

POLLING FEVER

The Udhampur-Doda Constituency where polling is being held on 19 April in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections has seen the most intense campaigning. The incumbent MP Dr Jitendra Singh did not leave any corner of the vast constituency spread across five districts untouched while campaigning diligently despite he being a favourite. The campaign was on developmental issues, for the region needs a lot of infrastructure, particularly roads. Both Udhampur and Doda are in the hinterland and hilly areas where road connectivity is very poor and the existing roads are in bad shape. Interestingly, both regions have immense scope and potential for development and tourism. Baderwah has already come on the tourism map of India. Reasi in Udhampur is a global hotspot with the largest and the richest lithium deposits discovered last year. However, unless roads are constructed all the futuristic projects would get delayed. The voters are hoping for the elected MP to expedite road construction.

INDIA AND DEMOCRACY

India has become synonymous with democracy. As the next general elections begin on April 19, we can take pride in being one of the few developing countries where elections have been held without any break. The elections have happened despite doomsday predictions by the global powers about its irrelevance in the light of extreme poverty, backwardness and illiteracy at the time of Independence from Britain. Indians are different as the world is realizing and acknowledging fast. Elections in India are sacrosanct and the process has got refined to the level of being fool-proof from malpractices. Democracy is one of the most difficult systems of governance since every section has to be taken on boards and aspirations of all have to be met. Democracy doesn't give a free hand to the rulers to push growth. However, despite all its shortcomings democracy is the surest way to make every citizen feel empowered and a partner in governance and the system.

THE KASHMIR DISPUTE: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

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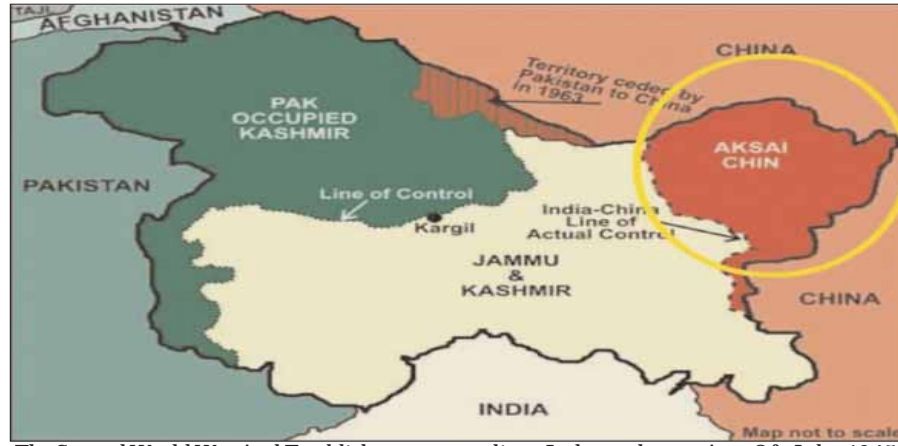
With Independence in 1947 India inherited an ethno-religio-linguistic problem from its masters the British, who had themselves inherited an ethno-religio-political legacy, known as the Glorious / Bloodless Revolution in 1688, which made England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as one country the United Kingdom, purely Protestants, different from Roman Catholics, following the Pope of Rome. The glorious revolution of 1688 also brought about an end to the total monarchical system by bringing complete democracy with a two-party system of Whigs and Tories, making Sir Robert Walpole as the first prime minister of the United Kingdom, through elections by both parties. The monarchical system also changed, bringing William of Orange and Anne, the only in bloodline working in Holland, brought to the United Kingdom as puppets in the hands of the prime minister of U.K. bringing a monarchical government but with a powerful legislature going on even today. This was the unanimity of the British in the Indian context, the case was different. The legacy left by the British in 1947, British India had 562 princely states ruled by different kings, Nawabs, Wazirs and Rajas. Before going into the main genesis and dispute of Kashmir, it is important to know the historiography of Kashmir.

The geographical situation and location of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh was demarcated in 1867 by an Indian map curator Sarabjeet Singh in terms of Treaty of Amritsar between the British and Sikhs, by which a fully demarcated Jammu and Kashmir was left to General Gulab Singh in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army. It included northern parts of Wakhan Corridor (Pan Handle of Afghanistan), Gilgit, Baltistan and Full Ladakh as conquered by Gen. Zorawar Singh, a chieftain in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army as well as Poonch, Mirpur, Wazirabad and Hills adjoining Neelum and Kishan Ganga rivers. Ancient legends of Vedas and Puranic times reveal that the entire Kashmir was a watery lake draining into Sindh River (Indus or Hydaspas) flowing through the Kishanganga and Neelum rivers. Legends also believe that Rishi Kashyap, a staunch follower of God Shiva drained Kashmir and in his name Kashyapamir emerged in 5000 yrs B.C.

King Cyrus the Great of Achaemenid Dynasty of Greece, Turkish origin spotted Kashmir in 567 B.C. (As records reveal in Greek writings of Strabo and Aristotle, which encouraged Alexander the Great of Macedonia came to conquer the Asian sub-continent, particularly India in 326 B.C. As records Magasthenes in 'India' in the modern period, the Jammu and Kashmir state stretched over 2,22,236 Sq. Kms out of only 55% was left with India at the time of partition on 15 August 1947. The remaining 45% was divided into JKAK (Jammu Kashmir Azad Kashmir) 30% and 15% of Gilgit Baltistan gifted to China by Pakistan.

At the time of partition, India had 38% of Muslim population while Pakistan had 62% of Muslim population. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder and leader/president of National Muslim League/Conference in 1946 formulated the Two Nation Theory at the general assembly at Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Karachi. A memorandum to this effect was submitted to Mountbatten, the last British viceroy to India. M.A. Jinnah was born and brought up in Gondal a small princely state in Junagadh, which along with his family migrated to Karachi.

The situation was reverse in Junagadh than Kashmir. The Hindus formed 80% while Muslims comprised with only 20% of population in entire Junagadh. After



The Second World War and establishment of the United Nations, the British had decided to leave Indian sub-continent, where by an interim government passed the Indian Independence Act in July 1947, by which the 562 princely states in India were asked either to be independent, or accede to India or Pakistan.

The princely state of Junagadh ruled by Sultan Mohabbat Rasool Khan assisted by Diwan Shah Nawaz Bhutto, decided to accede to Pakistan. A plebiscite was held on the instructions of the United Nations. This plebiscite held in September 1947 made Junagadh to accede to India on 10 Sept. 1947.

The next masterstroke of M.A. Jinnah, (ultimately misfired) was that of Hyderabad. This princely state, at the fall of Mughals was established in 1724 by Mir Qamar Ud Din Khan Siddiqi, also termed as Nizam Ul Mulk Asaf Jan. At the time of partition, this princely state of Hyderabad was ruled by Nizam Usman Ali Khan, the richest Sultan in the world, having his own currency, and an embassy in Delhi. Fond of horses, he had eight polo grounds and entitled him to be a 'Polo Man'. His kingdom was run by a Diwan Qasim Rizvi who had his own faithful and trustworthy Razaaks or soldiers or Mansabdars left by the Mughals. With the Indian Independence Act of July 1947, Sultan Usman Ali Khan was asked to be with India, or Pakistan or remain independent. He opted to remain independent with the support of Jinnah in proxy the Razaaks under Qasim Rizvi forming the Majlis E Ittehad Ul Musalmin an independence claiming organisation led by Qasim Rizvi, revolted against the British who despatched Maj. Gen. J.N. Chaudhary to quell the revolt termed as the Operation Polo in 15 Sept. 1948 by which Usman Ali Khan fled to Australia by which Hyderabad was annexed to India and signed the instrument of accession by which Hyderabad became a part of India in 1950.

The third princely state of Kashmir, ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh, a descendant of the first Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh, abstained from joining India or Pakistan and claimed to be independent, having his own kingdom/country of Kashmir with 89% Muslims and 20% Hindus. Kashmir, lies at the confluence of Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu ethno-religio-linguistic cultures. It also stands at the pivot of faults of these three civilisations. It is also the meeting point of the Panhandle of Afghanistan, the Crown Jewel of India and a meeting point of the ancient silk road where nomadic warfare has always persisted.

The Kashmir dispute opened quietly in 1947-48 with Pakistan occupying a strategic region of Gilgit/Baltistan with the support of Nooristanis, Afridis and Badakshas coming from the Panhandle of Afghanistan. They also occupied north western parts of Kashmir having Mt. Peaks like Godwin Austin and K2 of Central Himalayas.

The central theme of Kashmir dispute, lies in boundary making, both with Pakistan and China, making it an area of geo-politics and political geography. The In-

dian Independence Act of July 1947 passed by an interim government of India, headed by an interim prime minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru (an interim government comprising of Jawaharlal Nehru, his sister Smt. Vijay Laxmi Pandit (India's permanent representative to United Nations, established in 1945) Sh. T.N. Kaul (India's first ambassador to U.S.A.) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (India's first interim home minister) and Sh. V.P. Menon (India's first home secretary) who were given the task of uniting the then 562 princely states. All the 561 princely states united to make India a republic, except Jammu and Kashmir, which had some conditions to be satisfied between the interim Indian government and Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir. The accession of Jammu and Kashmir with India or a decision making either with Pakistan or remain independent, made the Kashmir issue an issue of dispute.

The Kashmir dispute can be attributed to... 1. The delay in accession of Kashmir with India. 2. The interim Indian government with an interim prime minister.

Above all, the real cause of Kashmir dispute is the issue of boundary both with Pakistan and China. Out of the total area of Jammu and Kashmir as demarcated by the survey of India established in 1867 which covered a total area of 2,22,236 Sq. Kms. Out of which India possessed only 55%, Pakistan and China possessed 35 and 15% each.

The quest of boundary with Pakistan is full of controversies. The boundary with Pakistan was to be drawn over Marsy Land (Rann of Kutch), Sandy Land (The Thar Desert) The Plain Land (Punjab) and The Mountains (The Shiwaliks and The Middle/ Central Himalayas, The Karakoram).

The task of boundary demarcating should have been done by a trained, cartographer and boundary maker, instead this task was given to a barrister of England by the then Governor General of India Lord Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas Mountbatten. The barrister was supposed to come to India in May 1947 to have consultations with Rajas, Sultans and Nawabs of 562 princely states of India, but he arrived and started his task of boundary making under geographic dimensions on 20 July 1947 and demarcated the boundary line between India and Pakistan without any geographic principles of boundary making in marshes, deserts, fertile plains and lofty mountains. This brought about a lot of discontent resulting to ethno-religio-migrations increasing the dispute.

The Indo-Pak boundary thus demarcated by Cyrus Redcliff in August 1947 separated the two countries, India and Pakistan fulfilling the demand of Mohd. Ali Jinnah (The Two Nation Theory) giving the Marshy Rann of Kutch, The Desert of Thar, The Infertile Doaba of Punjab and The Lofty Himalayas to India as well as West Bengal to India.

The northern most parts of Kashmir (Present Day Azad Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir) was already with Pakistan before partition, occupied by Nooristanis, Afridis and Badakshanis of

Wakhan, so the intent of Pakistan was only to capture the vale of Kashmir mostly drained by Jhelum and its tributary The Kishanganga passing through Kupwara, Baramulla, Badgam and Sopore. This was the mindset of Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute.

The water system of Indus (The Hydaspas) was the next issue in the Kashmir problem. The Indus (Mother of the System) originating from Kailash Mansarovar in Central Asia has a complete set of five downstream rivers all cutting through the Himalayas, in spite of clash in tectonic plates (Lauratia and Gondwanaland) in the Precambrian Age Geologically.

The general population in 1947 was only 40% of what it is today in both countries. Dispute between the two started with large scale violence in West Punjab (Low Stream Region) and J & K (The Upstream Region) as such the Indus Waters Treaty was signed in 1960 in New Delhi under Ibrd (International Bank For Reconstruction and Development) by which India agreed to give 20 M. Cusecs of water every year from the Indus system and could utilise the above cusecs of water for its own (The India) through today India is utilising water by dams like Salal, Dul Hasti, Shalimar, Pong and Bhakra Nangal. The Ibd, India, and Pak teams regularly visit these sites.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir was extremely tense at the time of partition. The delay in accession to India by Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir was the root cause of the Kashmir problem. This delay in accession was caused by the dilemma in the mind of Maharaja. It took for a month and a half for accession of Kashmir with India. This brought about incursion after incursion by Afridis, Pashoons and Rebels assisted by Pakistan army to wrest more and more area from Indian Kashmir, which was the main cause of dilemma in the mind of Maharaja. The time of independence 15 August 1947 to accession of Kashmir with India on 26 Oct. 1947 added lot many factors to the Kashmir problem. Under this time span, the invaders reached upto Baramulla where they were stopped by the Indian army under Maj. Som Nath Sharma in the battle of Badgam who was awarded the first Param Vir Chakra in history of Indian Army.

It was at this stage that M.A. Jinnah forced the invaders to press over India to internationalise Kashmir and go to the United Nations, where the Security Council asked India for a plebiscite in Kashmir and have a cease fire. The plebiscite could not be completed, whereby Maharaja signed the instrument of accession with India. Meanwhile the invaders had crossed even the ceasefire line and by a Standstill Agreement, a line of control (Loc) came into existence which continues till date. By the instrument of accession, Kashmir acceded to India. The Muslim conference under Sheikh Abdullah came to power with its own legislative assembly and a separate flag of Kashmir.

The accession of Jammu and Kashmir with India was instigated primarily at the behest of Sheikh Abdullah who impressed upon Jawahar Lal Nehru, the interim prime minister to bring article 370 into J & K through the legislative council, the constituent assembly, thereby having a separate constitution of Jammu and Kashmir. This was primarily done so that the Muslim could be increased and no outsider could come to J & K.

The prospects of peace and salvation of the Kashmir problem can be brought about by diplomacy and peace agreements by a dynamic personality of a calibre like Sh. Narendra Modi and his team with Sh. S. Jayshankar, Sh. Amit Shah and Sh. Rajnath Singh. With peace talks with a popular democratic leader in Pakistan.

Uttarakhand women: Agents of change in State politics

SHEETAL ARYA

Women in Uttarakhand are renowned for their extraordinary resilience and hard work, characteristics deeply rooted in their Himalayan heritage. Despite grappling with the challenges of life in this rugged terrain, Uttarakhand's women have consistently been at the forefront of social and environmental movements, epitomized by figures like Gaura Devi of the Chipko movement and Tinchari Mai (Deepa Nautiyal), who spearheaded the Anti-Liquor movement. These women have fearlessly confronted injustice, embodying the spirit of Uttarakhand. This article seeks to underscore the political engagement of women in Uttarakhand, shedding light on their role in bolstering democracy.

The political participation of women in Uttarakhand can be delineated into two primary spheres: first, women assuming leadership positions within the political domain and second, women exercising their electoral rights as voters.

Since the inception of the state, the representation of women in the

legislative assembly has seen a significant albeit gradual rise. From four women members in the first assembly, the number has increased by 50% in the 2022 elections, marking a commendable stride. However, despite this progress, women remain a minority in the assembly, constituting a mere fraction of the total members. Presently, the legislative assembly boasts eight women members, including three Dalit women, the highest number in Uttarakhand's history. Notably, Smt. Ritu Khanduri serves as the speaker, while Smt. Rekha Arya is the lone female minister in the cabinet. Despite these advancements, the disparity in political representation persists, underscoring the challenges women face in accessing political power.

While women's representation in the parliamentary arena remains scant, with only two female MPs out of eight, the discrepancy between the female population (49%) and their political representation is stark. Despite their active participation in grassroots movements, women's presence in formal politics remains disproportionately low.



Women in Uttarakhand constitute the backbone of the rural economy, grappling with issues like migration, environmental degradation and inadequate healthcare services. However, societal norms and economic constraints often deter their political involvement. Moreover, political parties' reluctance to field female candidates exacerbates this disparity. For instance, in the up-

coming 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress has not nominated any female candidates, while the BJP has nominated only one, Mrs. Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah.

Nevertheless, women voters in Uttarakhand have emerged as a formidable force, outnumbering men in recent elections. Their increasing political awareness, fueled by issues directly affecting their lives, coupled

with higher literacy rates and government initiatives like reservation quotas, has galvanized their participation. Policies such as 30% horizontal reservation in government jobs and 50% reservation in Panchayats have bolstered women's political agency, enabling them to assume leadership roles at the grassroots level.

In the run-up to the 2024 Parliamentary elections, both major parties are vying for women's support, employing diverse strategies. Congress has pledged financial assistance and job reservations for women, emphasizing women's security and justice. Conversely, the BJP highlights its implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as a milestone for women's rights, coupled with grassroots mobilization efforts.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal among women voters, attributed to his grassroots connect and initiatives like the Women Reservation Bill, further consolidates BJP's electoral prospects. The "Modi factor" has resonated with Uttarakhand's women, contributing to BJP's continued dominance since

2017.

To bolster women's empowerment, the state government has allocated a substantial gender budget for 2024-25, earmarked for bridging gender disparities and promoting equality. Additionally, measures like deploying women employees to oversee polling booths and facilitating pregnant women's access to voting booths underscore the commitment to inclusive governance.

In conclusion, Dr Ambedkar's assertion that a community's progress is contingent upon women's advancement holds for Uttarakhand. While women have historically been instrumental in social movements, their underrepresentation in formal politics remains a pressing concern. Addressing these challenges is imperative for ensuring women's political representation and expediting the state's development. As Uttarakhand gears up for the upcoming Chunav Kauthig, with women comprising 48.1 per cent of the electorate, their increased participation promises to be a harbinger of democracy's triumph in the state.

(The writer is a research scholar; views are personal)