Chapter – 3

Political Parties in Jammu and Kashmir: The Emergence of National Conference
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Political parties have become a must for any modern democratic state. Parties play a crucial role in the political process and they determine the operational character of the system. In fact the functioning of the formal institutions in a parliamentary democracy becomes clearly understandable only through the dynamics of party-system. Like other states of the union of India, Jammu and Kashmir has its own party system\(^1\). It is essential to have a brief historical survey of the origin, growth and development of party system in the state of Jammu and Kashmir especially of the National Conference.

The State was from 1846 to 1947 ruled by Dogras. The political system of the state was based on the personal rule of the prince who used to enjoy all power: Executive, Legislature and Judicial. Under this system question of the freedom and civil liberties of the people did not arise. Such rights were denied to them. But as a result of the political agitation which the people of Kashmir launched against the rule of autocracy and despotism, Dogras were compelled to grant them the right to platform and to form associations. Politics in Jammu and Kashmir has been considerably influenced by deep seated historical, socio-psychological and economic factors. It is basically the politics of the Dogra times in which the majority of the political parties have their origin. In this chapter the origin and the development of the National Conference is examined.
Dogras ruled for about hundred years. During their rule the people of Jammu and Kashmir were in abject poverty. The people suffered mal-administration, corruption, illiteracy, hunger, taxation and what not. The protest and agitation began in 1920s. The early agitations were limited in their agenda and scope until growing discontent with the Dogras exploded in massive Muslim agitations in 1931. It proved to be a turning point in sharpening the external boundaries of the Kashmiri Muslim community in relation to the Dogra Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits, who supported the Dogras. To address the issue Dogra ruler, Hari Singh appointed commissions to look for the resolution of the problem. The Glancy Commission appointed at the behest of the British Government, the report of which evoked sharp reaction from the Hindus in the state. They viewed its recommendations as an attempt to strangulate them politically and economically. They launched a virulent agitation and be known as Bread agitation and was led by Kashmiri Pandits Yuvak Sabha which was founded in 1928 in Srinagar. The Pandit community felt that its recommendations were not favorable to it and ousted Prem Nath Bazaz from the President ship of Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha; Jialal Kilam was new President, who along with Kashyap Bandhu and others guided and supervised the agitation. The Hindu organizations in collaboration with the erstwhile Dogra rulers not only took to maligning the movement but also encouraged communal pandering of the Hindus. As a result, communal politics reigned supreme both among the Muslims and non-Muslim communities. the Muslim and Hindu groups had taken contradictory stands on major issues. When the
Muslim organizations demanded a responsible government their Hindu counterparts apprehended that it was an effort to replace the Hindu Raj by the Muslim rule. Some Kashmiri Pandits even went to the extent of suggesting to all minority groups in the state to unite and organize under an “All Jammu and Kashmir Hindu Conference” for fighting their political and other demands separately. Moreover Sheikh Abdullah’s insistence on the implementation of the recommendations of the ‘Glancy Commission’ was taken as a challenge by the Kashmiri pundits to their privileged position in state services. It is pertinent to note that some Hindu leaders like Bhai Parmanand, Dr. Moonje (Hindu Maha Sabha) and Sardar Sant Singh (a Sikh leader) viewed the freedom movement in Kashmir as a part of the “Pan Islamic Movement” in India. In the name of Indian nationalism a resolution was also passed by the Hindu Maha Sabha in its Akola session of 15th August 1931 which stated: “the Hindu Maha Sabha looks upon with fear at the fiery propaganda carried on against the Maharaja of Kashmir.”

It was in the above mentioned conditions that Kashmiri Muslims were organized under the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, founded in October 16, 1932 to spearhead an organized struggle against the Jammu based Dogra ruler. This Conference enjoyed the support of the Muslim Intelligentsia, clergy, trades people, industrial Laborers, artisans and peasant. Despite the Prima facie unity the Muslims failed to consolidate themselves into an organized and well knit group. The mutual rivalries among them resulted in the breakup of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference with Mirwaiz
Moulvi Yousuf Shah as setting up of the other group called Azad Muslim Conference. The formation of the Muslim Conference in the state was particularly gratifying to the oppressed Kashmiri Muslims. Though the people were not officially members of the conference, they supported it. From the beginning, it grew and spread throughout the state, carrying the message of freedom to people from the Dogra autocracy.

In the beginning, the people regarded the Muslim Conference as Sheikh Abdullah’s party and it was this personal ascendancy which inspired Sheikh to seek help of the other communities.

**MUSLIM CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES:**

The Muslim Conference committed itself to the following matters.

1. To organize the Muslims of the state and secure for them their rights.

2. To struggle for the improvement of their economic and cultural lot.

3. To emancipate them from disabilities they labored under.

The party through its resolutions in an open session at Pather Masjid, envisaged:

a) Property not is confiscated on account of conversion of a person from one religion to another, which was a practice during Dogra regime.

b) The recruitment to the administrative posts to be made in proportion to the various communities of the population.

c) Reduction of land revenue.
d) Recruitment to the state Army should be thrown open to all communities.

e) Freedom of speech and expression to be guaranteed.

f) Release of all political prisoners unconditionally.9

Thus Muslim conference entered the arena of politics of state, determining its future course, without going to examine its nature, emerged, to secure the socio-economic betterment of the people. In their quest for support form Indian Muslims, Kashmiri Muslim leaders received a favorable response from Punjabi Muslims, the Ahrars and Ahmadiyas.10 This trend was abetted by the formation of several local political organizations with a secular nationalist outlook and socialist objectives – such as the Kashmir Youth League, established in 1936 founded by Prem Nath Bazaz and Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. This organization pledged its support to the unity of all people and the institution of responsible government in the state.11 The youth league leaders had the patronage of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other radical leaders in the Muslim conference. The league unequivocally pledged its support for the liberation of Indian people from the British rule.12

The labor movement was another important development along secular lines, spearheaded by unions such as Kissan Sabha (Farmers union), peasants union, Students federation, government sericulture and silk labour Union, Telegraph Employees Union and Turpentine labor Union, along with other unions including Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Such progressive and liberal movements helped political leaders especially the popular Sheikh Abdullah to
see the conflict in different way, no longer focusing on its religious roots but rather on the exploitative nature of state’s political and economic structures. The Muslim support from outside state had come unstuck owing to increase cleavages (between Ahrars, Ahmadiyas and Punjabi Muslims), as well as sectarian differences (between Shias and Sunnis and between Sunnis and Wahabis). Thus these differences among them deepened. Needing a new ally Kashmir’s Muslim Conference turned to the Indian National Congress, which was also spearheading a freedom movement against Britishers. With its secular and nationalist leadership, however the Congress leadership could not support a communally oriented political movement and instead urged to build a United Front and convert the Muslim Conference into a national organization.

The Muslim Conference and the later National Conference had come to determine politics but the former in its inception had to grapple with a twofold problem. One was that non-Muslims were to be assured that the freedom struggle was common between them and Muslims. Second, which emanated from the first, was the problem of those of workers, who would not like to convert a communal into a secular type of political organization.

Consequently, the logistics of party politics demanded the removal of those members who either believed in ‘Two Nation Theory’ or in sabotaging the party (Muslim Conference) for personal ends. Whether there was any substantive difference between different sections of the people or not, the leadership of the Muslim conference made it to appear so much acute that those
who dissented to the ideology of the National Conference were weeded out of
the organization. Thus the conflict of these groups resulted into the hurling of
nicknames or damaging the reputation of leaders. The Sheikh Abdullah was
blamed as a believer of Ahmadiya sect, and others were divided on ideological
acrimony.

The cleavages were manifest through Yuvak Sabha, representing the
Kashmiri Pandits, Unjuman-i-Islahi Rasoom of Molvi Mohammad Syeed
Masoodi, Unjuman Ithadul Muslimeen and Dogra Sabha of Jammu,
Youngmen’s Muslim Association. However, these cleavages did not thwart
the course of revolutionary action against the despotic Maharaja. Actually in its
operative part, the Muslim conference determined the actions of Maharaja. It
decided the course of political history of Kashmir right from 1937 to 1947.

**Muslim Conference – Advocacy for Secularism:**

The history of Muslim Conference is the record of the struggle of the
middle and upper class Muslims for achievement of their class rights. The
leadership of the party realized that Muslim conference could not appeal to all
sections of masses in a country with a multi-religious and multilingual society.
They decided to retool politics against the forces that stood in their way. On the
basis of these grounds there was a clarion call to all people of the state to
cooperate in the struggle for freedom. The leadership had visualized that the
Maharaja and other forces of reaction could exploit the situation against
Muslim Conference. A few young Muslim leaders including Sheikh Abdullah
began to think of reorientation of Muslim politics on broader healthier and non-communal lines. The leadership of the Muslim Conference started negotiations with the other communities in the state. In this connection the Sixth Session of Muslim Conference marked a desire of retooling the politics of the state on secular basis. In the Presidential address of Muslim conference on 26th March 1938, Sheikh Abdullah observed:

"Like us the large majority of Hindus and Sikhs in the state have immensely suffered at the hands of the irresponsible government. They are also steeped in deep ignorance and are in debt and starving. Establishment of responsible government is much necessity for them as for us. Sooner or later these people are bound to join our ranks. No amount of propaganda can help to keep them away from us". The main problem therefore now before us is to organize joint action and a united front against the forces that comes in our way for the achievement of our goals. This will require re-christening our organization as a non-communal political body and introducing certain amendments in its constitution and rules. These were the convictions of the leadership of the Muslim Conference and consequential upon it the organization was converted to the National Conference on 11th June 1939. The conversion of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference into National Conference, a changeover on broader basis symbolizing the secularization of Kashmiri politics, became a necessity owing to certain developments within and without the Muslim Conference organization. These developments were the appearance of factional politics among the leaders, the inimical role played
by Hindu communities and the government against the freedom struggle conducted solely by the Muslims and the consequent emergence of radical forces and their role in redirecting the movement which ultimately threw its doors open to the non-Muslims. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was the pivotal figure amidst these developments and it was he who played the most notable role in providing a broader based secular and nationalistic base to the movement.

The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah molded very cautiously and with measured steps to change the mass opinion of Muslims in favour of nationalism and secularism. The unity meetings, the revolutionary and secular role of the leftist forces within the Muslim Conference and the factional politics among the Muslims were contributory factors which led the leaders of the Conference to reshape the movement on national and secular lines. The first step in this direction was taken in March 1933 when the working committee of the conference constituted a subcommittee to find out ways and means of uniting all communities belonging to all religions, but due to political disturbances, it was however here that the idea of joint action in politics had taken birth.

In November 1934 immediately after the third annual session of Muslim Conference was over, Sheikh went on a tour to Punjab. The outcome of this tour was the implementation of the programme of introducing nationalism into Kashmiri politics. The first movement in this respect was the publication of a
weekly journal entitled The Hamdard. The inauguration of Hamdard, a joint venture of ‘Sheikh Abdullah’ and ‘Premnath Bazaz,’ was performed by a well-known Congress leader, Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchloo at Hazuribagh Srinagar on August 3, 1935. This inauguration of the paper secured two purposes:

(a) The congress was introduced to people through the personal presence of Dr. Kitchloo whose mission was to introduce the policy and programme of Indian National Congress in Kashmir politics.

(b) The Hamdard was made the mouthpiece of this policy. In his inaugural address Dr. Kitchloo acquainted the people with underlying idea of the movement in light of Congress ideological content.

Main theme was that people should fight for economic freedom which included the establishment of industries, development of trade and commerce and construction of means of communications. He ridiculed those who mixed politics with religion by laying emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity. According to him the freedom struggle in Kashmir should be conducted against the British who were the main enemies of the people. These ideas inspired the Muslim Conference and the emerging progressive forces. With regard to the majority and minority relations over political issues – Kitchloo made it clear that “it was the duty of the Muslims being in majority in the state to win the confidence of minorities for the conduct of a successful movement.” So far as the formal “Hamdard was concerned’ its policy was based on secular ideology and helped in laying the foundations of progressive nationalism in Kashmir. The paper
played a vital role in the development of democratic consciousness among the people and fought courageously against entire orthodoxy in whatever form it existed in the state and more important, it prepared the people for achieving the right of responsible government in the State.\textsuperscript{20}

**Muslim Conference- Advocacy of Responsible Government:**

This policy as the political goal was adopted in 1934. As the Mian Ahmad Yar Khan said that by implication and establishment of a democratic political system is the only solution to the troubles.\textsuperscript{21}

The Muslim Conference started a vigorous campaign of political propaganda in favour of responsible Government preparing the public opinion for its acceptance. It had invited the non-Muslims also to join the movement but there was a scanty response from them. Choudhary Ghulam Abbas assured them about the aim of the movement.\textsuperscript{22} ... the struggle for the achievement of rights of the Muslims had not been started with this aim that the Hindus would be deprived of their true and legitimate rights. The struggle for freedom was started to support and protect the rights of all the subjects of the state. As a result of this struggle, not only Muslims but also all other communities have equally been benefited. The reduction in water tax and grazing tax and the proprietary rights in land have equally been advantageous for the Muslim peasants as well as the non-Muslims. Similarly the fruits of the establishment of a Legislative Assembly in the State and the freedom of press and platform, in whatever degree, are equally reaped by both communities. It is true that in
achievement of these rights the Muslim community alone has suffered troubles and afflictions and the non-Muslims have only caused impediments in their way. But ignoring the bitter past, the Sheikh Abdullah, on behalf of Muslims, appealed to Hindu countrymen that they should cooperate with us. I assure them that Muslims do not want to usurp the legitimate rights of any community. Let us, therefore join hands together and struggle for the emancipation of our country.

**Muslim Conference- Advocacy for Nationalism:**

From 1936, the Muslim conference staunchly advocated nationalism and secularism, when a responsible Government Day was observed on May, 8, 1936 in the entire valley and a call given to non-Muslims to join the celebrations was not generally responded by them on the ground that they still doubted the character of the movement led by the Muslim Conference. The official organ of the Hindu Yuvak Sabha, ‘the Daily Martand’, termed the Muslim conference “an organization of communalist Muslim which has come into existence for the protection of Muslim rights.

This organization has been established with the idea of crushing the Hindus... it is therefore not expected of its members that they will allow this organization to work, like the Indian National Congress, with tolerance and for the common cause of both the Hindus and Muslims. It is impossible to expect the members of the Muslim Conference to conduct a joint action until they sever connections from the Muslim Conference and establish a national body in
The Rajput Gazette wanted the question of responsible Government to be decided by the Maharaja because “in this lies our salvation and betterment.” It was evident that the official policy of the Yuvak Sabha which commanded the majority of the pandits, and other non-Muslims, was not in favour of nationalism and that its members had a soft corner for the Government which, as the non-Muslims always believed, would protect their communal interests.

In spite of all this very character of non-Muslim communities, a small number of intellectually advanced non-Muslims who had by now grasped the direction of the political wake responded to the appeal of the Muslim Conference to join the movement for responsible government, which was of great importance and contribution to the growth and development of national politics at this stage. The growing awareness of this need made it necessary that the Muslim Conference be transformed into a national body, and this presupposed that the concept and ideological content of nationalism be made known to the Muslim masses and that the movement be based purely on the economic content and the democratic outlook. The movement was to be brought to the level of Indian National Congress, both ideologically and politically. This task became henceforth the main political activity of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and the leftist forces among the ranks of the Conference. “According to him, sooner or later all other communities are to join our ranks, no amount of propaganda can keep them away from us.” The movement could not be put on national lines, argued Sheikh Abdullah, because “some sad
happenings took place in the beginning of the movement in 1931 which, in turn, gave rise to certain misunderstandings between the Muslim and Hindus.\textsuperscript{25} The main cause of this was the doubt nourished by the non-Muslims that the movement led by the Muslims was communal one. By 1936 the leaders of the Conference removed this fear from the minds of the non-Muslims by preaching openly politics of nationalism. With the result the progressive minded Hindus actively take part in the movement by which new emerging forces and trends took their birth in the Kashmir politics. With the result the communal lines of the Kashmir politics were removed by a secular organization namely Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) is one of the major political parties in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, headed by Sheikh Abdullah in 1947 at the time of Indian independence. The earlier name of this party was All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, founded by (Sheri Kashmir) Sheikh Abdullah in October 1937. Later on June 11, 1939, it was renamed as All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

Evolved as a political movement challenging the feudal and autocratic rule, the National Conference traversed a long period of its political existence taking on various forms. Of all the existing political parties in the state, the National Conference occupied the most important place in the politics of the state. Its commitment to the interest of common Kashmiris was woven around its ideological formulation based on its political programme adopted in 1944 in the form of New Kashmir Manifesto. This manifesto emphasizing on the
reorganization of the economic and political structure was to catch the imagination of the Kashmiri people as it provided them a conception for a new Kashmir – a Kashmir purged of its miserable past reminiscent of its political subjugation, economic oppression and social backwardness.

**National Conference-Organization:**

National conference is a closely organized party which has its units in every corner of the state, particularly in the Muslim majority areas of the state.

According to changes made in the organizational setup of the party in 1975, the party has now Block Committees in place Tehsil Committees and each block functions under Block President. The organization consists of Basic Committees, Halqa Committees, Provincial Committees and the General Council.

A basic committee is constituted of primary members and the basic members of a particular village or Mohalla and functions under an elected president.

A Halqa Committee consists of only basic members of a Halqa with 10,000 to 15,000 urban populations or 7000 to 10,000 rural populations and each Halqa committee works under an elected President.

The General body of a Block Committee consists of elected delegates of a particular block. These delegates elect the Block president. The president nominates his working committee of 15-25 members out of the general body of the Block Committees. The working committee elects other office bearers of
the Block Committee lie the Vice-President, the Secretary, Joint Secretary and the Treasurer.

The General body of the District Committee consists of the elected delegates of a particular district. They elect the district President. The President nominates the members of his working committee.

There are three provincial committees for the three provinces of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. Each provincial committee has a general body, consisting of ‘delegates’ of the whole province. The delegates elect the provincial president. 27 The elected President nominates a working committee of 31-51 members out of the general body. The Vice President, the Secretary and the Treasurer are elected by the members of the committee.

The Central General Council is at the top of the pyramid. Its members are elected by the delegates of the ‘District Committee, the number of the members from each district depends upon the number of delegates in each district. 1/10th of the delegates of a district are elected for the Central General Council. The General Council elects the President of the organization who functions as the president of the Council as well. The General Council is elected for a term of 3 years and its quorum is 1/3rd of its membership.

“The members of the State legislative Assembly and the state legislative Council belonging to the National Conference are considered to be the ex-officio members of the respective working committees the ‘Block Committees’, ‘District Committees’ and ‘Provincial Committees’ of the Party”.
The Working Committee of the party as nominated by the president of the party out of the members of the General Council and the number of its members is fixed by the constitution of the party to be 25-31. The Working Committee is the most important and the most powerful organ of the party though it is a tool in the hands of the President. “It is the executive organ of National Conference and is responsible for implementing the programs and policies of the party. It can formulate rules and regulations for the enforcement of the Aini-Isasi (Constitution) of the party. It can also interfere with the working of all Subordinate Committees of the party, whenever need arises”.

The Constitution of the Party (Aini-Isaasi) provides for the ‘Central Election Board’ whose members are nominated by the President of the party and the number of its members varies from 7 to 11. The Election Board conducts the elections of the organization and its convener is the General Secretary of the party.

Article 24 of the Constitution of the National Conference (Aini-Isaasi) provides for the Constitution of ‘credentials committee’ comprising of at least five members of the working committee to look into all types of complaints against the members of the party. It submits its recommendations to the working committee.

The party has a President, Vice-President and a Secretary General and a Treasure at the state level – elected for a term of three years. These office bearers, particularly the president are the life and soul of the party. Since 1975
till his death Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah has been the President of National Conference. It is he whom the party owns its existence whose dynamic leadership has organized the party so well that it appears to be a closely well-known organization.

**National Conference-Membership:**

Article 3 of the Constitution of the party, there are three types of members of the National Conference.

1. Ibtidai (primary members) members
2. The Members
3. The Basic Members

The Ibtidai Members are the new entrants to the party and have right to vote in the basic committees but cannot contest for any office.

Members are the persons who have been the members of the party for two years continuously provided they understand the programmes and policies of the party. They can contest for any office in Basic Committees.

Basic Members are the persons who have been members of the party continuously for three years, besides possessing other qualifications. The basic members can contest for any office in the party, subject to other provisions of the constitution of the party.

**National Conference-Ideology and Programme:**

Ideology may be defined as “any systematic and all-embracing political doctrine, which claims to give a complete and universally applicable theory of
man and society and to derive there from a programme of political action. In other words, ideology means an explicitly definite philosophy which forms the basis of a social, economic and political system and for the realization of which a commitment is made, a programme formulated and a collective action taken. The National Conference has always cherished and practiced the ideals of secularism, nationalism, socialism and democracy. In fact the very foundation of the party was laid on secular ideology. The party at the time of its formation in 1939, was thrown open to any person on the condition that he would take oath, declaring that he “will maintain the unity among different classes of the people and offer every possible sacrifice for the attainment of liberty and responsible government in the state”.

The change over from Muslim Conference to National Conference was vindication of non-communal outlook of the party. The party decides to yield to pressures of the ‘two-nation theory’ of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The secular outlook of the party is also manifest from its famous slogan: Sher-i-Kashmir Ka Keya Irshad – Hindu-Muslim Sikh Itihad.

The National conference has always declared that the socialism, secularism and democracy are the corner-stones of its policies and programmes. ‘Naya Kashmir’ which is the bible of the National Conference, is nothing but an embodiment of democratic, socialistic and secular principles. The programme Naya Kashmir was prepared in 1944, with some amendments in its contents on August 25, 1976 by the central Executive of the Party, under the chairmanship of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The amendments were
affected “to bring it up to date and in conformity with the all-round requirements of a welfare state”.

Article 2 of the ‘Naya Kashmir’ mentions that “complete freedom of faith, conscience, worship and expression shall be guaranteed to every resident of the state”.

Article 3 reads “the people of the state shall be guaranteed the rights to:

(a) Freedom of speech.
(b) Freedom of press.
(c) Freedom of assembly
(d) Freedom of association and organization.

Article 23 mentions that the state economy shall be planned with a view to ensuring rapid economic growth and social justice. The manifesto issued by the party on the eve of elections also confirms that the ideology of the party to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy. A firm believer in liberal democracy the party has been championing the cause of such human rights as are essential for the establishment of an egalitarian society based on the principles of equality and justice. In short, the party’s commitment to, secular, national and socialistic ideology has become an article of faith with it and the party has unabatedly been espousing the cause of secular democracy, Hindu-Muslim unity and national integration.

Besides the National Conference there are many other organizations which were established in state of Jammu and Kashmir or operated as the
extension of the national parties. A brief overview of them is needed here to understand the various facets and dimensions of political discourse in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

**All Jammu and Kashmir Praja Parishad/ BJP:**

The political movement headed by Sheikh Abdullah that originated in Kashmir in 1931 remained to some extent unsuccessful to gain the support of Jammu especially the Hindu dominated areas. Its genesis, growth and ideological mornings made it a suspect in the eyes of the Dogra Nationalists of Jammu who looked upon it as something alien and unacceptable. The Praja Parishad which later merged into the Jana SanghParty\(^{31}\) of Jammu and Kashmir in mid-50 and represented the aspirations and interests of the relatively better off Hindus (landed class and the beneficiaries of the erstwhile feudal system etc.) came into being in Jammu in the late 40s (1947) mainly as a protest movement against the anti-Dogra policies and Quit Kashmir movement of 1946, which the Dogras of the Jammu viewed as an attempt to eliminate their influence from Kashmir.

The existence of Praja Parishad as a protest movement opposed the government’s major policy planks such as abolition of land-lordism, anti-Dogra Maharaja drive, attempts at framing a separate constitution for the Jammu and Kashmir state and a separate flag, emblem etc. The Parishad supported the full integration of the Jammu and Kashmir state with the Indian Union and demanded abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Owing to its
being a Hindu-based organization, it has no influence in Muslim dominated areas. This movement to a certain degree synchronized the conflicting aspirations of Dogra Nationalism vs. Kashmiri Muslim identity. The Praja Parishad had received support from Hindu Maha Sabha, RSS, for its formation. The first President of the party was Hari Wazir and the General Secretary was Balraj Madhok. The party in the meantime gained strength with the adhesion of such stalwarts as Prem Nath Dogra and others and became the Principal opposition party of Jammu. It was in close touch with Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad and Jana Sangh.

The main task to which Praja Parishad was committed was the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir State with the Indian union, like other acceding states and safeguards the legitimate democratic rights of the people of Jammu from the anti Dogra stance of Sheikh Abdullah government. This party considered the state of Jammu and Kashmir an inseparable and indivisible part of India. The party articulated Jammu’s discontent in the emotive slogan of “Full accession” of the state to Indian Union and abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution that guaranteed it a special status. The party stressed the deletion of Article 370 and described this as its first and foremost duty. The party tirelessly tried to unite the people of Jammu with a view to foiling the attempts of those who either favored special status or tried to separate the state from Indian Union. Business class concentrated in the city of Jammu and townships of Kathua, Udhampur and Reasi generated a lot of support for the party. Many Rajputs among the Hindus also extended support to Praja Parishad.
because they regarded the National Conference leadership as the destroyer of Rajput dynasty from the station. By 1951 the Party had become a power to reckon in the areas of Jammu and the only one which was in any real sense the opposition party to the one in power All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

As one of the important rightist parties of Jammu and Kashmir, Praja Parishad always opposed the setting up of a separate Constituent Assembly for the state. It favored the application of Indian Constitution to Kashmir. Instead of this stand a special session of the party held on May 8, 1951 decided to contest the elections to the constituent Assembly of the State. Because of the large scale rejection of nomination papers of its candidates, party decided to boycott the elections and blamed the government for having used unfair means. The party in spite of its strong support base failed to enter the state assembly.

Later on the national scene with the efforts of Jaya Prakash Narayan to establish a two party system in India as an alternative to Congress Party, several other parties including Bharatiya Jan Sangh merged together to form Janata Party in 1977. The Jammu and Kashmir wing of Praja Parishad was later on converted into Jana Sang Party which also became a part of Janata Party. In 1979 with the fall of Janta government a number of new political parties emerged out of it. On April 6, 1980 Mr. L.K. Advani constituted a new party namely Bharatiya Janata Party with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its president. The party adopted a separate constitution, flag and separate electoral
Consequent upon the formation of BJP out of the rain of Janata Party, the erstwhile cadre of Jana Sangh in Jammu and Kashmir also joined the party. The BJP’s stand on Jammu and Kashmir is same as was the ideology of Praja Parishad.

The Jamaat-e-Islami:

The pro-Pakistani fundamentalist organization was established in 1942 at Shopian by Maulvi Ghulam Ahmad Ahrar in collaboration with Syed Shahabud-Din and other likeminded persons. Since there was no organization worth the name in existence in the state to serve Islam, the need for organizing the Jamaat was duly brought into being with a view to promote Islam as an ideal of life for the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a well-knit well organized and extremely disciplined politico-religious organization. It draws its followers mainly from the middle class strata of its co-religionists. It also draws its followers from government officials and academic circles. It however found favour with the educated young Muslims who are the mainstay of the party. The leaders of the party are of the opinion that the illiterate masses do not come close to it because they are easily misled and exploited by the selfish Mullahs and by unscrupulous communists and taken in by the deceitful gestures of other political parties whereas Jamaat-e-Islami abhors all such methods and means. According to them, it is the revolutionary message and programme of the party which antagonizes all other political elements working in the state who find it difficult to reconcile with the revolutionary programmes.
of the party. It is slogan of Allah-hu-Akbar, which is raised for establishing the
sovereignty of Allah that has annoyed all those who have been ruling over and
exploiting the common people of the state. They have been beating the drums
of their own greatness as against the greatness of Allah. They have been doing
it on various pretexts like nationalism, economic prosperity, political
superiority and racial superiority.

The Jamat-e-Islami is an ideological party and not merely a political
party or a religious or social reform organization. The fundamental conviction
the party holds is that “there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad (peace be
upon him) is his prophet”. According to this conviction, Allah (God) is
absolute “the only creator, disposer of all affairs and the only law-giver in the
voluntary and involuntary aspects of life. The conviction in simple terms means
that God is the only ruler, possessing the real power. If man wants to be really
free, he should then surrender his free-will and autonomy to God. For the
achievement of any goals and objectives, it is necessary for the mankind to take
the path of Allah, which would enable man to get rid of all kinds of personal,
racial, parochial or prejudices which are usually the source of attachment and,
therefore root cause of all disputes and conflicts among mankind on this earth.
Such attachments should not, therefore, stand in the way of his love and
devotion to the message of Allah and his Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon
him). Man should apply the criterion supplied by God to distinguish between
good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust. Such a Nizam or socio-
economic and political system can be established only by peaceful and non-
violent or non-forcible means. That is the basic reason why the Jamat does not subscribe to armed revolution. It has declared its belief in democratic and constitutional method for bringing about any kind of revolution.

The party favours parliamentary democracy as a form of Government. Since this form of Government is, more or less, in consonance with the accepted principles of Islamic democracy, the party has agreed to work it for the achievement of its political, social and economic programme in the state. The party is of the opinion that Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed state. The accession of the state to India is temporary and, as such, subject to the ratification by the people. This condition has, the Jamaat holds, been recognized by the United Nations also. On this basis the Jamaat-e-Islami maintains that the people of Kashmir still retain the right to determine the state’s issue of accession, hence the right to self-determination. To determine the issue of accession by the people themselves is a right which the Government of India should concede to them so that Kashmir issue is resolved once for all.

**Indian National Congress:**

The history of the Indian National Congress in the state of Jammu and Kashmir goes back to thirties of the 20th century when the party “began to figure openly in Kashmir politics in 1935. The State People’sConference, a strong wing of the Indian National Congress, was instrumental in shaping the future course of the state politics in Kashmir. It has, in fact, persuaded a major
wing of the Muslim Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to convert the Muslim Conference into a secular organization so that the other non-Muslims could join the freedom struggle in the state and could fight shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brethren against the rule of despotism and autocracy. This desire of the Indian National Congress was translated into reality in June 1939 when the name of Muslim Conference was changed into National Conference. The major contribution of the Indian National Congress to Kashmir politics was that it gave secular and nationalistic character to it. Moreover it was successful in winning over the Sheikh Abdullah and his close associates to its side which ultimately had far-reaching consequences in the political life of Kashmir. It was this association which helped the state’s accession to India and later on confirmed it. It was in this way that Indian National Congress became important political force. However the party in the state was not looked with favour especially by Kashmiri people. As a firm believer in the power of the common masses, the party has always stood against all those forces and elements in the state of Jammu and Kashmir who are either hostile to very framework of parliamentary democracy or are supposed to be actively engaged inciting parochial and sectarian sentiments of one section of the people or other.

The Communist Party of India (C.P.I.):

The history of communist movement in Kashmir goes as far back as 1929 but the actual history of the party in the state starts from 1937 when the
Communist Party of India turned its attention towards Kashmir in order to fish in its troubled waters as the state was facing economic and political turmoil. It was in 1937 that two prominent Moscow-trained workers from Lahore, Professor Abdullah Safdar and Fazal Illahi Qurban visited the valley and contacted some leaders of the then Muslim conference. Both of them actively worked in Srinagar but could not achieve any appreciable success. It was B.P.L. Bedi in 1942, which proved successful to win over the sympathies of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq to the communist faith.

The C.P.I. claims to uphold Marxism as its ideology and the methods used by its workers are true to the nature of its ideology and in consonance with the practices of the communists of the rest of the world. The profile of the party (Kashmir unit) will be incomplete without mentioning its most remarkable feature and that is communalism within its ranks. Hindu communists differ drastically from the Muslim communists whose number is far less than that of the former. They look upon each other with suspicion. The Hindu-faction in the heart of hearts would like to favour India and the Muslim faction favours Pakistan whenever an issue is discussed to which Pakistan and India are parties. Commenting on the character of Kashmir communists, P.N. Bazar says, “Most of the members of communist group in the state are Hindus. Despite their Marxism they have not forsaken their communal prejudices and they want Kashmir to accede to India if it must elect to join either of the countries. The Indian communists sided with Hindu faction. But the Party as
such was not able to achieve the kind of support to make considerable influence in the politics of the state.

**Muslim United Front (MUF):**

In the year 1986 a new religio-political organization called Muslim United Front (MUF) was formed in which the dominant position was enjoyed by the Jamati-Islami. In the beginning it was a conglomeration of fourteen parties and groups. All of them were bound together by their single common claim that they are dedicated to the cause of Muslims. But most of these partners had hardly ever figured in the politics of the state. In fact they were for the most part unknown faces in the public life. Soon after its formation, there had occurred differences and disagreements amongst its constituent parts over important issue such as the issue of accession of the state to India etc. As a result some of its partners, like the People’s conference, Indian Muslim league, National Conference (K) etc. left it in its early formative period. The MUF as it stands at present has been reduced to a mixture of Jamaat-e-Islami, Immat-e-Muslimin (founded by Dr. Qazi Nisar of Anantnag), a small faction of Shiite Muslims led by Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari, Jamaat-e-Ahli Hadith and a few religious organizations of Muslim, such as Itihad-i-Muslimeen, Tuhafzur-ul-Islam etc. It also draws its membership from prominent Muslim intellectual, lawyers, academicians and modern youth.

The important factors for the creation of the MUF were the Governor’s rule in the state in 1985 which was seen as interference in the internal affairs of
the state, the alliance between National Conference (F) and Congress (I) and the communal riots in Anantnag in February 1986. The MUF was brought into being for the achievement of that very objective “to fight for rights of Muslims, and resist repression on Muslims”. It was also declared by the MUF that “it was not formed with a view to harass non-Muslims. The major aims and objectives of the MUF cantered around the issues such as promotion and protection of Islamic solidarity, adherence to the principles of Islam, maintaining precious heritage and traditions, promoting cooperation among Muslims. This organization after the creation became an influential force in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir in 1987 electoral politics. Gradually it waned out with no effective political support base.

**The Awami Action Committee:**

Holy relic, the hair of Prophet Mohammad (SAW), was brought to Kashmir in 1700 A.D. by a person Medanish – this relic was kept in the Hazratbal Mosque which is very sacred and highly respected by the Kashmiri Muslims. This relic was stolen on December 27, 1963 which caused widespread dismay and anger among the people. To protest, anti-government demonstrations were held all over the valley paralyzing the administration. Maulana Masoodi, then organized an All Party Action Committee dedicated to the investigation of the cause of loss of Holy Relic and to bring its recovery. This Action Committee became soon a “coalition of opposition parties” by containing elements of Plebiscite front and followers of Mirwaiz Maulvi
Farooq and political conference headed by Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Karra also lent support to the party. On June 20, 1964, there was a split in the Action Committee. Maulvi Farooq founded a new political party, “the Awami Action Committee Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq for a couple of years followed the pro-Pakistani line and anti-India stance and called himself a citizen of Kashmir, not India. The rise of this party divided the area of influence among two major centrifugal opposition parties; the plebiscite front and the Pro-Mirwaiz group.

Ideologically the Awami Action Committee was the pro-Pakistani group. It declared Sheikh Abdullah for having committed a blunder by linking the fate of Kashmir with India. Its constitution lays stress on the right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir. The rank and file of Awami Action Committee believes that they have been denied the opportunity to come in the Indian mainstream and the People of Kashmir are suspects in the eyes of the Indian leadership.45

**The Panthers Party:**

This party was founded in 1982 and is closely identified with the personality of Bhim Singh. Initially he was elected as Congress MLA in 1977 and also served as a functionary in the youth Congress. In 1983 he contested as a nominee of Panthers party and he successfully barged his assembly seat. The influence of Panthers party is confined only to a few Hindu constituencies with sizeable votes of the Rajput community. This party hardly subscribes to any consistent ideology.46 Bhim Singh has been a vocal supporter of the regional
interests of the Jammu region. Panthers Party has often agitated against the dominant Kashmiri Muslim leaders.

**Peoples Democratic Party (PDP):**

One of the several State Parties of Jammu and Kashmir that are active in the state political scenario, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party holds a prominent position. The party was founded in the year 1999. Ex Union Home Minister of India - Mr. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was among the leading founder members of the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party.

The high point of the party came in 2002, when it won the State Assembly Elections and formed the state government. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed became the chief minister of the state and remained in the chair till 2005. When it won the state elections, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party was a part of the coalition of United Progressive Alliance. It is based on the ideology of self-rule (see appendix-vii), within Indian constitution. The party is the main opposition in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Democratic Janata Dal:**

The Democratic Janta Dal (Jammu and Kashmir) is one of the state parties in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The party coalesced with the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference in the year 1998. But this alliance was to last only for a year. On 3rd February 1999 Democratic Janta Dal emerged as
a separate and independent party. It pursues no specific agenda and ideology. It
prefers to seek alliances with different parties at different times. At its best it
tries to ensure political stability and harmony in Jammu and Kashmir.

All Jammu and Kashmir Patriotic Peoples Front

Jammu and Kashmir is an Indian state that has been at the forefront of
political activity since time immemorial. Ever since India's heart wrenching
following independence, India and Pakistan have been at war trying to establish
control over the state. The All Jammu and Kashmir People’s Patriotic Peoples
Front is an eminent state party of Jammu and Kashmir that is striving to keep
the political unrest at check.

All Jammu & Kashmir Patriotic Peoples Front is a pro-Indian
paramilitary camarilla whose sole objective is to counter the insurgency
operations of the militants. The Islamic guerrilla group, the Muslim Mujahedin
had stopped their terrorist operations and had thereby joined hands with the
state government in the year 1995. Looking back at the history of the Muslim
Mujahedin, it is evident that they were a faction of the Hizb-ul-Mujahedin who
organized themselves into the Patriotic Peoples Front to contest the elections.
The Patriotic People's Front played a key role during the 1997 elections. They
actively buttressed the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference and helped the
then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah to come to power.

OTHER KASHMIRI ORGANISATIONS:

There are a number of political parties functioning in the State. But
JKLF is the only organization that functions in all the three regions of Jammu
and Kashmir under the same name, constitution, leadership, organizational structure, flag and policy. In Indian administered part the JKLF is divided into two groups. One group is headed by Yasin Malik. The other is Jammu and Kashmir People League which stands for unfettered right of self-determination of Kashmiri people. Among other Kashmiri organizations, some of whom had previously contested election under Indian constitutional suzerainty but now demand implementation of UN resolutions on Kashmir, have formed an alliance named All Parties Hurriet Conference (APHC) which is considered as a pro-Pakistan organization. Prominent among APHC members are Jamaat-e-Islami, Peoples Conference, Awami Action Committee, Muslim Conference, Ittehadul Muslimeen and a renegade group of JKLF led by M. Yasin Malik. There are some other organizations. An alliance of a number of these organizations called JK Liberation Alliance (JKLA) stands for unfettered right of self-determination but is not very active.

This analysis shows that there are diverse and different political parties operating in the state of Jammu and Kashmir pursuing different agendas and objectives ranging from independence to integration with India. These parties at different times have influenced the political discourse of the state having repercussion which continues to affect the political scenario. Of these National Conference is the one which is one of the oldest parties in existence and which has played a significant role in the politics of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
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24. Ibid.


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35. The Hindustan Times, (New Delhi), May 9, 1951, p.1.
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