CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the nature, character, achievements, as well as merits and de-merits of the relations between the British Government and the Indian States during the period under review. The findings and conclusion of the study are completely based on the narration and interpretation of the various characteristics of each chapter. How far the British statesmen, in the following four and a half decades, adhered to these strands of the vividly declared policy and to what changes and considerations this policy was subjected in response to the changing conditions and circumstances as well as growing requirements of the Paramount Power in India as well as in Great Britain.

The assumption of the Government of India by the British Crown in 1858 marked the beginning of a new epoch in the British Policy towards the Native States. The principles of 'abandoning no just and honorable accession of territory' by the application of the doctrine of lapse or by other means, which had been deliberately adopted and adhered to by the British authorities during the Company's period, was renounced once for all. The historic Queen's Proclamation of November 1st, 1858 declared in clear and unambiguous terms that the British Government would no longer follow the policy of extension of British possession in India. In pursuance of this declared assurance and Adoption, Sanads were granted to numerous Native Chiefs, including the Punjab Chiefs, particularly the Chiefs of the Phulkian states. It was, indeed, a peremptory and irrevocable decision of the British Government under the Crown to perpetuate the Native States as an integral part of Indian political system.

The Native Chiefs were also assured that the treaties and engagements concluded with them by the East India Company would be
scrupulously maintained and that their rights, dignity and honour would be respected. The solemn assurances given and the concessions granted had evoked high expectations, and caused no mean happiness, in the hearts of the Native Chiefs, and particularly in those of the Sikh Chiefs of the Punjab. For they felt that their territorial and titular possessions would be secure; that their sovereign rights under the existing treaties and sanads would be respected; that their princely dignity and honour would be upheld; and that the British authorities would not interfere unnecessarily or without any reason with the internal affairs of their respective States. But the wide dimensions which the British policy assumed in the course of the following four and a half decades belied most of their expectations and made them somewhat unhappy and dissatisfied. The British Government during these decades asserted, slowly but surely, new claims as a Paramount Power, and exacted new obligations from the Native Chiefs who began to be considered as mere 'feudatories'.

The vast and various fields in which such claims were generally asserted and corresponding obligations imposed were, in the main, the questions of succession; arrangements during the majority of the Chiefs; disputes between the Chiefs and their collaterals and between the Chiefs and their feudatories; fiscal and economic matters, and especially questions of coinage, salt and opium, railway, post and telegraph; personal and territorial jurisdiction of the British in the States; extradition between British India and Native India and between the States themselves; disputes between the States and their isolation from one another; military establishments in the States; Chiefs' visits to foreign countries; employment of Europeans in the States; interference with the internal administration of the States; and, above all, allegiance of the Chiefs and Princes to the British Sovereign/paramount power. In fact, the
British authorities arrogated to themselves arbitrarily in the name of 'Paramountcy' whatever rights and powers they desired, and whatever remained with the Native status and their Chiefs was considered to have been left as a matter of grace.

"The sovereignty of the Crown was everywhere unchallenged. It had itself laid down the limitations of its own prerogatives. It was, ostensibly, a claim not to Paramount power but to complete sovereignty—an assertion that the prerogative of the Crown reached out to any length it chose, entitling it as of right to impose on every State what control it thought fit, although in its forbearance it had graciously chosen to submit to certain self-imposed limitations. Thus, unlimited sovereign authority was claimed by the Paramount Power and its extent was deliberately left undefined. These claims of Paramount Power were asserted generally in spite of, and very often in clear violation of, the existing treaties, engagements and sanads which were declaredly to be 'scrupulously maintained.' It was by agreements tactfully negotiated, by precedents of one State adroitly extended to the others, by usages and customs allowed, consciously or unconsciously, to prevail, and by circulars and orders unilaterally issued by the Supreme Government that the additional obligations were exacted from the Native Chiefs. It was, indeed a miracle achieved by British statesmanship that hundreds of Princes and Chiefs who were all subjected to humiliating conditions – conditions which were tantamount to a denial of most of their sovereign rights– should have submitted, without any organized demur or demonstration, to the imperious dictates of the Paramount Power.

The process reached its culmination during Curzon's period. In the words of Lord Curzon himself:

“The Native Chiefs are not sovereigns. They have been deprived of the essential rights and attributes of sovereignty.
They cannot make treaties, they cannot keep armies or import arms, they cannot have any relations with each other beyond those of friendship, they cannot even build railways without the consent of the Government of India. In the event of aggravated oppression or misrule they are liable to deposition”.

Thus the Chiefs were rendered both unwilling and incapable to pose any serious organized challenge to the British Paramountcy in India. On the other hand, their services were positively utilized for the security and strengthening of the Empire.

In March, 1926, Lord Reading sent a Long Letter to the Nizam of Hydrabad. This has been recognized as the classic statement of the doctrine of unfettered Paramountcy. It said:

"The sovereignty of British Crown is supreme in India, and therefore no ruler of any Indian state can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Its supremacy is not based only on treaties and engagements but exists independently of them, and quite apart from its prerogative in matters relating to foreign affairs and policies, it is the right and duty of British government to preserve peace and good order throughout India."

The Princes got a respectful respite in 1928 when Butler Committee presented its report. For instance, it fully endorsed "the rulers' assertion that their relations were with the Crown, not with the government of India, and could not therefore be transferred without their consent, to a new government in British India...." But the report did mention that "The Paramount Power had an obligation to protect its clients against attempts to overthrow them, or to substitute another form of government with the passage of time and the nationalist activities in
British India were going stronger, the winds of change became very clear by the end of the Second World War”.

Exigencies of imperialism required the British authorities to discard their policy of keeping states isolated from one another and also from British India. It had to promote some kind of co-ordination between States and Provinces. Tired of their isolation and increasing encroachment on their rights and intervention in their internal and also external affairs by the Political Department under the cover of Paramount power. The Princes also designed to seek a solution of their difficulties in constitutional arrangements with British India.

The relationship between the Princely States and British India was influenced to a large extent by the pressures exerted by various factors. The constitutional proposals that evolved were often a compromise between conflicting aims of the British, the Princely order and the nationalist movement. A striking feature of the constitutional development was the direct pressure on the union of both the British India and the states, as the only solution for India's problems. The concept of a union as enunciated by the rulers of Alwar, Bikaner and Baroda, a sisterhood of states, 'a federation' and 'a council of India' as propounded in the reports of officials and non-official committees and commissions, consistently maintained the need for constitutional inter-relationship between the States and the rest of India. The conflict of interests, on the part of the parties concerned- the Princes, the Paramount Power and the political parties in British India - made its realization well nigh impossible.

Thus, in putting forward the view, the British wanted a scheme to sustain a conservative group. It with its dependence on Paramount Power was bound to follow the imperial policy. In the initial stages the Princes believed that their entry into federation might, among other things, meant
freedom from the clutches of the Political Department. However, they immediately realized that what the Congress had envisaged as a federation was likely to result in a questioning of the right of the States' system to exist. They too knew that they could neither combat public opinion that favoured the federal idea, nor remain isolated from constitutional developments in British India. Under such condition, the kind of federation they were willing to accept was such as would maintain their powers inviolate. To illustrate, their insistence on investing the Crown with powers to safeguard their treaty rights could only mean the creation of a supra-federal authority that naturally challenged the sovereignty of the federal authority. Such an authority was not acceptable to various political parties demanding complete freedom.

The federation in the framework of a Dominion and in relation to the ultimate objectives was thought of by the Congress and the Princes as conflicting objectives. While, to the Congress, it was only a means for the achievement of complete freedom and for the setting up of a society based on the Karachi Resolution of 1931, to the Princes, it was a strategic move to get away from the dictates of the Political Department in certain matters. It was also to secure as many favourable terms from British India as they could without losing their rights related to the internal autonomy as the means for the maintenance of some fundamental rights. The Princes made a denial of these very rights a condition precedent to their entry into the federation. On this issue, the Princes held out firmly from the time the Nehru Committee of 1928 made its proposals for the federal structure of India to the deliberations in the Constituent Assembly. Therein an influential section of the Princes took a strong objection to the inclusion of fundamental rights in the Constitution of the Indian Union.

In the First Round Table Conference both Bikaner and Patiala favoured federal unity between States and British India. Patiala soon
backed out and denounced the idea of Federation. It along with Dholpur and others evolved a scheme of confederation with a loose association with the Indian Union. Even those who were opposed to the idea of confederation and favoured direct accession of States with the Indian Union were unhappy with the federal provisions of 1935 Act. They appeared to be more interested in bargaining for more rights and concessions than in the realization of federation. None was happy with the British policy with regard to Paramountcy. All wished it to be retained as a protection against the nationalist forces. They wanted to take full benefit of the British declaration that the constitution of the Federation of India would precede the establishment of responsible government at the Centre.

The outbreak of the Second World War in September, 1939 caused the suspension of the inconclusive federal negotiations. However, wartime exigencies did strengthen the trends towards integration. The bigger States, which had all along kept aloof, came closer to British India by taking in the deliberations and discussions of various councils and government departments. Further, the intensive tempo of the freedom struggle in British India combined with political consciousness in the States highlighted the incapacity of the smaller States to handle the situation by them. Cooperation grouping and attachment schemes brought closer the smaller States in administrative as well as judicial matters. It was the nucleus for the 'federation of smaller States with a centralized administration.' The Attachment Act of 1944 went further. Despite the intense opposition from them wiped off the smaller States as distinct political entities. It was feared by the Princes to be the 'beginning of the end' of the States' system. Some of the Princes came out with a confederation scheme of States. Thereby they attempted to save the
smaller States from total extinction. It did not fructify or produce any fruit because of the non-participation of bigger States in it.

The political situation/conditions of the post-war period destroyed whatever possibilities there were of the Princes achieving their aims and objectives. Freedom Struggle had so progressed that it appeared to be only a matter of time for it to realize its aim of complete independence. The British Government, embroiled as it was in post-War problems of domestic and international politics had lost its capacity to keep its hold on India. It found no cause to be eager to protect the position of the Princes in Indian polity. The position of 'vantage,' as had been frankly maintained by the Ruler of Bikaner had been lost to the Princes. As a Consequence the situation called for a 'reorientation of their policy,' to sustain themselves and safeguard what they could under the circumstances, the Princes thought of rallying support of another source of political power i.e. the people. The idea was mooted by the Princes in a number of conferences and committees. Constitutional reforms were introduced and administrative system was modernized in a number of States. However, these efforts failed to satisfy the States' subjects due to the background of the rising strength of the States' People's Movement which then had the blessings and full political support of the Congress,. They wanted many more reforms. They wanted and demanded a constitutional and political union with British India.

The prospect of India partition provided the Princes with an opportunity for maneuver. The Nawab of Bhopal and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, as Chancellors of the Chamber of Princes, pleaded with Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 and the Cabinet Mission in 1946 that, if there could be two India's there was no reason why a third India composed of Indian States could not be formed and recognized. Hyderabad in its discussions with the Cabinet Mission had already expressed its desire to
assume freedom. So it demanded retrocession of the territories it had ceded to the East India Company and added a new claim for a free outlet to the sea. In it, the Rulers were considerably encouraged by the Cripps' proposals. These permitted the Princes to secede and promised the lapse of Paramount power in regard with only such States as decided to join the federation. Consequently, the Princes expected that they might be allowed not only to exist as independent political units but also the protection of the Paramount Power. The Cabinet Mission made it vivid that the British Government would not be ready to shoulder the obligation of their protection and that British Paramount power would lapse in case of all States after India achieved its independence, many Princes, encouraged by the attitude of conservative leaders of England, expected for British protection in some form or the other. Soon after the British Prime Minister's declaration in favour of the partition of India as wanted by the Muslim League, Bhopal and some other States resigned from the Chamber of Princes on the plea that, after the lapse of Paramountcy, the States would have independent status. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, on behalf of Travancore, took the same stand. Some of the Princes mooted the idea of an independent "Statistan" of some States.

Thus, with the exception of Hyderabad, States' accession to the Indian Union was brought about peacefully through negotiations under the pressure of public opinion and compulsions of the situations. The Nawab of Junagadh desired accession with Pakistan, but its people desired accession with the Indian Union. Ultimately their will prevailed. The Maharaja of Kashmir wanted Standstill Agreements with both Pakistan and Indian Union. However, when Pakistanis raided Kashmir, the Maharaja, with the full concurrence of the National Conference, signed Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union.
The Instrument of Accession and the Standstill Agreement filled the void created by the lapse of Paramountcy. It averted an administrative chaos that was bound to occur, had there not been such an arrangement. The Central Government had to reckon with the people's demand for responsible government and had also to build up the economic stability and consolidate the political unity of a partitioned country.

Despite the lapse of Paramountcy under the Indian Independence Act of 1947, power relationship between the successor government and the States virtually remained as it had been earlier. However, the successor government was concerned with ensuring that aspirations of the people, on whose support they had achieved power, were realized, the successor government could not afford to permit status quo ante to continue and alienate the people of the States.

When the transfer of power took place in 1947, there were many critics who thought that the country would be disintegrated; it would not be possible to maintain a stable administration in the country. The actions of Sardar Patel put a stop to such apprehensions and silenced the critics.

Stability, unity and strength were his watchwords. Junagadh acceded to Pakistan, Bhopal, Hyderabad and Travancore threatened to declare their independence. But Patel’s diplomacy made it difficult for them to carry out their threats. There were certain misunderstandings current about him. A prevalent one about him was that he was an iron dictator and ruthless to the core. But the fact was quite contrary.

Notable thing about the states integration was that it left no ill feelings among the princes. Patel achieved this difficult task of consolidation with an absolute cooperation and goodwill of the rulers; they gave their co-operation because they trusted him. He did not cut the knots, unraveled them. He did not destroy, rather he disarmed them. He
did not coerce, rather he induced. He did not pressurize, rather he appealed.

The integration of the princely states in India was handled in a well-organized manner by him. The pattern of integration was also not identical in case of all the states. Sardar Patel could visualize the socio-political environment in the various states based on which his action-plan was formulated to suit the requirement. His approach to the problem had a broad base and diversified modalities were adopted. It was unimaginable what a spade work he did to obtain the political information of the various states to formulate his action plan. His association with the States' people was very close. By virtue of his ingenuity, he followed the path of persuasion with friendly states, threats with smaller states and even confrontation with the states which were found to be unmanageable through normal channels of action programme. In all such cases, he followed a well-organized path of action, keeping in view peace and harmony and preparing the country for a better future and promising its citizens overall prosperity as a nation of the world.

The mechanics of integration of the states turned out to be so simple that the total number of five hundred and odd states could be integrated in a short span of time without even a single drop of blood being shed. His overall management of the integration system proved to be far superior to any other integration process in the world surpassing the ingenuity of Bismark, the great unifier of Germany. Hence, the complex process of integration of the Princely State, which ended with success, paved the way for the stability and prosperity of the country.