CHAPTER - III
ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE PARTY

National Conference Party has the distinction of being one of those few Indian political parties which had emerged before Indian Independence. The party also has a prominent historical background in pre-independent Indian politics in general and Kashmir politics in particular. It is not difficult, after W.H Morris-Jones to Characterize Kashmir political system “belonging to the type of the one dominant party”,\(^1\) since 1931. The emergence of the National Conference as dominant political party is direct consequence of its inception as the party fighting for freedom and emancipation prior to 1947. There was no organized political force in existence in the state till 1932.\(^2\) Many Factors have contributed in the emergence of the National Conference Party and these factors can be traced in the backdrop of history of the State of Jammu and Kashmir itself and growth of the party nurtured with the events which happened in Indian national politics from time to time.

Jammu and Kashmir is central to India’s vision of a truly secular, diversified and decentralized Union. J&K is of so much strategic value to India that it has consumed enormous political, economic, diplomatic and military resources, and still remains one of India’s security pre-occupations. The geographic features of the state have determined the valley’s history and culture.

Kashmir owes its historical unity and isolation to the same facts which gave to its geographical location a distinct and unique character. The state has a fertile plain embedded among high mountain ranges, a valley large enough to form a kingdom itself and capable of supporting a highly developed civilization.\(^3\) The state of Jammu and Kashmir can also claim distinction in relation to other parts of India because number of invasions, the magnitude of tyrannies and cruel exploitations during different phases of the history.\(^4\) They have been ruled by many rulers even it can be said that they have been exploited and suppressed by many rulers. All rulers of Jammu and Kashmir
have come and gone but nothing has changed. The bad condition of the people of the state never improved. After the demolition of the Mughal Empire, situation in the state had turned from bad to worst. Extreme worst condition had come with the invasion of Ahmed Shah Durrani in 1750. Rule of Afghans had begun with his invasion, near about three quarters of a century when the Afghans had occupied Kashmir and the people had to tolerate the harshest government. Shocking tales of religious persecution, devastation and repine during that period are still commonly told in every household in Kashmir. Afghans treated badly not only the Hindus, even the Muslims did not live respectable life under them. Not even single section of Kashmiris remained untouched by their misrule.

According to Vidya Bhushan, “Afghans also amassed wealth by exploiting the local population and hence further demoralized them by shattering the local economy. In short, political subjugation under Afghans accompanied by exploitation of resources, economic servitude of the people, social degeneration and ruthless administration in Kashmir”.  

In 1819, a few Hindu Kashmiri pandits under the leadership of Pandit Birbal Dhar, invited Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help them out of their miserable plight. The ambitious Sikh Maharaja seized opportunity to capture Kashmir and an Annexed it with Sikh empire. Maharaja sent troops to Kashmir and in that year itself Sikh troops defeated the Afghan governor and as a result of that Kashmiris got new master from Punjab.

From 1819 to 1846, Kashmir remained under the Sikhs but change in the regime did not improve the lot of the people. Maharaja and other Sikh rulers did not have time to involve personally in the Kashmir’s administrative activities, so they deputed governors to rule in their name. Large number of taxes and duties besides the land revenue were being levied by the governors. Those taxes were unbearable for the people and consequently large number of them fled the country.

According to William Moorcroft, who visited Kashmir in 1824, “the Sikhs looked upon Kashmiris as little better than cattle”. He further writes that everywhere the people were in most abject condition, subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression. In November 1845, war broke out between the
Sikhs and British at Subraon. The Sikh nobles asked Gulab Singh, one of the favourite Lieutenants of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Sikh army, Raja of Jammu in 1820 for services rendered to Sikh empire, to help and lead them. But Gulab Singh was not interested in helping the Sikhs to whom his allegiance formerly belonged. By remaining aloof Gulab Singh wanted to “earn the gratitude of the British diplomats” and in this he became successful. He always wanted to carve out a state for himself and so, when he was asked to become the prime minister of Punjab. After the Sikhs were vanquished, he was delighted, immediately after accepting the office, Gulab Singh himself remained in touch with the British authority.

Kashmir and certain other territories had to be ceded to British Empire if the Sikhs were not able to compensate 1.5 crore to British government under the Treaty of Lahore (March 9, 1846), but Sikhs had failed to pay. Gulab Singh grabbed the opportunity and offered 75 lakh rupees as compensation; as a result. Treaty of Amritsar was signed between Maharaja Gulab Singh the purchaser, on the one side and the British India government on the other side, on March 16, 1846. According to the treaty of Amritsar, the territory lies to the eastward of river Indus and the westward of river Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahore was made over permanently by British Government to Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu for a consideration of rupee 75 lakh.

After the end of Sikhs rule over the state, Dogras had become the rulers of Kashmir. The Dogra ruled the state from 1846 to 1947. During the long period of time, of a little over one hundred years, the state saw four ruling princes. During the early rule of the Dogras, the people of Kashmir suffered much misery. It was the time the Pax Britenica gave them outward peace, which was lacking during the rule of either the Pathans or the Sikhs but the peace best helped the upper classes people in general and the Hindu upper classes in particular to consolidate and fatten themselves at the expanse of the masses. But the common people did not make any progress. Moreover, economically their condition had been deteriorating day by day. The land was in dilapidated condition in the reign of the Dogra rulers, Gulab Singh and
Ranbir Singh. Taxes were collected almost as higher as in the times of Pathans and Sikh regimes.\textsuperscript{13}

Asifa Jan, a noted political scholar describes, “The Dogra rule was essentially autocratic in nature and character. The Dogras believed in the principle of personal rule. The political system that they established was feudalistic in nature. It was undemocratic, irresponsible and despotic. The socio-economic system was also responsible for the ills and evils, the people suffered under the Dogra rule.”\textsuperscript{14}

Maharaja Partap Singh died in September 1925, having no son to succeed him. So his nephew Hari Singh, Son of Raja Amar Singh succeeded him and became a ruler of the state. Immediately after Hari Singh ascended the gaddi, a sort of Rajput oligarchy began to be formed under Maharaja’s shelter, and mediocre Rajputs became Heads of many departments of the state. The military was exclusively reserved for the Dogras, more than sixty percent of gazette appointments went to Rajput men. It was an avowed policy of the Dogras to exclude Kashmiris from their army ranks. People of Kashmir felt shocked at the policy of racial discrimination. Soon invidious treatment became intolerable to majority sections of Kashmiris especially to Muslims. Voices of resentment were begun to rise in protest.\textsuperscript{15}

Sir Albion Banerjee describes the situation of Kashmiri people and says that the people of Kashmir had been leading very miserable life. Kashmiri artisans were finding it very difficult to earn living because of unsympathetic attitude of the Dogra government. He said, “Jammu And Kashmir State is laboring under many disadvantages, with a large Mohammedan population absolutely illiterate, laboring under poverty and very low economic condition living in the villages and practically governed by dumb, driven cattle. There is no touch between the government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself require overhauling from top to bottom to bring it up to the modern condition of efficiency. It has, at present little or no sympathy with the people’s wants and grievances.”\textsuperscript{16}

During Dogra rule, there had been provincial as well as communal bias and prejudice in the policy of the government. For instance both Hindu and
Muslim people of Kashmir and frontier districts were not entitled to join the army because they were looked upon as a subject race and cannot be trusted. Hindu Dogras and Muslim Dogras were recruited in the Maharaja’s regiments. Even Kangra Rajputs and Gorkhas from outside the state can have a place in the military of the Jammu and Kashmir. Government jobs were meant for local Kashmiris. In civil Administration during reign of Partap Singh, higher appointments were reserved for Punjabis.\(^\text{17}\)

G.H. Khan describes that the state’s people under Dogra rule had suffered miserably. The reasons for economic and social backwardness of the masses were due to very character of the state, its institutions of the Jagirdari system and the system of revenue, taxation and corrupt administration. More than eighty percent of people living in villages were under debt. Industrial sector was also in bad condition. Moreover, politically suppressed and economically downtrodden, the Muslims of Jammu And Kashmir State were also educationally backward. The most important cause of educational backwardness of Muslims was the anti-Muslim attitude of the Dogra administration.\(^\text{18}\)

Hari Jaisingh while describing other reasons behind the condition of Kashmiris particularly Muslims said, “The Maharaja alone was not to be blamed fully for the backwardness of the Muslims. The Britishers were also responsible. The later were not in favour of higher education in frontier area, making them susceptible to foreign ideas. They did not want to publish newspapers, which could spread anti-British sentiments”.\(^\text{19}\)

The dawn of political awakening in Kashmir can be traced back to the 1930s. For the first time in its long history, the people began to realize their rights.\(^\text{20}\) 1931 is regarded as the most important year in the history of Jammu And Kashmir State for many reasons. Its importance enhances further when one talks about political consciousness among the masses of the state. Year 1931 is also considered as a starting point of political awakening in Kashmir. In the early thirties, while the people in India dared not to raise even a finger against the ruler, in Kashmir, people were fighting a battle against autocracy.\(^\text{21}\) Kashmir valley out of all the regions of the state was first to experience upsurge in 1931. 13\(^{\text{th}}\) July was the date when open
demonstrations against the despotic rule of the maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir took place. Many demonstrations had been staged even earlier by the peasantry and shawl-weavers of the state. But never before whole Muslim population arose a one man against the authority. This statement clarifies that this movement did not belong to any particular group of employees or union. This was the outburst of the public anger against despotic rule of the state. The government of the state was not prepared to let the agitation spread and so the repressive machinery of the government was set in motion. The ruthlessness of the government did not deter the people of the state from continuing their struggle.

According to G.H. Khan, The rising of the 13th of July that year was not merely a protest against the excess of certain officials with the religious practices of the Muslims which had occurred one after another in Jammu a few weeks before but it was in fact a vehement expression of a deeply felt resentment of the Muslims who had failed in the past to persuade the rulers to do them justice. They exploited the incident of an alleged desecration of the Holy Quran and made it the starting point of what eventually turned out to be a long-drawn-out political struggle. Coming out of the state of disarray into which had lain low for long, they pulled themselves together, and entered upon an organized battle for freedom from economic, social, political and religious subjugation.

He further adds that the Muslims in general and the Kashmiris in particular, were subjected to the rule of injustice and oppression during the Dogra period in the state. The Muslims of Kashmir were discriminated against in every sphere of life. Unreasonable taxes, discrimination in government services, denial of political and civil rights by the government were among the main causes behind the eruption of the unrest in the state.

Sardar M. Khan describes that, the “political consciousness” came to the people of Kashmir at the beginning of the twentieth century when a number of young men were getting education from Aligarh Muslim university and formed a group together, that was called “reading room”. These Kashmiri students were the members of that group. Activities of that group and group regarded as a phenomenon of political consciousness in Kashmir.
Asifa Jan while discussing causes of mass movement of 1931, says, “1931 anti-government movement was the first organized and well directed “mass movement. There were many causes responsible for the struggle for freedom launched by Kashmiris e.g. economic causes, beggars and forced laborers suppression, bad condition of shawl weaving and silk industry, policy of discrimination towards Muslim majority in every field by Dogra regime, huge burden of taxes on masses, ban on political freedom of masses, and above all desecration of the Quran, which had hurt the sentiments of Muslims, who were in the majority in the state”. 28

To pacify the situation in the state “Temporary Truce”, an agreement was signed between maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and representatives of the public, who were elected during the time of agitation. This agreement was signed on 26 August 1931 to end the agitation. 29 As a result of that movement people had succeeded to get their dues. Leaders of agitation had got success to put pressure of public anger on ruling authority. Maharaja changed the policy of the government with regard to the recruitment to the state administrative services so as to enable the Muslim community, to have due share in proportion to their population. 30

Many views and theories could be found, regarding the causes of eruption of 1931 agitation against the state ruling authority. Particularly against the Hindu ruler of the Muslim population dominated state. Bhagwan Das and H.L. Saxena, propounded in their work that British India government was the main architect of this event. These historians believed that British India government has its vested interests behind the articulation of conspiracy of 1931 agitation and British India government and disgruntled Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, who was very impressive speaker and was greatly able to arouse religious frenzy and passion among Muslims by reciting passegess from holy Quran in a most sonorous voice. 31 Bhagwan Singh writes, “These were a communal trouble of the worst type in the state” 32 and H.L. Saxena, characterized this agitation as a Muslim “Rebellion”. 33

Most prominent and widely read author on the contemporary history of Kashmir, Prem Nath Bazaz, the first among the authors who analyzed the reason of the emergence of the agitation, describes that a group of young
Muslim men, who having completed their respective courses by 1930, found themselves unable to enter into state services direct on high and remunerative positions. Sheikh Mohamed Abdullah, who is stated to have played prominent role in agitation, was one amongst them. These young men organized themselves into a group, called ‘Reading Room’ party.\(^{34}\)

According to Prithivi Nath Kaul Bamzai, “Members of Reading Room party had come in the contact with Muslim leaders and propagators of Pan-Islamism and organized themselves into a group, holding meetings at the Muslim Reading Room in Srinagar. Frustrated at not having been successful in entering state service direct on responsible and remunerative posts, they came to the conclusion that unless they had backing of the masses, they had no future in the land of their birth”.\(^{35}\)

Various authors have given their points of view regarding the reasons behind the eruption of the 1931 agitation against the autocratic government of the state, which was said to be discriminatory against Muslim majority population. Some historians have tried to give communal look to this agitation in their work and tried to relate every problem of the state because of Hindu ruler and Muslim majority population’s religious differences.

Though all historians have their different views regarding the reasons behind the emergence of agitation against the Dogra government in Kashmir but their views are common with regard to bad economic condition of common men, peasantry and youth of the state and that bad economic condition was believed to be the foremost reason. People wanted to get rid of their worst condition of living at any cost and the main reasons behind the movement of 1931 and a spontaneous mass uprising were political and economic. People had become totally disappointed and wanted to get rid of miseries of their life. As a result of that, masses had stood up against undemocratic rule of the state, which was supposed to be a cause of their situation. Revolutionary changes were sought by Kashmiris and they were prepared to sacrifice everything they possessed, even their life for the betterment of their future. But people were inexperienced and had no tried leader to guide.
Rise of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah:

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was born in 1905, he was brought up by his widowed mother and two elder brothers. His family was engaged in Shawl trading business. After having his education from Sri Pratap College, Srinagar and Punjab University Lahore, he succeeded to get admission in Aligarh Muslim University in U.P. he did his master degree in Science from Aligarh, where he had come into contact with other Kashmiri students and started group as “Reading Room”.  

Educated Muslim youth was angry because of the bad condition of Kashmiri Muslim community, and that condition forced Kashmiri educated youth to organize themselves against injustice prevailing under Dogra’s rule. Non-Muslim youth were being given appointments on administrative posts by the public service recruitment board. Sanskrit and Hindi languages were offered as an option in the examinations, whereas Urdu, Arabic and Persian were put on the back seat. Muslim youth had felt that policy as anti-Muslim and decided to oppose discriminatory policy. Sheikh Abdullah was the foremost among them and they formed a group a “Reading Room Party” at Fateh Kadal, Srinagar on 12th of April 1930.

Meetings of Reading room party had been organized, in which various issues were discussed and mostly discussed were the problems of Kashmiri people. In one of the meetings Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah explained the implications of appointment regulations and stressed to protest against it. In order to that sheikh Abdullah sought to present the memorandum to the government. According to Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the Reading Room Party was a pretext but the real aim was to organize a movement.

Sheikh Abdullah was becoming a popular Muslim leader day by day among common Kashmiri masses. 1931 mass movement’s events gave him popularity across whole state. Sheikh had possessed many qualities to be a popular leader and he never missed a single chance to impress Kashmiri people. Many incidents in state during that period gave him stage to set his political agenda.

Sheikh Mohamed Abdullah, was present on the accession ceremony of Maolvi Atiqullah to the office of Mirwaiz and, there he got a chance to deliver
speech to the masses and the Impact of Abdullah’s speech was impressive. Sheikh Abdullah had been with gifted melodious voice and he used to recite holy Quran in his speeches. Sheikh Abdullah’s speeches attracted people in huge numbers, even the passerby.

In order to get rid of Sheikh Abdullah’s presence in Kashmir, Government transferred him to Muzaffarabad as a science teacher. Sheikh Abdullah didn’t like that action and gave his resignation under protest from the Government job in a public meeting in Srinagar. Zafar Ali Khan, editor of “Zamindar”, Lahore, in order to appreciate the courage and determination of Sheikh Mohamed Abdullah editor titled him Sher-i- Kashnir (Lion of Kashmir). After Abdullah’s arrest in 1931, the slogan had become popular among people and spread in the state like fire in the forests.39

Agitations Against Government in J&K:

Such incidents had happened in the state in 1931, which hurt the sentiments of majority Muslims. Who, had been neglected by Dogra rulers so far in development point of views. In addition to that, disrespect of holy Quran by the sub inspector in Jammu jail premises and forbade the use of the ground for the Eid prayers, which had been traditionally used for the same purpose. Such incidents provoked people to raise voice against government.

According to G. H. Khan Kashmiri people especially Muslims had to face discrimination everywhere on their own land, for example in education, and administration. Political freedom had also been banned under Dogra rule which played major role to make people angry, In addition to that the news of holy Quran’s insult in Jammu province aggravated Muslims. People started to organize themselves against autocratic misrule of Dogra government and that led to processions and demonstrations against government in 1931.40 M.Y. Saraf explained about these incidents that politically suppressed and economically deprived Kashmiri majority Muslims felt deeply injured by these events.41 After these incidents people started organizing themselves against the autocratic government of the state.

People of Kashmir had started looking for a better life in their own country. Gradually, as the movement attained more and more growth,
development and strength, the Muslim leaders demanded a just, democratic and parliamentary type of government in place of the then existing autocratic rule. Other demands like grant of bill of rights which would give to the people of the state the fundamental rights and basic civil liberties such as the right to freedom of press, speech, platform, association, movement, assembly, religion etc.42

Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh by an order provided Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir an opportunity to presenting their grievances personally to him. Four representatives from Jammu province and seven from Srinagar, decided to represent the public. In Srinagar public meeting was organized by Reading Room Party to elect seven members from the valley on 25th of June, 1931. Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was the one of the seven elected members.43

After the meeting, on the request of dispersion by the leaders, people were going to have tea. Suddenly a strange man came on the venue and started delivering the speech to provoke people against the misrule of the Dogra government. That man was Abdul Qadeer Khan, an employee of an English officer Major Butt, who was on visit of valley along with him.44 The speech of Abdul Qadeer awakened the people and they started to think seriously of their destiny, shape future strategy and prepare themselves to face any eventuality at any price.

Police arrested Abdul Kadeer and charged him for treason. Muslims of Kashmir didn’t like that action of the government. People gathered in central jail in large numbers to attend trail of Abdul Kadeer. But authority didn’t allow them to enter in the venue. Clash between police and mob had erupted. In order to disperse the people, firing orders were issued and it culminated with the killings of many people and many people got injured.45

The Martyrs bodies were kept in the Jamia Maszid. Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues were present with the people that had joined the procession on July 14, 1931. Warrant was issued for the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. When he came to know that, he surrendered himself. Many other leaders had also been arrested.46 The movement assumed serious turn after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues. Maharaja Hari Singh
declared martial law and all kinds of oppressive devices were to let loose on the people to silence them.⁴⁷ Prem Nath Bazaz describes the event and says, “it was for the first time in the history of Kashmir that people have struck work for political ends. Until now business used to be suspended only on the occasion of death in the royal family but now it had been done in furtherance of the national cause. There were so many latthi charges, section 144 had been imposed, but it was being defied everywhere and when people were asked as to why they were on the strike and when would they give up, the only reply made anywhere was that, “we shall obey the orders that Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah might give in the situation after the release from the jail.”⁴⁸ The desire of the people for the freedom from autocratic rule received a new thrust with the sudden and vital turn the event took on July, 1931. The sensational event made the same people of Kashmir determined, who had surrendered their freedom to Mughals; who for about seventy one years served quite meekly to the Afghans; who were looked down by Sikh rulers, who were contemptuously treated by the Dogras, to throw off all sorts of shackles and made commitment to give life in freedom movement.

Every event in the state during that period had been increasing the importance and respect of Sheikh Abdullah among the Kashmiri masses. People followed his instructions and feel him one among them. Allama Iqbal, described his views about Sheikh Abdullah and said, “One thing which clearly stand about Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah is that he has completely removed the fear of going to jail or facing the Dogra army from the minds of Kashmiris.”⁴⁹

Growing intensity of political agitation had compelled Dogra government to communicate with masses, which resulted that the Muslims and the other sections of the masses were asked to submit their demands to maharaja. Muslims submitted their demands on October 19, 1931. However first achievement of Muslims was to get freedom of press and platform. It was due to this very achievement with the establishment of Muslim Conference, the first major political organization of people in Kashmir. After that appointment of Glancy Commission to investigate grievances of various communities living in the state, on the basis of Glancy Commission
recommendation maharaja gave opportunity to people of the state to participate in the matter of legislation and the administration. The establishment of legislature was an important milestone of freedom struggle in Jammu and Kashmir. Muslim Conference played an important role in the achievement of people’s success. The recommendations of the Glancy Commission also disclosed the sad tale of discrimination of Muslim majority over a long period of time i.e. from 1846 to 1932.

**Formation of Muslim Conference and Its Role:**

Muslim Conference was an early response of the emerging Muslim intelligentsia of Kashmir to the situation of valley’s backwardness and deprivation. The idea of formation of party gained momentum especially after the release of Kashmiri leaders on 4th June, 1932. According to Maulana Mohammed Sayed Massoodi, the decision of new party formation and its name Muslim Conference was taken in the central jail, Srinagar in course of discussions he had with Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah.

Muslims of Kashmir in 1932 had got a common platform against misrule of the government and a long subjugation, suppression of Kashmiri Muslims. Muslim conference was a fruit of long time nourished Kashmiri aspirations of common struggle. After quitting his job because he had grievances against the administration of Dogra ruler Hari Singh, Sheikh Abdullah and few other educated young men thus laid the foundation of the Muslim Conference. The Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was the first organization to be set up with Sheikh Abdullah as its president.

First annual session was held at Srinagar in October, 1932. Sheikh Abdullah was the president of inaugural session of the party. That was unique gathering, irrespective of religious differences, all Muslims sat shoulder to shoulder on the same platform. Sheikh Abdullah clarified in this session that their movement is not against any minorities and assured all his countrymen, all non-Muslims whether Hindus or Sikhs that party would always try to redress their grievances and others should also respect Muslims just rights.

Sheikh Abdullah in inaugural session demanded the exhaustive review of Glancy Report and demanded fulfillment of the recommendations, which
were unfulfilled so far. Freedom of Association, Freedom of Press, and Repeal of Emergency laws were also the demands, which were demanded by him. Sheikh Abdullah also demanded to set up legislative Assembly for the state, which was recommended by Glancy Commission.55

The second annual session of Muslim Conference was held at Mirpur in December, 1933. Sheikh Abdullah was again unanimously elected president, in recognition of his unique role in Muslim Awakening. Demands such as setting up legislative assembly, municipality, Muslim’s representation in government services according to their proportion to the state population, freedom of press, withdrawal of restriction on change of religion and criminal procedure code were in the resolution, which were passed by conference.56

The Maharaja agreed to set up Praja Sabha with 75 members to give adequate representation and give preferential treatment in state administration to Muslims of the state under Glancy Commission recommendations. These gains gave a boost to Sheikh Abdullah’s position among Muslims.57 Muslim Conference had been gaining confidence of the people during that period and membership of the conference had increased day by day. People, across the state were enthusiastic to be a part of the party for their emancipation. In1934 Praja Sabha’s election, the Muslim Conference won 19 seats out of the 21 allotted to the Muslims.58

The third annual session was held at Sopore in November, 1934. That session had a great success and was attended by thousands of people. Mian Ahmad Yaar Khan was elected as a President. By the next year in October, 1935, the fourth session of Muslim Conference was held at Srinagar. Choudhry Ghulam Abbas was elected as a president. Muslim Conference did not hold any session in1936. On 8 May 1936, party held a ‘Responsible Government Day’, in which people of all religion participated at the initiative of Sheikh Abdullah.59

The fifth annual session was held in Poonch on May, 1937. Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was again elected as a president. Demand of responsible government was the main issue in that session. Here Sheikh Abdullah showed his confidence that in near future; Kashmiri Hindus and Sikhs would join hands with them, in struggle for the achievement of
Responsible government in the state for the betterment of Kashmiris. The Muslim Conference committed itself to:

1. Organise the Muslims of the state and secure their rights;
2. Liberate them from the disabilities they labored under;
3. Struggle for their economic and cultural betterment.

The Muslim Conference worked across the state and became a state wide political organization in the real sense of term and played a vital role in awakening the Muslims of state in succeeding years. According to Abdul Jabbar Ganai, the Muslim Conference entered the arena of politics of the state, determining its future course, without going to examine its nature, emerged to secure the socio-economic betterment of the people, it consequently resulted in the participation of the people in the struggle.

The First Legislative Assembly in the State:

British India government wanted to curtail the powers of Maharaja and imposition of political restrictions on his authority. The British government launched to undermine the Maharaja but the appointment of the constitutional reforms conference was a direct and more defined effort to cut down the powers of the Maharaja. In the process to accept the Glancy Commission recommendations, on May 31, 1932, a franchise committee under the chairmanship of Justice Sir Barjour Dalal, with the four other members was appointed. The committee recommended the setting up of a Legislative Assembly consisting of 75 members. In the first elections of the Legislature held in 1934 the Muslim Conference captured 19 out of 21 seats allotted to Muslims.

Conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference:

The secularization of Jammu and Kashmir politics became inevitable after the Muslim Conference launched its movement for responsible elected government in year 1932, because the communal politics was coming into conflict with the traditional tolerant temperament of the people of the state. A few young Muslim leaders including Abdullah began to think of reorienting the Muslim politics on broader, healthier and non-communal lines. The progressive leaders and the workers of the Muslim Conference disliked
communalism and disapproved of the religious base of the state politics. They knew that communal party would not be successful in the multi-religious and the multi-linguistic society.  

Under the presidency of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, sixth annual session of Muslim Conference was held in Jammu on March 26, 1938. In his address Abdullah made a call to Non-Muslims for participation in the freedom struggle against the autocratic ruler and said, “Our policy of admitting non-Muslims is neither tactical nor diplomatic. But it is sincere voice from our heart”. He also believed that the sufferers from the present system of government were not only Muslims, but also Hindus and Sikhs, untouchables and Buddhists were the sufferers. So as to bring all communities under one flag it is therefore, essential, to amend the name and constitution of the conference.

Maulvi Mohammed Syed Masoodi moved resolution to change the name and constitution of the Muslim Conference, so that Non-Muslims could enter into party fold. But few members opposed that resolution on the ground that Muslims are backwards educationally and immature in politics while Hindus are advanced in every field and the decision of the party is premature to allow them into same platform. Few other members were also opposed the resolution and wanted to take public opinion. In that session Sheikh Abdullah made short speech and amendment to resolution put for vote. However the resolution of change the party’s name could not be passed in that particular session.

On 28 June 1938, Muslim conference’s working committee met at Srinagar and passed the resolution after long debate, recommending that doors of party be thrown open to all people “irrespective of their caste, creed and religion”. In 1939 the general council of the Muslim Conference accepted the recommendations and thus National Conference party came into existence.

Under the presidency of Khawaja Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq, the special session was held in Srinagar on 10-11 June, 1939. Various prominent leaders were present in that session. The session was attended by the delegates from all over the state. The name of Muslim Conference had been
changed into All Jammu and Kashmir National conference. It had been announced there that every citizen of state can be a member of the party whether male or female, irrespective of religion or race,\{ provided a person undertakes in writing to have the setting up of a responsible government and the recurrence of individual liberties as his political goal.\} Prominent leaders such as Allah Rakha Sagar, Mirza Afzal Beg and P.N. Bazaz supported the conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference.

P.N. Bazaz addressed the meeting and said, “I have never been as happy as I am today; it is so overwhelming that it is not possible for me to express myself coherently and with ease. From the very beginning it has been my longing to bring all the communities on a common platform”.

At the end of this special session the resolution was put for vote. The overwhelming majority of delegates supported it; only three hands were raised in opposition. Sheikh Ahmed Banihali, Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ganai and Moulvi Mohammad Abdullah were those and later they walked out in protest. According to P.N. Bazaz, “June 11, 1939, was a red letter day in the history of the freedom movement in the state. The great desire of those who wanted to reorient state politics on secular lines had been fulfilled”.

The working committee of Muslim Conference had adopted a resolution on 28 June, 1938, and then recommended to the General Council to alter and amend the name and the constitution of the organization had been confirmed by the special session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference on 11 June 1939, changed its name to the all Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

According to Vidya Bhushan, “The history of Muslim Conference from October 1932 to June 1939 is nothing but the record of struggle of the middle and upper class Muslims for the achievement of their class rights”. But appreciating Sheikh Abdullah for his remarkable achievement, Krishnan Manon writes, “Sheikh Abdullah had the courage and the statesmanship to steer the movement out of the narrow waters of communalism into the broad sea of Nationalism.”
The National Conference Party:

After the conversion, the first annual session of National Conference was held at Anantnag in October, 1939. The party passed a resolution, which is termed as a ‘National Demand’. The resolution demanded responsible government, and the legislature in the state. The members of the legislature would be elected by adult franchise based on a joint electorate, with some seats reserved for the minorities, and financial control must be under the legislature except that on military services. Many other demands were also there in the memorandum. It was the first demonstration of Nationalism. Both Muslims and Non-Muslims participated overwhelmingly.

Meanwhile, the idea of two nation theory had gained the ground after 1937 general elections. Congress and Muslim League had formed a coalition in elections in United Province and set some Pre-conditions for the working of coalition government. After the land slide victory, congress backed out from the terms of coalition and did not include Muslim League leaders into government, which resulted into strife between congress and Muslim League. Kashmir had come into the radar of Muslim League. Sheikh Abdullah was the prominent Muslim Leader in Kashmir so that he had to play important role to denounce two nation theory of Muslim League. Sheikh Abdullah personally disliked that idea of separate nation for Muslims.

The Basic Constitutional Features of the National Conference Party:

Having set up an organization based on secular lines, All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference presented basic constitution of the party to the people. This constitution was adopted by the party on same day, when the party’s name was converted from Muslim Conference into National Conference on June 10-11, 1939. The constitution specifies the aims and objectives of the party, and directs to its cadre for the achievement of the responsible government in the state by means of peaceful struggle. Structure of the organization was also specified in the constitution, which is based on the following lines:

1. Primary Membership
2. Primary committee and district conference
3. General council and the working committee of the conference

4. Annual session of the party.

According to the constitution of the party, any person could get membership only on an application and on the payment of four annas (1/4 of a rupee) initially and Rs. 2 now a days, as the basic membership fee. Party has further divided its administrative set up into 12 divisions in the state. Elections for the office bearers, delegates, and members of General Council as well as working committee of the party at primary unit, district unit, provincial and central level units have also been given in basic constitution. The General Council was to be elected from among the delegates from the district committees and Single non-transferable vote system was adopted for holding elections and casting the votes.

To manage the District affairs of the party District conference committee was to be constituted with the delegates from concerned district. These committees work according to the directions issued to them by the General Council, if any. Another important feature of National Conference party’s structure is that no person can participate in the party’s internal elections of office bearer at any level until he or she is not registered as a member of party and even cannot cast his or her vote in party elections. None of the member of the party was permitted to become a member of any communal outfit.

The National Conference party also has a youth wing called Jammu and Kashmir Youth National Conference, which works to mobilize youth across the state. The party also has a separate labour wing with a number of trade unions affiliated with it. The Head quarter of the party is at Mujhid Munzil, Srinagar. It is clear that formation of National Conference party was based on democratic principles; without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and religion, and one can become a member of party by making an application for membership under constitution of the party. Basic constitution of the party provides guidelines for the easier and proper working of the organization which every member is supposed to follow and observe.
New Kashmir Manifesto:

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, as the president of National Conference on 30th September, 1944; issued Political, Social and Economic program of party, known as “New Kashmir Manifesto” in an open session of the party at Sopore, where 15’000 people and hundreds of party delegates had gathered from every corner of the state.81

According to a veteran Indian journalist, Ajit Bhatacharjea, “having rejected the appeal of communalism the National Conference went on to commit itself a programme of radical reforms. It adopted “Naya Kashmir” manifesto, an ambitious document touching on every aspect of public life that showed the impact of socialist Ideology and democratic values on Abdullah and his colleagues.”82

The declaration of “New Kashmir Manifesto” is referred as the Magna Karta of the people of Kashmir. It has become the most important document of economic life of Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah introduced this manifesto in following words, “the Progress is a relay race. History has known the invasion of vandals, the sinister self – righteousness of the inquisition. But every new generation has received the torch from the bleeding hands of men of thought and life. Today, this torch is firmly grasped in our hands”.83

Sheikh Abdullah further announced that the National Conference fights “for the poor against those who exploit them; for the toiling of our beautiful home-land against the heartless rank of socially privileged……. The history of freedom from all forms of economic exploitation is the only true guarantee of political democracy…….”84 a well-known communist, B.P.L. Bedi was the main architect of the New Kashmir memorandum. Many other people contributed substantially in the drafting of that document. Mohammed Din Taseer, Freda Bedi, Pandit Jialal Kalam, widely known for their progressive outlook, was those who contributed a lot in drafting of the memorandum.85 National Conference party invited from its members their suggestions and viewpoints in writing, then a bulk of such material were collected and all good things compiled and given a proper shape. It was then prepared into well-arranged document of “Naya Kashmir”.86 Thus the impact of the communists on Sheikh
Abdullah and his National Conference became more marked in the adoption of party’s ‘New Kashmir Manifesto’.  

Balraj Puri, social activist and a renowned journalist writes, “Naya Kashmir Programme was not only a constitutional blue-print of a sovereign independent state looking after its own defence and external affairs” the Naya Kashmir manifesto clearly spelled out in most unambiguous terms ‘workers charter’, ‘peasants charter and the ‘women charter’ etc. No sector of National movement in subcontinent conceived of anything like this.  

Hari Jaisingh while criticizing “New Kashmir manifesto” as a socialistic instrument writes, “The New Kashmir manifesto of 1944, largely the handiwork of the communists, issued by the Sheikh Abdullah, gave him the aura of a socialist. It raised the slogan of “land to the tillers” because land in Jammu and Kashmir belonged to Hindu landlords. For the same reason, Sheikh Abdullah never agreed to pay any compensation to the landlords when he abolished the landlordism. On the other hand in the rest of India, land lords were given compensation”.  

National Conference in its entire session held in 1976 to deal with the new and emerging realities on the political and the social horizon of State and the Country, party executive appointed a sub-committee. The subcommittee had made necessary amendments in Manifesto and its recommendations were later approved by the Party Executive in 1977 and amended “New Kashmir Manifesto” ratified the accession of the state with Indian union, “we the people of Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh, in order to unite ourselves in an atmosphere of Equality and Liberty and to lift ourselves and our children forever from the abyss and superstition to a life of freedom with a scientific temper and to fulfill the historic task of making the state of Jammu and Kashmir the shining crown on the forehead of the Republic of India, do hereby adopt and solemnly pledge this Socio-Political and Economic Manifesto.”  

The “New Kashmir Manifesto” was divided into two parts: (1) The Constitutional Structure of the State and (2) The National Economic Plan. The most important features of the Manifesto were the elaborate enumeration of the state under the constitutional system. The plan provides following rights;
The right to equality;
The right to freedom of conscience and worship;
The right to freedom of speech;
The right to freedom of press;
The right to freedom of ‘street Procession’ and demonstrations;
The right to privacy of homes and secrecy of correspondence;
The right to work;
The right to rest;
The right to material security in old age, sickness and incapacity;
The right to education;
The right to protection of law;
The right to move the courts for justice;
The right to personal property;
The right of the women to equality of opportunity in all fields of the national life and the rights to special protection for children and mothers.  

Many other provisions were also proposed in Manifesto, related with state administration’s working, governance, future course of action and policies for the upliftment of citizens of the state. Peasants of state had been living under pitiable condition because of zamidari system, mostly didn’t possess land of their own. Land reforms were revolutionary achievement of National Conference to provide land to landless farmers. These land reforms were the best example of socio-economic transformation of people’s life and National Conference initiated to implement these reforms after it came into power in 1947, these reforms were firstly laid down in New Kashmir Manifesto.

The manifesto envisaged by the National Conference was based on socialistic pattern of society and democratic principles of the responsible government. Indeed ‘New Kashmir’ gave meaning to the struggle of common man for freedom. But in spite of that parties like Muslim Conference did not leave the chance to criticize the programmes of the ‘New Kashmir’. Under the chairmanship of Mir Waiz Yousf Shah, The Muslim Conference’s leaders criticized the draft of the ‘New Kashmir’ as “Utopian” on November 11, 1940,
at a public meeting held at Srinagar. The Yuvak Sabha, an organization related to Hindus of the state did not lag behind in launching the campaign of criticism against the ‘New Kashmir’. But the plan in the ‘New Kashmir’ has ever since 1944 provided the guiding principles of the National Conference’s approach to problems of the state. National Conference has been following “New Kashmir” manifesto as the leading light.

New Kashmir manifesto hailed and had positive reaction by Indian socialists and the communist party of India; on the other side the Indian National Congress was not very enthusiastic about New Kashmir but Nehru and leftist forces in the congress supported it.

**Revival of Muslim Conference in the State:**

In year 1941 Muslim Conference was revived and started to counter National Conference’s influence on Kashmiri masses. The demand for Pakistan based on ‘Two Nation Theory’ envisaged by Muslim League headed by M.A Jinnah, by the middle of year 1944, had considerably eroded the National Conference in Muslim majority areas in the state but at same time Congress was very keen to strengthen its feet so that in case of the likely partition of sub-continent, the Muslim majority state could at least be saved from inclusion into Pakistan. For this purpose congress leaders made serious efforts to bring about an understanding between Maharaja’s government and the National Conference. Efforts bore fruit, in the wake of the circumstances prevalent in the state Maharaja’s government had decided to make the system of ‘popular ministry’ which would help the people and National Conference party in coming closer to the Responsible government. To fulfil that purpose, constitutional experts were appointed and they had made recommendations for the constitutional reforms in the state. As a result of those recommendations, a plan of Dyarchy was drawn up.

In a meeting of general council of the National Conference party on October 8, 1944, party decided to accept the offer to nominate the members for the assembly, while G.M. Sadiq led the opposition within party, demanded the rejection of the proposal. On other hand Muslim Conference boycotted that proclamation and there upon decided to boycott the elections.
The National Conference party had welcomed the appointment of the ministers. It was considered a great victory of the party towards the achievement of responsible government in the state.\textsuperscript{97} Although Appointment of ‘Popular ministers’ reduced gap between people and ministers to some extent but real powers were still vested in the hands of Maharaja. Prime Minister worked as a puppet in the hands of Maharaja that made Prime Minister and popular minister’s relationship bad with each other. Because of contradictions, National Conference ministers resigned from council of ministers on March 18, 1946.\textsuperscript{98} However Mian Ahmed Yar Khan, the leader of National Conference party in the Praja Sabha accepted the offer of Dogra government and became a minister in place of Mirza Afzal Beg on April 15, 1946.\textsuperscript{99} The news of the appointment of Ahmed Yar spread like a wild fire across the state. Sheikh Abdullah charged the government of breach of faith and conspiracy to break up the National Conference. Thereafter, National Conference expelled Ahmed Yar Khan from the basic membership of the party on April 7, 1946 and his appointment also ended the ‘entente cordiale’ between the government and the National Conference party.

On the other side main rival of National Conference, Muslim Conference had tried to maximize its influence, invited Mohammed Ali Jinnah in its annual session in 1944 at Srinagar. In order to decrease the importance of that event, National Conference organized its annual session in 1945 and invited top rank leaders of the congress.\textsuperscript{100} Many congress leaders had addressed the people and workers of the party. While addressing the rally Khan Abdul Gaffar said, “Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah is the gift of god. If you don’t follow him, you will be humiliated.”\textsuperscript{101}

Meanwhile political conditions in British India were undergoing revolutionary changes and the British government had expressed their intention to give independence to India and to fulfill that purpose, a delegation, the British Cabinet mission had come to India in March, 1946.

**Quit Kashmir Movement:**

British India Government empowered princely states to decide their future regarding their accession into India or Pakistan or remain independent.
More than 365 princely states were present across the nation at that time. Jammu And Kashmir State was one amongst those princely states. To assert the views of the leaders of various political parties for evolving an agreed formula for the transfer of power British Government sent Cabinet Mission in India.\(^{102}\)

The Cabinet Mission also visited Srinagar on 19 April, 1946, however a memorandum was sent to Mission by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the leader of National Conference Party. That memorandum is known as “Quit Kashmir Memorandum”.\(^{103}\) The salient features of this memorandum were as follows, “To day, the national demand of the people of Kashmir is not merely the establishment of a system of responsible government, but their right to absolute freedom from the autocratic rule of Dogra House.” Sheikh Abdullah also denounced the treaty of Amritsar and called it as a sale deed. A sale cannot have the status of treaty. Therefore, after the termination of British rule, Kashmir has the right to become an independent. Abdullah further said, we want to inscribe our own destiny and we want the Cabinet Mission to reaffirm.\(^{104}\) So Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah raised objections to the decision being left to the Maharaja. According to Sheikh, Maharaja didn’t enjoy the support of majority of people of the state.

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah launched Quit Kashmir Movement, on the pattern of Quit India movement which was started by Mahatma Gandhi in India for year earlier of Sheikh’s movement\(^{105}\) he got huge response from the party cadre and there were processions and holding mass public meetings, especially in Kashmir valley. Meanwhile, Jawaharlal Nehru invited Sheikh Abdullah in Delhi. But on his way to Delhi, Sheikh got arrested in Muzaffarabad by the Dogra Government in May, 1946. Many other top rank leaders of National conference party were also got arrested across state. In protest against Sheikh Abdullah’s arrest demonstrations were organized by the people in whole state. Many people were killed during confrontation with the police.\(^{106}\) According to Abdul Jabbar Ganai, “the movement was launched not against the Maharaja or Dogras, but against one hundred year old transaction (the treaty of Amritsar) of the Dogras.”\(^{107}\)
Balraj Puri describes the position of National Conference on Quit Kashmir Movement, “In a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission, the party disputed the legal validity of the Treaty of the Amritsar. It maintained that this treaty was unlike other treaties under which the rest of the state was governed. In case of Kashmir valley, its people and not the Maharaja had a right to decide the future. As the memorandum did not challenge the legal right of the ruler to rule over the rest of the state, the party limited its own right to represent and speak for the Kashmir valley alone”.

The ‘Quit Kashmir’ movement helped the National Conference to regain some ground, which party had lost during the past five years in the state. This also unnerved the top ranking leaders of the Muslim Conference. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the only Congress leader who had duly supported the ‘Quit Kashmir’ movement and condemned the repressive policy of the Dogra government. He took a leading part in the expression of sympathy for Kashmir. In a statement from Delhi he said, “Both as president of all India people conference and as a Kashmiri, I have been greatly troubled by the developments in Kashmir”. Thenceforth, Jawaharlal Nehru decided to go to Srinagar himself to sort out all things. But he was refused to enter in the state on 20th June, 1946 and detained by police. After his release from detention in July, 1946; Nehru reached Srinagar and visited Sheikh Abdullah in prison and attended part of his trial.

The leaders of National Conference were lodged in jail in 1947, while the Maharaja called for fresh elections to Legislative Assembly. National Conference in protest boycotted the elections, as a result of that Muslim Conference emerged as a winner.

National Conference from 1947 to 1950:

Year 1947, has great importance in the history of India. By that year India got Independence from British rule but on the other hand country had witnessed communal division of country, communal hatred, riots and killings of millions of people and above all large number of population displacement from one side to other side, which had never happened in world before that. Bloodshed could have been seen across country. In that year itself two
nations were emerged i.e. India and Pakistan by the bifurcation. With the formation of two nations, long standing dispute had also taken birth in the Shape of Kashmir.

Jammu and Kashmir has been apple of discord between India and Pakistan since then. Internationally Jammu and Kashmir is considered as a disputed territory since the year 1947. Before the partisan of the nation both congress and Muslim League leaders showed their interest in the State. Both countries were eager to include the state in their respective nations after bifurcation. Because Kashmir has been famous for its beauty across the world, it has its geo-political and strategic importance too because of its boundaries connectivity with central Asia and China. India and Pakistan both knew that importance. So, leaders of both countries were keenly interested to accede Jammu and Kashmir into their respective countries. But decision of accession was rested into the hands of rulers of princely states. Jammu and Kashmir, being a princely state too, the decision of accession had to be taken by Maharaja Hari Singh. According to Ajit Bhattacharjea, “Nehru was anxious to fit Jammu and Kashmir into the framework of a secular Nation, which it would strengthen.”

15 August, 1947 was announced as a deadline for the transfer of power. Whole nation was preparing for the celebrations of the independence from British rule but on the other hand future of Jammu And Kashmir State was uncertain. On June, 1947 Mountbatten went to Srinagar along with letter prepared by Jawahararl Nehru, on the basis of which Sheikh Abdullah’s popularity in the valley made out a strong case for the accession of state to India;

“Of all the people’s movements in the various states of India, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference was far the more widespread and popular….. Kashmir has become during this past year an all- India question of great importance….. It is true that Sheikh Abdullah’s long absence in prison has produced certain confusion in people’s mind as to what they should do. The National Conference has stood for the still stands for Kashmir joining the constituent Assembly of India.”
Maharaja Hari Singh told his wish to Mountbatten that he wants to remain independent and did not want to join either of the dominions. Then Mountbatten replied that being a Hindu King of Muslim dominant population state, it is impossible to survive independence status of state and Maharaja himself. Even then maharaja had decided to accede either of the dominions. On 17th July, 1947, All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference passed the resolution that Jammu and Kashmir should join Pakistan and warned the Jammu and Kashmir state government that if the government joins Indian Union, Muslim Conference would oppose such step strongly.

On the other hand top ranking leaders of National conference party like Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Maulana Massoodi and Sardar Budh Singh were either underground or in prison or exile so the line of action of the party could not be clearly known. Still some National Conference leaders always believed that the state would join the Indian union of its free will, if it was allowed to be expressed.

Situation had drastically changed in the state; tribal men started invading in the state with the patronage of Pakistan to forcibly occupy the state. To counter the invasion Maharaja sought Sheikh Abdullah’s help. As a Result, on 29 September, 1947, Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison. Streets were crowded to welcome Sheikh Abdullah. Hindu, Muslim, Sikhs had gathered in large number to welcome their leader. It was believed that Abdullah would defend along with his colleagues; communal peace and amity in the state and enlist the cooperation of all communities in this taste.

According to Ajit Bhattacharjea, “ in fact, as Mehr Chand Mahajan, the last State Prime Minister appointed by Hari Singh before Abdullah, confirmed in his memoirs, it was not until Abdullah supported accession that it was accepted by Nehru and troops were airlifted to save Srinagar.”

Pakistani Tribal intruders were continuously marching toward Srinagar and were committing atrocities on people of Jammu and Kashmir State. Tribesmen had resorted to indiscriminate slaughter of both Muslims and Hindus. Maharaja Hari Singh had left the valley to Jammu. Those developments forced Maharaja Hari Singh to tilt toward India to get Military
help against tribal intruders. As a result of that on 24th October 1947, the maharaja offered the accession of the state to the Indian Dominion.122

On 27th October 1947, the accession was accepted by the Governor General of India. The accession was accepted on the condition or understanding that the Sheikh or the National Conference would be associated with the administration of the state.123 As the intruders had reached the outskirts of Srinagar, with the approval of instrument of accession first Sikh Battalion of Indian army on 27 October, 1947 morning landed on Srinagar airport. However, luck was on India’s side and a near impossible situation was miraculously saved by these troops.

The situation of the Srinagar when Indian Army landed as; volunteers of National Conference patrolling the streets and the approaches to Srinagar and Lathis were the only weapon possessed by the volunteers. They drove buses to the airfield to ferry Indian troops against the Intruders.124 Maharaja Hari Singh left the valley after he heard the news of advancement of tribal intruders towards Srinagar and fled to Jammu. Entire administration was left in the hands of National Conference volunteers. Volunteers of NC had helped Indian army and also protected people dedicatedly from intruders at that time. National conference party showed its true secular face and its commitment to secularism in those events. Sheikh Abdullah’s commitment toward secularism brings him close to ideology of Indian leaders and India itself. National Conference played prominent role to send intruders back, party played every role which was possible at that situation.

According to Ajit Bhattacharjea, “Abdullah’s endorsement of the accession was the first objective sign after partisan that Muslim could have confidence in India’s secular credentials. As a result, the anti-Muslim wave was checked in India and faith in secularism revisited.”125 Sheikh Abdullah took over as the head of emergency Administration on October, 30, 1947. Since 1846 he was the first Kashmiri, who was appointed on this post. Pundit Nehru was aware about the ground realities of the state. He knew that without the support of Sheikh Abdullah regulation of Kashmiri affairs was impossible. The role played by the National Conference in maintaining perfect communal harmony in the darkest days of communal
violence in 1947, had deservedly received tribute from no less a person than the father of nation: “My sole hope and prayer is that Kashmir should become a beacon light to this benighted sub-continent.” In the first broadcast to the nation on these momentous events on 2 November 1947, a revitalized Nehru said, “It would be well if this lesson was understood by the whole of India which has been poisoned by communal strife. Under the inspiration of a great leader, Sheikh Abdullah, the people of the valley, Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs, were together for the defense of their common country against the invader. Our troops could have done little without the popular support and cooperation.”

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah convened a press conference in Delhi on March 6, 1948, where he expressed his views regarding state’s accession with India and said, “We have decided to work with and die for India…. because India is pledged to the principle of secular democracy in her policy and we are also in pursuit of the same objective.” The sheikh had formed an unshakeable faith about the Indian ideology of secular politics which had served the basis of accession with India.

After the installation of popular government into the state in 1948, New Kashmir manifesto’s conversion into reality was the main aim of the National Conference’s administration. Party leadership devoted their attention towards attaining its main objective. The first major thing the party did was the passage of the big landed estate abolition Act and transferred land to the tillers.

**National Conference from 1950 to 1953:**

After India’s Independence, the Kashmir accession to India was supported with strength and vigor by the National Conference and its leaders including Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. A special status in the union of India was accorded to Kashmir. The state ceded to the union only in defense, foreign affairs and communication.

The most important work done by National Conference was to abolish big landed estates. Democratic government of the state led by National conference declared its policy of liquidating the big landed estates, which was
considered by the main reason behind the exploitation of the tillers. Government declared transfer of land to the tillers of the soil on Martyr’s day, July 13, 1950 and also declared the limit to keep land; no excess land could have been possessed by anybody beyond the limit. The land reforms received a wide publicity at the National and International levels.

The constituent assembly was convened on October 31, 1951 on the basis of adult franchise, in which the National Conference under the stewardship of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah had won 71 uncontested and 2 contested seats in the house of 75. During elections of 1951 the National Conference was riding on high tide of the popularity because of its association with the freedom movement which led to the termination of the Dogra rule, establishment of the popular regime in the state.

The First President of India, Dr. Rajinder Prashad was elected with the support of Sardar Patel, that was clearly the defeat of Jawaharlal Nehru, who supported C. Rajagopalachari as the President of India. On the other side the formation of Bhartiya Jana Sangh gave new life to the Hindutva forces in Northern India, with widespread criticism of special status given to Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover Pro-Hindu Purshotam Das Tandon had been elected as a President of Congress. These trends were followed with deepening concern in Jammu And Kashmir State.

All these developments made Sheikh Abdullah upset, resulted in his speech in Ranbir Singh Pora he criticized communal political developments in Indian politics. Pundit Nehru expressed his displeasure on Sheikh’s public speech in a letter to Sheikh Abdullah on April 23, 1952. Sheikh Abdullah felt upset and irritated too because he accused that his friend Nehru questioned his secular credential in a latter. To counter the allegation, Sheikh Abdullah wrote, “I reminded him that it was I who converted the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, and, in 1947, I started living in defense of my principles, my beliefs in social justice for all classes and creeds were not based on wishful thinking but on the realities of life.”

In 1952, Delhi agreement was the outcome of attempt made by Nehru and Abdullah to settle their differences. According to that agreement the state of Jammu and Kashmir would enjoy the special privilege within India. The
state will have its own flag, though this does not preclude the use of Indian union flag. While arising at the agreement, the attempt was to preserve the maximum of state autonomy, while discharging obligations as a unit of federation.

Prime Minister Nehru was to meet Pakistan premier, in July 1953. He sought the opinion of the National Conference leaders on various alternative solutions which he could discuss with his Pakistani counterpart. The National Conference working committee appointed a working group. Its members were Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Maulana Mohammed Syed Masoodi, Sardar Budh Singh, Pundit Girdhari Lal Dogra, Pundit Sham Lal Saraf, M.A. Beg, and G. M. Sadiq. It was a committee formed of top ranking leaders of National Conference. A month long discussion resulted in the following consensus;

1. Overall plebiscite (including choice of Independence);
2. Independence of the whole state;
3. Independence of the whole state with joint control of India and Pakistan;
4. The Dixon Plan would be implemented along with the independence of the region where plebiscite was to be held.

Pundit Nehru without any hesitation disapproved the proposal of Independence of the state. Some sections of political opinions in India alleged that Sheikh Abdullah was involved in a plan to set up an independent Kashmir. Some of his speeches were quoted to prove the point that Sheikh was involved in an international plot to create an independent Kashmir.

On August 9, 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was got arrested by the order of ‘Sadar-e-Riyasat’ Karan Singh and also informed his dismissal from the post of Prime Minister. He had been handed a memorandum signed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Pundit Sham Lal Saraf and Pundit Girdhari Lal Dogra in which they have expressed ‘No Confidence’ in Sheikh Abdullah and blamed the despotic style of working and outlook of the Prime Minister. Sheikh Abdullah’s downfall was only made possible by the support given to Delhi by some of Sheikh’s most trusted associates. Abdul Ganai argues that, the agitation in Jammu was one of the reasons for the fall of the sheikh in 1953.
The agitation launched by Praja Parishad in Jammu, namely Satyagraha against the Sheikh and his party. They levelled the following charges;

1. Sheikh Abdullah had tried to Muslimise the state in the name of secularism.
2. There had been totalitarianism in the name of democracy.
3. Civil liberties had been attacked by the ruling party.
4. Steps had been taken towards the creation of independent Kashmir.
5. Delhi agreement was betrayal.\textsuperscript{139}

During 1940s, National Conference party suffered very much both from its organizational strength and leadership crises. Thus the leaders like Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Maulana Masoodi, G.M. Sadiq, Ghulam Muhi-ud-din Qara, D. P. Dhar, Girdhari Lal Dogra, Sardar Budh Singh etc. made the party a living organisation. Various resolutions had been passed during this period by National Conference. At the third annual session of the party in Srinagar on 22, 23 and 24 August, 1941, important resolution regarding ‘responsible government’.\textsuperscript{140}

Manzoor Fazili, a noted political scholar writes that, “The Kashmir politics entered into a politics of Centre- State relations in its theoretical framework as early as 1951. In its operative parts, it was a politics of confrontation between the National Conference headed by Sheikh Abdullah and the congress leadership at the Centre. The suspicions grew on both sides.”\textsuperscript{141}

**Role of National Conference from 1953 to 1974:**

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed took his new responsibility after toppling the government of Sheikh Abdullah. However it was a difficult task to run the government of such a state, which was hitherto a synonym with the name of Shaikh Mohammed Abdullah. But Bakshi had a sufficient package to offer to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, which included salary raise for all government servants and workers. His government also managed to secure large funds for economic development, building, road constructions etc. Bakshi also promised to do away with all these irregularities and to implement
the politics formulated by the National Conference for the betterment of the people.

In 1954, Constituent Assembly rectified formally the accession of the state with India. It was the best achievement of the government of India and Jammu and Kashmir. In April, 1954, customs barrier was lifted between the Jammu and Kashmir state and the rest of India. Constitution of the State of Jammu and Kashmir came formally into operation on 26 January, 1957.\textsuperscript{142}

In March 1957 elections were first held after the Jammu and Kashmir adopted its constitution and Bakshi was elected as Prime Minister of the State of Jammu and Kashmir with a majority of 68 seats. The overall result was as under;

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
Name of Party & Seats Won & Percentage of Votes Polled \\
\hline
National Conference (NC) & 68 & 56.21 \\
\hline
Praja Parishad (PP) & 5 & 24.11 \\
\hline
Praja Socialist Party (PSP) & - & 2.34 \\
\hline
Harijan Mandal & 1 & 5.88 \\
\hline
Independents & 1 & 8.91 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Party Position in 1957 J&K Assembly Elections}
\end{table}

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

After 1957 elections, National Conference had to face a split; Democratic National Conference was launched by a group of leaders led by G. M. Sadiq. Leaders like D.P. Dhar and Mir Qasim were also present in G.M. Sadiq’s group to launch new party. On other hand Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beg, a staunch supporter of Sheikh Abdullah, was also arrested in 1953 and was released in 1954, launched the All Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front on 9 August, two years after dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah and moreover Front activists also decided to observe “Black Day” on 9\textsuperscript{th} August, each year.

This front got the support of pro Abdullah group within and outside the legislature. The basic demands put by the plebiscite front organization were;
firstly, holding a free impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations. Secondly, withdrawal of Indian and Pakistan forces from Kashmir and restoration of civil liberties and free elections.

The National Conference passed a resolution in 1957 that the issue of plebiscite was no longer valid as the constituent assembly has already confirmed the state’s accession to India. It said, “Kashmir now stands as the constituent unit of India and any attempt to alter the ‘status quo’ will open possibility of International conflict”. The National Conference in its election manifesto released on the eve of 1957 assembly elections pledged itself to defend the territorial integrity of the state as an integral part of India and to strike for the liberation of area of the state “aggressively occupied by Pakistan.

Many other developments had been continually moving parallel during this period. Nehru was building pressure to release Sheikh Abdullah from the prison. In order to do that, letters were written to Karan Singh and Bakshi Government by Pundit Nehru. On January 8, 1958, Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison. After release, Sheikh Abdullah issued a press statement on February 17, 1958, in which stress was laid on Plebiscite in the State.

In April, 1958, Sheikh Abdullah was again arrested. Mir Qasim describes that during the release period of Sheikh Abdullah i.e., January 8, 1958 to April 30, 1958, “we learnt that the riots were engineered by Bakshi Sahib’s supporters to provide justification for the re-arrest of Sheikh Sahib”. The process of development in the State did not increase Bakshi’s popularity among masses. G.M Sadiq led Democratic National Conference charged Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed government with corruption, nepotism and suppression of civil liberties.

Despite being condemned by his rivals, the National Conference leaders adopted a resolution expressing support for the economic policies envisaged in the state’s third five year plan for the economic betterment of people. The 1962 elections were so thoroughly rigged that the National Conference got two slots more than in 1957. The party got an absolute Majority by winning 70 seats in 75 member assembly. This was an
overwhelming victory of the National Conference. The overall result was as under:

### Table 3.2
**Party Position in 1962 J&K Assembly Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijan Mandal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, leader of the National Conference formed his ministry in Jammu and Kashmir in 1962. Democratic National Conference headed by G.M. Sadiq decided to go with majority decision of the party leaders and merged party with National Conference. Those elections were fought by Democratic National Conference (Jammu wing) because they did not like ‘re-united move’ of party with National Conference.

In 1962 after China’s aggression Pundit Nehru’s health deteriorated sharply. On the other hand in Jammu and Kashmir Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed’s regime became unpopular. Because of suppression of Opposition voices in State as well as in New Delhi and demands for central action were more frequently made Bakshi’s government also imposed ban on public meetings.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was replaced by Khawaja Shamshudin by following the terms of the plan put forth by Kamraj, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in late 1963. Under this plan a large number of ministers in the Centre and in state were asked to resign. Bakshi who remained Chief Minister for almost a decade had very strict administration in the state. On October 3, 1963, before Bakshi’s resignation, he made further changes in Constitution.
For example the post of Prime Minister would be known as Chief Minister and the Head of the State, Sadar-e-Riyasat, would be designated as the Governor of the State. In addition to that the four representatives of State to the Indian Parliament, which were nominated by State Legislative Assembly, would be elected by the people of the State directly.

During the tenure of Khawaja Shamsuddin, the news that the sacred hair of Prophet Mohammed kept at Hazaratbal was missing, spread like a fire in a Forest across the state on the morning of December 27, 1963. That particular event deteriorated situation in the State. There were massive demonstrations in the Kashmir valley. The state administration under Mr. Shamsuddin was totally paralyzed. Khawaja Shamsuddin had to resign on February 27, 1964 and G.M. Sadiq was elected as a Prime Minister of the State with the help of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed who wanted to please the central leadership.

The new government led by Mr. G.M. Sadiq released all political prisoners in a short time. The trial against Sheikh Abdullah, Mirza Afsal Beg and other was withdrawn and civil liberties were fully restored. The National Conference had been ailing since Abdullah’s arrest. Instead of reviving the NC, Sadiq and Mir Qasim combined to virtually eliminate it. As a result of that, the National Conference merged with congress on January 26, 1965, and J & K Chief Minister, G.M. Sadiq hoisted the flag of congress in the premises of the all J & K National Conference headquarters in Jammu. The Plebiscite front showed its protest in opposition to the move of National Conference’s merger with the congress party. On December 21, 1964, the President rule had been imposed by Centre government in State of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution and that was intensely disliked by opponents.

National Conference government headed by G.M. Sadiq took many steps including the extension of some of the beneficial Union laws to the state, the merger of the National Conference into State Congress party unit was the extension of the Congress activities in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
Revival of National Conference:

The congress party had faced factionalism within party fold, G.M. Sadiq and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed’s differences were also growing. Both of them didn’t tolerate each other and therefore Sadiq was not getting support from Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed’s group in the legislature. G.M.Sadiq appointed an enquiry commission against Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. The commission found Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed guilty in corruption charges and misusing position during the prime minister ship. All these developments made Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed to call a convention of his supporters and announced the revival of the National Conference on January 10, 1960.155

The 1967 elections were contested by revived National Conference party under Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Many other parties had also contested the elections including the Democratic National Conference (Jammu wing). The Congress party led by G.M. Sadiq turned out victorious in these elections. The overall party position as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>53.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praja Parishad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revived NC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNC(Jammu wing)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praja Socialist Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

The results of 1967 assembly elections revealed that the National Conference after merging with congress managed to get majority in state assembly but could not do as it did before. Substantial decline can be seen in seats won and percentage of total votes polled by the congress, having the National Conference with it. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed led previous National
Conference had a good response from the electorates and won 8 seats in the house of 75 with 17.16 percentages of total votes polled. However, the Congress party formed the government with the absolute majority under the chief minister ship of G.M. Sadiq. G.M. Sadiq had become chief minister of the state for the second time. But factionalism in the party remained as it was. Differences between organizational wing and legislature wing of the state Congress were quite clear on the scene. At that time Syed Mir Qasim was the president of the state Congress committee and had differences with the Chief Minister G.M. Sadiq. Both of them did not tolerate each other and continuously made attempts to dislodge each other from their respective positions.156

Due to the bickering in the Congress party, Syed Mir Qasim resigned from the post of party’s president. With the help of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed and his followers, Syed Mir Quasim and his supports tried to blemish the image of Sadiq. But on the other hand Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afsal Beg led plebiscite front was supporting G.M. Sadiq. G.M. Sadiq was facing many difficulties in his tenure. But Sadiq remained the chief Minister of the state till 1972 assembly polls because of his good will in central congress leadership. All these events adversely affected the working of government in state. Development works in the state came to stand still and nothing concrete could take place.157 Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was indicted by the Ayyanagar commission for corruption in 1970. To secure his political entity, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed joined Congress (O) by that year itself.158 And revived National Conference got merged in Congress (O) in June 1972 on the call of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed.159 The overall result of 1972 state assembly election was as such:
### Table 3.4

**Party Position in 1972 J & K Assembly Election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jana Sangh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamait-i-Islami</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.I</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (O)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant seats</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

Congress party led by Syed Mir Qasim came into power in 1972 assembly elections. So the Plebiscite Front had to be kept out. It was known to Mir Qasim that Sheikh Abdullah’s involvement in that election could shuffle his calculations to get into power. In the absence of serious opposition, Mir Qasim won with comfortable Majority. The Jana Sangh won 3 and Jamat-i-Islami made an entry into the State Assembly by securing 5 seats.

After 1971 war between India and Pakistan; new nation Bangladesh came into existence. Partition of Pakistan put impact on Jammu and Kashmir politics also. Sheikh Abdullah changed his policy in Kashmir. Firstly he dropped his demand of Plebiscite and opted to demand as much as autonomy as possible.

According to Ajit Bhatachargea, “the loaded elections in the state did not stop Abdullah and his chief political and constitutional advisor, Afzal beg, from rethinking their strategy after Bangladesh; their emphasis on plebiscite was first to go. The appeal of Pakistan had diminished and independence was more remote than ever. The Best that seemed available was to secure as much autonomy as possible.”

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*160*
During 1967-72 the political conditions were very bad in Jammu and Kashmir. The lack of understanding between G.M. Sadiq and Syed Mir Qasim had worried the congress in Delhi and that led Congress party to make an accord with Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, so that party could perform well in the state. In 1974, Accord was signed between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi with the firm understanding that Article 370 would be restored to its pre-1953 status. The residuary powers of legislation shall remain with the state; however some important areas would be managed by parliament of India. D. N. Dhar says while describing about an Accord that Sheikh Abdullah involved in negotiation with Centre government was for saving his face, because Indira Gandhi had emerged stronger after Bangladesh war and Seikh Abdullah had to negotiate from a weak position.\footnote{161}

Abdul Ganai describes situation that led to the Accord between Sheikh and Mrs. Indira Gandhi and said; by 1974 Mrs. Gandhi and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, had realized that the attitude of confrontation had not paid them anyway and consequently, reconciliation was sought by an Accord. The fact was that the politics of plebiscite had given the plebiscite front no dividends. And it had also failed in the U.N.O. whatever be the reasons. So the outcome put down in the shape of an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, is known as Kashmir Accord.\footnote{162}

With the conclusion of the Accord, the politics of plebiscite also got eliminated and the politics of National Conference resurrected. On 5\textsuperscript{th} July, 1975, Plebiscite Front had been converted into National Conference party by passing the resolution.\footnote{163} Abdullah was persuaded to accept office and was sworn in as Chief Minister on 25 Feb. 1975, returning to the post after nearly twenty two years. As usual, he received enthusiastic welcome but his popularity had suffered. As Ajit Bhatacharjea describes that there was continuing criticism in the valley of his deal with Mrs. Gandhi.\footnote{164} But he soon regretted his association with the Congress and came to doubt Indira Gandhi’s assurances. As he recalled later: “Forgetting my past experiences, I agreed to cooperate with Congress, but soon had to regret my decision.”\footnote{165}
Sheikh Abdullah evaluated the rule of National conference in the state between years 1953 to 1975 as the darkest phase in the history of the party because leaders of party had lost their real aim and objectives and had lost themselves in the glamour of power. But the evaluation did by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah seem to be incorrect and politically motivated. He had not appreciated the works done by previous chief minister especially Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed.

**National Conference from 1975 to 1982:**

On 5th July, 1975, special session of All Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front was convened and after long discussion about prevailing political situation in the state, it had been decided to change the name of the Plebiscite Front into National Conference. Indira- Sheikh Accord concluded in 1975, after that the politics of Plebiscite also got eliminated and the politics of National Conference resurrected. Sheikh Abdullah with the support of Congress Legislature Party became the Chief Minister of the State. Mir Qasim resigned voluntarily on February 22, 1975. After twenty two years Sheikh Abdullah came into power and was sworn in as a chief Minister of the State on February 25, 1975.

Parliamentary Election was held in India after the end of emergency in 1977. Congress faced humiliating defeat in election all over India. In Jammu and Kashmir, State assembly was dissolved due to withdrawal of support to Sheikh Abdullah’s government by Congress and Governor’s rule had been imposed. Sheikh Abdullah resigned from the government recommending fresh elections which took place in summer of 1977. But due to bad health of Sheikh Abdullah, he was not available for campaigning physically but cassette was recorded with his message, that the election was the referendum of the Kashmir’s self-respect, and that they could now show they were masters of their destinies and that Delhi could not dictate their future. National Conference fought election with the agenda of restoration of State’s Autonomy, an objective failed to secure in the Accord. The overall result of 1977 Assembly elections was as such.
### Table 3.5

**Party Position in 1977 J & K Assembly Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress(I)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamait-i-Islami</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

The Sheikh Abdullah formed his ministry after the elections and returned to office on 9th July, strengthened politically, but in failing health.\(^{171}\) National Conference secured 47 seats but later congress decided to support the party both in and outside the house. It secured 59 members as such.\(^{172}\) The Sheikh’s appeal to the voters from the ill-bed helped National Conference to sweep the pools and the opposition candidates became ineffective. Sheikh’s Mohammed Abdullah remained in the chair till his death on September 8, 1982.

Abdul Ganai describes that the reasons of the National Conference victory as understood immediately after were many. But one of the main reason was that the Sheikh’s historical image could not be overrun by anybody over-night.\(^{173}\) But there was an upheaval in the National Conference, Mirza Afzal Beg, and close aid of Sheikh Abdullah over Four decades, parted his way from the party. On 26 September, 1978, National Conference took action against him and expelled him because of anti-party activities.

In 1980 parliamentary elections Sheikh Abdullah openly supported Mrs. Indira Gandhi against Janta party. But good relation between both parties could not have sustained for a long period. Income tax raids on business elites in Srinagar on April 21, 1981, irritated Sheikh Abdullah because he felt that Centre has encroached in state’s affairs. That particular incident made both parties worsen.\(^{174}\)
In June 1982, Sheikh Abdullah suffered a heart attack, his second, he did not recover fully. Now he behaved as a conventional potentate, he took steps to ensure that the succession remained in the family. On 21 August he pinned the badge of president of the National Conference party on the chest of his son, Farooq. He also made him a cabinet Minister. Farooq Abdullah spent most of his Adult life in England, where he was trained as a doctor. In people’s gathering on 21 September, 1981, Sheikh Abdullah passed on his liabilities to him. Sheikh passed away in year in 1982. Subsequently, Farooq Abdullah took over the party leadership. Dr. Farooq Abdullah also brought back Mirza Afzal Beg in the National Conference. Afzal Beg dissolved his party, Inqlab-i- National Conference and rejoined National Conference.

During 1981-82, the politics of Jammu and Kashmir centered round the Center-State relations. On various issues Congress (I) led central government and the National Conference led state government confronted with each other. National Conference alleged that Center governments encroached in the sphere of State government which would put impact on special status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

1983 Assembly election was marked by the fierce nature of competition between the National Conference and the Congress and the elections itself became a source of confrontation between the Centre and the state. Mrs. Indira Gandhi conducted aggressive campaign against National Conference in these elections. Farooq Abdullah had inherited the Chief Minister ship from his father, and this was the first and crucial test for him. After the breakdown of talks for alliance with Congress, he jumped into the field with full enthusiasm. National conference emerged as a dominant party and had got 46 seats, yet the Congress as a strong opposition with 25 seats. The overall result of elections was as such.
Table 3.6
Party Position in 1983 Assembly Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Conference</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthers Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamait-i-Islami</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

In 1983, the election results were morale booster for Farooq. National Conference won the Legislative Assembly election and formed the government under the leadership of Dr. Farooq Abdullah. The National Conference won only one seat less than in 1977. In these elections Indira Gandhi bitterly campaigned against NC. The valleys voters still supported the NCs stand on autonomy. National Conference party started to get realized its presence across India by opposing Congress on regional autonomy. According to Ajit Bhatacharejea, Farooq’s vision was not limited to the valley. Flourished with the National Conference victory, he felt big enough to join the challenge to the Congress at the national level on the issue of regional autonomy. Chief Ministers of many states e.g. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab along with Farooq Abdullah worked out to evolve a common front on Centre-State relations.

The Congress party also made use of existing family feud between Dr. Farooq Abdullah and his brother in Law G.M. Shah. To topple Farooq’s government Jagmohan was appointed as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir state by the than Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Jagmohan dismissed Farooq Ministry; result of that puppet government headed by G. M. Shah was formed in Jammu and Kashmir. Mr. Shah formed the government with the support of 26 members of the Legislature Assembly
belonging to national conference. As a result of this, Dr. Farooq Abdullah had to relinquish his office of Chief Minister Ship.\textsuperscript{182}

Ajit Bhatacharjea describes, not everyone was as convinced as Jagmohan was of the legitimacy of his actions. Four non Congress Chief Ministers walked out of a National Development Council meeting to protest Farooq's dismissal. They were joined by nineteen other parties in describing the dismissal as undemocratic and urging the removal of Jagmohan from Jammu and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{183}

Mir Qasim writes on those circumstances in the state, "Mr. Jagmohan’s unconstitutional act was another nail in the coffin of the Kashmir faith in the Indian democracy and law,"\textsuperscript{184} G.M. Shah’s government was also dismissed by Jagmohan on March 7, 1986 and imposed governor’s rule in the state. Farooq Abdullah was reappointed as a Chief Minister to preside over interim National Conference- Congress regime by the Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi.

In March 1987, Legislative Assembly election was held in the state on the basis of Rajiv- Farooq accord.\textsuperscript{185} This accord ended the confrontation between National Conference and Congress (I).\textsuperscript{186} National Conference could have managed to win only 30 seats. A sharp decline from the 46 seats, party won in 1983 elections. Main rival parties in 1977 and 1983 elections came together into the alliance for 1987 assembly elections. Both parties had made upbeat able cartel. According to their agreement Congress put up candidates for 31 seats and National Conference would contest elections on 46 seats. However, the rival groups accused Farooq Abdullah of massive rigging in elections.\textsuperscript{187} After elections the overall result was as such.
Table 3.7
Party Position in 1987 Assembly Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUF</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Conference</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public Relations J & K.

The result of 1987, assembly election shows that the Cartel of national Conference and Congress had won with big margin. Many leader and agents of Muslim United Front (MUF) were got arrested, and charges of rigging were persistent in those elections. Because of such kind of charges the 1987 elections lost the credibility of electoral process, which was gained in 1977. The outcome of the 1987 Assembly election, widely perceived to be manipulated, reinforced the prevalent feeling that Kashmiris would never get a fair deal through democratic means.  

Ajit Bhatacharjea argues that, the National Conference had lost the image of being committed to Kashmir’s autonomy, the most effective counter to Pakistan and Muslim communalism by making coalition with Congress to just remain in power. It was seen as an agent of the Centre. Moreover Farooq Abdullah claimed that, “I think the biggest mistake I committed was to join hands with the congress (in 1987 assembly polls). We had hopes that by joining hands with the congress, we will get all the help that we wanted. It never came.”

Scarcity of jobs in the state frustrated educated youth of the state and they lost their confidence in democratic process. After the assembly elections in 1987, Military erupted, political order collapsed and Kashmiris came out on the streets demanding freedom. Opportunistic diverted Kashmiri youth’s focus from ballot to bullet. All this led to unrest in state, which further made
democratic institutions ineffective in state. Governor rule was imposed in the state and Legislature Assembly was suspended in January 1990. For six years thereafter, the state had political vacuum. All political activities were side lined by the fear of gun.

In 1996 Assembly elections were held with the help of the security forces. The mandate given to National Conference in these elections was unprecedented. National Conference party could manage to get 57 seats in state assembly. After the elections, the overall result was as such.

Table 3.8
Party Position in 1996 Assembly Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>34.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>12.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (INC)</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janta Dal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthers Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir Awami League</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (T)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>09.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Information and Public relations J & K.

National Conference party emerged as single largest party in all three regions of the state in these elections. National Conference government headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah came into power in 1996. During this period National Conference had become a part of Coalition Government at the Centre actively.

Later, in 2002, elections were held in the state. These elections witnessed many incidents of violence, killing of political activists, candidates, security forces and even civilians though Hurriyat Conference asked people to
boycott the elections, but it did not carry its mass campaign activities to convince people not to vote. The elections were held in four phases, the electronic voting machines (EVMs) were used in elections. More specifically, in this election a fierce competition was witnessed between National Conference and the newly organized regional party PDP.

National Conference fought elections under the leadership of young Omar Abdullah, son of Dr. Farooq Abdullah and grandson of Sheikh Abdullah. Party managed to get 28 seats and emerged as the single largest party. People’s Democratic Party (PDP) of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed managed to win 16 seats and Congress won 21 seats. After the election the overall result was as such:

**Table 3.9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>09.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthers Party</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>08.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>01</td>
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<tr>
<td>J&amp;K Awami League</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
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<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Commission of India.

The National Conference polled 28.23 percent of total votes polled and registered its victory on 28 seats of legislative assembly. Both in terms of the number of seats as well as the percentage of the votes, the rank of the party was the highest.

However, despite winning the largest number of seats, the party could
not maintain its position of dominance. It was the first time in the elections since 1977 when National Conference failed to cross the majority mark. Earlier, not only the party could win the elections with a comfortable majority but also dominated the house. In these elections the young scion of Abdullah dynasty, Omar Abdullah had lost his maiden election of Legislative Assembly to Quzi Mohammed Afzal, who until that day had only a dismal record of defeats against Abdullah’s. The reasons of National Conference were clear, the promises of peace and autonomy made by the party during 1996 assembly elections were nowhere in sight after six years of NC rule. It could neither get autonomy for its people nor could it bring peace in the state.

So, during 2002 to 2008, National Conference party had to sit in the opposition in the state assembly. In 2008, assembly elections took place in state immediately after Amarnath agitation. However, the boycott call was denied and there was massive participation of people in the assembly elections. After the election the result was as such.

### Table 3.10

**Party Position in 2008 Assembly Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Political Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
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<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.71</td>
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<td>BJP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
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<td>23.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI (Marxist)</td>
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<td>J &amp; K Democratic Party Nationalist</td>
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<td>1.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>People’s Democratic Front</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>J&amp;K National Panthers Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.34</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Commission of India.

After 2008 election results National Conference party formed the government in Jammu and Kashmir State with the alliance of Congress party.
Omar Abdullah became Chief Minister of the state with high expectations of the people in the state especially Kashmiris youth. Though Omar led National Conference- Congress coalition government completed its full period but both parties many times acted as opposition parties, because on many matters conflict could be seen between both parties. Both parties accused each other for non-cooperation on various matters. National Conference party, during this period had also been a part of Congress led UPA government at the Centre.

In year 2014, state of Jammu and Kashmir has faced big and fierce natural disaster in the shape of heavy floods in river Jhelum; which resulted heavy property loss in the state, Jammu and Kashmir went for Assembly elections in November- December, 2014, which had been held in five phases across the state.

### Table 3.11

**Party Position in 2014 J&K Assembly Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Political Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Percentage of Seats</th>
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</thead>
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<td>J&amp;K National Panthers Party</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.44</td>
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</table>

Source: Election Commission of India.

National Conference seats climbed down in these elections, 28 in 2008 to 15 in year 2014. Omar Abdullah resigned as a chief minister on 24 December 2014. PDP became the single largest party with 28 seats. BJP became the second largest party. Anti-incumbency against National Conference- Congress’s ruling government in the state and Anti- incumbency
against Central government, where National Conference was a coalition partner in UPA government, led by Congress party, issues of corruption, unemployment, and mismanagement of flood relief work by the state government and many other local issues played destructive role for National Conference party in 2014 assembly elections. It resulted in the post poll alliance of PDP- BJP who jointly formed a government in the Jammu and Kashmir and NC had to sit in the opposition.


Jammu and Kashmir has six parliamentary constituencies since beginning of these elections in the state in 1967 before that, members to the Lok Sabha were nominated by the state Legislature Assembly. No candidate participated as National Conference nominee in 1971 Parliamentary Elections. In 1991 parliamentary elections could not be held in the state due to militancy. National Conference party had not contested 1996 Lok Sabha elections.

National Conference party has always been frontrunner of these elections too. 1999 parliament elections were the most successful elections for the party because party had acquired 4 seats out of total 6 seats of the state. 2014 parliamentary elections had not brought good results for National Conference party, because party could not have managed to win even single odd seat in the state. Moreover party patron Dr. Farooq Abdullah had also lost his constituency in those elections to PDP candidate. The journey of the National Conference party in parliamentary election is shown in following table along with other parties.
Table 3.12

Lok Sabha Elections in J&K and Performance of Various Political Parties

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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>01</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Commission of India.

Factions and Splits in National Conference:

Factionalism and intra-party disputes are the part and parcel of the party system, which sometimes lead to the split in the party fold and give birth to the new party. It is indeed not a new phenomenon of political process in India, each and every party whether new or old has faced this problem once in a while. Being the oldest party in Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference has faced factionalism and splits many times on various issues. With the conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference, party had to face first ever resistance from within organizational fold; some of the members were against the conversion of party’s name and ideology. A section under the leadership of Hameedullah Khan broke away for continuing the existence of the Muslim Conference. 194 But when, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah had assumed power in the state after Indian independence, factionalism in the party was relatively unknown. Party was more cohesive and united because of the leadership of the Sheikh Abdullah, though some form of factional activities did exists. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was heading the faction but Sheikh Abdullah ignored and subdued those developments, which resulted in 1953 crises, which erupted with the open revolt of the Bakshi’s group.

By the mid 1949 the first breach in the National Conference party had taken place, where most prominent leader behind the “Quit Kashmir”
movement, Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra quit the party because he had not been inducted in the first Cabinet. He left the party in 1949 and floated a new party Kashmir Political Conference in June 1953.\textsuperscript{196} With Sheikh Abdullah’s dismissal in 1953, new faction came into forefront led by Mirza Afzal Beg, a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah, along with six members of legislative assembly and one member of the parliament left the party and founded All J&K Plebiscite Front on August 9, 1955.\textsuperscript{197} After the 1957 assembly election in the state; party witnessed intense factional wrangling and cracks in the party’s structure began to reveal. This happened because a section of leaders within party disliked the working style of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. G. M. Sadiq was the main leader of another faction during that period.\textsuperscript{198} The discord within the party came to the open over the nomination of G. R. Renzu for the legislative council by the faction led by G. M. Sadiq. Renzu had lost 1957 legislative assembly election; Bakshi personally opposed his nomination, because he thought this kind of activities would provoke backdoor entries. That particular incident had developed suspicion and mistrust within party. As a result of that, G.M. Sadiq and D.P. Dhar resigned from the working committee of the National Conference and formed Democratic National Conference, a new political party. Though DNC merged with parent organization in 1960 with the center’s intervention but mistrust could not be eliminated between those factions.\textsuperscript{199}

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed had to resign from the post of Chief Ministership when the famous Kamraj Plan was announced in 1963, perhaps the most obvious choice was G.M. Sadiq but instead of him, Khawaja Shamas-ud-Din was elected as the legislative party leader. The group led by G.M. Sadiq did not attend the Legislative party meeting under protest. Ultimately intra party factionalism reached such a peak that it brought entire system under a strain. Khawaja Shamas-ud-Din had to resign from the post after the theft of Holy Relic from the Hazratbal Shrine, which paralyzed almost entire administrative machinery in the valley. Circumstances compelled the National Conference to hand over power to G.M. Sadiq. The election of G.M. Sadiq as party leader by no means mitigated factionalism in the party fold; particularly Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed loyalists remained almost
unreconciled to the election of the G.M. Sadiq as the new leader of the National Conference Legislative party.\textsuperscript{200}

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed led faction in the party was not happy with G.M. Sadiq as a leader of the party and always tried to topple G.M. Sadiq led government. Bakshi’s group engineered the conspiracy to topple G.M. Sadiq ministry and for this purpose pro- Bakshi members of legislative assembly gave notice of no confidence motion against the government. But with the arrest of the Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed this could not have been successfully done. The acute factional rivalry pushed to brink as a result of the decision of the Sadiq ministry to merge the National Conference with the Congress party. This decision was taken by the working committee of the National Conference party unanimously. On the other side twenty pro Bakshi members of the state assembly vehemently opposed the decision and they informed the governor formally that they would continue to belong to the National Conference and not to the Pradesh Congress Committee.\textsuperscript{201}

The factional trouble inside the ruling party emerged again in 1978, when Sheikh Abdullah got to know that some members of the ruling National Conference party in league with the Congress party; had voted for Beg’s son in law for State Legislative Council election so the Sheikh Abdullah suspecting the bonafide of his colleague, Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beg relieve him from the post of cabinet minister. There were now two factions, one led by Mirza Afzal Beg and the other led by G.M. Shah. Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beg eventually left the party and organized a new party called Inqalabi (Revolutionary) National Conference.\textsuperscript{202}

The factional fight in the party knocked the door again after the demise of the Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah in September, 1983. Farooq Abdullah has been rewarded with National Conference’s top post, which has been always claimed by Sheikh’s son in law, G.M. Shah. However, Shah lays low for the time being and made an outward loyalty to Farooq Abdullah. In mid1984, G.M. Shah and his supporters toppled the Farooq Abdullah’s ministry with the help of the Congress.\textsuperscript{203} The governor of the state appointed G.M. Shah as Chief Minister of the state. The National Conference of G. M. Shah and his colleagues, was then called National Conference (Khalida).\textsuperscript{204}
It therefore can conveniently be stated that factionalism in the National Conference is not a new phenomenon. It has been affecting stability in the party since its inception. Factionalism in the party has also been responsible for political instability in the state. But despite all this, party has been playing important role in Jammu and Kashmir state politics.

The Ideology and Programs of National Conference:

Party is a firm believer of secular and liberal democracy and has also been working to protect human rights, equality and justice based administration and society's establishment comes into forefront of every policy and programme of the National Conference. State autonomy issue has been most important for the party and it stands committed to protect state autonomy at any cost. National Conference has always been demanding to get pre-1953 position.

National Conference has been propagating socialist ideology. To give concrete shape to socialist ideology party, released famous “New Kashmir” manifesto. Party practically implemented socialistic ideology by land reforms in the state and granted land to landless farmers and labourers. The commitment to adopt more policies to get socialist oriented system is being repeated in its manifestoes from time to time since 1977. Naya Kashmir stands witness to party’s faith in the concept of planned economy for the multi-dimensional betterment of the people of the state.

So far the party’s programme is concerned, National Conference is committed to achieve following goals and these are also reflected in party's ideology as well.

1. Party is totally against inside and outside barriers of Kashmir and also advocates free movement of people, trade, commerce and better coordination between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

2. Party is committed to bring closer all three regions of the state because party believes that all three regions of the state have same problems and destiny. All regions of state are equally important for progress and development of the state.

3. Unemployment in the state is a big problem and party is committed to
explore all avenues for gainful employment, locally, nationally and internationally. Party will also make provisions to give allowances to unemployed youth of the state. Possibilities will also be found in education, health, agriculture, floriculture, information technology, tourism, law enforcing agencies, handy craft sectors to provide jobs for unemployed youth.

4. Party will put adequate infrastructure for power generation to produce power at par with state’s capacity in hydroelectricity sector and ensure central government help so that power shortage is removed. Party will also make possible to provide electricity on cheap rates for agriculture and industry so as to ensure development of these sectors.

5. Corruption is also a big problem in the state administration. Party is also committed to provide fair administration to the people and get rid of corruption. Good governance will be the prime motive of the government and right to information will also be promoted to check injustice to the people of state.

6. The environment concerns facing the state are enormous. Natural beauty of Kashmir has been the main attraction all over the world. Party is also committed to enact strong laws to protect environment. Tackling water, air and ground pollution, restoring our water bodies to their pristine glory with special thrust on preservation of Dal, Wullar, Mansar, Surinsar and pyonyong lakes are party’s major concerns.

7. To ensure overall development of the state, party will restore the sanctity of the District development boards and will also make these institutions meaningful and of representative character.

8. For the rural development of the state party is pledged to complete agrarian reforms, scientific preservation of the land records, introduction of new techniques in agriculture, introduction of crop insurance and relief for drought prone areas, and provide drinking water facilities in every village. National Conference is also committed to make powerful panchayat raj, as the base of democracy.

9. For the education’s development in the state, party is committed to provide adequate infrastructure in the state. Facilities will be provided for science
education particularly in rural areas.

10. Empowerment of the women in the state is a major concern for the National Conference and in order to provide higher education to more school, colleges and universities will be established so that families find it easy to send their girls for higher education. Party encourages women to be equal partners in the development and progress of the state.

11. Tourism continues to be a major thrust and source for sustenance to a large number of people in all the three regions of the state. As tourism industry has been largely affected by the terrorism in the state which needs to be revived to optimum level.

12. Incidents of human rights violation have increased in the state with the passage of time. Party is committed to impress upon union government to take effective measures so these can be prevented. Party is also making efforts to do away with all anti people draconian laws like DAA, AFSPA. National Conference government had also formed human right commission to provide justice to the affected people.

13. National Conference believes that Kashmiri pundits are the important component of State's secular identity, composite culture and civilization. They had abandoned their houses during uneasy period of Kashmir's history and started living outside of the State will be brought back.

14. National Conference has very serious concern to improve health sector in the state by setting up hospitals in urban as well as in rural areas with modern facilities.

15. To solve refuges problem in the Jammu region, which has created a law and order situation, party pledges the central government to fulfill its obligation toward these people who cannot be covered under the state subject laws.

16. Party is also committed to encourage development of village industry and marketing of the products like fruits, flowers and transport for overall industrial development in the state.

17. Upliftment of backward classes comes under Party's main agenda. Free legal aid, special housing scheme will also be provided to backward classes and people living in backward areas of the state. It also wants the
Centre government to accord the scheduled tribe status to Pahari speaking people of the state.

18. Welfare centers will be opened at all district levels for orphans. Special education will also be provided to them to enable them to lead better life.

19. Launching of Infrastructural development works is most important feature of development and party wants to expand railway, roads and other facilities of public welfare.

20. Many other welfare schemes have always been part of National Conference manifestoes like better the monthly pensions to widows and disabled, introduction of crop insurance scheme, up gradation and strengthening of technical institutes and opening of job oriented courses, better service conditions of administrative work force, solution of all impending problems of kandi areas and ex-soldiers.205

In view of the above, the National Conference is an important regional political party having its limits confined to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Party has always been showing its presence in state since Indian Independent and also pre-independence phase. Party has its huge support base in Jammu & Kashmir, which can be perceived by the electoral performance of the party in the state. National Conference has been playing ideal role in the politics of Jammu And Kashmir State. Its ideology is still relevant. It has a glorious past and it also has to play constructive role in future as well. India is a real secular state and it can bridge the gap between the people of state and rest of India.
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