after the name of his friend and untiring Baloch political leader Mir Yousaf Aziz Khan Magsi who had died in 1935’s earthquake. Aziz Electric Press was the first and largest litho-electric press in Balochistan. And, it was the most modern printing press of its time.

The setting up of that printing press cost Rs10000 Rupees. 7500 rupees were collected through the donations of Samad Khan’s friends, peers and general public. And, Samad Khan managed the rest Rs2500 by selling his property. A large of portion of the donation that was Rs2000 was given by Khan-e-Kalat Mir Ahmad Yar Khan.^{viii} Kamal Uddin Ahmad in his book ‘Sahafat Wadi-e-Bolan Main’ says “Mir

Yousaf Aziz Magsi bought a printing press so that he could launch a newspaper from Balochistan and this purpose he collected donations from Mastang. But this could not happen due to his early death. And, after his death Samad Khan Achakzai became the in charge of that printing press.”But, the claim of Kamal Uddin Ahmad cannot be supported by any reliable evidence. Abdul Ghani Khan Ghano, one of the reputable historians of Balochistan, told this researcher about the claim of Kamal Uddin, “It is a hundred and ten per cent wrong not to give the credit of initiation of Aziz Electric Press to Khan-e-shaheed. It was Samad Khan who struggled for the printing press. He even sold his own property so that he could manage the money for the press.” Other historians, researchers and writers like Malak Asad Khan Tareen, Dr. Shah Muhammad Murri, Shoukat Tareen and Prof. Sami Naghmana Tahir are also of the opinion that the printing press was started by Samad Khan Achakzai. Samad Khan-owned Aziz Electric Press was situated at Prince Road Quetta. Weekly Istaqlal, the newspaper of Samad Khan, was printed in that printing press.^{ix}

Weekly Istaqlal

Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, the father of journalism in Balochistan, started publishing Istaqlal in January 1938. It was a weekly newspaper. Istaqlal was a bilingual newspaper. It was published in Urdu and Pashto, the mother language of Samad Khan and the people of British Balochistan which is nowadays called the Pashtun belt of Balochistan. The main purpose of selection Urdu as language of the newspaper was that masses could read and understand it easily.^x This newspapers was distributed among the masses free of cost.

Istaqlal was an anti-British newspaper and it followed the policy which was against the rule of the British, the then rulers of the Indo-Pak Sub-Continent. In fact, it was the representative newspaper of the Injuman-e-Watan, a political party that worked under the leadership of Samad Khan Achakzai and was active in the Pashtun belt of Balochistan.^{xi} It also supported the stance of Qalat State National Party, another political party which was active in the Baloch belt of Balochistan. Weekly Istaqlal was a staunch supporter of stance of Indian National Congress, one of the major political parties of the Indian sub-continent. The stance of Congress was that India should not be divided. On contrary, Muslim League, another major political party, wanted the partition of India and the creation of Muslim state Pakistan. Istaqlal opposed the stance of Muslim League and was against division of the Indian sub-continent. Samad Khan Achakzai was of the opinion that the division of the Indian

sub-continent would weaken Muslims and the strength would finish. But, after the creation of Pakistan Samad Khan not only accepted the existence of this country but also offered his services for the betterment and welfare of the masses of this country. Weekly Istaqlal focused the issues of Balochistan. Its leads and super leads were about the news of Balochistan.

As Istaqlal newspaper published news about Balochistan, the people of the province felt that it was the representative of theirs. And, the people would voluntary give donations to Istaqlal because they knew that Istaqlal was their voice which was raised for the achievement of their rights. Despite low literacy rate and less population, the circulation of weekly Istaqlal was 2500 copies and on other newspaper could gain such popularity at that time in Balochistan.

Although Istaqlal was against the policies and rule of British government, the British did not ban it. They only fined it and asked Samad Khan to submit security fee during their rule. But, after the creation of Pakistan the rulers could not tolerate the truth published in Istaqlal, so it was banned in 1950. After the imposition of ban of weekly Istaqlal, Samad Khan started publishing weekly 'Pegham-e-Jadid and Monthly 'Pashto' but these magazines were also banned under the Balochistan Public Safety Act.^{xii}

Weekly Istaqlal played vital role in the journalism of Balochistan. It was among the early newspapers of the province which motivated people to read newspaper. Common people were not habitual to reading newspapers. It was Istaqlal which for the first time inspired common people to read it. Being Urdu and Pashto newspaper, Istaqlal played important role in teaching people these two languages. The Istaqlal of Abdul Samad Khan played the role of nursery where almost all the early journalists of the province learnt journalistic work. Istaqlal was active supporter of the Indian National Congress and opposed the Muslim League's point of view, so to counter Istaqlal Muslim League initiated its own four newspapers. In fact, the initiation of those newspapers could not lessen the popularity and role of Istaqlal but their commencement provided another platform for the journalists of the province. Istaqlal newspaper raised the issues of the general public of Balochistan, so the people considered it as their own newspaper.

Difficulties Faced by Samad Khan during his Journalistic Career

The journalistic life of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai was full of difficulties and hardship. He faced much difficulties while struggling for the imposition of Press Act

in Balochistan. He travelled to big cities of Indian sub-continent to convince the political leaders to support his demand of enforcement of Press Act which cost him much money and consumed his time. Abdul Samad Khan faced hardness while establishing printing press in the province. He faced financial problems. To overcome those problems, he collected donations from general public and sold the property of his own. The non-availability of technical staff and professional journalists in Balochistan posed many problems to Samad Khan. He had to spend much money while travelling to big cities in search of technical staff for the newspaper and printing press. He paid more than normal salary to the staff recruited from other parts of the sub-continent because they are not willing to work at normal salary. Samad Khan had to submit security fees and fine when his newspaper Istaqlal was fined by the then government. The Istaqlal was banned in 1950 because it was blamed for violation of rules and regulations. The Pegham-e-Jadid and Pashto, two news magazines of Samad Khan, were also banned.

Conclusion

Samad Khan Achakzai, no doubt, played huge and positive role in the history of journalism of province Balochistan and Pashto language. His services are unforgettable. He was titled as “the father of Journalism in Balochistan” for his countless services. He was the first journalist who laid the basis of that journalism which was meant for the welfare of the masses of the province. If Khan Shaheed had not struggled for the imposition of Press Act and establishment of Printing Press, public awareness would not have spread easily in the province of Balochistan. And, if he had not launched Weekly Istaqlal, journalism would have nor promoted in the province.

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