CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Jammu and Kashmir came into being as a single political and geographical entity following the treaty of Amritsar between the British government and Gulab Singh signed on 16 March, 1846. The treaty handed over control of Kashmir State to Dogra ruler who had earlier annexed Ladakh. Thus a new State of Jammu and Kashmir was formed with Maharaja Gulab Singh as its founder.

In 1947, the British dominion of India came to an end with the creation of two Nations, India and Pakistan. Each of the 562 princely states joined one of the two new Nations, Secular India or Muslim Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir had a predominantly Muslim population but a Hindu ruler, and was the largest of these autonomous States and bordered both these countries. Its Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh preferred to remain independence. In October 1947 tribesman from North West Frontier Province invaded the Poonch district of Kashmir in support of rebellion by Muslims against the Maharaja’s taxation policies. Faced with a deteriorating situation, the Maharaja fled Kashmir and requested assistance from the government of India. Lord Mountbatten, India’s Governor General advised that Hari Singh should first accede to the Nation of India before any Indian forces were used to control the situation. Kashmir thus became the part of India and on 27 October 1947, Indian troops were airlifted to Srinagar. The Pakistani army officially entered the war in May 1948 on the ground that the presence of Indian troops in Kashmir constitutes a great threat to Pakistan’s own National security. The Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru referred the dispute to the United Nations and a ceasefire was agreed on the 1st January, 1949. The UN resolution asked the invading Pakistani army to withdraw to the pre-war international border and instructed India to hold a plebiscite to determine the will of the people. The plebiscite has, however, never been held since to this day and Pakistan army too did not leave the portion of Kashmir occupied by them. The Jammu and Kashmir under Indian control consists of 2/3 of the Kashmir while as 1/3 of Kashmir is administered by Pakistan. Attempts to resolve core issue through political discussions were unsuccessful. In 1965, war broke out between India and Pakistan and ceasefire was restored by United Nations following Tashkent declaration in 1965, by which both Nations returned to their original positions along demarcated lines. After the 1971 civil war in Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh, in 1972 under Shimla agreement, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan
agreed that neither side would seek to alter the line of control in Kashmir, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations.

In 1987, Kashmiri activists who had become disenchanted with the political process as a means of expressing dissent mounted an armed insurgency in the Valley and movement gained momentum throughout 1990 in the Muslim dominated areas of the State.

The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference is the largest political party in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir. The political anger, unrest and protest against the Dogra rulers in 1932 led to the formation of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932 but due to differences over the secular character of the Muslim Conference, it was transformed to All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in 1939 under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. National Conference played a vital role in the freedom struggle of Jammu and Kashmir and fought for the rights of common masses. After independence, National Conference came into power and stared implementation of New Kashmir Manifesto. In 1952, Delhi agreement was signed which gave special status to Kashmir.

The present study is an attempt to look into the various aspects of basis of Kashmir conflict and role of National Conference as a major political force from its emergence in 1939 to contemporary period in this conflict. We will now discuss basic features of our study:

1.1 Problem Statement:

Kashmir has been referred to as the most dangerous placed on earth. Since the partition of united India in 1947, this unresolved land and the people who live there has been at the root of constant tension between the world’s most populous democracy India and its neighbour Pakistan.

Kashmir conflict is complex and has historical, political, religious and international dimensions. The Kashmir conflict has emerged, persisted and flared up due to various factors which are broadly categorized into endogenous and exogenous factors. Main exogenous sources of Kashmir conflict are related with unfriendly relations between India and Pakistan, ineffective role of United Nations as well as Islamic linkage of Kashmir with outside world and the emergence of Islamic resurgence in the last three years. Besides, there are some internal factors which are responsible for emergence
and persistence of the conflict which include politics in Kashmir since Independence, ethnic differences and economic backwardness of the people in the State.

National Conference is the main political party in this conflict prone area and has been active even before the partition of Indian subcontinent. From the very beginning, National Conference has been consistently a cadre based political party having support at grass root level. As Kashmir conflict is of interNational importance and has serious repercussions for society, economy and polity of both India and Pakistan, so it is important to evaluate the role of main political party of State during different periods of time. The conditions which led National Conference which was at one time fighting for plebiscite to finally agree to full accession with India should be analyzed and the impact of this decision on its own cadre and Kashmir conflict has to be analyzed. The eruption of militancy, its causes and impact on National Conference as well as interNationalization of Kashmir conflict will be discussed. Thus our main focus will be to highlight the importance of National Conference in Kashmir conflict and to study the Kashmir conflict from various perspectives.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of Present Study:

The aims and objectives of present study are:

1. To analyze the causes that led to emergence of Kashmir conflict and study Kashmir conflict from perspectives of historical and political science.
2. To analyze various socio-political factors that led to emergence of National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir.
3. To analyze the role of National Conference in its initial era and the role played by National Conference during partition time.
4. To analyze the causes that forced National Conference to start plebiscite movement and its impact on political scenario of Jammu and Kashmir.
5. To analyze the conditions that led to Indira- Sheikh Accord of 1975 and its impact on Kashmir politics and conflict.
7. To analyze political scenario of Jammu and Kashmir during 1987 elections and position of National Conference in these elections.
8. To analyze post- 1987 election scenario of State and factors that led to eruption of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

1.3 Scope and Significance of the Study:
Before discussing the significance and scope of the study, we would prefer to answer a very important question, which may strike to the mind of any researcher. The question is that why we select conflict in Jammu and Kashmir and role of National Conference for our study? One was the reason of exploring the root cause of the conflict and as National Conference has been main political party since 1940’s, we want to analyze its role in this conflict. Besides, Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir is a very chronic conflict which has not only led to loss of life but also caused irreparable damage to democratic politics, economy and cultural pluralism of the State which has generated curiosity in me to study this problem within the framework of my subject.

The present study highlights the basic issues and the inherent problems related with the Kashmir conflict. As Kashmir conflict has been lingering on from more than six decades, the study will highlight circumstances that led to emergence of this conflict and the role played by India, Pakistan and leadership of State in emergence and sustenance of this conflict.

The study assumes significance as it will analyze the role of National Conference as initiator of political movement in Kashmir as well as role played by it in evolution of Kashmiri identity politics. The National Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah did not emerged as an organization but as a movement which played an important role in political awakening of masses during freedom struggle of Kashmir and helped in changing the pattern of autocratic Dogra rule so this study will discuss all factors as well as means through which such a large mass movement was organised in the State.

As National Conference has a strong ideological base and is a cadre based party, the study assumes significance as it will analyze how party managed political scenario of State even after 1975 Indira- Sheikh Accord in which Sheikh Abdullah accepted accession of State with India permanently.

The phase of Kashmir politics after 1987 assembly elections is very critical phase as it led to eruption of militancy, decrease in support base of National Conference, awakening of masses and increased alienation of people particularly educated masses.
The research work also bears significance because when militancy was at its peak and whole official machinery was dysfunctional, it was National Conference who remained steadfast, and initiated the era of reconstruction, peace and stability in the State.

The present study assumes significance in many other respects. The National Conference which once dominated the political scenario of the State particularly Kashmir valley seems to be losing ground and the void is being fulfilled by other political parties particularly People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Thus present study will give us information about the factors and events which have changed the hegemonic character of National Conference and have brought competitive power politics in the State politics. The reliance of the National Conference leadership on support of Central Government rather than support of people of State particularly Valley for its survival in power will be discussed and will give us insight that how faith of people of Valley on National Conference has diminished. The study will provide us insight into conditions which led to victory of newly formed People’s Democratic Party (PDP) in 2002 assembly elections forcing National Conference to act as main opposition party for the first time.

This study would be relevant as the information gained from the study would be helpful to persons who are engaged in the process of resolving conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. This study can be an asset for the policy makers as it will highlight the shortcomings on their part which led to increased alienation of the people of State especially people of Valley.

1.4 Framework of the Study:
Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir is popularly referred as Kashmir conflict. Kashmir conflict is complex and multi-dimensional. The Kashmir conflict has emerged, persisted and flared-up due to various factors and scholars have broadly categorized these factors into two categories – exogenous and endogenous.

Origin of Kashmir conflict can be traced in movement for freedom of India from the British rule as well as the way in which the India was partitioned. Freedom struggle in India was started by Indian National Congress, which was formed in 1885 and was based on secular ideology. From the beginning of 20th Century issues of ethnic and religious interests crop up in the movement for freedom. Muslim league was formed in 1906. The party propagated for the protection of interest of Muslims and sought to
create a religiously based State that would serve as a homeland for South Asian Muslims. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who was active member of Indian National Congress relinquished his membership of Congress party and joined Muslim league. He became president of Muslim league and actively advocated two-Nation theory. The demand got momentum from 1940 onwards. Thus, on the one hand, there was leadership of Indian National Congress, which believed in secular and plural India and on the other hand, Jinnah demanded a country for Muslims. Kashmir being a Muslim majority area and adjacent to areas which became part of Pakistan was very dear to Jinnah. So Jinnah wanted Kashmir to be part of Pakistan.

Thus source of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir lies in the nature of freedom struggles and the processes of Nation building in both the countries of India and Pakistan. For Indian Nationalists such as Nehru, the integration of Kashmir into India was critical because it would demonstrate that all faiths could live under the aegis of a secular State. By the same token, Pakistani Nationalists such as Jinnah saw the inclusion of Kashmir into Pakistan as equally critical as a homeland for South Asian Muslims. The way in which India was partitioned by British appears to be more responsible for the creation of Kashmir conflict. At the time of independence, there were about 562 princely States in India and Jammu and Kashmir was one of them. In 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was under the rule of a Hindu Dogra ruler, Hari Singh but majority of its population were Muslims. Every princely State was given right either to go with India or with Pakistan and this was to be decided by the people’s will or referendum. Such kind of referendum could not take place in Jammu & Kashmir as hasty process of partition could not give enough time to emergent States to make reasonable decisions for the effective control of their territories. Thus, the problem with accession arose because the British seemed to do three things at one time: to rule, to handover power and to divide and quit in hurry. Alaister Lamb in his book ‘Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy’ also argues on the same lines that it had taken the British hundred years to consolidate the Indian empire but in 1947, they dismantled it in seventy days. As last ruler Hari Singh did not opt either for India or for Pakistan, so technically the State became independent.

As the majority of people were Muslims, Pakistani leaders promoted entry of Pathans who incited rebellion in Jammu & Kashmir. Sumit Ganguly writes that during the
first week of October 1947, a tribal rebellion broke out near Poonch and in response to it a band of tribals from the northwest frontier province of Pakistan invaded the State on October 22, 1947. They had captured the part of Kashmir now referred as “Azad-Kashmir”. In response to this development, Hari Singh then requested for military assistance from India. Lord Mountbatten— the then Governor General of India, suggested Nehru to get instrument of accession from Hari Singh before sending troops and accordingly, on 26th of October 1947, the accession document was signed which was also subsequently ratified by Sheikh Abdullah. Mountbatten could have sent British army to crush the rebellion but he suggested Nehru to get instrument of accession from Hari Singh and thus helped indirectly in the entry of Indian army into the Kashmir. These and others are some questions, which have still not been answered. So many scholars suspect a colonial design in the creation of Kashmir conflict.

British historian Alaister Lamb argues that decision to retain Jammu and Kashmir as part of India was made by the British colonial administration under Mountbatten, as the departing British felt that Jammu and Kashmir was an important buffer to the north of India against the communist Soviet Union. Since it was a political decision made by the colonial administration, there was no question of allowing the future of Kashmir to be decided through the popular will of the people. The mechanics of partition as applied to the Punjab in great measure created the background to Kashmir dispute. In theory all Muslim majority districts contiguous with Muslim core of Punjab would go to Pakistan but by awarding three out of four tehsils of Gurdaspur district to India, the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India became a practical possibility. Through these territories like Gurdaspur, Batala and Pathankot, road link between Jammu and Kashmir with India became a practical possibility. Maharaja’s accession of the State to India legalized the entry of Indian army into the State on 27th of October 1947. This led to outbreak of war between Indian and Pakistani troops in November 1947. With no resolution in sight and at the suggestion of Mountbatten, the Indian cabinet decided to refer the case to United Nations Security Council. Accordingly, a complaint was lodged to the council on, January 1, 1948. This led to the interNationalization of the Kashmir conflict. In the Security Council debate Pakistani
representative, Mohammad Zafrullah Khan pleaded arguments more convincingly. Therefore, convinced of Pakistan’s case, the Security Council changed the tilt of the complaint from “Jammu and Kashmir question” to “Indo-Pakistan question”. The Security Council passed its first resolution on 17th January 1948, calling on both sides to help ease tension. Three days later, however, the council passed another resolution to create a United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) to exercise a mediatory role and to investigate facts. India rejected the resolution on the ground that it raised doubts about the legality of accession. Following this, the commission passed another resolution on 13th August 1948. The resolution was split up in three parts. Part-I concerned itself with the cease-fire, part-II with the truce agreement and part-III with plebiscite. It is to be noted that part-III was to be taken on after part-I and part-II had been fully implemented and not before. In this resolution, Commission asked Pakistan to withdraw its troops from Kashmir. The Indian withdrawal was to follow that of Pakistan. Pakistan did not accept the resolution, as it demanded balanced and synchronized withdrawal of both armies of India and Pakistan.

Another resolution was passed by UN Security Council on 11 December 1948. Some of the important provisions of the resolution are as follows:

i) The question of accession of Kashmir to India or Pakistan would be decided by the free and impartial plebiscite.

ii) The plebiscite was contingent on a ceasefire in accordance with the provision of part-I and II of the commission’s resolution passed on 13 August 1948.

iii) Appointment of plebiscite administrator who would be nominated by the Secretary General of United Nations in consultation with the commission.

iv) (a) After the cease-fire, and when the commission was satisfied about the restoration of peaceful conditions, it would in consultation with the Government of India and the plebiscite administrator to determine the final disposal of Indian and State armed forces.

(b) As regards the areas under Pakistan, final disposal of the troops in that territory would be determined by the commission and the plebiscite administrator.
Both India and Pakistan had accepted the UN mediated proposals and accordingly both countries came to accept a UN mediated cease-fire and UN observers group to supervise it from January 1, 1949. The present cease-fire line divides the State into two political units, Pakistan administered Kashmir lying under the control of Pakistan and Indian Part of Kashmir- Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. Presently 45 percent of the State’s territory is in Indian, 35 percent in Pakistani and the remaining 20 percent in Chinese control.

When the Commission failed to end the deadlock between two countries, it recommended its own dissolution and appointed Sir Owen Dixon as UN mediator on 27th of March 1950. He made two proposals: (1) to hold the plebiscite by sections or areas (2) to partition the State according to the known wishes of the inhabitants and holding a plebiscite in the Kashmir Valley.

In Kashmir, first general elections were held in 1951 and constituent assembly was formed to further integrate the State. In response to this, the Security Council at the instance of Pakistan resolved on 30 March, 1951 that any decision made by the State constituent assembly about the future of Kashmir would not be binding. Between 1951 and 1955, there were five UN reports by a new UN mediator, Frank P. Graham. He first suggested direct talks between India and Pakistan Governments. When this proposal made no headway, he got down to fixing the quantum of forces to be retained by the two sides after demilitarization of the State, for holding a plebiscite. Graham’s proposal was acceptable to India and Pakistan only in parts. Therefore, he also came to the conclusion that the way out for the resolution of Kashmir conflict was bilateral talks between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan joined the lobby of United States in 1953 and in response to it, India joined the lobby of Soviet Union and Indian leadership went back on its promise of the right of self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In view of this, Nehru in 1956 declared that there was no need for a plebiscite because Kashmir was legally a part of India. In this way from 1957 with Soviet veto permanently in place, any meaningful initiative on Kashmir offered a bleak prospect. The Kashmir conflict had resulted in two wars between India and Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 respectively. In 1965 war after the cease-fire, then Soviet Union took the initiative and brought Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistan ruler, Ayub Khan together at
Tashkant where peace declaration was signed. This was the first-time that both India and Pakistan affirmed in writing “not to resort to force” and “to settle Kashmir dispute through peaceful negotiations”. The same peaceful approach was underlined in the Shimla agreement in 1972. Under this agreement the two countries resolved to settle their differences by “peaceful means” and promised not to “unilaterally alter the situation”. The two also under took to “prevent organization, assistance or encouragement of any act detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful relations between the two”. Since the Shimla agreement there has been no war between India and Pakistan except brief Kargil war in 1996 but there has been no settlement either. Kargil war again brought the two countries on conflict over Kashmir issue but immediately subsided under immense pressure from world powers on power centres of both the countries. After the start of militancy in the State since 1989, Pakistan now argues more vigorously that Kashmir is the core of its problems with India and Kashmiris should be given the right of self-determination but all the major powers in the world are united in thinking that the solution will have to be found by India and Pakistan bilaterally.

It is evident from the above discussion that roots of Kashmir conflict lie in the nature of India’s freedom struggle and the hasty partition of the country which has transformed it into a conflict between two sovereign countries. It is further established that deeply turbulent Indo- Pak relations over Kashmir conflict have not only multi dimensional international ramifications, but have a practical impact on the stability and peace of the region, as well as potent relevance to emergent and emerging geopolitical challenges of South East Asia especially sub-continent.

For emergence and sustenance of any conflict, internal (endogenous) factors are more responsible than external factors as external factors have a limited role. In fact, external factors may only contribute in the intensification of the conflict. Major internal factors responsible for Kashmir conflict are politics in the State after 1947 war, economic backwardness, ethnic diversity and unemployment among educated youth.

When the tribals attacked the State of Jammu and Kashmir in October 1947, the last monarch of the State Hari Singh left Kashmir and shifted himself to Jammu. So Government of India proclaimed prominent Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah as an
Interim head of the State in October 1947. Abdullah was convinced that the Kashmiri identity could be best protected in the Indian secular and democratic polity. Recognizing the particular nature of problem, Government of India awarded Kashmir a ‘special status’ through article – 370 on 17th October 1949. This allows the State to have its own constitution, restricts the parliament’s powers to three subjects: defence, communication and foreign affairs. If other constitutional provisions or Union powers are to be extended to Kashmir not only the prior “concurrence” of the State Government is required but also it has to be ratified by the State’s Constituent Assembly. Following this, in October 1950, as an interim head of the State Sheikh Abdullah had formally demanded election to create constituent assembly in the State. Therefore, in 1951 elections for the first State assembly were held in which National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah got sweeping victory. Accordingly in November 1951 Shiekh Abdullah was sworn as the first Prime Minister of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Because of this political development, power and authority which was monopolized by Dogra monarchy shifted to Sheikh Abdullah who belonged to Kashmiri ethnic group.

Sheikh Abdullah introduced Land Reforms in the State. Thus ownership rights were granted to landless Kashmiri peasantry. It is because of these humanitarian land reforms that Sheikh Abdullah became a popular figure among lower and middle class Muslims of Kashmir and got their vote and support till his death. In fact, through Land Reforms, the foundation for the emergence of a new generation of Kashmiris was laid. Meanwhile in 1952, a group of communal organizations led by Jan Sangh President Shyama Prasad Mukherjee along with Hindu Mahasaba, RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh), Jammu Praja Parishad and others started demanding that State’s special status (article-370) should be abolished. These communal organizations had the backing of the Hindu landlords of Jammu, who had lost economic and political monopoly after Sheikh Abdullah introduced Land Reforms in the State. During 1952 crisis, political elites at centre especially Nehru remained ineffective to stop these communal agitators. In response to this development, Sheikh Abdullah (On July 10, 1952) at the party’s headquarters in Srinagar is quoted as having said that even Nehru could not control communal elements in India and the time might come when Kashmir would have to say “goodbye” to secular India. These developments led to widening gap between Sheikh Abdullah and Central Government.
and resulted in his dismissal from power on 8th August, 1952. Meanwhile at the political level the ruling regional party National Conference was made a branch of All India Congress party. These all events led to dilution of regional identity of Kashmir which increased alienation of people of Valley.

Plebiscite front was launched in 1953 to secure the right of plebiscite for Kashmiris. Moreover, Government of India allowed only those politicians to come in power who were not opposed to Jammu & Kashmir’s full constitutional integration with India. Among these politicians names of G.M. Bakshi (1953-63), Sadiq (1964-1971) & Mir Qasim (1971-75) deserve mention. It was during the tenure of these Prime/Chief ministers that most of the provisions of article – 370 were diluted which caused an unprecedented wave of anger in Kashmir against relations with India. Even after bringing these radical politico-constitutional changes in Jammu & Kashmir, relationship of the State with the central Government has remained weak. However, in 1975 ruling National party Congress (I) realizing that the State could not be controlled by weak and unpopular leaders had started political bargaining with National Conference leader, Sheikh Abdullah which led to signing of accord referred to as “The Kashmir Accord 1975”. This accord paved the way for S. Abdullah to re-enter into politics of Jammu and Kashmir on 24th February, 1975. As a consequence of this, the separatist forces were significantly marginalized. The plebiscite front was dissolved and most of its leaders had now joined the mainstream politics.

On 8th September 1982, Farooq Abdullah was unanimously chosen as Chief Minister of the State after his father’s death. In 1983 assembly elections, National Conference forged an alliance with another regional party, Awami Action Committee (AAC) in order to keep Congress out of power. Central Government started conspiracy to dismiss elected Government of Farooq by encouraging defection within his party through the then governor of the State, Shri Jagmohan Malhotra. That defection led to dismissal of the elected Government of Farooq in 1984. Accordingly G.M. Shah, though sponsored by Governor of the State, was allowed to form a Government in 1984. Because of this development moderate Kashmiri faith in Indian democracy was again shaken. Although Farooq was not as popular as his father but his dismissal began a new phase of alienation.
In 1987, National Conference and Congress (I) were back in alliance after a brief period of Governor’s rule. This alliance totally undermined the National Conference’s popularity and capacity of representing the distinctive Kashmiri sentiments. It was after this alliance (Congress-National Conference) that extremist trends in Kashmir politics started emerging and gaining strength. This situation helped to strengthen the Muslim United Front (MUF) and made it a major force in Kashmir’s politics. So much so that Congress-National Conference alliance had to resort to large scale rigging in Assembly Elections (1987) in order to remain in power. In this situation people got completely alienated from the mainstream politics. This situation led many unemployed youth to shift directly from the electoral politics to armed militancy. In fact, groups of young men who took to violence comprised mostly those who had actually worked during the 1987 Assembly Elections on the side of MUF (Muslim United Front). These people were subjected to severe torture for their association with the opposition. The objective situation thus created provided a good opportunity for Pakistan to get involved in Kashmir as never before.

Hurriyat Conference was formed in 1993 to give militancy a political face and as an amalgam, the Hurriyat incorporated almost the full spectrum of ideologies prevalent in Kashmir at that time. It is providing opposition to the agencies of Indian State through its activities of calling strikes and demonstrations against the excesses committed by the security forces.

Government of India after a long gap of Governor’s rule in 1996 revived the political processes again in Jammu and Kashmir. Since then elected Governments are working there under a number of constraints. Thus the genesis of the conflict can be traced to the political system which failed to fulfill the legitimate political aspirations of people.

The Kashmir conflict has its ethnic dimension as well. Although the State has been multi-ethnic society, its’ culture was earlier defined in terms of what is called as Kashmiriyat which has declined gradually since independence. According to Riyaz Punjabi, well-known political scientist, the unprincipled politics pursued by central Government for Jammu & Kashmir resulted into the rupture of Kashmiriyat and division of people on the basis of religion. As a result of many political developments, three different demands are coming out from the ethnic groups who are dominant in
respective provinces of the State. In Jammu, particularly from the Dogra dominant belt, the demand for separate Jammu State is being raised from time to time while in Ladakh, Buddhists especially from Leh district are demanding the “union territory status”. And Muslims of Kashmir mostly seek “Independence” from India. Gautam Navlakha, renowned human rights activist, rightly says that: “The roots of the crisis in Kashmir lie in the Kashmir’s fears for the loss of the cultural identity in the face of the Hindu/ Hindu notion of Nationalism. This manifests the single most important source of the crisis in Kashmir Valley – cultural marginalization of a group of people due to a process of State sponsored imposition of pan-Indianess derived from a Sankritic Brahmanical notion of Bhartiya culture and civilization”.

Economic backwardness has also played its’ role in the alienation of people of Jammu and Kashmir. With economic planning being relegated to the background by politicians and the increase in unemployment and corruption in the State, many unemployed youth of the State joined militant organizations.

Religious dimension has also played vital role in Kashmir conflict. The role of religion in fomenting the Kashmir conflict can be analysed in many ways but it is a fact that Islam is being used for mobilizing people to fight against the Indian State and to interNationalize the conflict. Economic backwardness and political corruption and alienation of people are no doubt potential factors of sustaining conflict. But no conflict can be sustained without consciousness of people about the conflict and this has happened in Kashmir. Kashmir has witnessed growth in education and mass media rapidly, which play an important role in making people aware about the conflict. Growth of educated unemployed youth acted as catalyst for conflict in Kashmir. There has been rapid increase in mass media as well as education in the State in last few decades. Between 1965 and 1984 tremendous growth occurred in the print media, in India in general and in Kashmir in particular. For example, in 1965 only 46 newspapers were published in Kashmir. Ten years later, 135 newspapers were being published. By 1991, the number had grown to 254. Essentially, in the span of approximately twenty-five years, the number of newspapers published grew by 450 percent. Mass media makes the conflict National and InterNational.

Thus it can be concluded from above discussion that Kashmir conflict is not due to simple factors i.e., Kashmir is a Muslim majority State whereas rest of India is
dominated by Hindus so there is a conflict between Muslims and Hindus or the conflict is only due to support of Pakistan to separatists in Valley but this conflict is multidimensional which involves the question of interNational law, mismanaging politics in the State, increasing unemployment and alieNation among people. All these and other such factors facilitate persistence of conflict in Kashmir. In such a situation religion is being used for mobilizing public opinion. It is a matter of fact that delicate socio-economic conditions and growing alieNation among people was used by Pakistan to exploit the situation against the interests of India.

1.5 Hypothesis of the study:
1. National Conference has been dominant and determining political force in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir since its formation in 1931. It has played vital role in determining the political fate of the State even after partition of united India.
2. The secular credentials along with role played by it in empowerment of general masses of State give it upper hand in relation to the other political parties in the State to hold trump card for different political developments and upheavals that occur in the State from time to time.
3. The popularity of Jammu Kashmir National Conference has shown decline after 1987 elections which further declined by emergence of People’s Democratic Party.

1.6 Methodology of the Study:
Qualitative and quantitative research methodology that aims at an observation, collection and formulation of data collection has been used for exploring the research work. To make the study multidimensional in character and approach both the historical as well as comparative methods have been used in this study. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for these research work. The primary sources, which are collected, are in the form of speeches, letters, interviews, statements, personal diaries and official documents which will help in giving better foundation for constructing the framework of this study. The secondary sources consist of books, reports, magazines, journals, articles, newspapers and other secondary means of information available.
1.7 Data Analysis Technique:
The data analysis process in this study is descriptive-qualitive in nature. Recognizing the scope of study, which is about a State having a distinct special character, the analysis in the study will follow the chronological political process that occurred in the State and these processes will be analyzed and interpreted to give holistic view of the topic of study.

1.8 Limitations of the Study:
Like every study, this research study has certain limitations. It does not study the role of other political parties in emergence and persistence of Kashmir conflict. The research does not study the various approaches and possibilities regarding the resolution of Kashmir conflict. It does not study the role of United Nations of America (USA) and former Russia (USSR) in deescalating the tension between India and Pakistan from time to time. Further the study does not go into details of role played by secessionist parties in declining the popularity of the National Conference.
References:
24. Ibid., p. 244.
25. Ibid., pp. 248-249.
45. Ibid., p. 32.