Chapter -4
Role of Political Parties
National Vs Regional
Role of Political Parties National Vs Regional in Jammu & Kashmir

Political parties have played a pivotal role in modern democratic state. Parties play a crucial role in the political process and they “determine the operational character of the system”. The role of parties is not similar in all aspects and at all times in all the societies. Party system in every country is a product not only of the adopted or prevailing form of government but also of its historical roots, civic traditions, cultural orientations, geographical compulsions and economic situation or model. In the developing societies, the political parties are expected to play an active entrepreneurial role in the formation of new ideas, in the establishment of a network of communication for those ideas, and in the linking of the public and the leadership in such a way that power is generated, mobilized and directed. In fact the functioning of the formal institutions in a parliamentary democracy becomes clearly understandable only through the dynamics of party-system. Like other states of the Union of India, Jammu and Kashmir has its own party system. Democracy is one of the most widely advocated forms of government. But the growth of modern democracy can not take place without certain conditions. Among these conditions, a healthy, democratic and stable party system occupies a unique place. The party system not only democratizes politics but it also makes responsible government responsive. Kashmir represents a political sub-system which has its own peculiar position and style. Since its inception in 1947 this political sub-system with its parliamentary institutions within a democratic set-up, had very little interaction between the system and the people.

The party system in the state has been largely influenced by local conditions and primordial factors of religion, ethnicity, region, family and personality of leaders. Most parties have been either based on religio-regional considerations or represented ‘coalition of elites’ i.e., vested
interests in the socio-economic and political sphere. They channeled the people’s problems and frustrations along ethno-communal and regional lines. Many of them have acted as little more than spokesman for a particular sect, religion, family or individual. Some parties are yet to become fully committed to the Indian nation on account of their being unable to transcend the traditional barriers of religion, tribe and ethnicity.

There is hardly any party which could be considered as a cohesive body based on distinct ideological lines. In fact, most of them happens to be ideological amorphous groups. Their strategies have been subjected to constant changes in accordance with political needs from time to time. Nor do the parties have any composite character. Some are very strong in certain constituencies or regions but have no support elsewhere. Most of them have remained functionalized and are held together by considerations of power patronage or personality of a leader. Moreover, at times it becomes difficult to distinguish between a devout religio-regional group and those claiming to be secular, progressive and nationalist organizations. Most of them in the initial stages were, in fact, formed and nurtured on community consideration. With this little introduction let us now have a brief study of the following major political parties in Jammu and Kashmir.

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference is one of the major regional political parties in India. The origin of the party can be traced back to pre-independence rule of Maharaja Hari Singh, the last ruling prince of the Dogra house. It was during his rule that an organized political movement was born in the beginning of thirties of the present century in Srinagar. The movement was conducted under the banner of the Muslim Conference which was formed in 1932. The Muslim Conference bifurcated and a part of it headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah formed another party called
National Conference in June 1939, the movement spread to most parts of the state and was joined by Hindus, Sikhs and others. This conversion not only made a qualitative change in matters of policy but also in terms of scope, strength and leadership of the party. The new party became open to diverse socio-cultural groups and regions and got integrated with the nationalist stream. Not only this, the green flag of the Muslim Conference was also replaced by a red flag with a plough in the middle of it. The National Conference was thrown open to all adult citizens of both the sexes without any discrimination on the ground of religion, caste, creed and colour. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the founder of the freedom movement was unanimously elected the President of the National Conference. In fact, the change of nomenclature from “Muslim Conference” to “National Conference” was very timely and enabled the party to escape all persuasive techniques of the Muslim League. It rejected and opposed the “two-nation theory” of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and became a popular movement against the twin-forces of feudal autocracy and the colonial regime. The National Conference was personally supervised and guided by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who was also instrumental in bringing the Conference in close association with the All India National Congress. The National Conference “worked in close cooperation with the India National Congress and thus, formed an integral part of the nationalist struggle for freedom”.¹ As it had combined the framework of the congress party and the local aspirations of the majority Muslim Community, it emerged as a dominant political party in the State in the post-independence period.

Initially, the National Conference benefited from varieties of factors such as charismatic leadership, unity of command, secular and progressive outlook and sound organizational structure. But when it assumed power, it became victim of intense infighting authoritarianism and ethno-regional cleavages. The overbearing personality factor had trammeled the democratic
process and often forced the dissidents to break away from the party resulting in the formation of various splinter groups.

The first such group called “Kashmir Political Conference” with a pro-Pakistani line was formed on June 19, 1953 under the leadership of Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra, a senior leader of the party. Mr. Karra found it difficult to work under the leadership and ideological framework of Sheikh. This new group was supported by the followers of the ‘Muslim Conference’ whose top leaders including Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and Maulvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah had migrated to the Pakistan occupied Kashmir in 1947. The process of fragmentation continued during the regime of Bakhsi Ghulam Mohammad also. The formation of Praja Socialist Party (PSP) in 1953 by Mr. Balraj Puri, Om Prakash Sharf etc. also took place during the reign of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad.

Again in 1957, factionalism surfaced on the issue of sharing power between the two groups in the National Conference. The group consisting of the leftist leaders (G. M. Sadiq, D. P. Dhar, G. L. Dogra etc.) came out of the party and formed the ‘Democratic National Conference’. This group had enjoyed sufficient power in the state between 1948 and 1957. When Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad assumed power after the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, this group in the five-man cabinet had three members. After the post-1957 assembly poll, these leaders resigned from the party on the plea that the National Conference, as it stood, lacked the capacity and purpose to fulfill its historic role. The formation of this group was severely criticized by the ruling parties of the state and the centre.

Another major faction which came out of the dominant ruling party was of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and his followers. It so happened when a group headed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad emerged from National Conference formed the Congress party in 1965. Bakshi Ghulam
Mohammad, who was out of power after his ouster under Kamraj plan in 1963, revived the National Conference in 1966 and championed the cause of Kashmiri Nationalism or identity. But since Sheikh Abdullah and the Plebiscite Front existed on the Political horizons of the State, Bakshi could not convert his faction into a real National Conference. Soon he and his group were also persuaded to return to the ruling Congress in 1971.

It was only in July 1975 that the National Conference was revived by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah by dissolving the Plebiscite Front. The Sheikh intended to make it as strong as the Pre-1953 National Conference. But in the changed situation it was not very easy to achieve this. His group though, representing the entire spectrum of Kashmiri identity, failed to secure a sort of confluence of secular, progressive and nationalist orientation which dominated the party between 1939 and 1947. The Sheikh assumed the office of the chief minister on February 25, 1975 when Syed Mir Qasim Voluntarily stepped down in favour of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who had agreed to become the leader of the Congress legislature party in the state legislative assembly in the light of Indira-Abdullah accord on Kashmir in 1975. The vital and the most important thing for the Sheikh were to ensure his own safeguard and security of his position against all possible dangers so that 1953 episode could not be repeated. He did it very cautiously and prudently. He acted rather ruthlessly to protect his political interests even at the cost of losing his most trust worthy and confident colleague in politics, Mirza Afzal Beigh whom he expelled from the party. Thereafter, Mr. Mirza Afzal Beigh formed a separate political party called Inqilabi National Conference. This was the first split in hitherto monolithic structure of the National Conference. The second split in the National Conference occurred in 1984 when 12 members of the ruling National Conference formed a separate political party, namely National Conference (Khalida) group. They choose Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Shah, an M.L.C. as their Leader. Mr. Shah
formed the government with the support of 26 members of legislative assembly belonging to National and Congress. But as a result of March 1987 elections, the National Conference (Farooq) re-emerged as a ruling party in alliance with the Indian National Congress as a result of massive manipulation of election results which were going in favour of Muslim United Front. Dr. Farooq Abdullah was again inducted into the office of the chief Minister thereby proving that the decision taken by the Governor in 1984 was wrong.

Ideology and Programme

Ideology means an explicitly definite philosophy which forms the basis of a social, economic, and political system and for the realization of which a commitment is made, a programme formulated and collective action taken. Viewed in this perspective the National Conference has always stood committed to the ideology of nationalism, secularism and socialism. In fact the very foundation of the party was laid on the principles of secular ideology. The secular character of the party was naturally in tune with that of the All India National Congress and out of tune with All India Muslim League. The National Conference had naturally chosen the congress secular ideology. On March 6, 1948, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah declared:

“We have decided to work with and die for India. Ever since the National Conference had attempted to keep the state clear of pernicious twonation theory while fighting the world’s worst autocracy”7. Though it was the statement arising out of his own outlook but afterward history of Kashmir clearly indicated that it was not supported by general mass.

A firm believer in liberal democracy, the party has been championing the cause of such human rights as are essential for the establishment of an egalitarian society based on principles of equality and justice. The party has
been an ardent supporter of state autonomy. It stands committed to defend and protect the state autonomy at any cost. Any attempt at scrapping the Article 370 under which the state’s relations with the Union Government are governed is against the avowed policy of the National Conference. The party also stands committed to get pre-1953 position restored and all those provisions of the Indian Constitution and other central laws which have been extended to the Jammu and Kashmir State during post 1953 period, repealed.

The National Conference subscribes also to the ideology of socialism. The desire to set the State on socialistic pattern is fully envisaged in the political Bible of Jammu and Kashmir State, namely, the New Kashmir programme. In short, the party’s commitment to secular, national and socialistic ideology has become an article of faith with it and the party has unabatedly been espousing with fire-eater intensity the cause of secular democracy, Hindu-Muslim Unity and National integration. The document of ‘Naya Kashmir’ stands witness to the party’s faith in the concept of planned production economy in matters of multifaceted spheres of socio-political life of the people of Kashmir. That is the reason that the party has to its credit significant achievements in the entire country.

The establishment of responsible government in the state was political goal of the party and it had vigorously fought for its achievement, as a result of which the hereditary rule of the Dogras dynasty was abolished and in its place parliamentary democracy established.

ALL INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The history of the Indian National Congress in the state of Jammu and Kashmir goes back to the second half of the thirties in the present century when the party “began to figure openly in Kashmir politics in 1935. On
December 28, 1935, a public meeting was held at Amirakadal, Srinagar, in connection with the fiftieth birth anniversary of the Indian National Congress . It was in this meeting that some of the leaders of the Muslim Conference together with other leaders of non-Muslim communities acknowledged the services rendered to the country by the Indian National Congress and, as such, they pledged their association with the congress president in his fight for the freedom of mother India. Also, the States Peoples Conference, a strong wing of the National Congress, was instrumental in shaping the future course of the state politics in Kashmir. The fact is that the Indian National Congress and its wing, the States Peoples Conference, were responsible to have persuaded a major wing of the Muslim Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to rechristen the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference into a secular organization so that other non-Muslims could join the freedom struggle in the State and could fight shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brethren against the rule of despotism and autocracy. This desire of the Indian National Congress was translated into reality in June 1939 when the name of Muslim Conference was changed into National Conference. Many suggestions were, at the same time, put forward to establish a Congress Unit in the State in place of a regional party. But these were rejected and the need for the existence of a strong regional party was felt must and feasible. However, the major contribution of the Indian National Congress to Kashmir politics was that it gave secular and nationalistic character to it. Besides, the National Congress was successful in winning over the Sheikh and his close associates to its side which ultimately had far reaching consequences in the political life of Kashmir. It was this association which helped the State’s accession to India and later on confirmed it but the kashmiris think the steps which Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah took to see Kashmir as an independent and secular country shattered when he was deceived by Indian National Congress.
During the post-independence era, the National Congress played its role rather very cautiously. It did not let itself tempted to enter into power politics of the State and bring the State into its own control. Even as a ruling party at the centre, the congress did not interfere in the domestic politics of the State so long as India’s interests did not fear any threat or challenge. But if the party feared any threat to the national interest, it had no hesitation to move as it did in 1953. But the party did not touch the National Conference and allowed it to continue under the leadership of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Thus, the State was allowed to be under one dominant political party for a pretty long time of sixteen years since 1947. During the sixties there cropped up a movement in some circles in Kashmir for the establishment of an official unit of Congress party in the State. Thus in 1965 the official unit of the Indian National Congress was duly established in the state and its first member became Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq who was also inducted into the chief Minister ship of the State Congress party in the state on January 26, 1965. It was in this way that the Indian National Congress became important political force, next to National Conference in the State.

Before this, the State had remained virtually a monopoly of the National Conference. Pandit Nehur, during his life time, never allowed people to formally organize the Congress party in the state as he regarded the “National Conference as the Pradesh Congress for all practical purposes” it was only after his death that the party was launched in the state. At this Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah gave a call for boycott of the Congress and ostracisation of its leaders. “The worst form of this ostracisation was the Sheikh’s refusal to let the congress supporters bury their dead in Muslim graveyards”. This caused lot of difficulties for the Congress leaders. Even barbers refused to shave the Congressmen. The Sheikh Abdullah warned that any Muslim who became member of the Congress party would dig his
own grave. Not only did he oppose the formation of congress party but also when Maulvi Mohammad Farooq decided to form his own party, the Sheikh appealed to him to strengthen the "Plebiscite Front". But the Maulvi Farooq ignored him and set up his "Awami Action Committee" on June 18, 1964.

The newly formed congress party remained in power for a decade from 1965 to 1975. It was in this way that the Indian National Congress became important political force, next to National Conference in the State. In 1975, the congress government under an accord had stepped down and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was reinstalled in power as the Chief Minister. The congress leadership wanted to bring the Sheikh within the fold of the party but failed, as he, on the contrary, wished to integrate the congress with his newly revived National conference. The Sheikh's National Conference swept the polls in the very first assembly election in 1977 and eroded the fragile base of the congress party in the Muslim dominated areas. This made it imperative for the latter to carve out its major support base in the Hindu Constituencies of Jammu region. Most of the congress MLA's and MP's since then have been elected from the Hindu dominated Jammu region. Thus the congress's support base has become indistinguishable from that of the BJP since 1983.¹²

Infact, the congress party and the National conference, had grown together and remained united till the revival of the new National Conference by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1975. Since then its area of influence has shrunk in the Muslim dominated areas. The position of the State Congress chief being regularly bestowed upon a Muslim has hardly slavaged the situation. But it is necessary to mention here that besides being in power in the state from 1965, the congress party had also ruled as a partner in alliance with National Conference (Khalida) from 1984 to 1986 under the chief Ministership of G. M. Shah and again it joined the Government headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah, National Conference (Farooq) in March 1987 till
The 1990 when the strong militant movement erupted the state and Governor’s rule was imposed. It is general opinion that the massive manipulation of election results by government which were going on in favour of Muslim United Front is responsible for militant freedom movement as the founders of various militant organizations were either themselves contesting such as Mohammad Yousf Shah from Noor Bagh constituency on MUF ticket or were chief agents of MUF candidates. It is also opined that notion and enthusiasm of freedom from India was ever existed in Kashmir and it just met with spark manipulating election results of 1987 which was fully supported by centre which erects strong question mark on Indian democracy and secularist approach.

IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAMME

The Indian National Congress was founded on the basis of secularism and nationalism. Its main object is to seek “the well being and advancement of the people of India and the establishment of India by peaceful and constitutional means, of a socialist state based on parliamentary democracy in which there is equality of opportunity and of political, economic and social rights and which aims at world peace and fellowship”. For the Indian National Congress, the political democracy has no meaning without economic democracy. The congress, has, therefore, always championed, in free India, the cause of economic independence. The party is committed to the establishment of democratic socialism with a view to achieve the “establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principle means of production are under social ownership or control”. The Indian National Congress belongs, in Short, to an ideology of democracy, nationalism, socialism and secularism.

On the basis of its ideological commitment to establish a new order for society on the basis of socio-economic and political justice, the Pradesh
Congress Committee in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has appreciably played its role for the upliftment of the people of the State. During the pre-independence days the Indian National Congress supported the people of Kashmir in their struggle for freedom from the chains of feudalism, autocracy and the British imperialism. The party has, thus, contributed its might to the politics of the state. It was also instrumental in strengthening the cause for evolving the movement on “democratic, secular and socialistic values in the state”.\(^{15}\) As a firm believer in the power of the common masses, the party has always stood against all those forces and elements in the state of Jammu and Kashmir who are either hostile to very framework of parliamentary democracy or are opposed to be actively engaged in inciting parochial and sectarian sentiments of one section of the people or another. The party has, therefore, been upholding the tradition of brotherhood and unity among all people living in the state. The congress party lays stress on the economic welfare of the people and it pledges to remove social obscurantism from the soil of the state. The party gets its majority of seats from Jammu region, where as in valley and other Muslim dominated areas of Jammu and Kashmir the party is lagging in election result which is attributed for being a central party for which Kashmiris think it responsible for snatching their right of self determination promised by India in UNO.

**THE PRAJA PARISHAD/ BHARTIYA JANTA PARTY**

The Praja Parishad which later merged into the Jana Sangh Party of Jammu and Kashmir in mid-50s and represented the aspirations and interests of the relatively better off Hindus (landed class and the beneficiaries of the erstwhile feudal system etc.) came into being in Jammu in the late-40s (1947) mainly as a protest movement against the new regime of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. It opposed the government’s major policy planks such as abolition of Land-Lordism, anti-Dogra Maharaja drive, attempts at framing separate constitution for the state and craving for a separate flag,
emblem etc. The Parishad instead demanded full integration of the state with the Indian Union and launched an agitation for the abrogation of Article 370 which grants special constitutional status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. At the same time, the Praja Parishad’s movement became intensified under the slogan of “Ek Pradhan, Ek Vidhan, Ek Nishan” (i.e; One President, One Constitution and One Flag). The Praja Parishad Leaders also demanded a separate statehood for Jammu and favoured a “Zonal Plebiscite. The extremist section in the Parishad also raised the “Quit-Jammu” demand against Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. At the same time, the Buddhist leaders in Ladakh, under the stewardship of Kushak Bakula (head Lama of Ladakh) also felt discontented with the Kashmiri leadership. The land in Ladakh which “was the property of the church and was rented to the peasants under most exploitative conditions” had also offended the key leaders of Ladakh.

In case of Jammu region, the movement against Kashmiri leadership became so intense that the students even indulged in violence while staging a demonstration against hoisting of the National Conference’s flag on a college building in 1952. They chanted slogans in favour of the Maharaja and the national flag. It was followed by violence, hunger strikes and large scale arrests of the praja parishad activists in Jammu city. The agitators accused Sheikh Abdullah of favouring the Muslims, particularly from the Kashmir valley. Even the slightest gains of Muslims led to agitations and communal tensions. The situation created by the Parishad’s agitation caused fresh misgivings among most Kashmiri Muslims who began to felt that their entity, which they had defended against Muslim invaders from Pakistan, seemed again in danger. Most Kashmiri leaders started emphasizing that they had acceded to India in respect of Defense, foreign affairs and communications. Even the Muslims outside the valley were equally affected by the Praja Parishad agitation, for example, people in the Muslim
dominated Doda district "emphasized that if they had peculiar local problems and geographically, culturally were quite different from their neighboring unit, they could not in any way be attached with the cultural unit of Jammu." They also demanded a district cultural status for their district. Hence the praja parishad movement proved an anti-thesis of what the freedom struggle in the state had ‘animated, and stood for’ between 1939 and 1947.

It was a period when Jammu and Kashmir in particular and other states in general, faced multi-furious problems of communal, ethnic, linguistic and regional dimensions. It not only offset the healthy conditions created between 1939 and 1947, but also led to a situation of confrontation and unending uncertainty in the state thereby diluting the secular and nationalist outlook of the state. Owing to its being a Hindu-based organization with communal outlook, it had no influence in the Kashmir valley and other Muslim dominated areas. It consisted of the articulate sections of Hindus representing people from the higher castes and middle and upper middle classes. They accused the Sheikh of ignoring the interests of Hindus and discriminating against the Jammu region. This agitation, to a certain extent, synchronized the conflicting aspirations of Dogra Nationalism Vs Kashmir Muslim identity. It had received support from the Hindu Maha Sabha, RSS, Bhartiya Jana Sangh and Ram Rajya Parishad consisting of the erstwhile feudal forces and their supporters. The key figure around whom the whole praja parishad movement revolved was Pandit Premnath Dogra. According to Balraj Puri, it was represented “a coalition of hurt regional pride, protest against an arbitrary rule, a sense of insecurity about the future of the state, vested interests and communal sentiments”, whereas according to Balraj Madhok, “The main objective of the new organization was to achieve full integration of Jammu and Kashmir State with the rest of India like other acceding states and safeguard the legitimate
democratic rights of the people of Jammu from the communist dominated anti-Dogra Government of Sheikh Abdullah”.19

Later on, the Praja Parishad was converted into the Jana Sangh party. The leadership of the Jana Sangh was largely recruited from the better-off castes such as Brahmin, Bania, Rajputs, etc. the whole party, barring a small group under Mr. Balraj Madhok, was merged with the Janata Party in 1977 but later reappeared under a new name ‘Bharatiya Janta Party’. Economically, the resurrected party represents the interests of business, trade and professions.

Interestingly, around 1983 the electoral base of BJP was suddenly hijacked by Mrs. Indira Gandhi under the new strategy of playing the Hindu card against the dominant Kashimri Muslim leadership. The BJP, as a result, failed to win even a single seat in the state assembly election in 1983. This trend has not changed in the subsequent assembly elections. The formation of ‘Shiv Sena’ in the early eighties has also cut into the support base of the BJP. Most of the Shiv Sena leaders have been recruited from amongst the RSS and ABVP activists. The Sena was formally launched in 1984, mainly in response to the local conflicts between Hindus and Sikhs in the town. Prior to this, there existed two small militant Hindu outfits named Shiv Sena of Gandhi Nagar and Shakti Sena of old Jammu. Both United in the wake of an incident involving a piece of land allegedly captured by the Sikhs to construct a Gurudwara in the city.20

The Sena began by denigrating secularism and pledging to unite and organize Hindus for their protection. It raised slogans “Jai Shiv Shakti, Jai Trishul”. In the face of increasing violence in Punjab, the Sena found easy acceptability in the Hindu dominated areas of the region. Moreover, with the arrival of the militant violence in Kahsmir, the Sena gained additional strength among the Hindus. To begin with, it claimed to be a non-political
body and had hardly any links with the outfits outside the state but subsequently it got affiliated to the Bal Thackray group of Shiv Sena. Regarding leadership, the Sena in Jammu represents the youthful people encompassing the business class, professions, teachers, students etc. It first entered the assembly poll in 1987. It contested on five seats but met with no success. However, since then its base has increased in business and trade and the educational institutions in Jammu and its peripheral towns.

**JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI, JAMMU AND KSHMIR**

It is a pro-Pakistani fundamentalist organization which has gained considerable support base in the valley of Kashmir. It was established in 1942 at Shopian by Maulvi Ghulam Ahmad Ahar in collaboration with Syed Shahab-ud-Din and other like minded persons. Some scholars believe that it was founded by Pir Saad-ud-Din in 1952. The Jamaat was duly brought into being with a view to promote Islam as an ideal of life for the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Jamaat has its own constitution which has been in force since 1953.

The Jamaat-e-Islami is a well-knit, well organized and extremely disciplined politico-religious organization. The Jamaat draws its followers mainly from the middle class strata of its coreligionists. Its militant cadres come from younger generation. It also draws its followers from government officials and academic circles. It entered assembly elections for the first time in 1972 and captured five seats with 9.85 percent valid votes. It has a committed cadre and sound organizational structure to spread its influence far and wide in towns, mohallas and villages. The Jamaat has at present the most dedicated cadre which runs into several lakhs. All of them are well-versed with the knowledge of Holy Quran, Sunnah and the changing scenario of politics. They are also equipped with modern education both in sciences and arts. Moreover, it has established a trust of "Madressas" in
various parts of the state in early 1960’s. These institutions concentrate on 
preaching the youth the principles of Islam. The Jamaat has as many as 200
'Madrassas' (managed under a separate body called ‘Falah-I-Aam Trust’)
which have been seriously involved in the Islamisation drive. The Jamaat
not only commands influence in the urban areas, educational institutions,
government departments, technocrats, lawyers, peasants etc. but also
maintains close relations with the Islamic fundamentalists abroad. It also
runs a weekly “Azaan” and other papers. The Jamaat concentrates on
“stemming the erosion of purity of belief and practice” among the Muslims.
It has fundamentalistic approach of Islam and believes in the whole
supremacy of Quaran and Sunnah. It abjures secularism. According to it the
secularism neither allows Islam to flourish nor ensures safety and security of
life of Muslims in India. According to Jamaat, politics and religion are
inseparable. Its workers also oppose family planning measures and consider
Kashmir as their country.

Since April 16, 1990, the Jamaat and its various sub-units, on account
of their involvement in the militant movement, stand outlawed and banned.
The dominant pro-Pakistani militant out fit called “Hizbul Mujahideen”
happens to be affiliated with the Jamaat-e-Islami. The “Falah-i-Aam Trust”
was also banned and all the 200 schools run by the Trust were closed.
Arrangements were accordingly made by the government for admission of
about 15,000 students of these banned schools in government educational
institutions. Moreover the teaching and non-teaching staff was also
absorbed in government institutions under the directions of High Court of
Jammu and Kashmir to which the trust approached after its ban.

The Jamaat favours parliamentary democracy as a form of
government. Since this form of government is, more or less, in consonance
with the accepted principles of Islamic democracy, the Jammat has agreed to
work it for the achievement of its political, social and economic programme
in the state. Like other democratically oriented political parties, the Jamaat believes in peaceful and constitutional methods for bringing about any change or revolution either in the thinking or outlook of an individual or in the political system or form of government. According to Pir Saad-ud-Din, "Revolution has many faces. To change the mind and educate people is also a face," and if mind and heart changes, that is also a revolution. It is here that Jamaat believes more in bringing about change through missionary activities, education and argumentation rather than through violent methods of force or war. That is the reason that Jamaat's politics and religion go together because "there is no dichotomy between religion and politics according to Islam". They are not two different things. They are two faces of the same coin. They are interdependent, inseparable and complementary to each other. According to Pir Saad-ud-Din, "Religion serves man's soul, politics serves man's body. Body and soul make man." Din or religion is a way of life. It deals with every aspect of man living in society.

From 1952 to 1971, the Jamaat-e-Islami remained aloof from active politics in Kashmir. During this period it not only consolidated its position in the State but it also prepared its well trained, dedicated and trustworthy cadres for political purposes. By 1972, the Jamaat was in a position to fight elections to the state legislative assembly. The Jamaat's participation in the election contest revealed automatically its political character.

The most important and controversial issue in Kashmir politics has been the issue of accession of the State to India. The Jamaat is of the opinion that Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed state. The accession of the State to India is temporary and, as such, subject to the ratification by the people. This condition has, the Jamaat holds, been recognized by the United Nations also. On this basis the Jamaat-e-Islami maintains that the people of Kashmir still retain the right to determine the State's issue of accession. Hence the right to self-determination. Any person at any place has a right to self-
determination. Be it Kashmir or elsewhere. Hence unless and untill the Kashmir issue was decided according to the wishes of the people of the state, India has no right even to convene any conference or hold any meet or organize any sort of international level programme on the territory of Kashmir. It was on this contention that on October 12, 1983 Syed Ali Shah Geelani told at a press conference that the international cricket match between India and West-Indies was illegal as it was being held on disputed territory of Kashmir State. Since the Kashmir issue was unresolved, the Syed added, the match amounted to a belatent travesty of international law.

The Jamaat-e-Islami does not agree with the concept of secularism as propounded by the Indian politicians. According to the Jamaat, the Indian leadership has not been able to change a man or society as a whole. The problem of communalism in India is the same as it had been in pre-independent era. The post-independent period in India has been witnessing frequent communal riots and the Government’s failure to prevent them. Thus secularism in India has become more a slogan, propaganda or a window show-piece. According to the Amir-e-Jamaat, “If they (Indians) explain their secularism by word and deed, we may even convert to it”. 27 Islam on the other hand is not communal. It is the religion of any human being and it deals with mind more than with heart.

MUSLIM UNITED FRONT (MUF)

The noteworthy development in the politics of the State of Jammy and Kashmir is the emergence of a religio-political organization called Muslim United Front (MUF). In the beginning it was “a conglomeration of fourteen parties and groups, all of them bound together by their single common claim that they are dedicated to the cause of Muslims”. 28 Soon
after its formation, there had occurred differences and disagreements amongst its constituent parts over certain important issues such as the issue of accession of the State to India etc. As a result some of its partners, for example, the People’s Conference, Indian Muslim League, National Conference (Khalida) etc. left it in its early formative period. The following three main factors were responsible for the formation of Muslim United Front.

Firstly, the occurrence of communal riots in Anantnag in February 1986 were so awkwardly exaggerated by the media including the National Press and the Kashmiri Pandits in and outside the State, especially in New Delhi, where the Kashmiri Pandit women and Kashmiri male Pandits taken out two separate processions raising slogans against the Muslims and, also, carrying the impression to the National Government and to the Indian masses that the Kashmiri Pandits were at the mercy of the Muslim community, if not saved in time, its immediate result was a quick follow up action under the directives from the centre in the form of ruthless butchering of Kashmiri Muslims by the state police in association with central reserve police force. The treatment meted out to the Muslims shocked them beyond expectations. They were led to think that their future existence was not safe under the present system. They thought to organize themselves and fight those forces that were bent upon to eradicate their identity. So in order to protect the Muslim identity, its culture and to safeguard its religion, the Muslims of Anantnag formed an organization, called, Ummat-e-Muslimah and this organization constitutes one of the important and founder members of Muslim United Front.

Secondly, the imposition of the Governor’s rule on the State in the year 1985, after G. M. Shah’s ouster from the chief Ministership, had given a great shock to and distressed the Kashmiri Muslims. It was generally believed that the change of Governments at the behest of centre was an
unnecessary interference in the internal affairs of the state whose Governments had always been functioning within the constitutional framework. Such an attitude towards the Kashmiris had led to believe that the centre treated the Kashmiri Muslims as mere slaves of dominant non-Muslim class ruling from New Delhi. This thinking had necessitated the Muslims of Kashmir to organize themselves against any kind of undue domination. Hence the formation of Muslim United Front.

Lastly, the alliance between the National Conference (F) and Congress (I) was another cause to have given birth to the formation of Muslim United Front. The political alliance between the two secular parties was "looked at with a frown of disapproval" by the electorate. The people had drawn the conclusion from the alliance that Dr. Farooq Abdullah had brought indignation to the people by joining hands with Congress (I) and that such a dishonour could no longer be tolerated. Hence the need for a separate organization. The misgovernance predominantly nepotism and corruption was prevailing and general mass had lost their faith in National Conference and were looking for any other platform which was provided by Muslim United Front founded by many students of different religio-political organizations.

Initially, the People's Conference of Abdul Gani Lone and the Awami National Conference of Ghulam Mohammad Shah had also expressed their unity with the Front. At one stage even the late Maulvi Farooq's 'Awami Action Committee' felt tempted to join the MUF. But soon they fell apart and started accusing the Front of its being under the tight control of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The Jamaat was more interested in getting the co-operation of Dr. Qazi Nisar, chief of Ummat-e-Islami and Maulvi Abbas Ansari (of Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen), a Shia leader and once a close confident of Sheikh Abdullah. The Ittehad represented nearly half of the Shias in Kashmir.
By having these two leaders in the Front, the Jamaat had gained a good deal of support from the people influenced by the Mosque’s culture and priestly class in the Kashmir valley. To them Shrines were effective power centres which suited the political needs of the Jamaat.

The MUF’s entry into the election in 1987 changed the entire complexion of the electoral politics in the state. It was for the first time that the National Conference after its revival in 1975 had faced a real challenge to its hegemonic position. Soon after the 1987 assembly poll some more groups including the people’s Conference of A. G. Lone and Awami National Conference of G. M. Shah had also joined the MUF. By this the MUF has gained substantial strength to pursue its anti-government campaign. However, their entry became a direct threat to the dominant faction of Jamaat which was neither inclined to share power with them nor wanted to dilute the MUF. With this the hold of the Jamaat-e-Islami on the MUF had considerably declined. Incidentally, it was a period when the anti-India stance among the Jamaat leaders had become pronounced. They started urging the government in Delhi to accept the right of ‘self-determination’ for Kashmiris. The non-Jamaat faction in the MUF, however, did not raise such issues. This faction, in fact, wanted that MUF should emerge as an alternative to the National Conference in the State.

The Jamaat led faction on the other hand seemed to be less interested in electoral politics in the post-poll (1987) period. The Jamaat-led MUF from then onwards concentrated on the Islamization drive and anti-India movement to score over the rivals. By mid 1989 this group also decided to give up the membership of the state legislature and on August 30, 1989 three MLS’s of the MUF resigned from the assembly. Later on, in November 1989, they boycotted the Parliamentary poll for which the Kashmiri militants had already issued a boycott call and announced ‘Civil Curfew’ for polling day. Subsequently, all except the National Conference and a few
independents yielded to the boycott call. Moreover, with the onset of militant violence in the valley both the MUF factions started fighting in the troubled waters resulting in the arrest of all the key leaders belonging to the two groups. It was after about two years on April 1, 1992 that five of them (i.e. Syed Ali Shah Gillani, Abdul Gani Lone, Maulvi Abbas Ansari, Qazi Nisar and Prof. Abdul Gani) were released with the intention of helping the state to return to a normal political process. However, the different factions after thorough negotiations ultimately founded the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in 1993 with clear cut objective of independence for Jammu and Kashmir.

The basic contention of MUF is that religion is an integral part of politics and, as such, the MUF has evolved an Islamic ideology to be the basis of the socio-political system it wants to establish in place of the existing parliamentary democracy in Jammu and Kashmir. The establishment of "Nizam-I-Mustafa the Islamic form of Government was the ultimate aim of the MUF". The Muslim United Front does not have faith in the parliamentary democracy, secularism and socialism. According to its leaders, the Muslims of Kashmir are being treated like slaves by the centre. They urge upon them “to liberate themselves from the slavery of Delhi’s Brahmin imperialism”. They further argued that the Kashmiri Muslims had been suffering from exploitation of their community and “onslaught on Islamic values right from 1938 when the Muslim Conference got converted into National Conference”. The MUF holds India responsible for division and disunity among the Muslim inhabitants of Kashmir. The step-motherly treatment accorded to Muslims by the centre has shattered their faith in Indian secularism. This is the main reason that the MUF categorically opposed Indian secularism and socialism.

The Muslim United Front does not recognize the finality of Kashmir’s accession to India. For them Kashmir is still a disputed territory
and this dispute could be resolved only by India and Pakistan in consultation with the people of Kashmir. However, the MUF openly declared that the war for securing rights to Muslims of Kashmir was not against Hindus, Sikhs or any other religion. Nor is it against National Conference or Congress. This is a fight for restoration of rights to Kashmiris. It is against ‘Brahminism Swaraj’. We want to defeat this Brahminism. (Dr. Qazi Nisar). But when the Muslims fight for the right, the fight is being dubbed “as a game of secessionists and fundamentalists”.

THE AWAMI ACTION COMMITTEE

Besides the Jamaat, the rise of the late Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq in the early 60s also gave an impetus to fundamentalism in the Kashmir valley. For a couple of years he followed the pro-Paksitani line and anti-India stance and called himself a citizen of Kashmir, not India. His sermons to the congregations in the Friday prayers at Jamia Masjid became a good source of anti- India propaganda and communalization of Kashmiri Muslims. His influence among the common Muslims in the down town localities of Sringar on account of his being the supreme religious leader had been enormous. It should be mentioned that the Sheikh Abdullah had used the platform of the famous Hazarat bal Shrine whereas the Mirwaiz used the pulpit of Jamia Masjid.34

Politically, his Awami Action Committee has been effective in certain assembly constituencies of the Srinagar parliamentary seat. In terms of alignments, the Awami Action committee has not followed any consistent stand. Rather it has entered the election fray with different groups from one election to another. Between 1983 and 1988 it remained aligned with the National Conference. Earlier in 1977 it had an alliance with the Janata Party and in 1987 with congress (I).
After the assassination of Maulvi Farooq on May 21, 1990 his son, Umar Farooq, became the chief of the Awami Action committee. The government suspected the hand of some pro-Pakistani militants in killing the Mirwaiz but majority of Kashmiris think he was killed by Indian agencies. His assassination was aimed at thwarting any move to initiate the process of reviving normal political process in the state.

JANATA DAL

Before 1947, National Conference was the only party which represents the people of Jammu and Kashmir. But the latter decades have seen the emergence of many other political parties in the state. Janata Dal which came into existence in the late 1980’s in India and at the same time it emerged in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed who was a senior congress leader (defeated) from congress and joined Janata Dal and became the supremo of the party of the state. He also became the home minister of India but his rivalry with Dr. Farooq Abdullah and National Conference on the basis of which he joined the Janata Dal could not be ignored.

In 1989, his daughter Dr. Rabaiya Sayeed was kidnapped by JKLF militants and demanded the release of five militants in exchange of Dr. Rubiya Sayeed. Although Dr. Farooq Abdullah who was the Chief Minister at that time, ignored the demand, Mufti Sayeed agreed the demand of JKLF militants and five militants were released in exchange of Dr. Rabaiya Sayeed. These were the days of V.P. Singh’s Janata Dal Government at Centre.

Another mistake the Janata Dal Government made was the appointment of Jagmohan as the Governor of the State in 1989 which was protested by Dr. Farooq Abdullah and his Council of Ministers. In January
1990, Jagmohan dissolved the legislative assembly of the state headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah and then begins the reign of terror, which was the result of repeated blunders by the Central Governments. All the political parties and their leaders were on run to safer place and left the innocent people to face the consequences. There was no political activity throughout these years.

In 1996, when the parliamentary elections were to be held in May, all the political parties revived their activities. Janata Dal Supremo V.P. Singh and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed visited the state of Jammu and Kashmir and met with several political leaders including Shabir Ahmad Shah and promised to solve the problem of the state. Janata Dal contested the parliamentary elections from all six constituencies but could succeed from Anantnag constituency only in the shape of Mohammad Maqbool Dar.

When Mufti Mohammad Sayeed again joined in congress in August, 1996, with his allies several leaders of the party joined into the N.C. including Abdul Quayoom and his allies. Abdul Qayoom was the president of Janata Dal of J & K.

Later on Dhan Raj Bargotra was elected as the president of the state of Janata Dal and Mast Nath Yogi as the general secretary of the state Janata Dal.

**Vote trends**

State general secretary appealed to the voters on September 19, 1996 to undermine and ignore all those parties and organizations that are responsible for the tragedy in the state.

The economic package announced by H.D. Deve Gowda was seemed to attract the voters to the party but the result in the assembly elections
declined this perception. The United Front Government’s Common Minimum Programe has also guaranteed the maximum autonomy to the state of J & K. The United Front Government and the Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda economy announced three economic packages which include construction of Uadhampur-Baramulla-Srinagar railway line, start work on Dul Hasti Hydro Power Project, to open Mughal Road, Agricultural University to Jammu, waiving of loans upto 50,000 rupees, project for water supply to leh, enhancing tourist facilities in leh and Kargil and construction of an air part at Kargil. Janata Dal has not much support base in any region of the state, where National Conference represents the largest support base throughout the valley, Jammu and Ladakh.

Poll performance

As has already been said that the party has fought only parliamentary elections in 1996 in which it has achieved the Anantnag constituency. In the Assembly elections 1996, the party contested from all the 87 constituencies, but could not get to its expectations. The party could win only five seats. In the previous elections the party has not fought any seat.³⁶

THE PANTHERS PARTY

The Panthers Party which was formed in 1982 has been closely identified with the personality of Bhim Singh. Initially he was elected as congress MLA in 1977 and also served as a functionary in the youth congress. In 1983, he contested as a nominee of the Panthers Party and won his assembly seat.³⁷ The influence of his party is confined only to a few Hindu Constituencies with sizeable votes of the Rajput Community. This party hardly subscribes to any consistent ideology. Prof. Bhim Singh has been a vocal supporter of the regional interests of the Jammu region. His party men often agitated against the dominant Kashmiri Muslim leaders.
They are accused of giving step motherly treatment to the region. All this, however, never precluded him in coming closer to the dominant leadership in Kashmir valley.

THE ALL JAMMU AND KASHMIR PEOPLE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The All Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party is a new political party in Jammu and Kashmir. It was founded in 1999 by the former Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and captured power in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in October 2002 assembly elections. In 2002 elections, the people voted decisively to overthrow the ruling National Conference whose last term in the government was largely seen as corrupt, inefficient and unsympathetic to the needs of the people of the state. Moreover, the results were a predictable consequence of the distance that had come over the last few years between the National Conference leadership and the people of the state. The National Conference Ministers were blamed for the massive corruption that was affecting the daily life of the people. Amidst such political circumstances, the People's Democratic Party under the leadership of former Union Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his daughter, Mehbooba Mufti, effectively incorporated into the party's campaign manifesto, issues with which the common people identified. The PDP promised a corruption free government, unconditional dialogue with militants, disbanding the Special Operations Group (SOG), providing a 'healing touch' to those affected by militancy. While the National Conference had a hardline position on these issues, the PDP clearly understood the mood of the people, especially in the Valley. The result was that the PDP won all of its 16 seats in the Kashmir valley on an anti-National Conference and pro-people campaign. The PDP also managed to raise all those issues that till now were mostly talked about by separatist outfits. The National Conference was punished even in Jammu where the
party could manage to win only 9 seats as compared to the 14 it had in the 1996 elections. Clearly, there was an anti-incumbency and anti-national conference mood among the voters in the state. Since 2004 it had one member each in the Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha. It was a member of the ruling United Progressive Alliance.

People’s Democratic Party is presently headed by Ms. Mehbooba Mufti, while Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who headed the PDP-Congress Coalition Government between October 2002 and November 2005, is the party’s patron.

ALL PARTIES HURRIYAT CONFERENCE

The party is a conglomerate of Jamat-e-Islami, JKLF, People’s Conference, People League and about a two dozen other groups which have been spearheading the secessionist movement. This organization was formed on March 9, 1993. The amalgam has, since then, been consistently promoted by Pakistan in the latter’s quest to establish legitimacy over its claim on the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. The founding members who took nearly nine months to form the organization, after conceiving it on December 17, 1992, have not been able to take a decisive stand on important issues. The founding members who met at the residence of Mirwaiz Umer Farooq made an agreement that there should be a united forum of all political and social organizations in the valley. There was hardly any unity among the members about the principal objectives. After nine months of deliberations, all that could be agreed to was that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) should work for the liberation of Kashmir from India leaving the issue of its accession to Pakistan or independence to be decided at the later date. An executive committee was formed with Mirwaiz Umar Farooq as chairman and Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Abdul Gani Lone, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, S. Hamid, Ghulam Rasool and Prof. Abdul Gani as members.
In New Delhi, the formation of the organization was watched with interest. The liberal intellectuals felt the conference to help in starting discussions to find a peaceful solution to the problems in the state. There have been sporadic efforts to engage APHC members in a dialogue to explore a peaceful solution. All visiting delegations to Srinagar met its members, but return invariably with the feeling of disintegration in the APHC leaders among themselves and also under the spell of Hizbul Mujahideen and Jamat-e-Islami.

**Ideology and Role**

According to the Hurriyat Conference, Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory and ‘India's control’ on it is not justified. It supports the Pakistani claim that Kashmir is the ‘unfinished agenda of Partition’ and needs to be solved ‘as per the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.’ The APHC perceives itself to be the sole representative of the Kashmiri people, a claim that has so far been endorsed explicitly only by Pakistan.

The outfit's primary role has been to project the image of counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and to mobilize public opinion against the Indian security forces. The alliance has consistently followed up local allegations of security force excesses, and in several documented cases, allegedly distorted facts to suit its propaganda. The APHC enjoys an observer's status in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Incidentally, the OIC had dropped hard-line Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, from its guest list and instead invited Mirwaiz Umar Farooq for its June 2005 Foreign Ministers Conference in Yemen.

The APHC does not recognise the Indian right over Kashmir. It blames India's lack of sincerity for the failure of the repeated attempts at the
resolution of the Kashmir issue. It has consistently criticized the Indian troops present in Kashmir and accused them of human rights violations.

There are currently two factions of the Hurriyat Conference. One, led by Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, second, Tehreek-i-Hurriyat, led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, both call for resolution of Kashmir on the basis of the right to self-determination of the people under the auspices of United Nations. Since 2004, the Omar Farooq faction has held three rounds of talks with the Government of India, while as Syed Ali Shah Geelani faction rejected the talks untill India stops the use of Armed Forces Special Powers Act and accepts Kashmir as a disputed territory.

The Hurriyat boycotted the May 2006 round table conference in Srinagar, which leaders of Jammu and Kashmir, and the Prime Minister of India attended. This was a setback to the Hurriyat’s dialogue with New Delhi. Presently the two factions of Hurriyat are heading towards a single platform considering their common objectives as their main priorities.

On Friday, August 29, 2008, Hurriyat leader Shabir Ahmad Shah was arrested, following the arrests of other Hurriyat leaders such as Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, Mohammad Yaseen Malik and two others. Mirwaiz is the term for the traditional leader of Muslims in Kashmir. He inherited the title as the 12th Mirwaiz and was the founder chairman of the Hurriyat in 1993. Before he began an active career in Kashmir politics, he nurtured the ambition to become a software engineer. He holds a master's degree in Islamic studies.

After joining of Shabir Shah with Umar Farooq’s Hurriyat recently, the Mirwaiz has grown into a more powerful political entity. He has attempted to bridge the gap between his faction and that of Syed Ali Shah Geelani. This effort was a precursor to his visit to Pakistan held Kashmir
and Islamabad in June this year. Shabir Shah also helped to bring the two factions of huriyat closer.

His Pakistan visit saw a major change in his approach to the Kashmir issue, taking a major tilt towards India's sovereignty over the area. He announced that the United Nations has failed Kashmiri people from India's wrath. Till January this year, he had maintained his belief in an UN sponsored resolution of the problem.

It was only natural that the APHC leadership felt it to concentrate more on activities in New Delhi and abroad. It ventured out of the valley in April 1994, when a four member team consisting of Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat and Mufti Bahauddin Farooqi met senior officials in the US and members of the Indian press. This was followed by APHC delegation attending the meeting of Foreign Ministers of OIC countries in Rawal Pandi in September, 1994, visiting Casablanca to attend the OIC Summit in 1994, sending a delegation to the UN Human Rights Conference in Geneva in 1995, deputing Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to attend the meeting of the contract group of the OIC in New York and present its case to delegates of the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement at Cartagena.

At the inaugural function of the Kashmir Awareness Bureau which was opened in New Delhi on November 5, 1995, Mohammad Yasin Malik told the gathering about the historical perspective of the Kashmir tangle. He said that if Gandhi would have been alive today, he would have observed fast unto death to force Indian security forces to stop excesses in Kashmir. He also blamed Government of India for enforcing exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir just to give communal colour to the ongoing freedom struggle. He told that there are more than 25000 Kashmiri Pandits still living in Kashmir and are happy.
Poll Issue

All Party Hurriyat Conference is a strong advocate of right to self determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The party has always condemned the elections in the state and rejected any such move. The party was also involved in the anti-election campaign during the parliamentary and assembly elections. Most of its leaders including Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Yasin Malik, Maulvi Umar Farooq, Shabir Shah and Maulvi Abbas Ansari were subjected to House arrest during the elections. Party continues to be the National Conference’s main opposition block, especially since the electoral process has polarized all the players in the fray along the line pro-India and pro-independence.

All Party Hurriyat Conference, which consistently vouches for the separation of Kashmir from India and establishment of Nizame Mustafa has sharply criticized the talks between the Central Home minister S. B. Chavan and the militant leaders Babar Badar, Bilal Lodhi, Gulam Mohi-ud-din and Imran Rahi and repeated the earlier refrain that any solution to the Kashmir problem should be found through a tripartite dialogue among India, Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Apart from the above groups, few more minor parties like the Janata Party, People’s Conference, People’s Democratic Front, Democratic Party Nationalist and Awami League also operate in their respective areas. The Janata Party, like other states, had lost its importance after the 1977 elections. The People’s Conference, which finds its support among the Muslims of certain assembly constituencies of the Baramullah and Kupwara districts, revolves round the personality of A. G. Lone. Earlier he served as member of the National Conference, Congress (I) and Janata Party. He was elected to the assembly thrice in 1967, 1972, and 1977 and also held ministerial position in 1970-71. In 1977 he was elected as a Janata MLA.
Later, he along with some other MUF leaders supported the cause of the pro-independence militant outfits in the valley resulting to his assassination allegedly by Indian agencies.

Electoral performance of Different Political Parties

The factor of unopposed returns and other malpractices, whatsoever the reasons, did not allow the democratic process to grow and establish its roots in the state right from the early years. It also did not allow the party structures to acquire a proper form and thwarted the growth of political consciousness among the people. In every election, efforts have been made to maintain the hegemony of the dominant ruling party, as a result of which a pluralist democratic culture has failed to crystallize. The electoral performance of different political parties is shown in Table I – IV.

Table 4.1

Region-wise electoral performance of different political parties in Assembly Elections (1962-1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Contested
**Won
Table 4.2
Community-wise voter turn-out in the 1983 and 1987 Assembly Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Muslim dominated constituencies</th>
<th>Non-Muslim dominated constituencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Electorate</td>
<td>No. and Percentage of electorate who voted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>21,60,207</td>
<td>16,30,643 (77.42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>24,66,961</td>
<td>19,10,644 (77.45%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Seventh and Eight General Election Reports of the Election Department of Jammu and Kashmir State.

Table 4.3
Region-wise voting performance (Percentage of valid votes) of different political parties in the 1983 and 1987 Assembly Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Valid votes secured by different parties in 1983</th>
<th>Valid votes secured by different parties in 1987</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jammu region</td>
<td>Kashmir valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>45.30</td>
<td>19.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Conference</td>
<td>29.91</td>
<td>59.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.J.P.</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaat-e-Islami/MUF</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>6.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Conference</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (CPI, CPM, LD, JP, BSP, PP. etc.)</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Reports of the Election Department of Jammu and Kashmir State.
### Table 4.4
Party-wise performance in the Assembly Elections (1951-1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Congress</th>
<th>National Conference</th>
<th>Praja Parishad/ Janasangh/ BJP</th>
<th>Janata Party</th>
<th>Jamaat-e-Islami/ MUF</th>
<th>Other Minor Party</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>75* (Unopposed)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68 (56.21**)</td>
<td>5 (24.11)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0 (8.14)</td>
<td>2 (7.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70 (66.96)</td>
<td>3 (17.47)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 (21.44)</td>
<td>3 (9.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>61 (53.2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (16.45)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 (21.44)</td>
<td>9 (26.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>58 (55.44)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (9.85)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(7.18)</td>
<td>0 (0.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>11 (16.89)</td>
<td>47 (46.22)</td>
<td>13 (23.72)</td>
<td>1 (3.59)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (4.98)</td>
<td>4 (9.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>26 (30.32)</td>
<td>46 (47.29)</td>
<td>3 (1.9)</td>
<td>0 (0.28)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (4.98)</td>
<td>2 (10.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>26 (20.20)</td>
<td>57 (34.78)</td>
<td>8 (5.10)</td>
<td>0 (0.43)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (8.71)</td>
<td>4 (14.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>7 (20.00)</td>
<td>57 (34.78)</td>
<td>8 (12.13)</td>
<td>5 (10.87)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 (11.77)</td>
<td>2 (9.31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Number of Seats won
** Percentage of votes polled

**Source:** Complied from the election reports of the Election Department of Jammu and Kashmir State.

186
### Table 4.5
Party wise performance in the Assembly Election-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Conference</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples Democratic Party</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthers Party</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (M)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Complied from the election reports of the Election Department of Jammu and Kashmir State.

### Table 4.6
Party wise performance in the Assembly Elections-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Conference</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples Democratic Party</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (Marxist)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J &amp; K Democratic Party Nationalist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples Democratic Front</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J &amp; K National Panthers Party</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Complied from the election reports of the Election Department of Jammu and Kashmir State.
This is the way our Governments function. This is the way they discharge their duties as guardians of law and order. This is the way they enforce the Constitution. This is the way they protect the citizens of the country. This has made the country a house divided against itself; it has driven and is driving honest, law-abiding citizens to desperation; it has produced a community where very few respect the Government or the law of the land but everyone believes that one can break the law at will and get away with it. The ruling party's greed for power is insatiable; everyone who calls himself a Congressman wants to get to the top of the ladder overnight, to be a millionaire in a jiffy; and, therefore, no one has any hesitation to sign a pact even with the most despicable, criminal, unscrupulous men and women who would be treated as untouchables in any decent society.

It is this approach of the Government to the problems of the nation which is responsible for many of the ills that afflict it. Its thickskinned attitude, its indifference to the problems and sufferings of peace-loving, loyal, innocent citizens, its scant respect and concern for members of the minorities, the weaker sections and the lower castes, makes the Government an organisation of corrupt, lazy politicians, unconcerned, heartless officials, slow-coaches and moribund rulers. The solution to this state of affairs is to make the political parties realise that public life is not a sinecure. Politics is not for time-servers, money-grabbers, criminals and the power-hungry. Those who wish to get into Parliament must be ready to work; and work in Parliament or in Government implies utmost respect for the Constitution and a determination to enforce it in letter and in spirit. If they do not know what it is, what it means and implies, they should not stand for elections and, even if elected, the leaders should not entrust them with responsible positions where they have to act as impartial rulers with efficiency and speed.

To make the country safe for democracy, and help it to grow and progress as a free society, it is not only the communal parties and groups
that have to be made to forsake the path of religious ideologies, communal hatred and bitterness, but equally so those parties that claim to be secular and non-communal but in practice are equally sectarian, communal and partisan. Ours is far from being an enlightened, civilised and impartial society. The Congress Party which fought for the freedom of the country has been in power continuously from 1947 with two brief interruptions in 1977-79 and again in 1989-91. The party claims to have consistently stood for and to stand for democracy, secularism and social justice as enshrined in our Constitution. But its actions and policies disprove much of this. The time has now come to subject its claim to a proper scrutiny.

A political party once elected with a majority in Parliament or in a State Assembly forms the Government at the Centre or in the State. When this happens, its first, foremost and supreme duty and primary function is to rule and not be a silent spectator to whatever is happening in the country; the Government that it has formed represents all the citizens in the country or in the State; the primary function of the Government is to protect everyone of its citizens, their life and their property; its fundamental duty is to enforce the Constitution and the other laws enacted by Parliament or by the State Assembly. Whatever may be the religion, the ideology, the caste, the language, the status or the individual or the group that violates the law, whoever may be the party or group that is responsible for any civil disturbance, riots, death, destruction and bloodshed, and however great may be the political clout, the muscle-power, the money-power at the disposal of the party, group or individual, the law is supreme, applies to every single citizen, and must be applied to everyone in the same manner and intensity; it has to be enforced without any discrimination, difference, distinction or liniency. The law has to be enforced at all times uniformly, and with equal severity whoever may be the person or group that violates the law. The Government is to show no mercy, no soft corner, give no special treatment
or consideration to anyone whether the person is a relation, a sympathiser, a friend, a party worker, a country-cousin, a self-styled law-giver, a caste-comrade, a fund-raiser, an underworld doon, a lawbreaker or a party leader of the minister or anyone in authority. A law of the country has been violated and the person who has done so must be made to face the consequences of his action. He has to be punished. The law has to be applied to him in its totality. In our country, we have a highly respected Judiciary charged with the task of enforcing the law, and therefore, politicians, ministers or bureaucrats are not required to do that work.

The political parties have to formulate and develop a political philosophy, a socio-economic ideology designed to solve the material, mundane problems of the country and not people’s spiritual problems. That policy must be designed to meet the needs of the people which are essentially the problems of hunger, disease, shelter, clothing, education, employment, law and order, communications, transport and our relations with foreign countries. Such a policy must be brought down to the level of our own national needs and requirements; it must be designed to solve the problems that are facing our people in India and not the problems of some far-off countries. When this is done, the political parties will be confident of facing their constituents, their voters, their supporters and their opponents with something concrete, tangible and sensible, something that holds a promise to the people, something that will improve the lot of the people and make their existence a pleasure. They will be able to present such a plan of action to the voters and asks for their support and will not need to blough, dupe, hypnotize people with the imaginary bogey of religion being in danger, and ask for their voters because someone is a Hindu, somebody else is a Muslim, or anything of that kind. There will not be any room, any time, any need to bring up issues like temples, mosques, churches, or gurudwaras into picture.
For too long our politicians have been obsessed with the idea of making the grade in politics through the medium of religion, caste, creed, region, community, language and such other narrow loyalties. Rather, they would have left those petty, insignificant issues like religion, beliefs, temples, mosques and religious yatras to those who are better qualified to attend to them and whose job actually it is. They would have tried to come to grips with issues that are really theirs by virtue of calling themselves politicians. They would have devoted their time and energy to formulate genuine political ideologies based on the socio-economic conditions prevalent in the country, as political leaders and parties have done and are doing all over the world where democracy exists. Such a preoccupation would give them sufficient food for thought; they would find it sufficiently absorbing, engrossing and satisfying; they will find, above all, that is precisely what a vast majority of our people are looking for and expect our politicians and public leaders to do. It would earn for them the gratitude of the masses because they do not want their political leaders to teach them whether to and which temple or mosque to go to; they do not want the politicians to teach them what their religion is and how to practice it, but to help them to solve their real, daily problems of food, shelter, clothing, education, employment and maintenance of law and order in the country.

This is the real task of political parties, parliamentarians, legislators and public leaders. It may be that some politicians or parties were able to achieve their objectives by bringing religion into politics in the past. But they must realize in this enlightened age that the consequences of such action are far from being in any way fruit full for the nation. The masses are unconcerned about the religion of others; they do not even care to know whether their neighbors go to a temple or a mosque or a church or worship no god at all. They have lived in peace and harmony with their neighbors for centuries and they have no intention to do otherwise. Hatred and discord, if
any, exist in the minds and hearts of politicians who are anxious to capture power by playing upon the religious sentiments of people. The politicians can help the people to unite the country once again if they will; they can help the people to live in peace and harmony.

In a democracy political parties are absolutely necessary. They provide alternative socio-economic programmes for the voters to choose from. They serve as watchdogs of the interests of the nation and of the people. They help to prevent the nation from being turned into a dictatorship, theocracy, a fascist state, a one party state or a den of unscrupulous self-seekers and corrupt politicians. They throw up issues which affect the nation, highlight the needs of the people, their wants, their requirements, their sufferings, their difficulties, their concerns; and they get the government to take action wherever necessary. The ruling party alone can not be expected to be conscious of and attend to all such matters unless they are brought to its notice and is forced to take action by the opposition.

In a country with a written constitution like ours, nothing can be done which violated any of the basic laws of the land. Even if such a programme is presented to the people by a political party and the party is elected with a majority, it will not be able to execute it because it can not do anything which violates any provision in the constitution. The oath that the Ministers take before assuming office clearly enjoins on them to uphold the constitution. The party's programme must ensure, among other things, that it does not bring religious issues into its manifesto because ours is a secular state. The state in our country has no religion. It can not have a soft corner for any religion; it is not to involve itself with religion; it is not to involve itself with religious matters; it is concerned with the temporal welfare of the people.
Since the political parties, sooner or later, will be concerned with matters of the state and shape its policies, they have to keep religious matters out of their programme. Religion is not to be brought in or mixed with politics or with any programme drawn up by a political party which it wants to implement if it comes to power after the election. Every citizen in our country has the freedom to practice any religion but religion has to be kept out of politics and official policies of the government. The voters must accept the fact that in our secular nation there is no room for communal, religion based politics. The BJP and other communal parties must be rejected by the voters out of hand so that our country may be free of this menace of communalism and the people may have peace to constructively work for them and for the nation. The only way to ensure a progressive, modern society in our midst is to exorcise communal and caste-ridden parties. It is the voters who can accomplish this.
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25. Farooq Rehmani, Chairman Peoples League, interview with Nikhil Lakshman; Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Speech delivered by Prof. Abdul Gani at Iqbal park on March 4, 1987. Ibid.