



# FIRST PARLIAMENT

Brief Profile of 6 Lok Sabha members from Jammu and Kashmir

## TEN RESEARCH DESK

An eminent Dogra soldier having close ties with Maharaja Hari Singh and a Kashmiri Pandit staunchly opposed to National Conference for a decade were among the first six members that Jammu and Kashmir sent to the first Lok Sabha in 1952.

Since the first delimitation was not extended to Jammu and Kashmir, the law provided for sending members from this state to the Lok Sabha through indirect elections with Assembly making the electoral college. However, such elections never happened in practice as leaders -Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1952 and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in 1957 and 1962 -made selections on their own and got resolution passed from the Assembly.

The first lot of members to the Lok Sabha comprised National Conference general secretary Maulana Mohammad Saeed Masoodi, senior party leaders Ghulam Qadir Bhat Ganderbali and Sufi Mohammad Akbar. Ganderbali and Sufi had worked in police and civil services under emergency administration besides being key organisational members in the National Conference. Major Lachman Singh Charak, a second generation legislator of the Praja Sabha and Shiv Narain Fotedar, a top Kashmiri Pandit leaders staunchly opposed to National Conference also made it to the Lok Sabha. Fotedar, first Census Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir under Maharaja Hari Singh administration, was a member of Praja Sabha, the pre 1947 legislative assembly, for 14



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years. The sixth member, Chowdhary Mohammad Shafi was from Mirpur who made Jammu his home.

Lachman Singh Charak, from Birpur in present day Samba district, was elected member of the Praja Sabha in 1938. His father, Chowdhary Chhatter Singh Charak was a member of the first Praja Sabha in 1934. Lachman Singh, in early 1940s, worked as under secretary to the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

Educated in the United States, Lachman Singh was a Captain in the Indian Army since 1934 and was a recruiting officer for many years. In 1947, he joined Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to assist the emergency administration in relief and rehabilitation affairs. In 1948, he was recalled by the Indian Army for active service in operations in Nowshera sector. Upon release from Army in 1950, in the rank of Major, he returned to Sheikh Abdullah government and worked with the peace brigade.

Chowdhary Mohammad Shafi, an academic and journalist, was originally from Bhagsar in Mirpur district but he lived most his life in Jammu. A trusted lieutenant of Sheikh Abdullah, he took active role in National Conference since the early 1940s and also got in close contact with Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders. Despite belonging to an area which had fallen to Pakistan, Chowdhary Shafi was deeply committed to the idea of India and for this reason he was arrested by Pakistani forces and imprisoned in Lahore for a long time.

On March 25 1952, when Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah moved resolution in the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly, under session at the Grey Hall in Jammu, he introduced each member, proposed to be