CHAPTER VII

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The representative system in the modern state is closely connected with the political party. In fact, no political system whether democratic or authoritarian can function in the absence of a political party. The thought of a partyless democracy is a thought of utopia.

A good party system is imperative for the proper and smooth functioning of a democratic set up—especially for a federation. Co-operation and co-ordination between the different sets of government—federal and unit governments, can be achieved only through a good party system. It is always the national political party which is "the most responsive instrument of restraint upon federalism's centrifugal tendencies." In a federal state there may be national parties and parties formed on the basis of sectional interests—interests of a particular state or region only i.e. DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, Assam Gano Parishad in Assam, Akali Dal in Punjab, Telugu Desam in Andhra and National Conference in J&K. In case there exist different parties at different centres of power or to speak otherwise, one party that is in power at the Centre is not in power in some states where some regional party has clinched power, the chances of relations between the two getting bitter and impaired are greater. This process further penetrates into the micro level i.e. to the unit or state where if a regional
or state party cares for a particular community or territorial concentration. This is true of NC in J & K state for enjoying unhindered support of Kashmiris only.

In the case of J & K State, National Conference (NC) has dominated the political scene. However, no local party has been able so far to reconcile and represent the sharp ethno-regional diversity of the state of J & K. The major political parties that are functioning in the State are NC, Congress (I) and BJP, Janata Dal, Jamaate-Islami, LBA, MUF and recently formed Huriyat Conference.

Of all the existing political parties, NC occupies the most important place in the politics of the State, not only because of its electoral victories to the State Legislative Assembly Elections and Parliament but also because of the great historical role it has played in the politics of the State during the last four and a half decade. It has been the most prominent party during the struggle for freedom, to organize the people against the Dogra rule. The party has won thumping majority in all the elections to the State Assembly from 1951 to 1987 except a decadal gap (from 1965 to 1975) when it was turned into a Congress unit by G.M. Sadiq in 1965.

The NC has always cherished and practised the ideals of secularism, socialism and democracy. The change over from Muslim Conference to National Conference in 1939 was the vindication of the non-communal outlook of the leaders of the party. "Naya Kashmir", the bible of the party, is nothing
but an embodiment of democratic, socialistic and secular principles. The programme "Naya Kashmir" was prepared in 1944 and some amendments were effected in its contents on August 25, 1976 by the Central Executive of the party, under the chairmanship of Sheikh Abdullah. The amendments were effected to bring it up-to-date and in conformity with the all round requirements of a welfare state.  

National Conference, that became the symbol of Kashmiri nationalism against Dogra Rule in Pre-1947 period stand for separate Kashmiri identity and individuality. This stance of the party has changed little in the last four decades which has restricted its outgrowth to the two other regions of the State. "When regional and communal claims are pressed, the NC leaders seek security by identifying themselves exclusively with the interests of Kashmiri Muslims. Reacting to the winter agitation of 1978-79; agitation against Resettlement Bill of 1982; and agitations against the famous Durbar issue in 1987, the Chief Minister Sheikh Abdullah in the former two cases and Farooq in the latter spoke in the Assembly as spokesmen of Kashmiris.  

The newly revived NC (1975) remained tightly under the grip of Sheikh Abdullah and his ilk. The situation hardly changed after his death. Gradually the party lost touch with the masses. Its leadership didn't go beyond well entremended persons or groups (powerful religious families, contractors, forest lessees old political families, business interests and bureaucrats). The hold of a strong Muslim
middle class over the party came to be established during the 10 long years of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's administration. Even after the return of Sheikh Abdullah to power in 1975, the stronghold of the two dominant groups of Muslims i.e. bureaucrats and trader-contractors remained intact. This, among others, alienated party from the people, particularly in the countryside. This, in fact, helped the other communalist and militant organizations strengthen their foothold among Kashmiris.

Congress (I) is the second important party in the State which was formerly launched in 1965, when, under the leadership of G.M. Sadiq, the then Prime Minister of the State, NC was converted into National Congress. However, NC was later on revived by Sheikh in 1975. Congress ruled over the State for over a decade (1964-75) and has emerged as the biggest opposition party in the State Assembly Elections of 1983 when it secured 26 seats out of 76. In March 1987, NC-Congress(I) alliance emerged victorious winning 51 seats out of 76. Ideologically Congress (I) stands for a composite national identity and to a secular ideal that brings the two-NC and Congress (I) closer in this respect. Congress(I) has a strong foothold in Hindu dominated Jammu region and has little base in the Valley where it has secured success only through electoral alliances with the NC. The party stands for the sustenance of special status of the state envisaged under article 370.

The Congress(I) is led by the people representing the dominant interests in business and trade, transport, services, professions, landed class etc. Because of its
growth out of NC many of its leaders have also served NC. Even, communalists of Jamaat and other groups also penetrated the Congress organization in the middle of eighties.

BJP Champions the cause of Jammuites. However, since 1983, the electoral base of the party has been hijacked by the Congress by playing with the Hindu card against the dominant Kashmiri leadership. Shiv Sena that was formed in the early eighties and which recruits from RSS and ABVP activists has also cut into the support base of BJP. Shiva Sena that was formally launched during the Hindu-Sikh riots in 1984, has of late, received extra-strength after the arrival of militancy in Kashmir. Shiv Sena that initially remained non-political joined Bal Thackrey group and fought 1987 Assembly Elections from 5 seats. It lost all the seats, however, its base has increased in business, trade, and educational institutions of Jammu. Therefore, BJP, whose base has been eroded by Congress(I) and Shiv Sena, has indistinguishable supporting from Congress and Shiv Sena in Jammu. However, party enjoys much greater support among Kashmiri pandits.

BJP that survives Jana Sangh, came into existence in 1980. As its predecessor, the party is a staunch supporter of full accession of the State of J & K with India and the abrogation of article 370. The party has a foothold in the region of Jammu only.
Jamaat-i-Islami is yet another party that is more an ideological party and not merely a political or a religious or social reform organization. It was found in 1942 at Shopian by Maulvi Ghulam Ahmed Ahar in collaboration with Syed Shahabuddin and other likeminded persons. The party is firmly of the conviction that Islam is an all-pervading and comprehensive 'order of life' and the Jammat intends to promulgate and translate that order into action in all spheres of human life.

The Jamaat not only commands influence in the urban areas, educational institutions, government employees, technocrats, lawyers, peasants etc. but also maintains close relation with the Islamic fundamentalists abroad. It has received financial assistance from Pakistan and certain Arab countries. Besides money, books and other literature worth lakhs of rupees, Jamaat has created a vast network of Mohalla Mosques in different parts of the state. It also runs a weekly "Azaan" and other papers.

The party runs hundreds of schools in Kashmir and has been found guilty of imparting anti-national education to the students thus rousing secessionist tendencies in the valley. All the educational institutions run by the Jamaat were banned by Governor Jag Mohan in March 1990 for brainwashing the Kashmiri youth against India.
The Jamat regards Kashmir problem as a living issue and does not consider the accession of Kashmir to India as final and irrevocable. At present there are a large number of Jamat run militant outfits (Hizbe-Islami, Islami Tehrike Tulba, Allah Tigers Islami Jamaate Tulba, Zia Tiger Force, Islamic Students League, Hizb-ul-Mujahiddin and several others) that are operating in the Valley. The object of these outfits is not independent Kashmir but Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.\(^{15}\)

Then there are several other small parties that represent sectional interests. Awami Action Committee of late Maulvi Farooq, Peoples Conference of A.G.Lone, Peoples League of Shabir Shah, Panthers Party of Bhim Singh, MUF (Muslim United Front) and recently formed Hurriyat Conference. AAC, (Awami Action Committee) of Maulvi Farooq originated in the early sixties after the issue of holy relic theft. Initially being a pro-Pak organization, it later contested the State Assembly Elections of 1977 (in alliance with JP) in 1983 and 1988 (in alliance with NC(F)). AAC also suffered splits in 1970 and 1972 when J & K Muslim Conference and New Awami Action Committee were respectively formed by dissidents. AAC came from the Wealthy families of Srinagar City and the influence of Maulvi Farooq being a religious leader was enormous. The AAC has remained quite effective in certain Assembly seats of Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency. AAC leader Maulvi Farooq was assasinated on May 21, 1990 for his moderate attitude, Maulvi Farooq's son Umar Farooq heads the group now.\(^{16}\)
MUF, a conglomeration of about 12 organizations (Jamat-e-Islami, Umaate Islami, Anjumane Ittehadul Musalmeen, Islamic Study Circle, Muslim Education Trust, Muslim Welfare Society, Islamic Jamaate Tulba, Majlis Tahafazul-ul-Islami, Jamait-ul-Hadis, Shia Rabita Committee, Idara Tahquiqat Islami etc.) was launched in 1986 as a result of communal riots of February 1986, NC-Congress alliance and rise of communalist forces in Kashmir.

Then there is Panthers Party of Bhim Singh formed in 1982. The party Champions regional interests of Jammu against dominant Kashmiri leadership and has a foothold in a few Hindu constituencies of Jammu region with sizeable votes of Rajputs. People's Conference is a party headed by A.G. Lone and it has foothold in Kupwara and Baramulla districts.

The party politics in the State of J & K, therefore, assumes regional and communal overtones. If NC enjoys full support of the majority of the people in Kashmir, the people of Jammu are more inclined towards national parties like Congress(I) and BJP. If NC has failed to mobilize support for itself in Jammu and Ladakh regions, BJP and Congress(I) have failed to extend their party bases into the Valley. Nevertheless, the efforts of the national parties mainly Congress to make the State leaders toe the line of the party in power no matter the techniques to achieve such objectives are good or bad; vicious communal propaganda and electoral campaigns launched to mobilize public support, and preaching of anti-national ideas by some communal parties like Jamat-i-Islami have helped alien the people of the State in general
and Kashmir in particular from India especially in the eighties. In fact, the success of such anti-national forces has been so great that NC, the traditional representative of Kashmiris, at present seems to have lost its foodhold in the Valley. Hurriyat Conference, a conglomeration of about 27 secessionist outfits headed by leaders like A.G. Lone and Geelani has of late tried to reduce the size of the NC for its ineffectiveness during the turbulent days in the Valley. Conference has projected itself as the sole representative of Kashmiris as is evident from the Hazaratbal issue of October-November 1993, when Hurriyat leaders came forward to conduct talks with militants and authorities for an amicable solution of the issue.20

National Conference, that ruled over the State since 1977 till the day of imposition of Governor's Rule in January 1990, is the main stem of Kashmir politics. The party under the inspiring leadership of Sheikh has so far championed the cause of 'Kashmiriat' or separate Kashmiri identity and has projected itself as the sole survivor of the cause of special status that guarantees the free and unrestricted enrichment of Kashmiri culture. However, the party failed to provide neat administration to the people and meet the demands of diverse nature. Party leadership has at times colluded with the Centre thus becoming puppets in their hands. Democratic norms have been violated and minds of the people vitiated through irresponsible remarks. The faith of the people in the party has been betrayed mainly in 1986 when Farooq entered into an accord with Rajiv and formed a coalition government in the State.
Sheikh's return to power in 1977 and his party's (NC) victory in State Assembly elections heralded a new era in Kashmir politics. However, the new leader soon became subject to relentless criticism by the people of the state and even to his close colleagues like Mirza Afzal Beg. Corruption and nepotism were the major charges against the Sheikh. In order to perpetuate his position, Sheikh conducted an oath of loyalty to him by his ministers. He also announced Public Safety Act on November 6, 1977 that empowered the State administration to detain persons and put curbs on newspapers and such other publications for the maintenance of internal security of the State. In opposition to this move Beg, a close associate of Sheikh, resigned as Deputy Chief Minister, and formed on June 8, 1978 four party "Opposition Forum" to defend civil liberties, to strive for the eradication of corruption, and fight against the establishment of dynastic rule in the State.

On October 23, 1978, Beg remarked that Sheikh wants not only power but absolute power and believes in theocracy and preaches a religious constitution. He described as most shameful the taking of loyalty oath by ministers in the State cabinet. Prominent leaders of the opposition parties also sent a memorandum in June 1980 to the Prime Minister and other Central leaders alleging serious malpractices by Sheikh Government. Sheikh was accused of breeding corruption and nepotism. The charges included Sheikh's renting of his ancestral house at Soura, a Srinagar suburb to the Sher-Kashmir Medical Institute for Rs.2300 per month and was
also charging for the house he was living in for about Rs.1600. His son-in-law G.M. Shah, a Cabinet member, was also allegedly charging 1400 for his house. Furthermore, Sheikh was alleged of owning a plot of land in the heart of Srinagar, some agricultural land in the Umar Bahar village in the lush Ganderbal area, a plot near the Srinagar Golf Club, a house along with the attached plot of land on Gupkar Road Srinagar, Dhanjibhai property complex on the prestigious Residency Road for a petty sum and two more houses for various members of his family. His movable sets were also said to be considerable including several cars. Another serious charge was that he has been dipping into the Waqf funds for purposes for which they are not meant.  

About his nepotism, the allegations were the appointment of his son Tariq Abdullah, as the Managing Director of the State Tourism Development Corporation, of Farooq Abdullah as M.D. of Sher-i-Kashmir Medical Institute despite availability of several other senior doctors in the State and of Mrs. Farooq Abdullah as the Chief Matron in the same Institute. Sheikh's son-in-law Ali Mohammed Mattoo was allegedly made Deputy Superintendent of a hospital in suppression of senior doctors. Sheikh's wife Begum Abdullah was also allegedly owning 79 canals of land at Tangmarg on the way to Gulmark.  

Meanwhile, in order to keep the party feeling alive NC indulged in anti-Centre propaganda accusing the Centre of its motives about toppling the State Government.
through his Youth Federation also started a strong campaign in February 1981 for the restoration of pre-1953 status for the State and making article 370 as the permanent basis of relationship between the State and the Union. The main objective of the campaign was visibly to attract the hardcore NC leaders of erstwhile Plebiscite Front to gain ground for himself to be the real successor of the Sheikh. Farooq also demanded a separate Election Commission for the State and for this he was receiving undoubtedly the blessings of his father. Sheikh in his efforts of posing Farooq as his real successor also helped him ascend to the Presidentship of National Conference on March 26, 1981.

A new party headed by Ved Vakil was also launched in Feb, 1982 when four groups Naya Kashmir Youth Federation, Youth National Federation, Youth Federation and Youth Front after sorting out their differences joined hands to form National Youth Conference an ally of National Conference. The new party was a youth wing of NC which indulged in anti-centre propaganda and demanded pre-1953 status for the State. The Sheikh Indira Accord of 1975 was thus flayed.

The Sheikh passed away on September 9, 1982 due to physical decline that he had been suffering for the last few years. This created a vacuum in the Valley for a man like Sheikh was unparalleled by anyone in the State, though he had tried hard in his lasting days to project Farooq as his real successor. It was this effort of his that ultimately helped Farooq to be unanimously elected as
the leader of the NC in the State Legislature, supported by all the 46 members on September 11, 1962.\textsuperscript{32}

In his last will and testament, Sheikh called upon the people of the State to strengthen NC which according to him was the only party that could guarantee the distinct individuality of the people of the State. He also asked the people to back Farooq and NC and held that if "people move in this direction, he would get due respect even after his death."\textsuperscript{33} G.M. Shah, Sheikh's son-in-law, was bound to be angry with Sheikh, for it was Shah who had worked for years with Sheikh and was experienced man also against the choice of Sheikh who remained in London for years and was new to the politics of the State.

However, this proved to be a dynastic business. Aware of the ambitions of Shah, Sheikh advised his family members including Farooq, Begum Abdullah and Shah to come to some durable understanding with Mrs. Gandhi. The counsel was reiterated more than once when he saw his son alone.\ldots he was deeply concerned that Farooq might not find things easy because of his son-in-law's (Shah) ambitions. He also realised that the former did not have the necessary political experience to ensure the smooth backing of the NC for himself. Soon the Sheikh had come to the conclusion that the best course for his son was to make sure that the Centre create no additional problems to him.\textsuperscript{34} Hence, a change in the policy of NC towards Centre could be perceived which evoked even suspicions in the minds of opposition leaders that the special status of the State could be eroded
by the Centre by taking advantage of weak leadership in the State.

Farooq's ascendance to power had a tacit approval of the Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi and Governor Nehru and so the whole of the process of succession ended peacefully. In his first speech at the floor of the Assembly Farooq addressed the legislatures as "the soldiers of the great Sheikh". He also recalled the popular slogan of the Sheikh which was also raised at his funeral procession. "Hindu, Muslim, Sikh Ittehad" and called upon them to strengthen this unity.

On 14th of September 1982 Farooq announced his eleven member Ministry from which D.D. Thakur and G.M. Shah were dropped though two of the followers of Shah, Bodh Raj Bali and Munshi Habibullah were included in the Cabinet. A day earlier he had remarked that it would be premature to remark on Shah's relations with Congress. To give representative character to his Ministry, Farooq inducted 4 members from Jammu, 4 from Kashmir and 2 from Ladakh.

Cautious of the improved relations of Farooq with the Centre A.G. Lone of Peoples Conference and Bhim Singh of Panthers Party caused a furore in the House a few days later when they demanded a guarantee from the new leader that the State's internal autonomy would not be sacrificed.

Failure of Congress(I) to enter into an electoral understanding with NC to the State Assembly elections of June 1983 drove the Congress to indulge in the worst kind of hooliganistic political vendetta as a justification
for its continued political existence. In fact, this changed strategy of Mrs. Gandhi was not only toward the so perceptive state of J & K but it was also the case with other non-Congress States like Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka also. She almost sided with the scope of mutual understanding with Farooq when at one time she remarked that "I must say that anti-national activities are on the rise in some strategic areas such as Jammu and Kashmir, the reason being her failure to make the State leadership toe her line and its collusion with some opposition parties.

NC became a divided house as the expulsion of dissidents like Shah and his followers was exploited to the fullest to topple the State Government and teach Farooq a lesson. "Everything was tried to tilt the balance. Riots were engineered, money was poured. G.M. Shah was hired to allure the NC MLAs to defect, Nehru was asked to dissolve the Assembly, a petition was taken to the President by senior Congressmen and he was asked to intervene, and a slander campaign was initiated against the C.M. Farooq." But when Farooq succeeded in winning the vote of confidence in the Assembly on January 27, 1984, Congress leadership turned to Tariq Abdullah the younger brother of Farooq. They would not care even about his murky past. Amongst other things he had even led a Pakistani delegation to the United Nations against India in 1965. But Tariq was not the only queer fish in the Congress(I) pile. The Jamaat, an avowedly anti-Indian conglomerate, seemed to have infiltrated the
Congress(I) to a very large extent. Which is why most of the political observers were astonished at the ferocity of Congress (I) attacks during 1983 election.  

Tariq Abdullah, who had been critical of his brother earlier also now came out openly against Farooq. He held that Farooq against the wishes of Sheikh had been going on confrontationist path with Centre. He also evoked the secularistic and democratic forces to come together against the disintegrative and disruptionist forces to strengthen the hands of India. According to Tariq Abdullah, Farooq had never hesitated to have secret alliances with pro-secessionist elements within and outside by State to keep himself in power. Farooq on the other hand, warned the anti-national and secessionist elements in the State to cease their subversive activities. He held that national integration had assumed greater importance today than ever before, and that 'we' would have to rise as one nation against these dangers. He also reminded the Assembly how his Government had come down heavily on anti-Indian elements in the State. However, the struggle for power in NC leadership tarnished the image of the party greatly and this caused a big disenchantment with politics among Kashmiris which had suffered a decline since the passing away of Sheikh.

In July, 1984, Congress(I) succeeded in bringing down Farooq Government through Governor Jag Mohan and install a new puppet regime under the leadership of G.M. Shah who had caused a split in the ruling NC with the help of 12 NC members.
This all happened at the instance of Congress(I) the biggest opposition with 26 seats in the House of 76. NC had 46 seats which was now reduced to minority with 34. Congress(I) supported the Shah Government from outside till the time when it succeeded in entering into an alliance with NC of Farooq in November 1986. However, similar type of developments took place in Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh where the duly elected governments were brought down through Governors by the ruling Congress in the same year. This policy of Congress explicitly exhibited its intolerance of non-Congress governments in the states, a policy strictly in contrast to the true democratic norms and values. It became clear that only those governments could exist which had aligned themselves with the ruling Congress.

Shah Government couldn't last long as it fall in the eyes of the people for its ineffectiveness, corruption and nepotism. During his rule, law and order situation remained far from satisfactory and anti-national activities increased. Congress(I), in its endeavour to create a following in the Valley and activate its organizational network that had been almost derooted by NC now was in a state of quandry. Neither could it afford to withdraw the support for it would be a clear invitation to Farooq to form new government, nor could it enter into a coalition government with NC(K) for any permanent basis of relationship with NC(K) would mean dooming the future of the party. The another alternative was of Governor's Rule but it can also not be extended beyond six
months under the State Constitution (Sec. 92) which would mean facing the people after six months.

In such a state of perplexity party couldn't make its stand clear which provided an additional sustenance to the Shah Government. Inspite of the protests within the party the State Congress (I) Committee Chief Mufti Mohammed Syeed, in a meeting held in July 1985, conceded that the situation was not ripe to withdraw party's support to Shah Government.52

Congress succeeded in its strategy of entering into an electoral understanding with NC of Farooq of which it had caused split in July 1984. In view of the new development NC-Cong(I) alliance under the leadership of Farooq formed a new coalition Government in the State on November 6, 1986:53 Ironically, the two parties which had been so far engaged in alleging each other as communalist, secessionist and undemocratic now entered into an accord which was projected as the collusion of secular forces against the anti-national elements. In fact, the alliance was forged and coalition-Government formed to prepare ground for the General Elections to the State Assembly scheduled to be held in March 1987. Although the NC-Congress (I) combine swept the polls winning 39 and 24 seats respectively out of total 76 seats,54 yet the manner in which elections were rigged broke the faith of the people in democracy. MJF, a front of 13 fundamentalist groups that projected itself as the chief opposition could secure only 4 seats. But the suppression and terror unleashed on the front activists by NC-Congress(I) combine played fire to the discontent of people who were already
annoyed at the collusion of the two.

According to the opinion survey, the hammering out of the NC-Congress(I) alliance in 1986 was a significant factor that alienated and annoyed the Kashmiris greatly. This view has been ratified by all the 69 respondents (69 p.c.) who answered the question. All the seven Shia respondents and one Pandit respondent have agreed with the view. Before the Rajiv-Farooq accord of 1986, the Congress was the principal channel of discontent against the state government while the NC channelised the discontent against the Centre. As the two parties formed a coalition-government hailed by commentators as the consolidation of secular forces, both type of discontent was diverted to communal and secessionist outlets. Lack of democratic tradition, civil liberties and free elections, further forced the popular discontent to seek outlets outside the Indian system. While NC-Congress coalition blocked secular and nationalist outlets of discontent, the assembly elections of 1987 widely perceived to be unfair blocked democratic outlets, also. Alienation of the Kashmiri-Muslims is, thus, the result of a comulative process.  

On April 9, 1987, a United Opposition Parties Democratic Front was formed by Lok Dal, Janata Party and Panthers Party to launch an agitation for the restoration of democracy. They also demanded a judicial probe into the rigging, booth capturing, and other irregularities in the Assembly elections and setting up of a committee to enquire into the misuse of funds by the state authorities.
To strengthen the opposition ranks, Awami National Conference of Maulvi Faruq and Peoples Conference of A.G. Lone also merged with MUF on July 11, 1987. On July 11, 1987 Peoples National Conference of G.M. Shah also declared going MUF way. CPI, CPM and some Congressmen also formed a left Front on September 22, 1987. These efforts, though provided good portents of the institutionalisation of popular demands, aspirations and discontent on democratic lines, yet could not yield the desired results as they weaned away under the influence of increasing extremism and terrorism in the State.

The ruling NC(F) suffered a big jolt when Abdul Rashid Kabli, an MP from Srinagar formed a new party J&K Democratic Forum to combat socio-economic and political injustice in the State. Kabli bitterly criticised the Farooq Government for its failure to give neat and responsive administration. Failure of the Farooq Government in containing militancy, mainly after the incident of Rubiya Syeed's kidnapping and the rise of National Front Government to power at Centre brought Governor's rule to the State in January 1990.

The years 1991 and 1992 also witnessed the launching of ekta yatra by BJP and marches to cross LOC by JKLF and Democratic Alliance of J&K from the side of POK. These marches and yatras also left an indelible imprint on the minds of Kashmiris. On December 13, 1991, the outlawed JKLF while reaffirming its pledge for independence for the State also declared that it will cross the LOC next Year. The statement was issued by JKLF chief Amanullah Khan. This was, as generally observed, a reaction to the BJP proposed
"Ekta Yatra" from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir where a national flag was to be hoisted by the party President Murli Manohar Joshi on the Republic Day of India. Inspite of the threats of grave consequences by the militants, the BJP chief Joshi under tight security measures unfurled the National Flag at the historic Lal Chowk of Srinagar on the Republic Day of India on January 26, 1992. True to their words, militants fired two powerful rockets that landed in the vicinity harming only a dilapidated school building.

The group of 70-odd BJP MPs and activists that had landed in Srinagar through air from Jammu chanted 'Vande Mataram' as the flag was hoisted by party president M.M.Joshi. In strident rhetoric Joshi held that "let all those who say that Pakistan is incomplete without Kashmir, know that India is incomplete without Pakistan". He further remarked that "Kashmir is an integral part of India and hoisting of the National Flag as we had promised, is a strong signal to all those who advocate otherwise, that we will not allow it. Kashmir is an integral part of India and no power on earth can change that." However, the repercussions of the yatra were widely felt. The BJP's Ekta Yatra to Kashmir was reminiscent of the Praja Parishad agitation in early fifties when S.P.Mukerjee marched into the valley with the avowed intention of merging the State with India. The Ekta Yatra, like its predecessor, did no more than rouse communal passions.... The yatra was futile as Kashmir is already an integral part of India. It is the emotional integrity that needs to be strengthened and such yatras would worsen
the situation." Criticising the yatra, Union Home Minister, Sushil Chavan remarked, "Let Kashmiris have the feeling that you have faith in them. Are you not doubting the nationalism of those living in Kashmir if you have to come from outside and hoist the National Flag? It should have been avoided".

The much pomp of Ekta Yatra was followed by the marches of JKLF from POK to cross the LOC on February 11 and March 30, 1992. The C-in-C of JKLF, Javed Ahmed Mir also declared a 'peace march' from the Indian side (from Srinagar to Uri) to welcome the party colleagues from across the border. However, the JKLF marches were flopped by Pakistani forces when they arrested about 500 marchers of Muzaffarabad and plugged the entry points. Some marchers were also reported to be killed in firing by Pak forces. After these marches about two such attempts were also made but of no avail.

A four party alliance of POK namely Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Alliance declared to cross the LOC on October 24, 1992. The alliance consisting of J&K Liberation League, the Pakistan Muslim League (Azad Kashmir), the National Peoples Party (Azad Kashmir) and the J & K People Party (Azad Kashmir) met the same fate as JKLF met in its marches of February and March, 1992. Very recently, on April 5, 1993, another bid to cross the LOC was foiled by the Pak forces, though the decision to withdraw the march had already been taken by its engineers, the People's Party's Unit of POK, after a dialogue with the POK authorities. All such moves from the Pakistan occupied Kashmir to violate the line of Actual Control have been largely inspired by the idea of gaining
ground in the POK and show their strength. Earlier the attempt by JKDA was also to counter the popularity gained by JKLF in March and February in which the JKLF men had evoked great response. These marches had not been supported by the opposition parties and ruling Muslim Conference of POK. It was mainly after the February march that the JKDA was formed. Nevertheless, the politics of these marches gradually turned out to be futile exercises as the 1st two marches were backed and attended by comparatively few people.

Nevertheless, the role of rightist organizations in communalising the issue and consequently reinforcing the Kashmiri religious sentiment is yet another important factor behind the popular alienation in Kashmir. In reply to the question about the role of rightist organizations in Jammu and the rest of country in affecting the problem all the 31 answers recorded replied in yes mentioning the names of organizations like BJP, RSS, Shiv Sena, VHP, Bajrang Dal and students' wing of ABVP.

Since January, 1990, the state of J & K has been placed under President's Rule for seven times. The State administration has failed to contain militancy in the valley. Militant outfits which number more than one hundred have been operating in the Valley. All the major political parties especially NC and Congress have become inoperative and their organizational structure frozen. NC leader Farooq has been visiting the valley after intervals to take the stock of the situation so that party activity could be
animated. Farooq has been demanding pre-1953 status for the state. This is mainly due to the passing of the Valley into the hands of secessionists who demand Valley's departure from India, either for the independence of Kashmir or its association with Pakistan.

Huriyat Conference, has, of late, been opposing the efforts of Farooq and Congress to revive the political process. In fact, it is Huriyat that has a say in the valley. Huriyat leaders have alleged Farooq of betraying Kashmiris by spending his time in London when Kashmiris were sacrificing their lives. NC leaders have adopted the same approach towards Huriyat. This became evident when in the meeting of 21 member co-ordinating Committee of all the major political parties of the State (NC, Congress (I), BJP, Panthers Party) NC leaders opposed the proposal of some members that Huriyat Conference should also be invited for talks in the next meeting.

Congress(I) the party in power at the Centre has also failed to evolve an unambiguous and clear cut policy towards the Kashmir problem. This is evident from the differences within the party leadership. In fact, the party workers in the valley have been finding it difficult to conduct meetings so that party activity could be revived.

Another aspect of the party politics in the State has been the indulgence of political parties in vicious communal and anti-national propaganda techniques. Political parties play a crucial role in educating people about the pros and cons of political power or in executing the process of
political socialisation. Therefore, the party propaganda becomes an important instrument of determining popular inclination towards or alienation from the system.

During the election campaign for June 1977 elections to the State Assembly, Sheikh had warned Kashmiris against the conspiracies to submerge the state's separate identity. NC leaders like Sheikh and Mirza Beg even appealed to the people that the Assembly Elections are no less than Plebiscite or self-determination. Sheikh would not even bother about the ill feelings that could be generated by his misleading speeches and threats. For instance, on 23rd of May 1977 Sheikh warned that "Kashmir is a part of India and Kashmiris are Indians, but they wanted to live in India with dignity and honour. If they were not assured this, they would not hesitate to separate from the Indian Union."

In one of his speeches, Sheikh declared the ruling Janata Party to be communal with Jana Sangh as its main component which has always been thirsty for the blood of the Muslims of India. He further remarked that "We cannot hand over the poor people of Kashmir to those whose hands are still drenched in the blood of Muslims." Similarly all other meetings and rallies organised by NC were marked by such speeches, slogans and gestures which created an impression that NC was the only party with a real love for Pakistan when all other parties were out to merge the State, completely with India. The emphasis on article 370 in the speeches of star speakers was also an effort to prove the pro-Pakistan
and anti-India stance of the party. So much attention was paid to this strategy and so meticulously, dexterously, and frequently was it carried out that all the opponents of the party were compelled to be on the defensive defending themselves from the charge of being anti-Pakistan and pro-India. Beg even made the people swear by Quran that they would support NC which, he insisted was the only party that could save Kashmir from Indian domination.

During the 1983 State Assembly Elections when Congress failed to enter into an electoral understanding with NC leaders, the two parties engaged in a struggle of vicious propaganda, allegations and counter-allegations against each other. Farooq Abdullah, the new NC leader even asked the Congress party to wind up its wing in the Valley and disband its organization in the State. Indira Gandhi the then Indian Prime Minister and Congress(I) President alleged NC of fanning communalism for June 1983 elections. While addressing a public meeting in the State she held that NC was patronising communal elements which weaken the unity and integrity of the country and provide chance to outside forces to exploit the situation. To counter this in Bhim Singh's words, "whether or not the Congress (I) stands for the unity of the country is not the point, the point is that Congress (I) men in their individual capacities would not be at all loath to hobnob with anti-national or pro-Pakistan groups, for even the smallest of political advantage."
Farooq Abdullah in his speeches not only remained cynical towards 'Indian dominance' but even threatened to conduct elections under the auspices of UNO and not under the Election Commission of India. Thus the hostile campaign of the two parties not only patronised the anti-national elements in the State but also provided for the secessionist outlets at the cost of national interests. This was a time when members of Jammat-i-Islami, a communal party, also penetrated the rank and file of Congress(I).

Anti-national activities increased in the Valley and State Police even arrested 400 men believed to be connected with organizations like KLF, Mahaze Azadi, Peoples League, Jamat-i-Islami and Jamat-i-Tulba. Two bombs were exploded in Anantnag and Republic Day on January 26, 1984 was observed as a black day.

In rousing communal feelings NC left Jamat-i-Islami far behind by indulging in worst kind of propaganda inflicting communal distances in Kashmir. Jamat an awoedly religious party operating at the social, educational, and cultural levels has expanded its strength greatly. Its strength lies mainly in the youth. Syeed Ali Shah Geelani a leader of Jamat indulged in highly objectionable speeches, preaching Islamic fundamentalism and accusing India of forcibly occupying Kashmir. He organized training camps in which ring leaders of Jamat exhorted the party cadres to propagate that by joining Pakistan, the Kashmiris will not only serve the cause of Islam but also secure like Pakistanis a large number of jobs in the Muslim World.
Similarly, MUF, a united front of about 12 organizations launched a vicious tirade against NC-Cong(I) alliance during 1987 elections to the State Assembly. The alliance leaders left no stone unturned in alleging MUF an anti-national and communal front and project the alliance as the sole secular force in the State. MUF also used all sorts of techniques in exploiting religious sentiments of the people and alleging NC leaders in playing into the hands of the Centre. Anti-national and pro-independence slogans marked their campaign.

Absence of a good established party-system in the State has also its role in facilitating the flourishing of anti-national elements in the Valley. The chief political parties (N.C, Congress & BJP) have regional roots which has restricted the development of a bi-party or multi-party system. In the middle of the sixties due to Bakshi-Sadiq confrontation NC was revived by Bakshi that polarised the State politics into two secular camps and this resulted in a serious setback to the secessionist and communal elements. But soon this development was demolished by Congress party which persuaded Bakshi to rejoin Congress. This role was once again played by Janata Party in 1977 in the State and the defeat of Congress at the Centre also convinced the people in the Valley about the potentialities of Indian democracy. After 1980, Congress (I) came to play the same role and in 1983 Assembly Elections it emerged out as the largest opposition party in the State. This provided an integrationist channel to all those who were dissatisfied
with the young and inexperienced leadership of Farooq. But a sudden shift in its stance when Congress staged defection in the ruling NC and supported Shah to form new government reduced it to neither an opposition party nor a ruling party and discredited its image greatly. For joining power an alliance with NC of Farooq was hammered out which was heralded as a unity of secular forces. But because Farooq didn't give vent to the popular anger against his dismissal and joined hands with those who had engineered his dismissal, part of the anger turned into support for secessionists and extremists. This explains the emergence of secessionist forces from long isolation. 91

A View of Militant Organisations

At present there are two streams of militants that are running parallel in the Valley— one is pro-independence while the other pro-Pakistan. The former is associated with the JKLF (Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front) and the latter with Jamaate-Islami and Hizbul Mujahiddin. In fact, according to different sources, the number of militant outfits that are operating in the valley vary from 55 to 190. 92

If one observes the history of secessionism in the Valley keenly it will become evident that the formation of Muslim Conference in 1932 by Sheikh Abdullah had also secessionist traits inherent in it. MC had been formed basically to get rid of and part from the Dogra Rule. The efforts of Sheikh to give it a secular character by turning it to All Jammu & Kashmir National Conference in 1939 were
also opposed when the old MC was revived by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas later on communal lines. Jamaat-i-Islami, a religious organization and also a strong protagonist of merger of Kashmir with Pakistan was also founded in 1942. The secessionist outfits that remained active since 1947 to 1980 have (JKLF, People's league, Al Fatah Plebiscite Front etc.) already been discussed in chapter IV.

At present JKLF is the most popular outfit in the Valley. Out of 100 respondents, only 69 answers could be secured. Out of these 69 answers 64 (64 p.c.) of the respondents held JKLF as the most popular outfit in the Valley followed by Hizbul Mujahiddin that was supported by only 3 (3 p.c.) respondents. However two of the respondents regarded both the groups as the most popular groups in Kashmir.

These groups are involved in killings, kidnappings, lootings, arsons and such other detestable activities. Very recently JKLF was involved in kidnapping of Rubiya, daughter of former Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Syeed (in December, 1989) and Nahida Imtiaz, daughter of an M.P. Saiffudin Soz (in Febr., 1991). Both the victims were released in exchange of five militants for each.

JKLF which has a strong hold in the valley is suffering from some internal differences and leadership crisis due to arrest of several of its leaders. JKLF has suffered a split pushing Amanullah and Qureshi (hijackers of an Indian plane in 1971) on the one hand, and Shabir Chaudhary on the
other to lead the splinter groups. Cause of split was the
dissolution of the London unit of the organization by
Amanullah under the pressure of Pak agents for a growing
number of members. They were professing pro-Independence
views against Pakistan's wishes. In the Valley the group
is headed by Javed Mir (Nalka) at present. JKLF has been
sided with these days by its Pak supporters as it has fallen
in their eyes. Being pro-independence, it is felt in
Pakistan that it cannot serve their ends. Hence, pro-
Pakistan groups have been formed and encouraged like Hizb-
ul-Mujahideen (HM), Muslim Janbaz Force (MJF), ALUmar
Mujahiddin etc. which have been making concerted efforts
to isolate the JKLF completely. An emasculated JKLF has not
been able to counter the challenge as most of its leaders
are dead or behind the bars. By June, 1991 it had about
2000 to 5000 trained militants. Intelligence sources also
hold that its supply of arms has been drastically curtailed
because of its anti-Pakistan stand. The main beneficiary is
the Hizbul Mujahiddin, a staunch supporter of Pakistan.

Hizbul Mujahideen was found in late 1988 by the
passive sympathisers of Jamaat-i-Islami and it became soon
the most powerful outfit because of the whole-hearted support
of revivalist fundamentalists of the Valley. The chief of
the group is Sayed Sallaudin. The group claims to be biggest
than JKLF, but this assertion seems to be doubtful as it
has also been disproved by the respondents of our opinion
survey. However, being aided by Pakistan, the group has
the most sophisticated weaponry at its disposal. HM has
also suffered many casualties including its area commanders
M. A. Dar and M. A. Wangroo. It has also a well organized propaganda machinery and it publishes two monthly journals Hizrat (Urdu) and Voice of Kashmir (English). They also claim to run a low power radio station named "Sada-i-Huriyate-Kashmir" (The Voice of Freedom for Kashmir) broadcasting programmes four times a day, each of one and a half hour duration.

Then there are a number of other pro-Jamaat and pro-Pakistan groups. Major among them are Hizbe Islami founded in December 1989; MSF (Muslim students Federation) headed by Mushtaq Ahmad Bhatt; Islami Tahrik-e-Tulba (ITT)-founded in November 1982; the women's wing of Islami Jamaat-e-Tulba, and Allah Tigers headed by Noor Khan-founded on August 15, 1989. Still there are Islami Jamaate Tula founded in September 1977, Zia Tiger Force- founded in 1988-headed by Mohammed Ashraf Dar and Islamic Students League (JSL)- founded on 16 September 1986 by Shakeel Ahmad Bakshi. Al Omar Mujahiddin is yet another group affiliated to AAC of Lt. Maulvi Farooq. It has about 1000 highly trained militants and is at present headed by Mushtaq Zargar. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen was formed in 1990 by disgruntled members of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, who did not want to take orders from the Jamaate Islami. They receive their funds from Pakistan and owe allegiance to it.

The women's wing of JKLF has overt links with the Dukhtaran-e-Millat of Pakistan. The latter is a women's organization that demands secession and its activists are widely used as couriers in a clandestine network that spans
the valley. Rubiya was said to be guarded by the volunteers of this organization. Peoples League, a pro-Pak group, headed by Shabir Shah, is yet another influential group in the Valley. It was founded in 1973 by Shah and Mohammed Altaf. The latter dissociated himself from the league and formed a new outfit called I.S.Y.O. (Islamic Students Youth Organization). It was also disbanded and Altaf now heads Mahaze Azaadi.

Thus in the last few years there has been a great increase in the number of militant organizations and even intelligence agencies are not certain about the strength of such groups. There have been several instances of mutual clashes between these groups mainly between the pro-independence and pro-Pak groups. Organizational discipline is yet another problem of these groups. In fact, JKLF also launched 'operation cleansing' to weed out indisciplinary elements from the organization. Similarly Hizbul Mujahideen hanged Abdul Hamid Sheikh a member of the organization for molesting and killing a girl. However, frenetic efforts are on to achieve unity of purpose and "Teherike Huriyate Kashmir" formed in March 1990 by about 1 militant organisations was a step in this direction. JKLF did not join the front. Kul Jamat Huriyat Conference is yet another conglomeration of about 26 organizations headed by leaders like A.G.Lone, A.Wani and A.Ansari. Nevertheless most of these militant groups have been functioning independently in the valley and are indulged in killings, kidnappings and destroying the public property.
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51. For a detailed description of the development. See the previous chapter.


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