

# Evolution of Political Parties in the State of Jammu and Kashmir

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## ABSTRACT

*Like the political history of other states of India, the state of Jammu and Kashmir has a rich political history. It is rich in the sense that prior to its merge with the Union of India the political awakening has started in the state, particularly in the Kashmir region. However, after the Instrument of Accession, the political mobilisation in the state has widened its scope to a large extent, which results the formation of various political parties. The functioning of the political system of the state has been weakened due to the broke down of insurgency. The main objective of the paper is to explore and analyse the political history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir before the dawn of insurgency. The specificity of this study is to discuss the roots and ideology of these political parties of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. For this study, secondary data have been used. The data has been collected from the books, research articles, and government reports. The paper has been divided into three parts; one a brief introduction about the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Second, political parties in the state prior to insurgency. Third, Conclusion and existence of these political parties in the present scenario.*

**Key words:** Jammu and Kashmir, Political Parties, Instrument of Accession.

## State of Jammu and Kashmir

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has three regions- Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh. These three regions have different religious and ethnic compositions; with Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist forming majority of population in Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh respectively. The Kashmir region forms the Northern boundary while Jammu and Ladakh regions form the southern and eastern boundaries of the state of Jammu and Kashmir respectively. These regions were brought together for the first time under one political, geographical, economical, cultural and ethnic grounds by the Treaty of Amritsar (1846). The treaty was signed between British Government and Gulab Singh on March 16, 1846 (Bose, S. 1997). The state of Jammu and Kashmir is a hilly state having diverse topography. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and about 80 percent of its population is engaged in agriculture and allied sectors. Thirty percent of the state's income is contributed by the agriculture sector. The state has 2.22 lakh square kilometers geographical area.<sup>50</sup>

## Political Parties Existence of the state from Accession to Insurgency

The state of Jammu and Kashmir became the Indian part through the Instrument of Accession executed on 26 October, 1947 by Maharaja Hari Singh, ruler of the Princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. By executing this legal document, the Indian Independence Act 1947 has been extended over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In this regard the various political parties were formed from time to time. The detailed description of these political parties is given below:-

### 1. Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC)

The root of the JKNC dates back to the Dogra rule of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It was founded as the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference party by the Sheikh Abdullah and Chaudary Ghulam Abbas in 1932. In this regard, it was limited to the Kashmir region only. However, in the year 1939 the party organization has changed and extended to other regions of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. With this extension character, the name of the party was also renamed as the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. National conference party supported the Accession of the state with the union of India in 1947. It dominated the political power of the state since 1947 to 2016 with some breaks by the congress party and PDP in one form or another form. Its main political agenda is the Autonomy. The major achievements of the party are implementation of land reforms and formulation of the separate constitution of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is the only state political party in the state whose Chief Minister was called the Prime Minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Later on, like the other states of the India this high titular post was also known as the chief ministerial post. This party has been presided and dominated by Abdullah's

<sup>50</sup> For further details see <http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/basicfacts/tour/regions.html>. Retrieved on September 15, 2017.

heirs; first Sheikh Abdullah's son (Farooq Abdullah) and second his grandson (Omar Abdullah) from 1982 to 2002 and 2002 to present respectively (Chaudhary, R. 2016).

## 2. Praja Parishad Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir became the part of India shortly after the independence of India in 1947. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah became the prime minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Dogra rulers who were ruling the state since long time came to an end and the political power went to the hands of National Conference. In this regard, the state got the special status under the Constitution of India. The people of the Jammu region were unhappy with the special status of the state. They formed an agitation in the Jammu region which was known as Praja Parishad. During this agitation a political party was formed, known as Jammu Praja Parishad in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the year 1947 by Balraj Madhok (Puri, B, 2001). They attacked Sheikh Abdullah's Policies and their "main plank of the agitation was '*Ek desh mein do vidhan; ek desh mein do nishan; ek desh mein do pradhan nahin challenge*' - "in one country, two constitutions; in one country, two flags; in one country, two prime ministers", would not be tolerated".<sup>51</sup> Later on it merged with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in the year 1963. The BJS formed a base for the BJP party in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It raised its voice against Article 370 and is for the repeal of special status prescribed in article 370 from the Indian Constitution. It wants autonomy for the Jammu region. It is presently a coalition partner in the state with the PDP.<sup>52</sup>

## 3. The All Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front (PF)

After the Instrument of Accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian union, Jawaharlal Nehru committed the Plebiscite to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>53</sup> The then the senior leader of the National Conference or "a trusted aide of Sheikh Abdllah",<sup>54</sup> Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, caught the word plebiscite and played the Muslim card in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He founded the Plebiscite Front (PF) on August 9, 1955. However, it was formally launched in the year 1958.<sup>55</sup> With the formation of PF, Pakistan "extended its support to the Front in its struggle against India. The Plebiscite Front committed itself to the demand for the right of self-determination of the Muslims in the State and the implementation of the Security Council resolutions envisaging a plebiscite under the aegis of the United Nations".<sup>56</sup> So its main objective became the plebiscite or referendum to be held under the auspices of the United Nations to bestow sovereignty over the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah became the so-called Patron to Plebiscite Front (PF) even though he never joined the PF. On the other hand, Muhammad (2013) has taken the analytical view of the particular party and states "looking analytically at the political stand of the organization it was more candid and clear than many other contemporary organizations espousing the cause of right to self-determination or resolution of the Kashmir 'dispute'/problem... Its political stand was more transparent and even clearer than that of the Hurriyat Conference that simultaneously talks of right to self-determination in accordance with UN Charter and the resolutions adopted by the UN Security council and about some vague negotiated settlement, without delineating a clear-cut modus operandi for achieving such a settlement- and leaving it open ending" (Muhammad, Z. G. 2013). However, this plebiscite demand had two versions – on the one side it led to the boycotting of elections in the state in 1960s while as on the other hand union government supported Abdullah to remain in a power. It became anti-Indian and Pro-Pakistani, which led to ban on the PF under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Sheikh Abdullah, M.A. Beg and G.M. Shah were noticed to leave from the state. Later on the PF chief Afzal Beg stated that the PF would no longer insist to hold the Plebiscite. This positive move was acknowledged by Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India and hold talks with the Sheikh Abdullah. To continue Indian sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir and in return an autonomy and self government would be endorsed under Article of 370 of the Indian Constitution, stated by an agreement called Indira-Sheikh Accord 1974. After this accord Abdullah merged the Plebiscite Front into the National Conference in 1975 (Koul M.L, 2002). However, in the Kashmir region, it sowed the "the seeds of communalism...in the Hearts of the Kashmiri Muslim and remained so even today".<sup>57</sup>

<sup>51</sup> For further details see <http://www.rajanagarwal.com/FurDev.htm>. Retrieved on July 10, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> For further details see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jammu\\_Praja\\_Parishad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jammu_Praja_Parishad). Retrieved on July 16, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> For further details see [ikashmir.net/whitepaper/plebiscite.html](http://ikashmir.net/whitepaper/plebiscite.html). Retrieved on July 15, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> For further details see [kashmirblogs.wordpress.com/tag/plebiscite-front/](http://kashmirblogs.wordpress.com/tag/plebiscite-front/). Retrieved on July 04, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> For further details see ([www.jammu-kashmir.com/basicfacts/politics/plebiscite.html](http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/basicfacts/politics/plebiscite.html)). Retrieved on July 09, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> For further details see [ikashmir.net/whitepaper/plebiscite.html](http://ikashmir.net/whitepaper/plebiscite.html). Retrieved on June, 25, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> For further details see [kashmirblogs.wordpress.com/tag/plebiscite-front/](http://kashmirblogs.wordpress.com/tag/plebiscite-front/). Retrieved August 2, 2017.

#### 4. Indian National Congress

Indian National congress is a political party of the Republic of India. However, the Jammu and Kashmir wing of the National congress was founded by Syed Mir Qasim. Qasim became the chief minister in 1971. In bye election of the 1963, it lost all three parliamentary seats. In this regard, in the year 1964, the congress party was formally set up in the state during the G. M. Sadiqs tenure (Verma, 1987). In 1965, the congress party of Jammu and Kashmir joined hands with the National Conference. The 1987 Assembly election gave the rise to first the coalition government in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. An alliance was formed through rig elections between the congress and National Conference parties. However, this alliance lost its credibility in a short span of time. Chaudary (2016) has taken a brief description of the state politics in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In this regard, she states “the 1987 elections results in an impasse. Though Farooq Abdullah formed the National conference-Congress government, it didn’t enjoy any legitimacy. The elections were perceived to be totally rigged and there was a general sense of disillusionment not merely with regard to the elections but also for the political process” (Chaudary, R. 2016). With the 20 MLA’s it made an alliance with the newly regional political party of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, PDP in the year 2002.<sup>58</sup> In 2014 Assembly election it won only 12 seats and sits as the opposition party.<sup>59</sup> In recent parliamentary election of 2014, the state political system comes into the hands of two major pre-alliances. One, led by Congress party and NC and second, by PDP-BJP alliances. Earlier one lost and later one (PDP and BJP) won three-three seats out of total six seats.<sup>60</sup>

#### 5. Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party

In 1973, Bhim Singh became the president of the Youth Congress in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and later on was chosen the General Secretary of the All India Congress. However, the formation of an alliance of the Congress with the National Conference and mainly “due to political differences between the state Congress and Singh, over protecting the economic, social and political interests of the people of the state, Singh resigned from the Congress and formed his own party”.<sup>61</sup> He founded a party in the year 1982, known as Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party with the main intent to stand strong against the National Conference party. It is one of the eminent political parties of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The manifesto and main Objective of the party is “to demolish corruption, communalism, criminalization, drug menace. To establish a real democracy through ultimate revolution”.<sup>62</sup> The party made strong achievements in the state like to persuade the Election Commission of India to hold elections in the year 1996, brought funds from the centre for the refugees from the Pakistan, resume the jobs of Numbardars and Chowkidars, freed numbers of political prisoners through PIL, inclusion of Dogri language in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule and is fighting for the ST status for the Paharis in the state, and is mainly concerned about the protection of women from the domestic violence’s.<sup>63</sup> In the election scenario the party’s position was slowly and gradually growing. It was a coalition partner in the PDP-Congress coalition regime (2002-2008) with its three candidates as its ministers. However, in 2016 Assembly elections it fielded 60 candidates out of 87 seats. All the candidates lost, including the earlier three ministers. They also lost the deposits.<sup>64</sup> It is first time in the history of the party that it has no MLA in the Assembly.<sup>65</sup> During the growing violence in the Kashmir region and the use of anti-riot pellet guns, it demanded President’s/Governors rule. In this regard it boycotted the talks with the All Party Delegation led by the Home Minister Rajnath Singh in 2016, citing the reasons “The government functionaries had intimated the Panthers Party that the political parties could interact with

<sup>58</sup> For further details see <http://www.elections.in/jammu-and-kashmir/assembly-constituencies/2002-election-results.html>. Retrieved on October 10, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> For further details see <http://www.elections.in/jammu-and-kashmir/assembly-constituencies/2014-election-results.html>. Retrieved on November 28, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> For further details see <http://www.oneindia.com/bengaluru/lok-sabha-election-result-2014-state-results-1449516.html>. Retrieved on November 28, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> For further details see <http://www.elections.in/political-parties-in-india/jammu-and-kashmir-national-panthers-party.html>. Retrieved on October 11, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> For further details see <http://nationalpanthersparty.com/history>. Retrieved on October 15, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> For further details see <http://www.elections.in/political-parties-in-india/jammu-and-kashmir-national-panthers-party.html>. Retrieved on October 21, 2017.

<sup>64</sup> For further details see <http://post.jagran.com/JKNPP-routed-in-JK-Assembly-polls-1419351107>. Retrieved on October 26, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> For further details see [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main/StatisticalReports/AE2014/Stat-Report-J&K-2014.pdf](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/AE2014/Stat-Report-J&K-2014.pdf). Retrieved on October 27, 2017.

central delegation only in Kashmir and the meetings in Jammu region were to be held only with the representatives of the civil society as per the itinerary".<sup>66</sup>

#### 6. International Democratic Party

R. P. Saraf became the Kashmiri politician in 1952, when he was elected to the constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. Saraf had served his early years of the politics in the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). However, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) had been joined by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. With this event Saraf was chosen for the central committee at the CPM (ML) party in the year 1970.<sup>67</sup> However, after more than a decade, Saraf founded his new party, known as International Democratic Party in the year 1986 in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Krishan Dev Sethi and Abdul Kabir Wani, were the two former members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Jammu and Kashmir who joined with the International Democratic Party. It has been a political party of India, working in Punjab and Rajasthan besides the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The party ideology is based on peace politics in the state and favours Joint Indo-Pakistani control over Kashmir as a means to achieve peace. Besides this, it also favours regional autonomy for the Jammu and Ladakh regions from the Kashmir region.<sup>68</sup> In December 2015, the party's chief met the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party Founder Shabir Shah and hold a dialogue on the current issues in the state. In this regard "DFP spokesperson severely condemned the policy of the Food Security Bill saying the government is pushing people to starvation." "On one hand, they shower bullets in people and on other, make anti-people policies," the spokesperson said and termed the people's protest against the Act as "justified". The spokesperson also expressed sorrow over the government's anti-Urdu policy saying this all is done at the behest of people sitting on Nagpur".<sup>69</sup>

#### 7. Muslim United Front (MUF)

This was a newly emerged Kashmir based political party in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It contested the election in the year 1987. This election is widely known as "rig election" in the political history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In this election the MUF and its alliance won only 4 seats. The party's position was well in winning the fifteen-twenty seats or if rigging would have not taken place the party would have formed the government. It has also been estimated that it would have been the part of some coalition government as the main contender in the state politics. The rig elections become cumbersome for the MUF in all forms. Chaudary (2016) states "the 1987 Assembly elections was mainly contested between National conference-Congress alliance, on the one hand, and the MUF and few associated parties like the Peoples' Conference, on the other" (Chaudary, R. 2016). Furthermore she has done a statistics of the election of the 1987. In this regard, the statistics says "on the whole, the MUF and People's Conference together gave a very tough fight to the National Conference-Congress alliance. Registering their strong Presence, these two groups scored slightly less than 40 per cent of the votes cast as compared to 45 per cent votes for the National Conference. But this high share of votes by MUF could not be translated into seats. The Coalition could win only four seats in the Assembly. Narrow victories for the National Conference and very high percentage of the rejected votes reflected the manipulation in results" (*ibid*). The rigging of 1987 election has been considered as the root causes of insurgency movement in the state. Insurgency has resulted the lost of wealth and health of the state in general and of the Kashmir region in particular.<sup>70</sup>

### III

#### Conclusion

During the developmental process of political parties in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, few political parties remain in power prior to Insurgency episode. It has been seen that the small regional political parties either merged with the other political parties for some time or completely like Praja Parishad or close down their shutters permanently like MUF and International Democratic Party. Due to the dominance of single party, National Conference party the other small parties simmered. However, the other political

<sup>66</sup> For further details see [http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/jknpp-to-boycott-talks-with-all-party\\_delegation/1/756689.html](http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/jknpp-to-boycott-talks-with-all-party_delegation/1/756689.html). Retrieved on October 29, 2017.

<sup>67</sup> For further details see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram\\_Piara\\_Saraf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram_Piara_Saraf). Retrieved on November 29, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> For further details see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Democratic\\_Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Democratic_Party). Retrieved on December 11, 2017.

<sup>69</sup> For further details see <http://www.knskashmir.com/news.aspx?news=International-Democratic-Party-Chief-meets-Shabir-Shah-3699>. Retrieved on December 12, 2017.

<sup>70</sup> For further details see <https://www.mediamonitors.net/perspectives/kashmir-a-history-littered-with-rigged-elections/>. Retrieved on December 9, 2017.

parties are still in existence through the coalition system of the state. The existence of small regional parties of the state of Jammu and Kashmir share is expected to increase in this coalition process.

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**Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.**

**~ Henry David Thoreau**