

Editorial

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION THE J&K EXPERIENCE

The recent Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir have strongly elevated the democratic edifice in the state. The hypothesis that democratic system holds the potential and the capacity to accommodate the urges and aspirations of the common man has once again been underlined in these elections. This proposition has special significance for the state which has undergone a violent phase; although this phase was imposed on it. Still, one aspect of the perception of tinkering with the democratic system in the past which sustained the violence needs to be reckoned with.

The results of these elections have thrown up new political formations in the entire state reflecting the changing perceptions and expectations of the people. The participation of new and the young voters is equally an interesting and significant aspect of these elections. The change is in consonance with the national pattern in which the traditional ruling dispensations have been replaced making room for new political party/ combinations to rule the country. This change has special significance for the social and political fabric of the entire country.

The election results in the J&K project diverse portents which have emerged from the three distinct regions of the state, viz; Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. However, in the two regions of the state, Jammu and Kashmir, the traditional political parties which had been ruling the state individually and/or collectively for long have lost their mandate. Again, the election results indicate that the political ideologies across the board have traversed the borders in the state. That the people in Kashmir valley voted for BJP in majority of the constituencies provides the illustration to the point. In the same manner, Kashmir centric parties like National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party were able to win some seats from the Jammu region further underline the interesting voting behavior of the people in the state. A new entrant in the political arena of the state, Peoples Conference,

which won two seats from Kashmir valley is a refreshing change in the political scenario of the state.

The changing political scenario in J&K has a special significance for the young generation of voters. The perception that they hold the power to bring about changes in the governance shall go a long way in strengthening their faith in democracy and its institutions. These election results equally hold a challenge to the political parties of the state. Their future depends on their performance in bringing about changes in the social and economic life of the state. They should realize that they would be accountable for their acts of omission and commission.

It is hightime that this process of democratic participation should percolate down effectively to the grassroots in the state. The effective participation of the people in running their local affairs shall go a long way in strengthening the democratic institutions in the state. This experience has provided highly successful in different parts of the country for the last several decades. It has brought about visible changes in the socio-economic life of the people. The J&K state is awaiting for this opportunity.

We wish our readers a peaceful and productive New Year.

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