
Sardar Patel Role in Uniting India

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Introduction

Sardar Patel handled effectively the integration of the princely states with his diplomatic skills and foresightedness. The problem of amalgamating 562 independent states with a democratic self-governing India was difficult and delicate. But it was essential to save India from balkanization, once the Paramountcy of British crown would lapse. Sardar Patel took charge of the states department in July 1947. He sensed the urgent and imperative need of the integration of princely states. He followed an iron handed policy. He made it clear that he did not recognize the right of any state to remain independent and in isolation, within India. Patel also appealed to the patriotic and national sentiments of the Princes and invited them to join the forming of a democratic constitution in the national interest. He persuaded them to surrender defence, foreign affairs and communication to the government of India. He, by his tactics, broke the union of separatist princes. By August 15, 1947 all except Hyderabad, Junagarh and Kashmir acceded to India. He thereafter carried three fold process of assimilation, centralization and unification of states. The states were amalgamated to form a union and that union was merged with the Union of India. He handled the Junagarh and Hyderabad crisis as a seasoned statesman. Nawab of Junagarh wanted to accede to Pakistan. When the people revolted, Patel intervened. Indian Government

took over the administration. Patel merged it with India by holding a plebiscite. Patel with an iron fisted hand subdued the Nizam. When the Nizam boasted anti-India feelings and let loose a blood both by the Razakars, Patel decided upon police action. He ordered the army to March into Hyderabad. The Nizam surrendered and Hyderabad was acceded to India. Thus Sardar Patel ensured, by his calculated methods, the absorption of a multitude of princely states into the Indian Union. Without a civil war, he secured the solidarity of the nation.

Department of Native States and Sardar Patel

On 27th June, 1947, Sardar Patel assumed the charge of the newly formed Department of Native States in the Interim Government. He was intent on sparing no efforts to stall the mischief done by the lapse of Paramountcy and was keen to work his way through the maze till he could achieve his goal of a United India. With this new mantle, on 5th July, 1947, he announced the Government's policy statement governing the Princely States, It was announced some days back that the Government of India had decided to set up a Department to conduct their relations with the States in matters of common concern. This Department has come into being today and the States have been informed to this effect. On this important occasion, I have a few words to say to the Rulers of Indian States, among whom I am happy to count many as my

personal friends. With his oratorical finery, he then proceeded to convince them of the futility of continuing their isolated existence of yore, made them see reason. He continued, When the British established their rule in India, they evolved the doctrine of Paramountcy, which established the supremacy of British interests.... Now that the British rule is ending, a demand has been made that the States should regain their independence.... I have every sympathy for this demand, but I do not think that it can be their desire to utilize this freedom from domination in a manner which is injurious to the common interest of India or which militates against the ultimate Paramountcy of popular interests and welfare or which might result in the abandonment of that mutually useful relationship that has developed between the British India and the Indian States during the last century. This has been amply demonstrated by the fact that a great majority of Indian States have 72 already come into the Constituent Assembly. To those who have not done so, I appeal that they should join now. He then kindled new hopes in them, We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavour, we can raise the country to a new greatness, while lack of unity will expose us to fresh calamities. I hope the Indian States will bear in mind that the alternative to cooperation in the general interest is anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a common ruin, if we are unable to act altogether in the minimum of common tasks. Let not the future generations curse us for having had the opportunity, but having failed to turn it to our mutual advantage. Instead, let it be our proud privilege to leave a legacy of mutually beneficial relations which would raise this sacred land to its proper place amongst the

nations of the world and turn it into an abode of peace and prosperity. These parting lines must have soothed many a ruffled nerve and sent out a confidence building message. But Sardar Patel's real work had only just begun. Sardar Patel initiated a fresh move by holding private and personal contacts with the rulers. On 10th July, he met with the Maharajas of Patiala and Gwalior and Premiers of Baroda and Bikaner. He then initiated a diplomatic leakage of the news of that informal meeting held at his residence. The newspapers published 'reliably understood' reports and that helped in bringing more Rulers to accept accession. Sardar Patel had already established his communication channels with various Rulers, their emissaries as well as the leaders of Praja Parishads and Praja Mandals in various States. Some substantial States like Hyderabad, Travancore and Bhopal were rearing for the self-proclamation of Independence; Junagadh even went to the length of acceding itself to Pakistan. Gradually, however, as the realities of the situation and the likely future scenarios where they would be at disadvantage vis-a-vis Indian Union, began to dawn on the Rulers, their resistance began to crumble and they began to, one by one, join the Indian Union by signing the Instruments of Accession and Standstill Agreements. Both these documents specifically declared that there would be no attempt to revive Paramountcy. Rampur was the first State to declare its accession to the Indian Union.³⁵ Sardar Patel endorsed V.P. Menon's idea of enlisting Mountbatten's cooperation, because his relationship with the British Royal Family would carry a considerable influence with the Rulers. Mountbatten responded positively and the Cabinet approved that line of Action. On 25th July, 1947, Lord Mountbatten, as the

Viceroy, address the Chamber of Princes and appealed to the Rulersto accede to either ofthe Dominions on three subjects, namely, Defence, External Affairs and Communications. He referred to the proposal contained in the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 as “reasonable, fair and just” that the States should surrender to the Central Government these three subjects. Defence was a matter which a State could not conduct all by itself. The States had no experience in handling the External Affairs. Communications presented a means for maintaining the lifeblood ofthe whole Sub-Continent. He summed up his appeal as under: The whole country is passing through a criticalperiod. I am not asking any State to make any intolerable sacrifice ofeither its internal autonomy or independence. My scheme leaves you with all practical independence that you can possible use and makes youfree ofall those subjects which you cannotpossibly manage on your own. You cannotrun awayfrom the Dominion Government which is your neighbour any more than can run away from the subjects for whose welfare you are responsible.³⁶ The appeal made a definite impact on the Rulers. The Negotiation Committee of the Chamber ofprinces split into two - one dealt with the Instrument ofAccession while the other with the Standstill Agreement. The two Committees approved these two documents. On 31st July, the approval ofthe full Negotiation Committee ofthe Chamber ofPrinces was communicated to the Government ofIndia. The time for Independence was approaching fast. Many ofthe Rulers had signed the Instrument ofAccession and the Standstill Agreement. But the Nizam ofHyderabad, the Maharajas ofJammu & Kashmir, Travancore, Indore and Jodhpur and the Nawabs ofBhopal and Junagadh, were the

few important Rulers who had not agreed to accession oftheir States to India. Here, it would be appropriate to note down a few interesting goings-on. The Maharaja ofTravancore was steadfast in his resolve to remain independent. As early as 15th June, Sardar Patel had queried him that he would like to know how Travancore could be a Sovereign State. He quipped, Probably, the statesmen who made declarations of independence and sovereignty did not understand the implications ofthose terms. So long as the Congress continued to have a foothold in Travancore, there was no question of ‘independence and sovereignty Later on, the Diwan ofTravancore, Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Ayyar, after attending the meeting ofthe Viceroy on 25th July, went back to Cochin to convey to the Maharaja the Viceroy’s advice forsigning the Instrument ofAccession. Meanwhile, the State Congress Committee had launched a pro-accession agitation and there were serious street clashes in the State. Sir Ayyar was wounded in one such clash. Ultimately, led by that kind ofsituation, the 38 Maharaja signed the Instrument ofAccession. The Maharaja ofJodhpur was being encouraged by the Political Department not to sign the Instrument ofAccession to India but to choose Pakistan instead. Accordingly, the Maharaja secretly met Jinnah, who gave him a blank sheet ofpaperto sign the terms and conditions for accession which would be acceptable the latter. But the Maharaja of Jaisalmer, who was accompanying the MaharajaofJodhpur, became suspicious ofJinnah’s designsregarding the communal question and the Maharaja ofJodhpur came back without doing anything ofthat kind. Later on, Mountbatten convinced him that his and his State’s interest laying in signing the Instrument ofAccession to India and the

Maharaja ultimately signed the document. The Nawab of Bhopal was the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes and was a rather powerful man among the Princes. He did not attend the Viceroy's meeting with the Rulers and the States' representatives on 25th July. Mountbatten tried to convince him to sign the Instrument of accession with India as his State was surrounded by the territory of the Indian Union. Then, the Nawab and his constitutional advisor Sir Mohammad Zafarullah had a long discussion with Sardar Patel. The Nawab wanted to sign the Standstill Agreement without acceding his State to India. But Sardar Patel very firmly told him that the Standstill Agreement would not be signed with such Rulers as refused to accede. Ultimately, the Nawab signed the Instrument of Accession. Later, he wrote to Patel that he had used all his powers to protect the independence of his State, but wished to tell him that so long as "You maintain your firm stand against the disruptive forces in the country and continue to be a friend of the States, as you have 41 shown you are, you will find in me a loyal and faithful ally". The Maharaja of Indore was acutely conscious of his pedigree and the decorum attendant with it. He was invited by the Native States Department to come to Delhi. He came but declined to come out of the railway saloon in which he had travelled to Delhi. Sardar Patel sent Rajkumari Armit Kaur, an equally highly pedigreed Princess to meet him. With all her royal feminine charms, she convinced him and brought him to Patel. But the Maharaja was under the influence of the Nawab of Bhopal and said that he had agreed with the Nawab to sign the Instrument of Accession together. When he was shown the document signed by the Nawab, the Maharaja agreed to sign too. Thus, by 15th

August, almost all the Rulers, with a few exceptions like Junagadh, Hyderabad and Jammu & Kashmir acceded to India and signed the Instrument of Accession and Standstill Agreement. Sardar Patel's deft handling of the situation, in spite of the pressures of communal riots that had flared up almost everywhere in the country, division of the assets going to Pakistan, adventurism of Nawab of Junagadh, Nizam of Hyderabad and Raja Hari Singh of Jammu & Kashmir, and numerous such other turmoils that even in normal times would be of nearly insurmountable magnitude, created a sense of oneness in the entire nation. The newly acceded States even put their resources at the disposal of the nation. Sardar Patel openly acknowledged the States' help at this crucial juncture. There were detractors of Sardar Patel's policy of reconciliation too. One P.L. Chudgar wrote to him on 30.7.1947, "If you will kindly read the preamble to the Foreign Jurisdiction Order in Council, 1902, you will find that the source and authority of the political powers of Paramountcy which the King-in-Council exercised through the Political Department are stated to have been derived from 'conquest, usage, sufferance' and all other diverse courses. Step by step, the Union Government of India can also assume all those powers on the same grounds and the further grounds of necessity to prevent a breach of the peace or conflict, which may spread in the territory under the Union Dominion and on the ground that it is the Union Government of India's responsibility to maintain peace in the territories of the States, big and 44 small. These are called 'extra-territorial powers'. Yes, the invitation to convert the foreign-bom Paramountcy into a native supremacy was quite alluring. But being a firm believer in the

democracy and the supremacy of the people's will, Sardar Patel wrote back, Paramountcy will disappear from 15th August and it is hoped that neither the Princes nor the people will shed a tear for its disappearance. May be there will be a temporary vacuum, but time and circumstances will evolve a suitable machinery which, while abandoning all the evils of the defunct Crown Department, will work in cooperation with the people and the Princes and create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. It is not clear whether the tremendous historical development that took place during the next three years was the result of a deliberate design or the natural outcome of India getting freedom and the establishment of a democratic political system both at the Centre and in the States. British Paramountcy in the States was sustained on the pain of armed punishment. One consequence of Paramountcy's disappearance was that the British military power was not available to the Native States to suppress their subjects. In the Free India, the armed forces of the Union were no longer available to the Rulers for being used against their own subjects. Moreover, the Congress had been waging a struggle against the British and hence, the British were interested in keeping the States free of Congress. However, Congress itself was a Government now. This particular realization made several States like Mysore, Cochin, Travancore, Bikaner, etc., to introduce constitutional and political reforms within their respective States. For alleviating the problem of introducing reforms in the smaller States, such States in Orissa and Chattisgarh, Deccan States and some Rajasthan States were reorganized as unions. Sardar Patel had been consulted about the Deccan States, which consisted scattered territorial pieces in two

linguistic regions of Bombay Province and were, in due course, merged into the Province. But the people's movements were at the root of the troubles in some smaller States in Orissa region, where the problems of backwardness and lack of any worthwhile political organization was complicated by the significant presence of a tribal population. A similar situation also arose in Chattisgarh region in the Central Province. Sardar Patel decided that in order to build up the resources of these States sufficiently to ensure modern government and to give them the benefits of democratic rule, the solution was to merge them into the adjoining Provinces. Many Rulers could have opposed this policy, but they were sufficiently wise to realize that their position in relation to their subjects had now become uncertain and it was advisable that they conclude an amicable settlement with the Government of India. These settlements basically involved only two conditions: (i) that their small States were merged into the adjoining Province, and (ii) in return for their abdicating the ruling power, they were given reasonable annual grant as privy purses. Sardar Patel's Statement dated 16th December, 1947, adequately brings out his concern for the Rulers, ... I felt that the Rulers had acquired by heredity and history certain claims on the people, which the latter must honour. Their dignities and privileges and their means of subsistence on a reasonable standard must be assured. I have always held to the belief that the future of the Princes lies in the service of their people and their country and not in the continued assertion of their autocracy. In conformity with these ideas, I felt that on release from an increasingly onerous and awkward responsibility, but at the same time, their personal position and that of the

ruling family fully safeguarded, they would have opportunities of services, which have hitherto been denied to them and which many of them are genuinely longing for and genuinely anxious to secure and they would cease to be the targets of continuous bitter attacks and ill-will. About the transfer of power within the States, he stated, Throughout my discussions with the Rulers, I was careful to emphasize that the solution which we suggested for the difficult problems with which we and they were equally faced was for them to accept or reject of their own free-will. There was no compulsion save of events and of the circumstances and the peculiar problems of their States. I also told them that in offering this solution, were actuated by nothing but the friendliest disposition towards them and had nothing but the ultimate good of the Princes and their people at heart. I also maintained that their voluntary surrender of most of the powers that they wielded so far would increase and not reduce the prestige that they have enjoyed and would create in the hearts of their people a place of lasting affection and regard which would rebound to their glory'. I am very glad that they all responded to these sentiments and would ask the people of these States to play their own part and to extend to each one of them unfailing cordiality and unrestricted goodwill. About the responsibility of the people in the new setup, he averred, In future, if the people of these States have any grievances, they can only be against the popular representatives and leaders, who would be charged with their interests and welfare, and not against the Princes. ...It will also be the duty of the people concerned to help and cooperate wholeheartedly with the respective Provincial Administrations in this process of unification and amelioration, so that

they may derive the full benefit of this great achievement.

Unified India Panorama The final picture that emerged from Sardar Patel's labours for the Unified India was something like following:

1 Saurashtra Union

On the eve of India's Independence, there were a total 222 States exercising various degrees of jurisdiction in Kathiawad. All these States taken together had an area of 22,000 square miles (56,980 square kilometres) and a population of nearly 4 lakh. Majority of them were petty States where self-government appeared well-nigh impossible. They were scattered and, due to financial backwardness, unable to provide welfare to their subjects. As such the Union of those States into one compact unit was essential. Sardar Patel had a preliminary talks with Jam Saheb of Nawanagar and the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra. He told them that owing to the agitations for self-government, the 80 Kathiawad States were in danger. It lay in their interests to merge into one compact Union. For their sacrifices, they were promised some sort of headship in the proposed Union. V.P. Menon visited Rajkot on 17th January, 1948, and after successful bargaining with numerous Rulers, hammered out the Saurashtra Union. In return, the rulers were given liberal privy purses, high posts to some of the important Rulers, and their sentiments for preserving the separate existence was respected.

2 Gujarat States

In Gujarat, there were 17 full jurisdictional and 127 semi- or non-jurisdictional States. They had two alternatives in mind - first, to form a Union of their own, or second, to get merged with Baroda. The Maharaja of Baroda was not agreeable to the second proposition, as he

wanted to keep a separate entity of his State, and the first course was not acceptable to the Native States Department because the semi- and non-jurisdictional States were further subdivided among themselves, number 271 at that time. Most of them were non-viable. Through bargaining, they were given clear assurance about their privy purposes, personal privileges and other facilities. Due to their weak economic position and non-viability, they succumbed to the bargaining and agreed to merge into the Bombay Province. However, Kolhapur and Baroda did not merge at that time.

3 Vindhya Pradesh

States Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand tract comprised 35 States. Biggest among them was Rewa, which was declared to be a viable unit. It also had separate representation in the Constituent Assembly. There were some difficulties in uniting these States into a Union. However, through bargaining, the Maharaja of Rewa was won over. Rewa wanted a permanent headship of the Union, but it was not acceptable to the States Department. However, it was conceded that in the election to the head of the Union, Rewa would get weightage in proportion to its importance. A proposal for an independent Constituent Assembly was also conceded, although it did not materialize after the formation of the Union. The privy purpose of the Maharaja of Rewa was fixed at Rs. 1 lakh per year. Thus, the main hurdle was over and in April, 1948, the Vindhya Pradesh Union came into existence.

4 PEPSU

Pepsu comprised four States, namely, Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, Kapurthala and Malerkotla. Four of these were Sikh States. Kapurthala belonged to the Ahluwalia family and Malerkotla's Ruler was a Sherwani Afghan.

The Sikh States had pro-Akali inclinations and they were also afraid that their States might be merged with the neighbouring Province, As such, they sponsored the idea of a separate Sikh State. On the other hand, the nationalist Sikh opinion was in favour of a separate Union of all Punjab States and was opposed to the merger of those States, leading to the formation of a separate Sikh State. The State Department commenced its bargaining bearing in mind the nationalist demand. It was finally decided to create a Union of the East Punjab States. Another factor that helped the formation of the Union was the dispute between the State's People's Conference and the Raja of Faridkot. The Raja's alleged ill-treatment of the political prisoners and Muslim evacuees induced the States Department to intervene and take over the State's administration. In this kind of situation, the remaining States agreed to merge into a Union.

5 Greater Rajasthan Union

Rajasthan contained 12 States. Their integration was effected in five stages. The first was the formation of Matsya Union, with the integration of four States of Alwar, Dholpur, Bharat and Karauli. The second was the formation of the first Rajasthan Union with Banswara, Bundi, Dungarpur, Zalawar, Kishangarh, Kotah, Pratapgarh, Shahpura and Tonk. The third was the inclusion of Udaipur in the first Rajasthan Union. The fourth was the formation of Greater Rajasthan Union with the inclusion in it of Jaipur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. The fifth stage was that of incorporating the Matsya Union in the 82 Greater Rajasthan Union. After prolonged negotiations and bargaining the deed was finalized by Sardar Patel himself with the assistance of V.P. Menon and others.

6 Travancore

Cochin Union On being asked to the premiers of these two States about the future of their respective States, they opposed their merger into the Madras Province and instead suggested the Union of these two States. But there was a problem in forming this Union. The Maharaja of Travancore maintained that he had been administering the State in the name of Shree Padmanabha (God) and as such, was the servant of a tutelary deity. On the other hand, the Government of India wanted some sort of assurance from the Maharaja that he would be faithful to the Constitution of India and to the new Union. Finally, it was decided that he would address a letter to the States Department expressing that he would preserve protect and defend the Union of Travancore-Cochin and the Constitution of India and would devote himself to the service of the people. The Maharaja, however, did not bargain for long and soon agreed to the formation of the Union.

7 Orissa States

On 14th December, 1949, Sardar Patel met Rulers of the Class-A States in Orissa and acquainted them with his views. But they were unwilling to merge their States. After much heated arguments, the Maharaja of Dhenkanal was taken into confidence and was told that in view of the Praja Mandal Agitation for responsible Government, he would be unable to maintain his position in the State without the support of the Government of India. He was also asked to convey his decision to merge his State to other Rulers and if they failed to follow his example, New Delhi would be compelled to take over the administration of their States. Menon even clearly threatened other Rulers that if they did not sign the merger agreement, he was going to order them to stay in Cuttack until the States Ministry occupied their States with

the help of Reserve Police. Menon later confessed that this was high-handedness. But Sardar Patel had assured Menon of his support. When Nehru and Gandhiji questioned the rationale of this approach, Menon was supported by Patel.

8 Deccan States

Following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, there were large scale riots in these States. Besides Kolhapur, there were 17 other States in the region, but they were scattered within the Bombay Province. The people in these States were agitating for responsible Governments for a long time. The Rulers of these States had formed a voluntary Union. They met Sardar Patel on 19th January, 1948, and asked for the formation of a separate Union. Sardar Patel made it clear that their Union was not duly recognized by the States Department and advised them to merge their States into Bombay Province, as law and order problems emanating from their States were seriously affecting the peace in that Province. As the lobbying of the States Department failed, Sardar Patel took a strong view and almost ordered the Ruler of Sawantwadi to merge his States into Bombay Province or else face the revolt of his people. The Nawab of Janjira was threatened with deposition if he did not agree to the merger.

9 Kolhapur State

There were large scale riots in this State after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and on the failure of the State's machinery to contain these, the States Department had to appoint Capt. V. Nanjappa as the Administrator. Forced by the situation, the Ruler most unwillingly signed the instrument of merger in the Bombay Province.

10 Baroda State

The Ruler of Baroda was trying to postpone the merger of his State into Bombay Province as far as possible. His Diwan K.M. Munshi suddenly left for England and the Ruler had to appoint Jivraj Mehta as Diwan as demanded by the local Praja Mandal. Thereafter, the demand for a responsible Government received new momentum. On 9th August, 1948, the State's Legislative Assembly accused the Ruler of misappropriation of funds of Rs. 3 crore and demanded his abdication in favour of his eldest son. Under 84 such circumstances, the Maharaja signed the merger instrument and requested Sardar Patel to safeguard the succession of the throne, privileges of the Ruler and the Ruling Family, to which Sardar Patel readily agreed.

11 Madhya Bharat

The States Department then zeroed in on the States in Madhya Bharat, particularly Gwalior and Indore. Sardar Patel informed the Rulers of these States that their integration into one Union was in their own interests, because then only, Government of India would be able to fulfill such obligations as privy purse and protection of private property. Maharaja of Gwalior was not in a mood to listen to the advice. Thereupon, V.P. Menon told him that the Department had made up its mind that apart from Hyderabad and Mysore, no State would retain their identity. Under these circumstances, neither Gwalior nor Indore could resist and agreed to the formation of a Union.

12 Shimla Hill States

In Shimla Hill Region, there were 16 States, 13 with less than 100 sq. mile territory and 3 with less than 10 sq. miles territory. After the transfer of power, there were constant demands for the grant of responsible governments. In Chamba State, the Government of India had to provide

Police and military assistance to maintain law and order. Subsequently, a Diwan was also deputed from the States Department to run the administration. Suket and Balson States voluntarily handed over their administration to the Government of India. Subsequently, all the States in the region, except Bilaspur, were grouped into one Union as Himachal Pradesh.

13 East Punjab States

Dujana, Loharu and Pataudi were the three Muslim States in East Punjab. When communal riots broke out, the Nawab of Dujana fled to Pakistan. Loharu agreed to merge into Punjab State and the Nawab of Pataudi voluntarily signed the merger agreement. 85 In summing up, it may be observed that Sardar Patel and his staff played their diplomacy from the position of power and strength. Where persuasion, conciliation or bargaining could not succeed, they did not hesitate in using threats or coercion. Local popular movements for merger were also encouraged to compel the Ruler's surrender. A few States were taken over on the ground of maladministration. Sardar Patel had been closely associated with the underground movements in the States even during the pre-Independence period and afterwards. He had a firm grip over the organizational wings of the Congress Party. Sardar Patel's assiduous effort and the efficiency of his officers in the Native States Department accelerated the process of the country's unification and by mid-1949, it was almost completed.

Nizam of Hyderabad seeks sovereignty for state

Nizam Mir Usman Ali Khan Bahadur of Hyderabad issues a firman declaring that upon the hour of freedom on 15th August, 1947, Hyderabad would become an independent sovereign, joining neither India nor Pakistan.

Under attack from Pakistan, Kashmir declares Accession to India.

Raja Hari Singh of Kashmir was undecided about accession. His territory was situated right in the middle of the two nations and his state had a large percentage of Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. He acceded in pressing circumstances, pleading to India to come to his aid to defend Kashmir against the attack from armed Pakistani tribals. India agreed to help him. Provided he signed on the Instrument of Accession first.

Landmark Referendum at Junagadh

When normalcy returned, a Plebiscite was conducted in Junagadh to ascertain the choice of the people of the state, given the peculiar nature of the circumstances there. An overwhelming majority cast their votes in favour of India.

Conclusion

The enduring nature of Sardar Patel's achievement in building a political edifice in India in little over two years, in place of five hundred and odd separate entities, earned him the noble title of the Architect of the Nation's Unity. The achievement confounded the Prophets of Doom, the most illustrious among whom was the former British Premier Sir Winston Churchill. This achievement also laid the foundation of the Indian unity, which was so vital to its prosperity and greatness in subsequent decades. An India divided would have been a prey to destructive forces, an irremovable obstacle to its economic progress and an irretrievable blow to the prestige which was its due among the world community of sovereign nations. An India united provided a firm base for economic planning and growth and an indispensable takeoff point for the implementation of its

foreign policy and for building up its foreign relations. The Mughal emperors and subsequently, the English Colonialists had accomplished India's unification through armed coercion and duress, but Sardar Patel secured it through reconciliation. Both efforts needed supreme willpower, tenacity and assiduity, but in keeping with the changing times, Sardar Patel added sagacity, that is, insight and practical wisdom, to his effort. The magnitude of this achievement can be appreciated only with an understanding of the nature of the problems that faced Sardar Patel when he was hand-moulding the scheme of transfer of power. Today, whatever may be the disruptive forces that threaten the country, the political solidarity and integrity crafted by Sardar Patel's statesmanship still holds and will continue to hold

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