

elections led to a fractured mandate. The outgoing National Conference managed to capture 15 seats, and its coalition partner, the Indian National Conference, got along with 12 seats. The Peoples Conference managed two seats and independents, and all other parties walked away with five seats. PDP had come out of elections as the largest party of the state in terms of its share of seats, the BJP in terms of its share of votes. After hectic negotiations, the two parties entered a Governance Alliance based on a contract for seeking national reconciliation in Jammu and Kashmir. PDP's patron, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who became the chief minister of the new government, mentioned that the "alliance as coming together of the North Pole and the South Pole-hoping the alliance would cover the gap between the two. "The alliance was to form a coalition government that would help in settlement and confidence building within and across the Line of Control, alongside providing a stable and representative government. Given the wide-ranging difference between the socio-political aspirations and complaints of the different people in the state, economic amelioration cannot lead to peace and prosperity. It was envisaged that a purely political process without visible material and economic goals could not ensure peace. Due to the different positions and perceptions of the two parties regarding the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, the alliance said it would maintain the status quo on all constitutional provisions, including the special status Jammu and Kashmir enjoy constitutionally.

## Conclusion

After 1947, the leadership vacuum in Jammu proved to be too big, and the efforts of the National Conference were too small to bridge it up. The National Conference failed to extend its base to Jammu because of its Kashmir-centric vision and lack of coordination and contact with its workers in Jammu. Further, an uneasy coalition between a democratic leader like Shiekh Abdullah and a constitutional leader who was the erstwhile Maharaja turned out to be untenable on many grounds. The constitutional leader could not give public expression to the aspirations of Jammu.

As a repository of feudal interests, he could furthermore not provide any justice to the democratic aspirations of Jammu's population. The reluctance of national parties to extend their activities in the state, particularly the secular parties, enlarged the sense of the prevailing vacuum. No other secular party could counter Sheikh Abdullah's charisma as a secular leader. For instance, the All-India Congress Committee disbanded its Jammu unit after the National Conference took over the administration. Praja Parishad articulated Jammu's discontent in the expressive vocabulary of complete accession of the state and abrogation of Article 370, which guarantees a special status to Jammu to the state. Gradually, with time, Jammu's regional discontent branched into a demand for local autonomy. This was portrayed repeatedly through statistics of lopsided developmental outlays. The Hindu rightist parties appropriated much of the regional identity politics and asserted through the demands made in the elite interests, with marginal interests relocated to the peripheries.

Most of the agitations spearheaded in the name of regional discrimination of Jammu focused on the interests of the educated middle class and did not represent the backward areas and sections of the society. As Hindu right-wing organisations raised the issues of regional discrimination, the discourse inevitably became the dominant Hindu perspective. A copious amount of the communal discourse also evolved during the 1952 agitation led by the Praja Parishad. Gradually, with time, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Jana Singh, and other variants of Hindu right-wing like VHP, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, etc., also made inroads. However, the hold of these parties and organisations remains limited to the Hindu belt of Jammu, and the internal contradictions between the two regions have only deepened. The failure of democratic institutions to take root in Kashmir by overt intervention of the central government prevented the development of healthy competition among the state's political parties.

Over the years, the polarising tendencies in different divisions were never checked, and institutional structures became weaker and vulnerable. When, in a dramatic turn of events, the Bharatiya Janta Party, which did not have a significant electoral presence in the state, managed to secure 25 seats in the 2014 state legislative assembly elections, it claimed

to contest nationalisms visible to any observer. It is pertinent to mention that all 25 seats were secured in the Jammu division alone. This also brings into focus the debates around Article 370 and the plan of trifurcation of the state. It is also essential to understand that the Dalit assertion in otherwise an upper-caste Hindu-dominated area of Jammu is minimal because the caste concerns have been relegated to the background because of the conflict-centered political discourse. The upward graph of religious tourism in the last thirty years also corroborated the solidification of Jammu's religion-based identity.

The Pandit migration from the valley turned out to be a bonus for the Hindu right-wing organisations as they could make inroads within the Pandit community and communalise the society on religious lines. The eruption of land agitation in the state also led to long-term implications that changed the region's nature and politics. The most significant fallout from the land row was the fracturing of the relationship between the two major areas of the state. The discordant politics went beyond the grievances of regional discrimination towards the idea of trifurcating the state into three parts.

The BJP's electoral triumph in 2014 put the PDP into a more passive mode toward a junior partner in the coalition, almost equivalent to disrespecting the popular mandate. The demands of self-rule, an end to human rights violations, and revocation of the AFSPA could not get any response beyond the PDP's election manifesto. The standard minimum programme, too, did not gain any traction. The only takeaway from the coalition was polarisation on communal grounds and greater demands for trifurcation of the state.

