

increase in the duration of yatra and rejected any attempt at putting a restrictive cap on the number of pilgrims visiting each year.

BJP/PDP Coalition and its Impact on Jammu

In a dramatic turn, the Bharatiya Janta Party secured 25 seats in the Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections (2014), claiming contesting nationalism 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 an otherwise upper-caste Hindu-dominated area of Jammu is minimal because the caste concerns have been relegated to the background because of the threat from the Muslim other. Chowdary (2014) writes that the assembly elections of Jammu and Kashmir surprised everybody with the massive participation and the performance of the BJP. The election changed the dynamics of the state's internal politics.

The political baggage of the BJP ran counter to the ideological soft-separatism of the PDP. In the BJP's nationalist cosmology, removing Article 370 of the constitution is fundamental. On the other hand, the political imagination of a party like the People's Democratic Party (PDP) is entirely enshrined in the principles of soft separatism. PDP couched its agenda in quasi-separatist language, advocating change in New Delhi's relationship with Kashmir. Even self-rule was first coined in 2005 by the then-President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf. The PDP adopted it in January 2006 in a different form and context. The party aimed towards constitutional restructuring, rescinding central laws that curtailed Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy and reclaiming the titles of Prime Minister and President, respectively. These proposals are nothing less than an aversion to the BJP. Chaudhary. R (2015) explains that "the PDP is a product of a political situation developed in Kashmir in the last two decades, and it reflects an inappropriateness that persists in the region between the need for democratic governance and separatist sentiments."

On the one hand, the PDP was close to separatist organisations regarding its agenda of self-rule, demilitarisation, softening of borders, and free movement across the Line of control. Through the support of Jamaat-e-Islami and Hizbul Mujahideen, the party managed to build a strong constituency for itself. The party also got unconditional support from others who were critical of the politics of the National Conference.

Thus, the Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party was launched on a soft separatist plank in 1999. It styled itself self-consciously on the memory of the Muslim United Front borrowing its flag and also drew for its ideological content. Even the PDP symbol- a pen and inkpot- was the same logo used by the Hizbul Mujahideen's supreme commander, Muhammad Yousuf (now known as Syed Salahudeen), when he contested the 1987 Assembly elections. A significant feature of the formation of the PDP was the unspoken tactical alliance between the elements of Jamaat-e-Islami, Hizbul Mujahideen and the PDP. After the elections in April 2002, Mehbooba displayed her party's Islamic colours by waving a green handkerchief to the audience at a rally. In the recently published memoir, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing, A S Dulat, describes Mehbooba Mufti as having links with the Jamaat-e-Islami, the ideological edge of armed militancy in Kashmir. Dulat recounts how Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee suspected Mehbooba of having links with militants. Narrating an episode from Vajpayee's visit to Srinagar in 2003, he writes, "When Vajpayee went to Srinagar in April 2003 and famously extended his hand towards Pakistan, a stage was erected high up for the public meeting — Vajpayee and Mufti (Mohammad Sayeed sat up on the stage). Mehbooba wanted to join them, but she was politely told there was no place for her on that stage". He adds, "Vajpayee did not want her up there...There were grave doubts about Mehbooba in Delhi, about her links with the Hizbul Mujahideen and the help it provided her party during the 2002 elections".

Wallace and Ramashray (2009) write that the party (PDP) used religious motifs to appeal to the voters. In 2008, this kind of propaganda was used by the PDP to get support from the Jamaat-e-Islami cadre. With multi-cornered contests in many constituencies, the 2014 assembly

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.