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## Exploration of electoral politics with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Election-2008

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### Abstract

The present study was carried out to analyze the electoral participation of electorates on the basis of various segments viz. gendering electoral participation, gender representation in contesting, winning and performance of different political parties in Jammu and Kashmir in Legislative Assembly Election-2008. Besides, the study aimed to explore the voter turnout of in the same election. The study was carried with the help of descriptive research. Primary as well as secondary data was collected. The results and finding were incorporated in the same study.

**Keywords:** Electoral politics, Jammu and Kashmir, Legislative Assembly Election-2008

### Introduction

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, formerly known as Jammu and Kashmir State possess geographically, culturally, racially, linguistically and ethnically heterogeneity entity. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir known for its extravagant natural beauty is the northernmost State of the Indian Union. It can be aptly described as "Paradise on earth". Jammu and Kashmir which occupies an awfully strategic position on the Indian frontiers is the only area in the Indian Union with a Muslim majority. It shares international with Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. It is bounded on the south by Himachal Pradesh and the Punjab, on the north by Chinese Türkistan and a little of Russian Türkistan, and on the east by Chinese Tibet, on the west lies Pakistan and to the northwest, Afghanistan. Previously, the Jammu and Kashmir possess diversified geographical sites. Geographically, the Jammu and Kashmir falls into four natural regions. In the south lies Jammu, the winter capital of the State; in the centre is the happy valley of Kashmir which contains the summer capital, Srinagar; to the north is Gilgit and between The Kashmir valley and Tibet is the province of Ladakh.

In Jammu and Kashmir electoral politics remains contested and exists side by side with the politics of separatism, any electoral exercise acquires special analytical significance as it provides a window to the political milieu of the state. The previous elections of Jammu and Kashmir hold more significance because political discontent is existing in union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The presence of separatists has created a political situation in which the whole issue of electoral politics itself came to be highly politicised within the separatist camp. On the other hand Government of India is timely trying to explore the ways and means for enhancing electoral participation in Jammu and Kashmir especially in Valley. In general on the importance of the elections, Gopal, K. (1967), an expert on election studies, observed

““Elections are particularly conspicuous and revealing aspects of most contemporary political systems. They highlight and dramatize a political system, bringing its nature into sharp relief, and providing insights into other aspects of the system as whole. Election is the contrivance through which a modern state creates amongst its citizens a sense of involvement and participation in public affairs. It is through popular election that the authority of a Government is clothed with legitimacy and peaceful and orderly transfer of authority to new leaders is ensured”.

Despite the boycott campaign by separatists and the intensified violence during the elections, the 2008 elections, as noted above, was intensely competitive. Such proactive boycott politics, operating simultaneously with, what is popularly termed in Kashmir, the 'gun culture' was bound to have an impact on voter turnout. Many a militant organisation had issued an open warning to people against participation in elections<sup>5</sup> and as electioneering proceeded and intensified, the level of violence was also intensified. Militants attacked almost every political leader of prominence, disrupted election rallies of almost every party, and even attacked party offices. While the impact of boycott politics seems to be complete in the urban areas, rural areas, especially those that have been traditionally prone to militancy, saw a higher voter turnout. Large number of studies has been conducted in the field of electorate politics of Jammu and Kashmir, like the studies conducted by Ayan, L. (2019) <sup>[1]</sup>, Hina, A.K. (2016) <sup>[22]</sup>, Thoker, A. A. (2004) <sup>[24]</sup> Nanda, A.L. (2002) <sup>[23]</sup>, Yadav, Yogendra (1996) <sup>[25]</sup>, Blais, Andre & Carty, K. (1991) <sup>[8]</sup>, Blais, Andre & Carty, R. K. (1990) <sup>[9]</sup>. However, least among them has been carried out in context of empirical approach. Keeping in view the investigator carried the below mentioned research study:

**Statement of the research problem**

The statement of the research problem for the present study is reported as under:

“Exploration of electoral politics with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Election-2008”

**Objectives of the study**

The presents study consists of below mentioned objectives:

1. To analyse the Legislative Assembly Election (LAE) of Jammu & Kashmir held in 2008 on the basis of:
  - a) Gendering electoral participation.
  - b) Gender representation in contesting and winning.
  - c) Performance of different political parties.
  - d) Voter turn out.

**Delimitations of the study:** The present study will be confined to Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly election 2008.

**Methodology and procedure:** The presents study was carried with the help of descriptive research method. The data was collected from the official websites of election commission of India. The collected data as analysed with the help of descriptive statistics.

**Analysis and interpretation:** The detailed analyses and interpretation of the data is reported as under:

**Table 1:** Showing frequency and percent wise distribution of electoral participation on the basis of gender In the Legislative Assembly Election (2008)

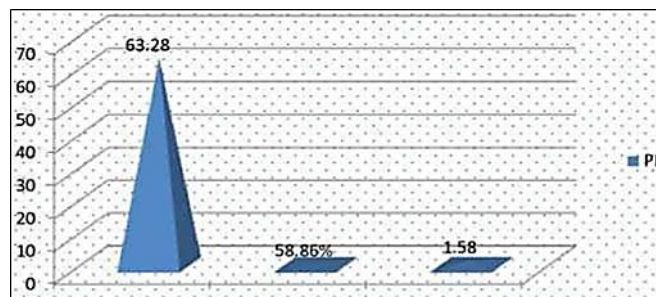
Status	Male	Female	Other	Total
TNE	3364265	3097492	63	6461757
NEVPS	2128882	1823212	01	3952094
PP	63.28	58.86%	1.58	61.16

**Index**

TNE=Total Number of electors.

NEVPS=Total Number of electors who voted at polling stations.

PP=Poling Percentage.



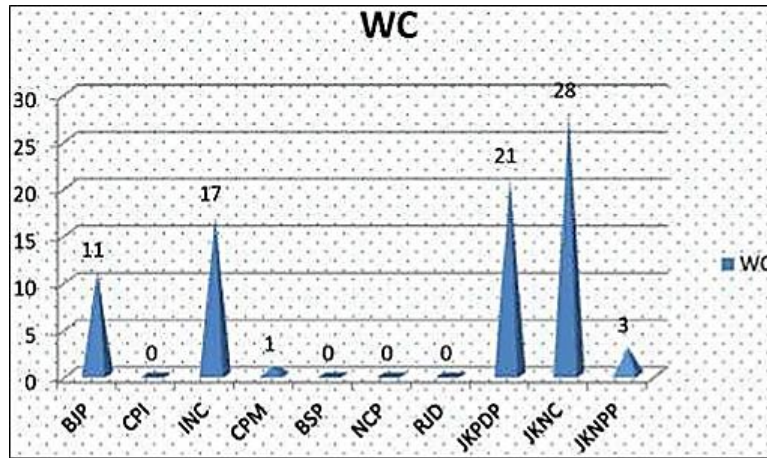
**Fig 1:** Showing graphical representation of electoral participation on the basis of gender in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008)

**Interpretation:** The results presented in table 1 (Please Refer, Fig. 1) gives information about frequency and percent wise distribution of electoral participation on the basis of gender in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). The results indicate that among male electorates 63.28 (F=2128882) express their right to vote at their respective polling stations in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). Coming towards their counter parts it has been observed that 58.86 (F=1823212) express their representation by casting vote at their own polling stations in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). Therefore, from the above obtained results it can be inferred that the gender difference was observed in electoral process in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). Indeed male voters achieve high percentage of voting as compared to their counterparts. Coming towards the composite analysis of the voter turnout of Legislative Assembly Election (2008), it has been observed that 61.16% (F=3952094) express their right to vote. However, the perusal of the table indicates that

majority of the respondents failed to express their participation in the electoral process in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). So the results indicate that major initiatives should be taken by the government to incline, more or more people towards electoral process.

**Table 2:** Performance of Political Parties in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir

S. No.	Party Name	Contesting Candidates	Wining candidates
1.	BJP	64	11
2.	CPI	07	0
3.	INC	78	17
4.	CPM	08	01
5.	BSP	83	00
6.	NCP	19	00
	RJD	14	00
7.	JKPDP	78	21
8.	JKNC	85	28
9.	JKNPP	78	3



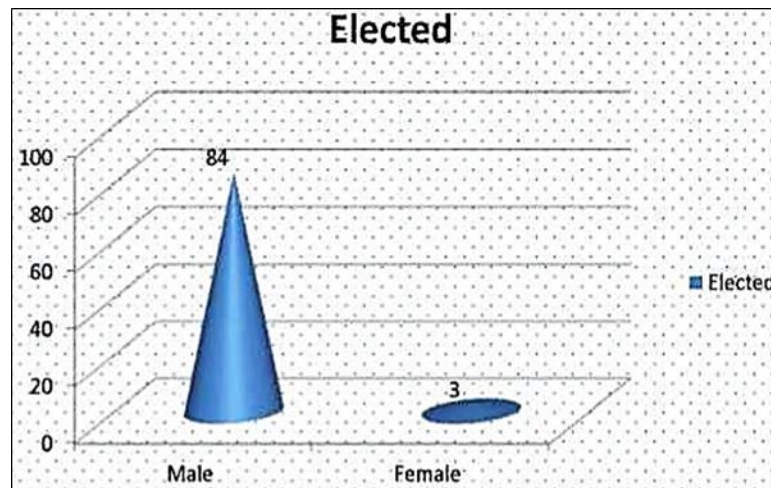
**Fig 2:** Showing graphical representation of performance of Political Parties in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir

**Interpretation:** The perusal of the table 2, (Please Refer Fig. 2) gives information about contesting and winning performance of Political Parties In The state in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir. The 2008 elections were quite competitive as the above table shows. The number of parties which were in fray was increased. Besides the National Conference, the Congress, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), BJP, BSP, INC, CPM, CPI, BSP, NPP also participated in the election process. However despite the fact that previously National Conference emerged as the hegemonic party used to winning with huge margin, the results were exceptional. The results reported in the table indicates that National Conference Party achieve top position by winning 28 seats out of 85 seats on which the party contested election in 2008. Thus, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was able to maintain its second position by capturing 21 seats. However, Indian National Congress (INC) stands on the third position in Legislative Assembly Election (2008). The results indicate that BJP, won only 11 seats out of 64 seats on which the party contested election in Legislative Assembly Election (2008). However this was the rising signal for BJP, Besides the obtained results indicate that the most ruling party of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) won only 28 seats out of 85 on which the party contested election of 2008, despite the were compelled to stay in opposition. Apart from this it is imperative to mention here that one seat goes in favour of CPM, as M.Y. Tarigami got success in winning two seat with least margin. In addition to this all remaining parties failed to open their account. The collation efforts of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Indian National Congress got success in executing the Government. But the prevalence of turmoil in 2009 (Amaranth land Issue) brought fracture in the collation based Government of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Indian National Congress. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) withdrew their support later Governor rule were implemented in the state. Thus, the assembly was dissolved before reaching to its maturity. Therefore, the State Assembly Elections, 2008, the results not only turned the Congress into a kingmaker but also pitched the party into a

power sharing alliance with the National Conference (NC) which emerged as the single largest party winning 28 seats. Together, the NC and the Congress had 45 MLAs, one more than magic figure of 44 required to form the government. The alliance also nets the NC, a partner in the NDA into the UPA. Although the NC's seat tally remained the same as that in 2002, the party was quick to stake claim to power with its President Omar Abdullah plumping for Congress's support, glossing over the fact that the past NC-Congress alliances were unmitigated political disasters particularly the Rajiv Gandhi-Farooq Abdullah Accord before the 1987 elections that pushed the state into militancy. The fractured verdict also necessitated the charismatic Abdullah Senior, who was projected as the party's Chief Ministerial candidate to step aside and pass the baton to his only son-a smooth succession to the third generation of the Abdullah clan which has ruled the state for much of the last six decades. Farooq said that he would work to strengthen the party base while his son would run the government in the state Farooq Abdullah said he did not want to return as it "required the energy of a younger man" and nominated his son Omar Abdullah and the head of the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference instead. The Congress debated forming a coalition with either Conference or the PDF. It was reported that the PDF had offered to support a Congress candidate for the Chief Ministership if it agreed to join with them. However, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Congress Chairperson Sonia Gandhi were reported to favour the largest party to "honour the mandate" of the election. On 30 December, the Congress and the National Conference agreed to form a coalition government with Omar Abdullah as the Chief Minister.

**Table 3:** Showing the frequency distribution of the contestants on the basis of gender in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir

Status	Male	Female	Total
No. of Contestants	1287	67	1354
Elected	84	03	87



**Fig 3:** Showing the graphical representation of the contestants on the basis of gender in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir

### Interpretation

The perusal of the table 3 (Please Refer, Fig. 3) gives information about the contestants on the basis of gender in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir. The results indicate that Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir was quite competitive as the above table shows. However, there was observed significant different of contestants on the basis of gender. The obtained results indicate that the total contestants were observed 1354. While gendering these contestants, it was found that 1287 were observed male contestants in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir. Coming towards their counter parts, it was observed that only 67 female contestants were reported in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir. Thus, the results indicate that gender gap is existing in the electoral process of Jammu and Kashmir. While evaluating the elected representation on the basis of gender, it has been observed that among male contestants 84 were elected as the representatives for legislative assembly. However, among female contestants, only 03 were elected. Thus, from the obtained results it can be inferred that the impact of gender is existing on the participation of testers. By and large, polity of Jammu & Kashmir has remained male dominated with minimal representation given to female candidates by both state and national political parties which more or less exposes the political hypocrisy of the country's politicians who are pressing for passing women's reservation bill but have miserably failed to give true representation to fairer sex. State political parties have most part of the democratic process of the state emerged as the ruling parties with likes like national conference, the party which has dominated over the state polity for most part

### Conclusions of the study: The conclusions of the study are reported as under

1. In the Legislative Assembly Election 2008, it was found that among male electorates 63.28 (F=2128882) express their right to vote at their respective polling stations in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008), 58.86 (F=1823212) female electorates express their representation by casting vote at their own polling stations in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). Therefore, from the above obtained results it can be

inferred that the gender difference was observed in electoral process in the Legislative Assembly Election (2008). Indeed male voters achieve high percentage of voting as compared to their counterparts.

2. In composite analysis of Legislative Assembly Election (2008), it has been observed that 6L16% (F=3952094) express their right to vote.
3. The results reveal that National Conference Party achieve top position by wining 28 sets out of 85 seats on which the party contested election in 2008, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was able to maintain its second position by capturing 21 seats and BJP won only 11 seats out of 64 seats on which the party contested election in Legislative Assembly Election (2008). However this was the rising signal for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
4. The results indicate that the elections 2008 were quite competitive, the contesting candidates position as well as quantity has been enhanced as compared to previous elections.
5. In Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir, the total contestants were observed 1354 among these contestants 1287 were observed male contestants and 67 female contestants were reported in Legislative Assembly Election (2008) of Jammu & Kashmir. Thus, the results indicate that gender gap is existing in the electoral process of Jammu and Kashmir.

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