

SARDAR VALLABH BHAI'S CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

We are very well familiar with the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He played a prominent role in the nation building. He was the first deputy Prime Minister of the country and the first Minister of Home Affairs of free India. At the time of independence India was going through a civil crisis which was a result of the partition of the country. India paid the price of partition by losing the lives of millions of innocent people of the country. Under such circumstances Sardar Patel was given the task of unifying the country. Nation-building is possible only when there is peace and for the peaceful existence every part should be well organized. The unity and integrity are the most essential characteristics of a nation. During the era of Britishers, India was divided into a number of Princely States. The task of unification of these princely states was given to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He was successfully able to integrate these states into India. He was also the member of the Constituent Assembly and as such was one of the chief architects of the present Constitution of India. This paper attempts to emphasis on the role of Sardar Patel as the freedom fighter, in the unification of the country, as the constitution maker, as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, as the supreme Commander-in-Chief of the army, and his vision in solving the present crisis in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Words: *Partition, Nation-building, Integration, Kashmir crisis*

INTRODUCTION

Sardar Patel was one of the prominent leaders who not only participated in the freedom struggle to make India free but also worked hard to strengthen the roots so that India remains integrated. He was the founding father of the Republic of India. He was the first Deputy Prime Minister of India and was also the supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army during the Indo-Pak War of 1947. He was born on 31st October 1875 in Nadiad, Bombay Presidency,

British India (now in Gujarat, India). He was born and raised in the countryside and belonged to the influential Patidar community. He was the fourth child to Ladbha and Jhaveribhai. His parents led a very simple life. He was married at an early age to Jhaverba. He had to struggle a lot in pursuing his studies. He matriculated and passed his Law Examination much later. He was successful as a lawyer in Godhra and Borsad but he decided to go to London to become a Barrister. He earned money so that he can go to England. He studied very earnestly

for the Law Examination and saved money for a visit to England. He passed his exams and returned to India with a lot of confidence. He was inspired by the personality of Mahatma Gandhi and on his insistence joined politics. He became a member of the Congress party. It is well known that at the time of independence India was divided into a number of princely states who were given the choice of either joining one of the two dominions that is India and Pakistan or remain independent. Sardar Patel's strategy and his able statesmanship successfully integrated all these princely states with India even after facing resistance from the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Junagarh and Hyderabad. He was a born leader. Also at the time of Indo-Pak war of 1947 he efficiently played his role as the supreme Commander-in-Chief of the army and drove India towards victory. We are highly indebted to him for his able guidance which he has provided us throughout the freedom struggle and also after independence. He had the calibre of becoming the Prime Minister and had the support of a majority of congressmen but on the insistence of Mahatma Gandhi he gave away his claim and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India. It is very sad that the person who played such an important role in the unification of the country was neglected for a long time. Even the Bharat Ratna Award, the highest award in the country was given to him posthumously in the year 1991. It is a harsh reality that the party of which he was a member and dedicated his whole life in its service neglected him. It was in 2014 that the present BJP Government under the Prime Ministerialship of Narendra Modi took a decision to build the world's highest statue of Sardar Patel in Narmada District. It would be called the Statue of Unity. It is slated to be world's tallest statue at 182 metres.

Sardar Patel could have been the first Prime Minister of India. A majority of people of the Congress were in favour of Sardar Patel. But Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru threatened Gandhiji of the division of the Congress Party in case he was not made the Prime Minister of free India. At that critical moment the country could not afford the division within the Congress and as

such under the influence of the pressure created by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru on Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhiji insisted Sardar Patel to give up his claim to become the Prime Minister. Although he had won the election against Jawaharlal Nehru but still he did what Gandhiji asked him to do. Had he been the Prime Minister he would have successfully tackled the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The policy of appeasement which was adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru and further by other leaders of the Congress deteriorated the situation not only in Jammu and Kashmir but also in North Eastern part of India.

ROLE OF SARDAR PATEL IN THE INTEGRATION

During the course of establishment and expansion of British Empire, it had developed basically two types of relationship with the Princely States.

1. Assimilation of princely states by way of merger
2. Indirect rule under which the British Empire had established suzerainty over many princely states. In this system, the British Crown established its paramountcy over these princely states and controlled their finance, foreign affairs and defence but allowed the rulers of these princely states to handle their internal administration.

After the revolt of 1857, the British government mainly adopted the policy of indirect rule. As a result of this, at the time of exit of the British in 1947, there were around 550 big and small princely states. Merger of these princely states into one administrative system was one of the hard task of the government. The situation was very complex because in the Cabinet Mission Plan and even in the Proclamation made by Atlee on the 20th February, 1947, the issue of the future of these princely states was left unanswered. On the other hand, this proclamation had created confusion because it stated that after the end of the British Rule, the

rights and duties of the British Empire towards these princely states under British paramountcy would not be handed over to any new government of India. Even in the Mountbatten Plan announced on the 3rd June, 1947, it was mentioned to follow the old principles and return paramountcy to these princely states.

Indirectly, these provisions authorized princely states to either merge with India or Pakistan or to either merge with India or Pakistan or to maintain their independent status as per their will and aspirations. The Indian National Congress vociferously raised the issue of merger of princely states while having dialogue with Lord Mountbatten over the matter of transfer of power. Sardar Patel because of his able leadership and diplomatic ability was able to merge these princely states into the Indian Dominion. The merger of princely states was a result of many factors. Definitely, role of Sardar Patel was pivotal in merging various princely states in India. At the time of independence, Sardar Patel was the Deputy Prime Minister as well as the Minister of Home Affairs. Also he assumed the extra charge of newly established Department of Princely states and accomplished this mammoth assignment with the help of Shri V.P. Menon, the secretary of the Dept. There were large number states who wanted to merge in India like Baroda, Bikaner, Cochin, Aundh near Satara etc. However, many other princely states claimed that they are free to choose between India and Pakistan and even free to form their own federation. Ruler of the Princely state of Bhopal even tried to counteract the attempt of the Congress to merge princely states by forming a federation of the princely states and developing nexus with the Muslim League. However, the initial resistance of the princely states could not succeed and by the 15th August, 1947, majority of princely states were merged either in India or in Pakistan. Patel and Menon adopted an elastic and amicable approach in the merger of the princely states. In the official statement regarding the merger of the princely states Patel clarified that it is not

the intention of the government of India to thrust upon its paramountcy over princely states but it wants their active cooperation in the making of the great nation and public welfare. Patel and Menon prepared draft for treaties having attractive benefits for the rulers of the princely states. Two specific types of documents were prepared:

1. Standstill Agreement- through this agreement, it was ensured that all the agreements and administrative behavior between princely states and the British government would be continued by the government of India.
2. Instrument of Accession- According to 'Instrument of Accession', rulers of princely states had to merge their states in India and had to transfer certain specific subjects to the government of India. Subjects to be transferred were to be determined on the basis of the states of the princely states concerned. Those princely states, which had been enjoying more autonomy under the British paramountcy, had to entrust only the subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communication to the government of India whereas smaller princely states, which were almost completely under the control of the British Regime, had to sign a different document of merger under which they had to entrust entire 'Residuary Powers' to the Government of India. Along with this, rulers of the princely states were offered some exclusive rights such as immunity of trial in Indian courts, freedom from customs duty, option for gradual democratization, right to retain British accolades and titles, right to retain personal wealth and right to succession. Sardar Patel, along with V.P. Menon played a key role in convincing the rulers. They have clearly intimated to the rulers of princely states that if they demur in acceding to merge with India on these conditions, they may have to do so with

lesser benefits in future. The Standstill Agreement was also denied to those princely states whose rulers refused to sign instruments of accession.

CONTRIBUTION OF SARDAR PATEL

Through his able tactics Patel was able to merge nearly 550 princely states with India he saved India from breaking up into small states, exercising their own sovereignty and did not allow large Hindu majority areas to fall into Pakistan. Through his diplomatic manoeuvres, Patel secured accession of all states prior to 15th August, before they could be made independent on par with India and Pakistan, thereby gaining equal status. The exceptions were those of Junagarh and Hyderabad- Kashmir too, but it was under Nehru's charge. Junagarh was a princely state situated in the Kathiawad peninsula in the south-west Gujarat. This princely state was ruled by a Muslim Nawab Mohbat Khan though majority of its population was Hindu. Though the land boundary of Junagarh was not attached to Pakistan, the Nawab of Junagarh argued that Pakistan can be reached from Junagarh through sea route. In fact, Nawab Mohbat Khan and his Dewan Shahnawaj Bhutto dreamt of merging Junagarh with Pakistan. On the 14th August 1947, the Nawab of Junagarh announced merger with Pakistan. Pakistan government also approved this merger in September 1947. However, two subordinate territories of Junagarh namely 'Maangrol' and 'Bawawribad' opposed this move of Mohbat Khan and declared their independence from Junagarh and also declared their intention to merge with the dominion of India. In response, the Nawab of Junagarh usurped these territories by using military force. Subsequently V.P. Menon went to Junagarh, met Dewan Shahnawaj Bhutto and persuaded to solve this issue through a referendum. In the meantime, Samal Das Gandhi, nephew of Mahatma Gandhi, established an alternate government (Arj-i-Hukumat) which became the centre of popular uprising against the Nawab of Junagarh. Frightened by these developments, Nawab Mohbat Khan fled away to Karachi and Dewan Shahnawaj Bhutto agreed to

hand over power and rule to the government of India. In order to establish the legitimacy of its rule, the government of India organized a referendum on the 20th February, 1948 in which 91% voters decided to merge Junagarh with India. The case of Hyderabad also was very well resolved because of the efforts of Sardar Patel. Hyderabad was a landlocked princely state with an area of approximately 82000 square miles and a population of around 1.6 crore. It was surrounded by the Central Province in the North Bombay in the west and by Madras in the east and south, 87% of its total population was Hindu, however rule of the state was in the hands of Nizam 'Osman Ali Khan' who was supported by a Muslim outfit 'Itlehaad-UI-Musalmin'. Nizam Osman Ali was also dreaming of his independence. Accordingly, he also issued a 'farmaan' (order) in June, 1947 according to which Hyderabad would retain his independence after departure of the British from India. In order to substantiate his stand, he also took services of the famous British Lawyer Sir Walter Monkton. The government of India denied validity of this Farmaan stating that the princely state of Hyderabad lies in the important link area between North India and South India and being independent it can pose grave danger before peace and security of India by falling under the influence of foreign powers. The Hyderabad Congress was supporting the government of India whereas the presence of communist party of India in the Telangana region of Hyderabad as the third front was also an important factor. Actually, Nizam wanted to have a limited treaty with the government of India through which he was aiming at such immunities which were needed to be outside the provisions of instrument of accession like impartiality of Nizam in case of battle between India and Pakistan. The government of India did not agree to this proposal also. The government of India signed a stand-still Agreement with the Nizam in November, 1947 so that the dialogue process could be continued and Nizam could also constitute a representative government so as to ensure ease in merger. K.M. Munshi was appointed as the representative of the government of India for the dialogue process whereas Nizam appointed Mir

Layak Ali, a staunch supporter of Pakistan, as his representative. But, Nizam was actually not interested in dialogue. Rather, his intention was to linger the process of dialogue and to increase his military power in the intervening period so that the government of India could be compelled to come to the terms proposed by the Nizam. However three major events took place during this period which contributed to the merger of Hyderabad with India.

1. Under the leadership of its new leader 'Kasin Rizvi', 'Itihaad-ul-Musalmin' organized its para-military organization namely 'Rajakaar' and started crushing the people's uprising against the tyranny of the rule of Nizam.
2. On the other hand, the Hyderabad Congress had already started a powerful 'Satyagrah' movement from August, 1947 in order to pressurize Nizam to promote democratization in Hyderabad. When Nizam brutally suppressed this movement by using force, the revolutionaries became compelled to take the course of armed rebellion.
3. During this period, the Telangana movement under the leadership of communists, which was almost suppressed earlier, was resurrected in order to oppose the suppression of farmers by the Rajakars. Communists formed parallel governments in the districts of Nalgonda, Warrangal and Karimnagar.

The cumulative effect of these three events was that the situation became explosive by the year 1948. During this period, Nizam was also accused of continuously importing arms and ammunitions from Pakistan and Eastern Europe. Efforts of Lord Mountbatten to persuade Nizam to merge Hyderabad with India also ended in smoke. The insult to injury was that the Nizam even tried to internationalize the matter by raising the question of Hyderabad in the Security Council of the United Nations and in the International Court of Justice. However, when

Lord Mountbatten resigned on the 21st June, 1948, it became easier for Sardar Patel to take decisive action in this regard. On the 13th September, 1948, Indian Army was deployed in Hyderabad under 'Operation Polo' so that the dwindling law and order in the princely state could be ameliorated soon, the Nizam of Hyderabad surrendered and accepted merger with India in November, 1948. The government of India showed leniency and did not punish the Nizam and even made him the Rajapramukh (Head of the State), granted him Rs. 50 Lakh as Privy-Purse and allowed him to retain major part of his personal assets. One pleasant aspect in this entire episode was that along with the Muslim population of Hyderabad, the Muslim population of the entire country supported the actions of the Government of India and merger of Hyderabad with the dominion of India. On the ashes of the defunct empire Patel created a New India- strong, united, put in a steel-frame. The frame was the Indian Administrative Service, which kept a sub-continent bound together as a single unit despite disparities of politics and economy. As savior and builder, Patel played a decisive role that took India to new pinnacles of success and glory.

Sardar Patel was the backbone of Gandhiji's Satyagrahas. During the Dandi March in 1930, he helped in making the Dandi March a success. In a speech, on his way to Dandi, Gandhiji admitted: "I could succeed in Kheda on account of Vallabhbhai, and it is on account of him that I am here today." In the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928, Patel played the role of a real leader. As the Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board, Patel played the role of a strict boss in the conduct of the provincial elections in 1937. In that capacity he declared: "when the Congress roller is in action, all pebbles and stones will be levelled." He was an uncompromising disciplinarian. That was a major contribution to the party's unity and strength. Without Patel's support Lord Wavell could not have formed the interim government

in August 1946, nor could Lord Mountbatten, in 1947, have implemented transfer of power smoothly and within the time-frame. In return, Patel got for India half of Punjab and half of Bengal and the whole of Assam. Kashmir had been taken away from Patel's charge by Nehru under Sheikh Abdullah's pressure. Had he been given the charge of Kashmir this issue was most probably solved years ago or would not have created as much problem as we are facing today. In his eulogy, delivered the day after Patel's death, sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs, paid tribute to "a great patriot, a great administrator and a great man. Sardar Patel was all three, a rare combination in any historic epoch and in any country." Bajpai lauded Patel for his achievements as a patriot and as an administrator, notably his vital role in securing India's stability in the aftermath of independence and partition:History holds many examples of freedom squandered by lack of attention to stability and order, the twin foundations of society. Though a revolutionary in his fight against foreign rule, Sardar Patel was no believer in abrupt or violent change; progress by evolution was really his motto. And so, although in August 1947 power changed hands, and with it the spirit of the administration, the machinery of government was preserved. As Home Minister and Minister for States, the Sardar had a double task, conservative in the good sense of the word, in what had been provinces in the old India, creative in the Indian States. Neither was easy. To the ordinary

stresses of a transition caused by the withdrawal of trained personnel which had wielded all power for a hundred years was added the strain of partition, the immense human upheavals and suffering that followed it. The fate of our new State hung in the balance during those perilous months when millions moved across the new frontiers under conditions which are still vivid- indeed, too vivid- in our memories, and therefore, need not be described. That despite some oscillation the scales stayed steady was due to not only the faith of the people in its leaders, but to the firm will and strong hand of the new Home Minister.

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