

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO IN THE KASHMIR REGION: ROLE OF SHEIKH ABDULLAH AND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses and analyses the history of development in Kashmir region in the government of Sheikh Abdullah from the 1947 period, when the developmental changes took place in different spheres especially land to tiller and education for everyone were prioritized. The land to landless tiller was seen as a revolutionary step which generated tremendous progress in agricultural productivity. The purpose is to understand the dynamics of development in Kashmir region after the postcolonial nation building – how it impacted the political dimension, what are the areas of mutual convergences and divergences.

Keywords: Development, Economy, Land Reforms, Nation Building

INTRODUCTION

Till the beginning of the twentieth century the Kashmir region was one of the major entry pots of trade and economy between India and Central Asia.ⁱ Kashmiri traders had a prominent role with their business houses located in Russia as wellⁱⁱ. Srinagar and Leh were important meeting grounds for traders during the different empires of the timeⁱⁱⁱ. However, this thriving business came to an end at the beginning of twentieth century after the Russian advancement towards Central Asia, followed by the Chinese occupation of Eastern Turkistan and Tibet^{iv}. Since the borders continue to be closed, which eventually in economic disadvantage to the Kashmir region. Besides the region has been deprived of the commercial and cultural relations with the neighbouring countries which had been built over centuries.

The trade and economy of the Kashmir region with the Indian subcontinent in 1947 was controlled through three highways and four waterways.^v These highways and waterways connected the Kashmir region with the part of Indian subcontinent, presently part of Pakistan. The worth of business and trade by way of these routes added up to crores of rupees every year^{vi} and all the people of Jammu and Kashmir regions were beneficiaries of this trade, because highways and waterways were going through the important areas of both the regions. Since all these trade and commercial routes were closed with the partition of India, consequently the regions lost a high market and traditional trade centres.^{vii} Thus, political instability in the history of Kashmir has caused a disastrous effect on the economy of the region. The town of Baramullah (North Kashmir) especially has never recovered with regard to economy since 1947. The Sikh minority and Gurdwaras at different places lend an environment of pluralism to Baramullah. The economy of this town depended on markets which after partition became Pakistan Punjab. In the words of one of the famous writers of Baramullah, M Y

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