Chapter – 4


The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, the predecessor of the National Conference, spearheaded the struggle in the state and performed an appreciable role in the political life of the state which made people conscious of their rights. In 1939 it thrown open its doors to all sections of the people of state. The new party ideologically found itself close to the Indian National Congress and henceforth, worked in cooperation with it against the British imperialism and other feudal forces within and without the state.

Initially, the National Conference benefited from the variety of factors such as charismatic leadership, unity of command, secular and progressive outlook and sound organizational structure. But when it assumed power, it became victim of intense in-fighting, authoritarianism and ethno-regional cleavages. The overbearing personality factor had trammeled the democratic process and often forced the dissidents to break away from the party resulting in the evolution of various splinter groups such as Kashmir Political Conference with apro-Pakistani line, mainly supported the revival of Muslim Conference, which had strong reservations about the move to secularize Kashmiri politics and vehemently resisted the attempts to fold the party into National Conference. The process of factionalism also continued during the regime of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Bakshi made efforts to create a power structure conducive to his continuance in power through personalization, nepotism, intimidation and manipulation. He rebuilt the cadres of the party
with his loyal supports and raised a private militia known as the ‘Peace Brigade’ to be used against his adversaries.\footnote{1} The formation of any effective opposition was discouraged. Even the National leaders in New Delhi including Pandit Nehru and Jai Prakash Narain also disfavored the formation of opposition groups in Jammu and Kashmir in view of the state’s special character. Nehru also accused the Balraj Puri’s Kashmir Socialist Party joining hands with the enemies of the country\footnote{2}.

Of the political developments in the state since 1947, the major events which dominated the state politics and faced by the National Conference and its leadership were:\footnote{3}


(iii) Founding of the Plebiscite Front in 1956.

(iv) The split in the National Conference in 1957.

(v) The developments following the state-wide agitation in 1964 after the loss of a sacred relic from the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar, and release of Sheikh Abdullah.

The Satyagraha was launched by the Praja Parishad against the National Conference party on following charges:

(i) Sheikh Abdullah had tried to Muslimise the state in the name of secularism.
(ii) There had been totalitarianism in the name of democracy.

(iii) Civil liberties had been attacked by the ruling party.

(iv) Steps had been taken towards the creation of Independent Kashmir.

(v) Delhi Agreement was a betrayal.

(vi) It was leading to a victory of the communist.

This agitation was one of the reasons for the fall of Sheikh in 1953. Sheikh Abdullah was arrested and was put behind the bars along with thousands of his followers, including Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beig. The National Conference legislature party elected Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as its leader and he assumed office as Prime Minister of Kashmir. The arrest of the Sheikh instead of solving the relations between the state and the Indian Union aggravated the situation promoting the conflict in the region. The whole political landscape underwent change deteriorating the state-Union relations.

The next political development in the state in 1956 was the rift in the National Conference led by Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad and the formation of the Democratic National Conference in 1957. The rift was caused on account of the omissions of G.L. Dogra, C.M. Sadiq, D.P. Dhar and Mir Qasim as Ministers in the Council of Ministers after the elections of 1957. However, when they were offered the minister ship later, the new party decided to merge again into National Conference in 1960. The removal of Bakhshi Gulam Mohammad from the power and the election of Shamsuddin as the state Prime Minister was regarded by many a device to keep the major political opponents
out of the government. According to Sisir Gupta “the stability that Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad achieved was also not based on any great amount of the popular sanction behind his methods of administering the state. There were stories of nepotism and corruption at the highest levels, of serious procedural lapses. Of high handedness and disregard for the established codes of conduct in public life. The establishment of the ‘Plebiscite Front’ in August 1955 by Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beig which was fully supported by the Sheikh was also one of the important incidents which made a difference in the politics of the state. The Front became extremely popular in Kashmir as it reflected the aspirations of the people of the state. It was the Plebiscite Front which both at the domestic level in the state and at the international level played a very important role. It determined the course of its politics and dominated the scene for years until it got converted into National Conference again as a result of Kashmir Accord of 1975. However it was not until December 1963 that the magnitude of the unpopularity of the state government became evident.9

The agitation in response to the theft of the sacred relic resulted in the fall of Shamsuddin Ministry and the election of Mr. G.M. Sadiq as the new Prime Minister of the state. This agitation became pro-Sheikh anti India and anti-state government which convinced the Government of India and Government of Kashmir to rethink about the Sheikh and the outcome was withdrawal of the cases against him. Sadiq in power, Sheikh in the political arena of the state and of the Centre, his visit to Pakistan, Nehru’s death and
1965 Indo-Pak war were the events which became the source of irritation for the Government of India resulting into the re-arrest of Sheikh Abdullah.

The rise of Mrs. Indira Gandhi on Indian political scene and the victory of India in 1971 conflict with Pakistan did not lessen the importance of Sheikh Abdullah in the politics of the state. Consequently, there was a dialogue between Mrs. Gandhi and the Sheikh resulting into the ‘Accord’ determining the Centre-state relations. The determination of state’s relations with the Centre was the first concern of the Sheikh and his party. Sheikh Abdullah in finalizing the ‘Accord’ was motivated by the desire of maintaining the nationalist outlook and at the same time demarking the line where he stood in the Kashmir nationalism he follows:

“Nationalism in Kashmir, however, spring from its incredible poverty, squalor, misery and under nourishment which are the lot of the exploited masses. Nationalism in Kashmir is no more middle class enthusiasm. It is firmly based on the bed rock of Stark economic realities and the urge for political freedom. The idea of nationalism in Kashmir cannot be comprehended unless it is viewed against the political and economic programme put forward in “New Kashmir”, which presents the broad contours of a democratic state based upon radical economic programme. Its expression of the long felt desire to bring together the various sections of the oppressed people in the state on the basis of their common economic sufferings.
Accordingly, the Sheikh thought of providing the people a democratic government with a radical economic programme as envisaged by the National Conference in 1944. Sheikh believed that the people of Kashmir were denied the political freedoms. The Accord according to him was reiteration of faith in the Centre and to perpetuate the mutual faith he took over power on 25th February, 1975. Once the issue of Centre-state relations was settled the National Conference had other issues to confront. The National Conference immediately after assumption of power faced a political problem – Congress majority in the legislature with a Cabinet of minority nature. The Pradesh Congress response was the withdrawal of support to the Sheikh Ministry in February 1977. The result was fresh elections in June 1977. During two years of power, before elections of 1977, the National Conference tried to devote itself to the cause of economic development. In the outset it pointed out the following questions:

(i) How to eradicate corruption or corrupt practices both in and outside the administration?

(ii) How to provide to the state clean and effective administration?

(iii) How to renew and reorganize the programmes for the economic welfare and promotion of living standards?

(iv) How to achieve self-sufficiency and economic progress based on social justice, within a short period?

(v) How to speed up the works of economic reconstructions?

(vi) How to restore peaceful atmosphere in the educational institutions and how to bring prospects for the future of unemployed youth?12
To streamline these objectives the National Conference government issued the orders with regard to the following:

(a) The widows and women without support were provided with canters which trained them and paid them stipends. A sum of Rs. 60/- were paid to them, half of it was deposited in a cooperative society as a membership. Thus cottage industries were to be encouraged.

(b) The work on Nallah Mar project in Srinagar was speeded and water supply was made available.

(c) In Jammu on Tawi and in Srinagar on the Jhelum, bridges were constructed.

(d) In cities sanitation, new constructions were cared for, many graduates were paid Rs. 120/- as a stipend.

Whatever little the National Conference, in economic field, could accomplish during the years of unpredictable Congress majority in legislature, it did not bring any dividends for it, the reason being that schemes of economic nature do not bring immediate results. However, with the change of power at the Centre, the situation in the state also brought in new dimensions to politics. Morarji Desai was not interested in the politics of the state as the earlier Governments were. The National Conference fought the elections and got a stable majority to form the government. The commitment of the National Conference was manifested in its Party manifesto published in May, 23, 1977. It provided for the people, the problems and promises made by the National Conference. The Manifesto starts with assertion:

95
“My, Sheikh Abdullah’s, goal is to free my mother country from slavery. Let us rise above the petty communal contradictions and unite to fight for freedom and share the responsibility to uphold the welfare of the people. I request my Hindu brethren to shun off the harassment and fear and not to be vitiated by doubts. We assure them that in case they cooperate with Muslims, we shall protect their rights as we shall protect ours”.

Commenting on the Naya Kashmir and its implementation the manifesto reads, “The ‘Naya Kashmir’ and its contents have relevance even today as they were in 1944 when it was adopted. The National Conference wants to make the ‘Naya Kashmir’ operative in its true essence. Its basis is democracy and it is to function from grass-root panchayat to the National Assembly. There shall be independence of judiciary and administration shall be responsible to it. In the field of economic life, we accept the principle of planed economy because it is the spirit behind economic freedom”.

The programme of ‘Naya Kashmir’ was well oriented plan whose aim was to base the state structure on a strongly built plinth of democracy, secularism, nationalism and socialism.

While reminding the past commitments made by National Conference, the manifesto says that the intention of reminding them is not to create misunderstanding but emphasis the relevance of these commitments to the forthcoming elections. It asserts that the Kashmiri is placed in a new situation especially at a time when Congress had lost its thirty years of old rule.
According to it, after the independence the National Conference had interpreted the Centre-state relations within the lines of those limitations which had given to the Centre only three subjects namely, Defence, Foreign Affairs and the Communications. Consequently the special status of the state had been established in accordance with the provisions of the Article 370 of the Indian constitution. To further define it the Delhi Agreement had been instituted.\textsuperscript{16}

The National Conference defended the Article until under a conspiracy the Sheikh government was dismissed in 1953. Later, the Sheikh and his party had to undergo trials for a long time, reaffirms the manifesto.\textsuperscript{17} The manifesto reminds the people to note that the National conference as a great political party had abolished hereditary monarchy in the state, jagidari system and above all the sums that villagers owed to ‘Sahukars’ or government institutions. It claimed the establishment of the Constituent Assembly after independence. It was the National conference which had initiated the position that people are the real source of power and planned economy is the solution for all economic ills. Consequently, it asserts that it is the National Conference, which has enough of evidence to prove that it had solved many problems and settled many issues and fulfilled the promises from time to time. The most important two issues which became convincing arguments for elections were the internal autonomy by defending Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and restoration of honor and respect for the people of the state, Kashmiris in particular.

The National Conference promised to provide social security plan so that the old age pensions and pensions for invalids and handicapped persons is
assured. The National Conference consequently promised attention towards the fast-growing orchard’s economy which is considered as the backbone of Kashmir economy and it also encouraged tourism sector. The manifesto further visualized improvement in transportation.

The National Conference assumed the responsibility, in the manifesto of assessment in debts of tenants and small traders. It promised the appointment of state subjects to all posts, gazetted or non-gazetted. It asserted to enforce all the relevant articles of the Constitution which could ensure a socialist society. It emphasized the role of the public sector and visualized to create a sense of cooperation in economic and industrial fields.¹⁸

The National Conference further envisaged the restoration of Fundamental Rights for the people of the state. However, it is to be mentioned here that special constitutional provisions pertaining to the state of Jammu and Kashmir envisage a partial application of the Constitution of India to the state.¹⁹ The operation of the provisions regarding Fundamental Rights enumerated in the Constitution of India were extended to the state by the Constitution (Application to J & K) order, of 1954. When the Constitution of the State was promulgated in 1957, provisions were also included in it, stipulating and confirming the availability of the Fundamental Rights provided for the Constitution of India to the people of the state. However, it was alleged by the National Conference that these rights were provided for the people only in name and hence they promised their adherence to them.²⁰
One of the important and significant promises that the National Conference committed to the people was the agrarian reforms. These reforms in Kashmir have had a very special history in the state. Let us examine how the Sheikh and National Conference first in 1950 and later in 1978 were the vanguard for these reforms – this organization alone has a credit to provide a legislation whereby land has actually been transferred to tillers. First major and revolutionary land reform measure was introduced in 1950 by promulgating the Jammu and Kashmir Big Landed Estates Abolition Act (Act No. XVI of 2007). According to this Act ceiling of land was fixed at 182 kanals uniformly for all soils, tracts, irrigated or un-irrigated, single cropped or double cropped and expropriated the land owners of their land in excess of this limit without any compensation. This Act deprived the owners of their ownership of 45 lakhs of acres of land out of which 2.3 lakh acres were given to the tenants thereof in ownership free of cost. It may be admitted that this Act caused injustice to and dissatisfaction among the landlords hold land exceeding the ceiling limit. In order to pacify the grievances of such landlords, the government appointed “Wazir Commission” headed by Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir in 1953 and a land commission in 1963. In the year 1972 the Jammu and Kashmir Agrarian Reforms Act was enacted to provide for comprehensive legislation relation to land reforms in the state and bring about a radical transformation in the existing pattern of land ownership. Justice Mufti while commenting upon the Act held:
“The objects of the land reforms contemplated by the new Act mainly appear to be: (a) to abolish the system of absentee landlordism including the allied forms of intermediaries; (b) to make the tiller of the owner; (c) to get a ceiling on landlordings”.

This Act unfortunately gave rise to unnecessary litigation and created chaos and caused hardships to both landlords as well as tenants. The main reason behind it was the defective drafting. In order to remove these defects and to review it with a view to provide for more equitable distribution and better utilization of land suited to the circumstances of the state so as to sub serve the common good, this Act was kept in suspension from 25th March, 1975 by the Jammu and Kashmir Agrarian Reforms (Suspension Operation) Act, 1975 (Act III of 1975) and a special Committee was appointed to look into the matter and scrutinize the Act thoroughly. Suspension operation of the Act was promulgated by National Conference immediately after a month of the assumption of their power in February 1975. When the Act was amended and properly drafted it was again passed and operated under the National Conference government.

In accordance with the promises made by the National Conference in the manifesto before election the government of the Sheikh Abdullah implemented and enforced the Act and many of the landless people received land. By and large the problems with regard to possession of land were solved. There may still be need to reform the agricultural holdings but the credit goes to the
National Conference both between 1947-53 and in post 1975 that it had capacity to settle its problems and induct the agrarian reforms.

Whatever the magnitude of issues and pursuits, the fact remains that the National Conference since it assumption of power after the Accord, had to face the problems of varied dimensions. The first, the Congress withdrawal of support in the legislature and the second was the politics of the regional imbalances by the ladakh and Jammu. Though the regional imbalance claim is old one but its revival was to tease the government of National Conference. For the purpose various commissions were appointed to look into the matter. A commission under the chairmanship of P.G. Gajendragadkar was appointed in 1967. It probed a little deeper into the problem and found no such imbalances. However in 1978 the same slogan created a grave situation in Poonch. This agitation was launched against the selection of teachers and some other employees by recruitment board of that area. The slogan, speeches of leaders, schemes and strategies of the agitation pointed clearly to an organized campaign against what they called the rule of Kashmiri muslims. But in this agitation no one was gainer. The agitation was foiled after the appointment of a commission under Justice S.M. Sikri, a retired judge of the Supreme Court of India assisted by Dr. Malcom S. Adiseshait, a member of the Rajya Sabha and Dr. A.R. Kidwai. The commission found no imbalances apart from imbalance in individual items at the level of the regions or the district administrative units within the region to lead it to recommend “constitutional measures” as referred to in its terms of reference.
The Commission has found imbalances in financial expenditure and in development programmes at the regional level in the IV Plan period and early years of the V plan which are now corrected, and serious imbalance in some of the district administrative units within each region. To meet these problems the commission proposes the creation of a state Development Board comprising the Chief Minister as chairman, and such members of the legislature as the J & K legislature may appoint in accordance with its procedure. Thus the agitation in Jammu could not bring anything for either the Jammu People nor could it bring any credit to the government. It however had a catharsis for the psychological problem of Jammu and Ladakh people. Just as Gajendragadkar commission appeased the Kashmiri pandits in 1967, so did Sikri commission in 1979. This however, no doubt created gulf between different regions of the state.

Immediately after the Accord, the Congress (I) and the National Conference could not go together. Consequently Congress withdrew support and Sheikh and his party had to face it. After elections, when National Conference assumed power, the Sheikh Abdullah “ignoring G.M. Shah his son-in-law and appoint Mirza Afzal Beg as Deputy Chief Minister, he made later as defacto head of the government during his illness and absence. But Sheikh seem discovered that Beg was getting too big for his boots and promptly gave him the boot”. Sheikh Abdullah had to remove a companion of his once for all. Though the dismissal of the Afzal Beg did not cause any serious law and order problem in his hometown Islamabad (Anantnag). During the regime of
National Conference, the government faced an unprecedented law and order situation immediately after the execution of Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, the ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan. The workers of the Jamat-i-Islami and Ahmadyas were victims of hooliganism, arson and looting. Severe criticism was leveled against the failure of law and order machinery. The government was discredited and claimed to be ineffective. In March 1980, the Road Transport Corporation employees put off their work. The government had a counter offensive by employing the private services and defeating the employees of the Road Transport Corporation, the government returned successful in suppressing the striking workers. Later the students of colleges and investigator agitated on the plea of a publication of a book “Islam: its culture and Monuments”, in which a pen picture of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) was drawn. The government had to quell it.

The Sheikh’s speech at Martyr’s Day created uproar in the Indian press. The Sheikh on Martyr’s Day, 13 July, 1980 had strong counter offensive against the Central leadership and said, “The people have firm faith and confidence in National Conference even now and for this reason they do not care for anybody be it General Zia or Mrs. Gandhi”. This again deteriorated the relations between the Centre and the state leadership. The old animosities between Sheikh and Congress (I) were the main cause of his outburst at Shaeed Mazar (the burial ground of Martyrs) in Srinagar.

The law and order situation thus was rendered a matter of shuttle cock. The National Conference accused congress (I) for disturbing the peace and vice
versa. The Congress (I) labeled the National Conference having colluded with the Jamiat-i-Islami and Jamiat-i-Tulba including Jana Sangh to further their designs against Congress (I). In the meantime there occurred the accident involving an auto-rickshaw and Army truck which snowballed into clashes between Army and civilians at Amirakadal, resulting into arson and looting. The agitated civilians, shouting pro-Pakistan and anti-India slogans were protesting against the torching of taxis and tempos and damaging buses by the troopers in sporadic clashes with civil transporters. It was the courage of Sheikh Abdullah to speak to the people at Lal Chowk which saved the situation: “However, such trifling accidents lead to political estrangement and re-open among the populace the question of accession”.

The agitations in Shopian and Kishtwar for grant of district status, agitation in ladakh and Jammu for imbalances from time to time, for opening colleges at various places, Kashmir University fire 1981 and installation of police permanently in the University – all posed serious law and order problems in the state. The fire which gutted the Legislative Assembly and severe threats of unemployed youths agitating at various district head quarters also posed a threat to law and order machinery.

The promises of the National Conference reveal that the leadership tried to implement what it had promised in earnest but failed in many and touched success in few. It was successful in abolishing the subsidy on food in Srinagar and Jammu. It suppressed the unfair means and lawlessness in educational
institutions and resorted confidence amongst college, University and school teachers. It streamlined the administration through single line administration trying to remove the imbalances amongst areas at district and tehsil levels. The operation and enforcement of the Jammu and Kashmir Agrarian Reforms Act is commendable as it changes the agricultural semi-feudal system in which tiller is superior. The National Conference government also partially nationalized transport. The National Highway (Srinagar to Jammu) has already been nationalized and forests closed for public.

The failures of the government are also well known. The Sheikh and his government and his party (National Conference) failed in determining the relations between the state and the Centre though the Sheikh-Indira Accord tried to delimit it. Consequently, the crises between the Centre and state have been persisting since the National Conference assumed power. Further the government failed to absolve the hegemony of the bureaucracy and the corruption in the administration. Though the vigilance commissioner’s office was given a wide rope in eradicating the evil, yet instead of giving a lesson to people at higher levels, the petty civil servants have been victims. Education has been rendered a useless trade. There was anarchy in educational institutions at all levels. Further, the grave problem remained neglected – the unemployment of educated youth. This problem was aggravated on account of nepotism and favoritism. The public opinion since 1975 was subjected to hopes and illusions. It is difficult for the National Conference to claim that their rule
was absolutely successful in its political and economic issues and pursuits. Politics is determined by the results it contrives.

The National Conference and politics of Jammu and Kashmir since 1974-75 was mostly vitiated by Centre-State relations. Though the Accord had to settle the same issue, yet in its interpretations and the political behavior, the National Conference and the central leadership in New Delhi were drifting from each other. Since the assumption of power, the National Conference and its leadership determined the course of politics in the state. The centre-state relationship had severe repercussions during the time of Indira Gandhi than during the Janata rule. The difference might be in the variance of the stature of Janata and Congress leadership. The difference might be attributed to the awkward behavior of the Congress (I) who in 1977 withdrew its support to the Sheikh Ministry. This withdrawal of support must have been taken by the Sheikh as an event of betrayal and contrary to the spirit of “Accord”. Just as the National Conference was apprehensive of the Congress (I) attitude and behavior so was Mrs. Indira Gandhi about the Sheikh. She sometimes talked against and deplored the National Conference’s alleged involvement in encouraging communal parties like the Jamat-i-Islami and the Jana Sangh and sometimes his involvement in the maladministration of the state. In fairness it must be added that the strife between the Chief Minister of so sensitive state as Kashmir and New Delhi has not always been a one-way affair and if the Sheikh has often behaved in an unacceptable manner and severely tested the Centre’s patience he too has been offered some provocation by the Congress (I). At once
Indira Gandhi not only attacked the Sheikh vehemently but also declared that without the Centre's tolerance and help, his government could not last even for half an hour.\textsuperscript{31}

The politics of state-Centre relations, usually takes the forms of complete merger or full integration and as against it full autonomy on the part of Kashmir leadership. Praja Parishad and mostly non-Muslims population from Jammu have been demanding full integration of the state with India\textsuperscript{32}. The National Conference has emphasized the preservation of Article 370 or internal autonomy. The process of integration by Government of India continues, the slogan by the Jammu people still persists and the resistance to the complete merger of Jammu and Kashmir with India also holds out. This politics, naturally dominates, at least at the domestic level by National Conference. But the autonomy proposal is not favored by all Kashmiri people. Some want complete cessation (independence) from Indian Union. Some wish to go with Pakistan. Where will this politics lead to is for the future to determine but the fact remains that the National Conference intends to fight at every level, whether Centre-state relation, merger, law, commerce, business and any other aspects of life?

After independence it was the National Conference that ruled the state throughout with some breaks when it remained out of power. The state was virtually under its dominance. It was the main party which virtually determined and influenced the political discourse in the state. No other party was in a
position to rise up as an effective alternative opposition to it. Rather the rise of any such party was intentionally discouraged. In fact the Congress government in New Delhi under the leadership of Pandit Nehru was against such a development. For Nehru, the most cogent reason in favour of National Conference was:

(i) That the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah had been sole political force to have secularized the state politics and also had brought it within the influence and ideological fold of Indian National Congress.

(ii) That the National conference had facilitated the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to India;

(iii) That the National Conference had assumed the National Character of representing the entire population of the state both at national and international levels;

(iv) That the National Conference was the only dependable political organization in the state to be safely exploited for India’s National Interest and as such, was the only state’s political force to fight two nation theory politics of Pakistan.

This is one of the main reasons why the state could not see a free play of party-politics in the state. National Conference ruled the state from 1947 to 1963. From 1965 to 1975 the Congress (I) enjoyed unchallenged monopoly over political power in the state. However the entrance of the Congress party into state politics paved the way for other national parties to establish their
party units in the state. It also opened opportunity for local leadership to enter into the political battlefield of their state. The restoration of political power to Sheikh in 1975 on the basis of Kashmir Accord ensured the ‘one party dominance’. The future of other political parties seemed to be very dark. The Sheikh adopted authoritarian means to ensure his own security which meant the security of his party. The National Conference got split when the Sheikh ousted his trustworthy colleague Mr. Afzal Beg from the party. As a result a new party, namely Inquilabi National Conference came into being. The Sheikh could not, however felt any danger to his political life. However certain activities of his Government such as the reorganization of some assembly constituencies in 1979 on communal lines, withdrawal of cases against the ‘Al-Fateh’ men, denial of state citizenship to the 1947 refugees and adoption of the resettlement Bill (March 1982) made serious dents in the body politics of the state. Resettlement Bill which provided for the permanent return of the erstwhile state subjects who had migrated to West Pakistan at the time of partition in 1947, created a serious rift between the Centre and state government on the one hand and the Muslim dominated Kashmir valley and Jammu region on the other hand. These things apart, the Sheikhs second phase of government (1975-1982) due to his old age, growing factionalism in the party increasing level of corruption and nepotism led to deterioration in the politics in the state. The spate of inter-regional tensions coupled with pandering to communal forces had further blurred the image of his government among the people. The National Conference which adopted the Pro-accession policy faced
the accusations of the Mullahs and Maulvis in the Kashmir valley. But he recovered his diminishing hold over the masses and during his rule, till his death, the role of fundamentalist and pro-Pakistani groups remained controlled or marginalized in the state.

But after the death of Sheikh in 1982, the situation remained strained due to confrontation between the Centre and Sheikh’s successor or, Farooq Abdullah. The factors which strained their relations were the Congress (I)’s maneuverings in 1983 and 1984 to destabilize and replace Dr. Farooq Abdullah who refused to play second fiddle to the ruling Congress (I) at the Centre. It has been perceptively observed that the second Kashmir problem actually began in the month of June 1984. The critical decision was the unsavory sabotage of Farooq Abdullah’s government by the Centre which seemed more concerned with power than democracy.\(^{33}\) The centre should have resisted the temptation to topple down the duly elected Farooq Government. People in the valley felt very much cheated by toppling. It was followed by confrontation which, in an atmosphere of growing menace of communalism in the country and the spurt of militant violence in Punjab which also inspired the Kashmir youth to adopt the path of militancy against India.

However this confrontation was lowered with an accord between Rajiv Gandhi and Dr. Farooq Abdullah in October 1986. It was the third historic accord as far as the relations of Kashmir and Delhi Government at that time was concerned. The first two were signed in 1952 and 1975. All the three
accords were signed by two ruling families in Srinagar and Delhi. But the Accord failed to prove as effective as expected. It was considered as opportunistic and a sellout of the state to Delhi by the fundamentalists. With the result situation went on sliding down and reached a position in the wake of the March 1987 elections which as a matter of fact is regarded as the precursor of the current turmoil in the Jammu and Kashmir state. This turmoil gave birth to various militant organizations with different manifestos.

Of all the existing political parties in the state, the National Conference occupies the most important place in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir state and has remained central to the politics of the state ever since its inception in 1939. Evolved as a political movement challenging the feudal and autocratic rule, it traversed a long period of its political existence taking on various forms. After entering the power politics in 1947, it occupied the hegemonic space in Jammu & Kashmir. However it resumed its place of dominance after it was resurrected in 1975. Having enjoyed a position of pre-eminence for almost a quarter of century it however faced a serious crisis of credibility in 1987 which is the subject of analysis in the next chapter.
References:


15. Ibid., p. 11.


17. Ibid., pp. 6-7.


22. Ibid., p. 2.


