

# Emergence of new political player “People’s Democratic Party” (PDP) in the political scenario of J&K and its achievements in the elections from 2002 to 2019.

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**Abstract:** *The modern state of Jammu and Kashmir (the status of statehood of which has been changed to union territory on 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2019) comprised of Jammu, Kashmir valley, Ladakh, the tribal areas of Goro, Hunza and the neighbouring territories of Jammu came into existence in 1846. When we have a close look on the state, we see the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been very unfortunate as it has seen many ups and downs, vicissitudes and oppression & suppression for centuries together. Nevertheless, the political awareness from 1930’s aroused the masses out of their political laziness for which they had paid extensively in the past. However the developments made especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century did restore the political phenomena of vitality with freshness and vigour and galvanised the thoughts and minds of the people towards the restoration of democratic process in the state of J&K. In the backdrop of this political scenario, People’s Democratic Party (PDP) emerged as a regional party in the state established by the prominent Congress leader and former Home Minister of India, Late Mr Mufti Mohammad Syed. The party started their political Journey from the 2002 State Legislative Assembly elections and secured second highest number of seats. This paper will focus on how The PDP emerged as a regional political party in the state and its achievements in different elections from the year 2002.*

**Key Words:** *Political Awareness, Political Parties, Kashmir Politics, J&K, Competitive Parties, Common Minimum Program etc.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Political Parties are the prerequisites for every democratic System.<sup>1</sup>A democratic government cannot function without the existence of political parties. We cannot think of democracy without political parties. As for as elections are concerned, they offer collective list of policies that citizens can chose for and in this sense Parties articulate and aggregate social interests. “To become a ‘Party’ to something always means identification with one group and differentiation from another. Every Party in its very essence signifies partnership in a particular organisation and separation from other by a specific Program.”<sup>2</sup>According to Burke, “Political party is a body of men united for promoting the principles of national interest.”<sup>3</sup>They develop, Consolidate and represent public opinion. They reduce complexity in the election process, instruct the people on political problems and other responsibilities. They act as a bridge between the government and the common man.

### 1.1. Political career of Mufti Mohammad Syed and the birth of PDP:

Mufti Mohammad Syed, the former prominent Congress leader, and the former Home Minister of India was born on 12 January, 1936 to a family of clerics of Baba Mohalla of Bijbehara Town in District Anantnag. He did his graduation in SP College Srinagar and became a post graduate in Arab history from Aligarh Muslim University. He started his remarkable political career by joining with Democratic National Conference (DNC), a splinter group of the J&KNC led by Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq in the late 1950’s. Syed was appointed as District Convenor of DNC.<sup>4</sup> which finally merged back in late 1960 with the NC.<sup>5</sup>In 1962 he was elected as MLA from Bijbehara constituency. He succeeded in retaining the position of MLA for the second consecutive term for the same constituency. In 1964 Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq became the CM of J&K and Mufti Mohammad Syed was appointed as the Deputy Chief of the party.<sup>6</sup> However, after a few years, DNC merged with INC, of which Syed remained a part until 1987.

Syed played a pivotal role in consolidating the roots of INC in J&K and raised it to the position of main opposition to DNC. Consequently, in 1972, he became the president of the State Congress Unit and cabinet minister in the Congress government.<sup>7</sup>In 1975, he was also appointed as the Congress legislative party leader. Despite two consecutive losses in the election, Syed with the knack as an administrator and politician, managed to bring downfall of JKNC government in 1984 which was led by Dr. Farooq Abdullah.<sup>8</sup> In 1986 under the Rajiv Gandhi government, he assumed the office as a minister of Tourism and civil aviation in the Union Cabinet.<sup>9</sup>In 1987, Syed split up with Congress to join VP Singh’s Jan Morcha, which subsequently led to his becoming the first muslim minister for Home Affairs in

the union cabinet of India from 1989 to 1990.<sup>10</sup> Within five days of swearing in, Syed’s daughter Rubaiya Syed was kidnapped by the JKLF, a militant outfit and was released only after the demand of the release of the five members of the outfit.<sup>11</sup> Syed was also affiliated With the Janta Dal for a few years . On the invitation of Lalu Prasad Yadu, he also contested Lok Sabha elections from the constituency of Katihar in Bihar. Later on in the same year, he parted ways with them and returned to the Congress, where he has begun his political career. He took up a remarkable and extraordinary project in the state of J&K in order to revive the political democracy which was destroyed by years of violence. He played a crucial role in setting up a bogus electoral contest in the state to present a façade of democracy where none existed. In the Early 1990’s, when militancy broke out in Kashmir, politicians fled from the state and political activities ceased. Mufti’s family also got affected by the violence like others in the state. In 1990, his uncle was killed by militants which forced them to leave the town and later on returned back after eight years. According to the former Deputy Commissioner of Srinagar, ‘Perdasi’, he said that it was the issue of fair which brought us in connection with Syed. He said, “Fear brought us together during the militancy and we used to speak to each other secretly on phone, trying to find out whether we are alive or not, and there was no question with which Party we were associated”. It was in this tumultuous atmosphere that Syed set out to revive the vigour and freshness of a democratic process for the 1996 assembly election. He talked and persuaded a large number of people of contesting the elections, promising manipulated victories to some and persuading others that their staged defeats would be in the best interests of the state. Syed persuaded Pardesei to contest the elections as a losing candidate. In 1996, Pardesei revealed that, “He wanted me to contest the elections against NC”. I said, “Jenab, What are you saying? We will be washed away”. He Said, “I agree with you but we have to fight and give credibility to the elections. We have to fight as secular Politician’s. So I fought against NC on a Congress ticket from Sonwar Srinagar constituency.” This is how Mufti made people ready for elections. It was an uphill task in these gruesome circumstances to find people inclined to participate in the elections. Still Mufti managed to persuade his wife Mrs. Gulshan Ara, his daughter Mehbooba Mufti and two brothers- in- law to contest the 1996 Assembly elections.<sup>12</sup> After a brief span of time, Syed finally dissociated from the Indian National Congress once for all along with his daughter Mehbooba Mufti to give foundation to Jammu and Kashmir People’s Democratic Party, a new regional political party in the state in July 1996. The main agenda of this party was to persuade the Government of India to initiate an unconditional dialogue on Kashmir for the resolution of the long pending Kashmir dispute.<sup>13</sup> In 2002, Assembly elections , PDP emerged as victorious party and the brain behind this victory was Syed’s daughter Mehbooba Mufti.<sup>14</sup> She successfully began her campaign by leading from the front to oppose the human rights violations which were committed by government forces and hence cultivated her image among the masses as a peace inhaler. She also promised an unconditional dialogue with militants and was of the opinion that they need to be given honour and should be allowed to live a dignified life only after to put down their arms. She also stressed and laid main emphasis on dialogue between India and Pakistan for the resolution of Kashmir dispute.<sup>15</sup>

Before the 2002 assembly elections, politics in the state was sharply divided between super patriotic political parties such as the Congress & NC which regarded J&K as an integral part of India and secessionist groups, especially the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), demanding the right to self-determination via a plebiscite. However, in 2002 elections , PDP emerging as a new political party and gaining momentum, sought to capture as a middle group between the NC pro-Indian image and the APHC’s pro-Pakistani mental attitude by projecting itself as a secular , Pro-Kashmiri political party supporting the demand for SELF RULE. In this way, PDP left no stone unturned to appropriate the political agenda of the Hurriyat Conference without its secessionist over tunes. PDP and the other mainstream regional political parties waged their campaigns from a secular platform without resorting to communal strategies of political mobilization.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. State Legislative & Parliamentary Elections from 2002-2014 and their Achievements:

In 2002 Assembly elections, J&KPDP began their election manifesto by efficaciously adding many issues to their list like corruption free government, providing healing touch to militancy affected people, unconditional dialogue with militants and disbanding of Special Operation Group (SOG) by which the common people were suffering.<sup>17</sup> With the people friendly manifesto, PDP contested the first time assembly elections in 2002. The elections were held in four phases in September-October 2002 & 44% turnout was recorded. These elections were quite different from those held formerly because all political parties, independent candidates, human rights activists, NGO’s, media and the international community appreciated the authenticity and results of the elections. PDP contested on 59 seats and the result was that they won all of its 16 seats in the Kashmir valley on pro-people and anti-NC campaign.

Performance of the PDP in the state elections of 2002 to the Legislative Assembly of J&K

Seats				Votes polled		Votes percentage in the seats contested
Party	Contested	Won	Forfeited deposits	Votes	%	
PDP	59	16	30	246480	9.28%	14.64%

Source: Statistical report on General Election, 2002 to the Legislative Assembly of J&K, Election Commission of India, New Delhi, P 8

Party Wise vote share and the number of seats won by different Political Parties.

Party	Vote Share Percent	Seats Won
JKNC	28.23	28
INC	24.25	20
PDP	9.04	16
PP	3.83	04
CPM	0.54	02
BJP	8.57	01
BSP	4.50	01
IND	21.03	15
Total	100.00	87

Source: Department of Information, Government of Jammu & Kashmir

PDP fielded candidates in 59 seats, gaining a total of 246480 seats (9.28%) across the seats they contested. In the whole Kashmir valley, they won in 16 constituencies. Another remarkable aspect of the 2002 assembly elections was that the other parties like J&K National Panthers Party and the independent candidates have shown tremendous performance. CPI (M) under the dynamic leadership of Yousuf Tarigami won two seats, the JKNPP of Prof. Bhim Singh won four seats. Due to the fractured verdict given by the results of 2002 elections, the Congress-PDP Alliance would have fallen short of the requisite number of seats to form the government. However the independent candidates, seven in number including two MLA's from CPI (M) formed the Democratic People's Forum (DPF) and declared publicly their unconditional helping hand to any non-NC-dispensation that takes claim to form the government and relegate the NC to the opposition benches.<sup>18</sup> On November 2, 2002, a coalition government was formed comprising of four partners viz; INC (20), PDP (16), PP (4), and PDF(1). Later on Syed became the CM for the first three years of the J&K assembly tenure and Mangat Ram Sharma of Congress, the Deputy CM. During his tenure as Chief Minister from November, 2, 2002 to November, 2, 2005, the governance was on smooth track and peace and stability at its peak. But unfortunately, the conditions worsened because of the Amarnath Land Dispute which results in a mass agitation in 26 May, 2008.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Parliamentary Elections, 2004:

The parliamentary elections, 2004 in J&K to the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha were held for 6 seats. INC & NC won two seats each, & PDP won one seat and one was won by an independent candidate Thupstan Chhewang from Ladakh.

Constituency wise list of elected MP's

Constituency	Elected MP	Party affiliation	Win Margin
Srinagar	Omar Abdullah	JKNC	11.84%
Baramullah	Ab. Rashid Shaheen	JKNC	2.96%
Anantnag	Mehboba Mufti	JKPDP	25.92%
Ladakh	Thupstan Chhewang	IND	19.94%
Udhampur	Ch. Lal Singh	INC	7.76%
Jammu	Madan Lal Sharma	INC	2.14%

The total polling percentage in J&K in the Indian general election, 2004 was 36.15%. The J&KPDP contested three out of the six parliamentary seats in the 2004 Indian general election of the state of J&K. The J&KPDP candidates were Mehbooba Mufti in Anantnag, Ghulam Nabi Lone in Srinagar and Nizamudin Bhat in Baramulla. Collectively they received a total of 267457 votes (11.94%) out of total valid votes polled in the election. The seat of Anantnag constituency was won by Mehbooba Mufti with a win margin of 25.92%.<sup>20</sup>

### 4. State Legislative Assembly Elections – 2008:

The coalition government between Indian National Congress and PDP in addition to some other candidates collapsed when the PDP withdrew their support in May 2008, because of the Amaranth land dispute which lead to the mass agitation in the valley. Hence the new election for the state were held in November- December 2008 in seven phases. The Indian National Congress which were headed by Sonia Gandhi described the polls of 2008 as “a triumph of Indian democracy”. 1354 candidates stood for the elections including 517 independents and nominees from 43 political parties.<sup>21</sup>

Number of Constituencies

Type of Constituency	General	SC	ST	Total
Number of Constituencies	80	07	0	87

Number of registered Voters: 65,38,111  
 Number of polling stations: 8,109

#### Party Performance

Party	Seats
NC	28
PDP	21
INC	17
BJP	11
NPP	03
CPI(M)	01
People's Democratic Front	01
J&K Democratic Party Nationalist	01
Independents	04
Total (turnout 60.5%)	87

Source: <http://www.india-elections.com/assembly-elections/Jammu-Kashmir/election-result-08.html>

PDP fielded candidates on 78 seats out of 87 in the 2008 Assembly Elections. Collectively the party received 610502 votes (15.39%) out of total valid votes in the state. The total of 21 seats were won by them and on 36 seats they forfeited deposits. After the election results were declared, the Congress made certain deliberations either to form the coalition with NC or PDP. It was reported that PDP had offered to support a Congress candidate for the chief ministership if it agreed to join with them. However PM Manmohan Singh and the Congress chairperson Sonia Gandhi disagreed with this and decided to favour the largest party to 'honour the mandate' of election. On 30 December there was agreement between the Congress and NC to form the coalition government with Omar Abdullah as the Chief Minister.<sup>22</sup>

#### 5. Parliamentary elections 2009:

The 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections were held in J&K in 2009 for 6 seats. The Pre-poll coalition of J&K National Conference and the Congress got five seats and one seat went to the independent politician Ghulam Hassan Khan. The two parties NC and Congress who fought as adversaries in the assembly polls had reaped the benefits of their alliance. In the Kashmir Valley, all the three constituencies were won by NC with Farooq Abdullah, Sharief-ud-din Sharik and Mirza Mehbob Beigh as the contesting candidates from Srinagar, Baramullah and Anantnag respectively. The Jammu and Udhampur seats were retained by the Congress candidates Madan Lal Sharma and Lal Singh respectively. The Ladakh seat was won by former NC leader Ghulam Hassan Khan, who contested as an independent candidate after he was denied ticket. Though it was a huge and dream victory for the alliance, but it was shock for the coalition's rivals. The PDP in the valley and BJP in Jammu had done remarkably well in the assembly polls of November-December 2008, but the parliamentary results shrunk their votes and also resulted in losses in their positions. There were three factors that worked against the PDP; first; the Congress was able to transfer its votes to NC particularly after Rahul Gandhi's visit and his offer of making friendship with Kashmiri youth. Second the people voted for the government, hoping that they would be able to get concessions from the ruling combination especially in jobs and development and third, the poll boycott in most areas of South Kashmir.<sup>23</sup>

#### 6. Parliamentary Elections- 2014 and the party performance of J&KPDP:

The 2014 Parliamentary Elections in J&K signified a vote for change. There was a severe blow to the ruling NC-Congress coalition in the whole state and it was not able to open its account by getting a single seat. For the first time, it came to fore that the state's oldest party, National Conference, will not be represented in parliament. It was in this election that political parties took it serious in view of the fact that the state was scheduled to go for assembly polls at the end of the year and it will present a good show in the parliamentary elections. This was also felt that it would have a direct impact on the assembly elections. In the Udhampur, the contesting candidate was former CM and Union Health Minister Mr. Gh Nabi Azad. In Anantnag, the contest was between PDP president Mehbooba Mufti and NC Member of Parliament Mehboob Beigh. In Srinagar, the electoral fight was between former CM and NC party patron Farooq Abdullah and former finance minister Tariq Hamid Karra of PDP. In the Baramulla constituency, it was a four-way contest between two times Member of Parliament Sharif Ud Din Shariq of NC, former deputy chief minister Muzaffar Hussain Beigh of PDP, Awami Ittehad Party President Er. Rashid and Salam-ud-din Bajad of the People's Conference.<sup>24</sup> Omar Abdullah led ruling coalition in J&K was abolished in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections with PDP and BJP sharing the six seats in the state. Apart from its president Mehbooba Mufti, PDP sent its former finance ministers Muzaffar

Hussain Beigh and Tariq Hamid Karra to Parliament. Farooq Abdullah, the scion of the powerful Abdullah family that has been mostly ruling the state for decades was given first electoral defeat by Karra. PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti acknowledged the highest results they got in the elections and was of the view that it will mark a profound change at the national and state level. She said that, “we treat this overwhelming response as an opportunity to serve the state to the best of our ability and also recognize it as a challenge in view of the huge problems that the state faces and we have set out to address those problems. Based on this decisive mandate, we will do exactly what we have stated in our manifesto.... use parliament as a forum for debate and dialogue on the Kashmir issue.”<sup>25</sup>

### J&K Parliamentary Constituency-Wise Lok Sabha Result 2014

Parliamentary Constituency	Region	Winning Party	Winner Vote %	Runner up Party	Runner-up Vote %	Victory Margin (Votes)
Baramullah	Kashmir	JKPDP	37.6	JKNC	31.3	29219
Srinagar	Kashmir	JKPDP	50.6	JKNC	37.0	42280
Anantnag	Kashmir	JKPDP	53.4	JKNC	36.0	65417
Ladakh	Ladakh	BJP	26.4	IND	26.3	36
Udhampur	Jammu	BJP	46.8	Congress	40.9	60976
Jammu	Jammu	BJP	49.5	Congress	28.9	257280

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

This Election made a turnaround throughout the valley. It was seen as a litmus test for the state’s oldest political party, the NC as well as for the ruling NC–Congress Alliance. The elections saw the debacle of the incumbent coalition government with the NC being routed in the Kashmir valley by the PDP and its alliance partner Congress meeting the same fate at the hands of the BJP in the Jammu and Ladakh regions. The post poll survey conducted by CSDS indicates a consolidation of hindu voters behind the BJP in the Jammu region. On the other hand the Ladakh seat was won by BJP with a low margin. The country’s largest parliamentary segment (area wise) recorded the lowest victory margin with BJP candidate Thupston Chhewang defeating his nearest rival Ghulam Raza, a Congress rebel fighting as an independent candidate by just 36 votes. For the first time in the history of J&K, BJP has won the Ladakh Parliamentary seat-2014. The 2014 Parliamentary elections has taught one of the important lessons to all political parties. The important lesson was that they cannot take people for granted any longer. People have become well aware and conscious regarding the contribution political parties have provided them and also the performance they have shown. They are evaluating everything and are observing minutely how responsive and transparent the government has been in its functioning.<sup>26</sup>

### 7. J&K Legislative Assembly Elections -2014 and the Government Formation

The J&K legislative elections -2014 were held in the state from 25 November–20 December 2014 in five phases. Voters in the state elected 87 members in the elections, which completed its six year term on 19 January 2015. The results were declared on 23 Dec 2014.<sup>27,28</sup> Before the elections were held, the Indian National Congress broke its alliance with J&K National Conference and contested on all seats in the assembly.<sup>29</sup> Before the elections, the campaign in the valley was very aggressive and robust. Following the huge victory of BJP in the Indian Parliamentary Elections, the BJP turned its attention towards J&K and started their campaign on the note that they will promise for development in the valley. One of the most important part of the campaign was that the PM of India, Narendra Modi also visited the valley in support of the local BJP campaign. The polls were carried out in five phases. Despite several boycott calls by separatist leaders, the election recorded highest voter turnout in the last 25 years. The poll percentage was more than 65% which was higher than usual voting percentage than in other states of India.<sup>30</sup>

Date	Seats	Turnout
25 November Tuesday	15	71.28%
2 December Tuesday	18	71%
9 December Tuesday	16	58.89%
14 December Sunday	18	49%
20 December Saturday	20	76%
Total	87	65.235%

#### Summary of the J&K State Assembly Election Results

Party	Seats	Previously	+/-	Vote %	Vote Share
PDP	28	21	+7	22.7%	1092203
BJP	25	11	+14	23%	1107194
NC	15	28	-13	20.8%	1000693
INC	12	17	-5	18.0%	8,67,883

J&K People’s Conference	2	0	+2	-	-
CPI(M)	1	1	0	0.5%	-
J&K People’s Democratic Front	1	1	0	-	-
J&KNPP	0	3	-3	-	-
IND	3	4	-1	-	-
Total (turnout 65.23%)	87	87	-	-	-

Source: Electoral Commission of India  
 “2014 Assembly election results of J&K/Jharkhand”

PDP became the single largest party with 28 seats. BJP became the second largest party with 25 seats.<sup>32</sup> A week after the declaration of the results, the PDP and BJP officially began talks for government formation in the J&K state. Both the parties had a two member team to form a Common Minimum Program. Naeem Akhter and Haseeb Drabu represented the PDP and Ram Madhav and Nirmal Kumar Singh represented the BJP. Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s office, Jitendar Singh, supervised the dialogue. The new PDP–BJP government took the oath of office on 01 March, 2015 in the Zorawar Singh Stadium of Jammu, with Mufti Mohammad Syed as CM for the full term of six years and Nirmal Kumar Singh as his deputy. PM Narendra Modi was also present on the occasion. Twelve cabinet ministers from each party were also sworn-in. It is pertinent to mention that it was the first time that BJP was a coalition partner in the J&K government. The Common Minimum Program prepared by the representatives was then released in a press conference. The CMP gave a vision of “all round development” of J&K and “Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas” [with everyone, everyone’s development]. CM, Mufti Syed could not keep his health due to the multi organ failure for a long time and left the world on 07 January, 2016. After his demise, his daughter Mehbooba Mufti led the Coalition Government. However Mufti led coalition government could not survive for long. The government collapsed on June 19, 2018 after the BJP pulled out the coalition listing a range of reasons from up surge in violence in the valley to the state government’s “failing in its responsibilities.”<sup>33</sup>

### 8. Parliamentary Elections 2019:

In the parliamentary elections-2019, that were held in the Kashmir valley, all the three seats were bagged by National Conference and PDP could not get any one. Earlier in the last parliamentary elections, all the three seats were won by PDP headed by the former CM of the state Late Mufti Mohammad Syed. This electoral rout came in the wake of rise in violence and a backlash from the voters after the PDP aligned with BJP in 2015 to form the state government. People did not like this move and they completely opposed it.<sup>34</sup> In the Anantnag parliamentary constituency, which has been the hub of PDP from yesteryears, was also lost by PDP and it was won by NC’s candidate Hasnain Massodi against Mehbooba Mufti by a lead of 9535 votes.

### 9. CONCLUSION:

Political parties are the most visible face of a democratic system for its smooth working. J&KPDP performed well in the state of J&K till 2014 elections. However, since its decision to align with the BJP in 2014 to form a government in the state, its political fortunes have been facing a serious backlash. They hoped that their decision to ally with BJP, was so in the context and with the complexity that it deserves. However, the lack of internal democracy and the concentration of power on one or a few top leaders has also crumbled the party like a pack of cards. In spite of this debacle, the need of the hour is to carry forward the party’s mission to a logical end, especially the peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue and friendship with neighbouring countries. In this connection, the party had play a significant role at the international level in creating an atmosphere in which the arch-rivals India & Pakistan became friends. The associates and the people at helm of affairs should take forward the vision and mission of the party, work harder to bring social order, peace and prosperity and dignity in the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

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