

Role of National Conference in Kashmir Politics

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The study deals with the subject as to how an organised and decisive freedom movement started against an autocratic ruler of Jammu and Kashmir under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas of Muslim Conference which was converted into National Conference in 1939. Both leaders agreed to keep equidistance from Congress and Muslim League. Pakistan resolution was passed in 1940 and in 1941 Abbas joined Mirwaiz in reviving the old Muslim Conference. National Conference invited Mr. Jinnah to Kashmir in 1944. Who disapproved programme of National Conference and favoured Muslim Conference. Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad, Ghaffar Khan visited Srinagar in 1945 and endorsed National Conference in public.

Kashmir remained independent from 15 August to 22 October 1947 but conditionally acceded to India on three items, foreign affairs, defence and communication which India accepted conditionally. Poonch, Mirpur and Muzaffarabad formed (Azad Kashmir) under Pakistani control. Thus Kashmir became a bone of contention between India & Pakistan. It is lying before the UNO since 1948.

National Conference came into power and started implementing of New Kashmir Manifesto. Delhi Agreement was signed in 1952 which gave special status to Kashmir. Communal parties started agitation against it. Sheikh Abdullah also reacted who was arrested on 9th August 1953. Bakshi was installed as the Prime Minister and got the accession ratified in 1954. After Bakshi, G.M. Sadiq and Mir Qasim ruled the state and Afzal Beg organised Plebiscite Front. Erosion process of state autonomy started. Nehru sent Abdullah to Pakistan for settlement of Kashmir dispute but his sad demise derailed the process. After emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country Sheikh Abdullah signed an agreement with Indira Gandhi in 1975. Sheikh Abdullah became Chief Minister. Who appointed his son Farooq Abdullah as National Conference president in 1981. State legislature passed Resettlement Bill 1982.

Sheikh Abdullah passed away on 8 September 1982 with whom an era ended. He was the symbol of Kashmir. Farooq Abdullah succeeded as Chief Minister in July 1984 but was toppled and C.M. Shah was installed as Chief Minister. Art 356 was imposed on Kashmir in 1986. Farooq Abdullah was again elected as Chief Minister with Congress alliance. In 1989 Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front started arms struggle for Independence and Hizbul Mujahideen started a movement for merger with Pakistan.

In 1996 Farooq Abdullah again became Chief Minister and his Government passed a resolution in 2001, in state Legislature demanding restoration of Pre 1953 status but Vajpayee Government rejected it. Farooq reiterated its party stand and said: "Internal

autonomy is as sacred to us as independence to Indians". Umar Adullah has been elected as President of National Conference. National Conference: contested 2002 elections under his presidentship and secured only 28 seats. People's Democratic Party headed by Mufti Mohammad. Sayeed secured 16 seats and is governing the state in alliance with Congress. To quote M1". Qasim : "National Conference had a golden role in Kashmir Politics but presently cadres are not selfless. Its Socialism, Secularism and Democracy is still relevant".