

# A Time Of Destruction, A Time Of Reparation

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In the last three months, since the unfolding of 2005 KOA Presidential Elections, a bedlam has erupted in the US KP community, throwing it into wild gyrations of the alleged fraud committed by KOA in the election process. KOA has had some twenty-five elections but never has anything of this magnitude of disruptive power happened before. Even without any tangible proof offered by the election fraud accusers, the reputation of KOA today stands in ruin and it is enmeshed in a mud.

Democracy is empowerment of everyone in an organization. There are no privileged classes in the organization. Managers and the members have the same rights, although their roles may be different. Each allegation, howsoever trivial, has to be investigated and brought to a conclusion. So we have to look into the alleged frauds committed in the 2005 KOA Presidential Elections. Election Investigation Committee (EIC), headed by the ex-KOA President Dr. Ashok Raina and helped by six other members, has already started the investigation process, and is now reported to be close to making conclusions and recommendations. We should consider the recommendations and adopt the ones that make sense. But that is the function of KOA Board. This should improve the future election processes. But after that let us stamp out the troublemakers for the larger interests of the community. While some people are raising the upheaval in the KP community today, let them not forget that there is a tomorrow.

According to the election fraud accusers almost all KOA Board Of Directors, directly or indirectly, were responsible for the alleged irregularities in the election, in favor of one candidate and against the other, while the outgoing President Sanjay Kaul was cast as a man with less than clean character. We know Sanjay Kaul and his family worked tirelessly in their four-year tenure and made some solid achievements for KOA. His administration had a successful record like no other administration has had.

To find fault with KOA for not putting up a government style flawless election

process is unrealistic. KOA is a microscopic organization, with all part-time volunteers workers, and meager funds. (Only fifty percent of the membership pays its dues) To expect that such an organization will produce a professional quality election process is sheer naiveté. I believe the election fraud accusers are not naïve but have an agenda up their sleeves. They are dinning up the fraud allegations to totally discredit KOA management, so as to have the just concluded election voided and have a new election, in which they expect their candidate to win. This is such an unscrupulous act that it has brought shame to the community.

Never have I seen such a planned upheaval to make a losing candidate in an election a winner, even when the margin of defeat was by some 160 votes. The perpetrators of this mob lynching do not care for the sullyng of the hard won achievements of KOA and the character assassinations of KOA management and the other people. The now tarnished image of KOA will take many years to repair and also most of the talented people suitable for the future KOA presidency now have no taste for it. It has thrown a lot of cold water on KP youth, whom we have been trying for a long time to woo to retain their Kashmiri roots. All this has made the US Kashmiri Muslim community happy.

Yes, there were irregularities in the election process but KOA is the size of a peanut compared to the governments, where every step in the election process has to be done in a perfectly legal manner. To expect KOA to be so well healed is sheer fantasy. This is not to say that the forgery of some ten or thirteen ballots can be put under the rug. That was a shameless act, for which the perpetrator or perpetrators must be thrown out of KOA, and even reported to police. Even in the government elections real frauds, even murders, occur but the elections are not repeated. Those who ask for the reelection are unmindful that KOA does not have the resources to conduct them, most of the KP community is sick and tired of the ugly and the purposely malicious fighting of the losing side supporters, and they have no stomach and time for the reelection. We need people, through EIC, to give us ideas on how the future election processes can be made better, given KOA's limited resources of volunteer workers and money. Certainly, with the limitations we have, the elections can not be totally insulated from errors and sabotage.

What we are seeing is that a handful of bad apples are spoiling the rest of the apples in the barrel. Let us take them out and save the rest in the barrel. Back in

the old days of Kashmir, KP's were well known for dividing and degrading their community for some selfish interest or ego satisfaction. This phenomena made Muslims very happy and of course eventually KP's were kicked out of the Valley.

KP community is in a fragile state at this point in history. We do not need commotion in the community most looked up to by the worldwide KP communities. We do not want overreaction by some people over an election process to damage the organization. Let us keep our feet on the ground and think. To divide KP community in US is perverse, to ask for the reelection will be a self-inflicted wound. Let us cut the cancerous portion to save the body. Let us call the emperor's clothes as they are. All this is not meant to directly criticize any individual, but to reflect on the melee atmosphere engendered by the elections, which has significantly damaged the morale of the KOA volunteer workers, donors, and membership. It will be quite a while before the old ambition, optimism, and energy returns to the KOA body politic, to continue making KOA a useful organization for KP community in US and throughout the world.