CHAPTER-IV
INTEGRATION OF NATIVE STATES INTO THE INDIAN UNION-ONE

PRE-INTEGRATION

Patel was a great nationalist. His interest in the Indian States began as early as 1927, simultaneously with the formation of the All India States People's Conference whose objective was to attain responsible government for the people in the Indian States through representative institutions under the aegis of their Rulers. It did not advocate abolition of the Princely Order. Patel's views were the same then as in 1947 when he was called upon to settle with the Princes. Even at that early time he did not mince words in calling a spade. Presiding over the Fifth Kathiawar Political Conference in Morvi in 1929, Patel stated, "The condition of the Indian States is both disorderly and pitiable. Nowhere in the world will one find such strange institutions. Even when they are proclaimed as independent kingdoms, there are no limits to their slavery.... On behalf of the British Empire, there is a chowkidar in the person of the Resident to superintend over the Princes. Nothing can escape his eye. It is considered a matter of wisdom to administer the State in accordance with his wishes.... For the Princes to claim the Empire's friendship is sheer nonsense, like friendship between a lion and a jackal!"

Patel's ridicule was built on homilies, biting similes, which instantly touched the heart of the illiterate, unsophisticated villagers who understood and enjoyed only such language. His lion-jackal friendship simile was followed by a similar one in the observation, "Many of the Rajas go to Europe every year. Has anyone of them been
given a welcome or a status of honour there? Some of the Rajas territory is not less than that of Afghanistan. Yet, when Afghanistan's Amir visited Europe last year, he was given a welcome in every country he visited. They wished to have his friendship." He further said, "The Rajas and Maharajas live in a state of perpetual fear... Under the ominous shadow of the Empire, many small States have shriveled like a tender plant and become lifeless because of dried-up roots.... By giving their people responsible government, they can make their States strong. The States' safety lies not in seeking the protection of the empire, but in the love of their people.' Patel declared that 'the whole of India is one country', and advised the Princes that 'they will be sadly mistaken of they can rest content with trumpeting their loyalty to the Empire. The time will come when what they do not do on advice, they will have to do in their hour of defeat.'

Exactly that happened 18 years later in 1947, with Patel presiding over the liquidation of the Princely Order – not the Princes. In 1929 itself he had assured the Princes that in 'independent India, the States have nothing to fear ... Those of the States which have started setting up representative institutions have lost nothing. The States have no cause to distrust their people... People's trust is the sign of a State's fearlessness. Remember: the State is for the people, not people for the State.'¹ On December 25, 1937, at the eleventh conference of the Rajpipla Lok Sabha, Patel spoke in the same strain, "we in British India are no doubt slaves. But you living in the States are doubly slaves. You are slaves of a slave! That's why your condition is worse."² The following year on May 22nd, Patel stated at the twelfth Deccan States Conference at Sangli in Maharashtra, "There is no country in the world which has 600 Princely States. Some of these are very small; but even an owner of six to seven villages' calls himself a Raja! Rajas cannot claim independence by wearing a crown. They are slaves."³
Patel did not favour, like Nehru and some others, a struggle against the Princes for three reasons: first, the unpreparedness of the people of the States to conduct such a struggle on their own; secondly, without an adequate 'force' at its command, the Congress did not want to open a second front of its freedom struggle against the British, and, thirdly, a struggle in the States would have to be by Indians against Indians – the Princes. The States people's struggle was, therefore, a peaceful constitutional effort to secure redress of their specific economic and political grievances. Nothing beyond that. Patel held the view that the Congress was not to get involved in such a struggle and thereby antagonize the Princes. Such a non-committal policy was debated at the Haripura Congress in 1938 following two developments: one, the proposed Federation, of which the States were to be members; and, two, the people's struggle had already taken place in States like Jaipur, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore and some of the Orissa and Gujarat-Kathiawar States.

No definite policy however, emerged at Haripura. The States people were merely advised to stand on their own feet. Such an outlook underwent a change at the Tripuri Congress in March 1939. The new policy resolution stated: The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation, or to a complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever increasing identification of the Congress with the States' people.' The resolution further stated: 'The Congress desires to reiterate that its objective – Complete Independence – is for the whole of India, inclusive of the States, which are an integral part of India, which cannot be separated, and which must have the same measure of political, social, economic and religious freedom as the rest of India.'

A struggle had started in Mysore State a year earlier over the hoisting of the national flag on January 26th, in celebration of
Independence Day. The authorities resorted to repression. A number of Congress volunteers were beaten up, causing casualties. Gandhi directed Patel and Kripalani to proceed to Mysore to make enquiries on the spot, as also to meet the Maharaja, Diwan Mirza Ismail and leading Congressmen in an endeavor to see that justice was done to all concerned. Prior to his arrival in Bangalore on May 6th, Patel attempted to create a climate of mutual trust and confidence with a statement on April 30th, in which he clarified the misunderstanding caused by 'a gross distortion of Gandhi's conversation with B.C. Shetty to suggest that he would conduct the struggle personally from wherever he happened to be.'\textsuperscript{5} Patel's conciliatory tone paved the way for fruitful discussions with the Maharaja, the Diwan and State Congress leaders, which resulted in a settlement on May 17th. The official statement issued in this connection expressed 'deep regret' of the Maharaja and his Government 'at the misunderstanding that has arisen in the State, as a result of which cooperation between the people and the Government, which is so essential for the constitutional development, of the State, has become difficult. The statement also expressed their 'deep regret and sympathy for those who were killed and injured.'\textsuperscript{6} The Congress Working Committee congratulated 'His Highness the Maharaja and his advisers on the prompt manner in which they are carrying out the settlement'.\textsuperscript{7} In his first direct dealing with the Maharaja of one of India's premier States, Patel gave ample proof of his superb qualities as a negotiator.

Patel was still in Bangalore finalizing the details of the Mysore settlement when trouble broke out in the small State of Mansa in Northern Gujarat. The peasants clashed with the Ruler over the issue of revision of land revenue settlement due in 1937. The authorities resorted to repression while the peasants 'stood up bravely, and their courageous wives gave every support to their menfolk, and bore smilingly all insults, beatings, confiscation of their properties and other hardships.'\textsuperscript{8} The boycott by the peasants proved so successful
that the entire administration came to a standstill. It was mutually agreed between the Ruler and the peasants that Patel be requested to arbitrate. The newly appointed Diwan saw Patel in Bombay along with other officers, following which an agreement was reached. That was the second feather in Patel's cap so far as States politics was concerned.

A most complicated trouble awaited Patel in Rajkot. Although small in size, Rajkot's importance lay in its being the headquarters of the Kathiawar Political Agency. Gandhi's father, Kaba Gandhi, was once its Diwan. Thakore Lakhajiraj, the then ruler, was god-fearing and public-spirited. He had set up a council of popular representatives to advise him on his conduct of State affairs. On his death, he was succeeded by his son, who, after completing his studies at the Rajkot College, had proceeded to Britain, where he lived a life of extreme luxury—drinks, dances and women. Patel's harsh verdict was, "Today's Princes are the product of the Rajkumar College! They are like rotten fruit! The Princes are sent there so as to turn them out as incompetent, worthless human beings, deprived of the power of independent thinking and whose manners and morals are of the depraved. Today's Princes have no sympathy for their subjects, let alone respect and love. The King of England may be called the Emperor, but he is the people's servant; and it is the people who are the real rulers. It is they who removed Edward VIII from the throne. Here, in Princely India, dancing girls are brought from outside, but one cannot open one's mouth. However, the Princes' incompetence is our incompetence. That is why people must keep a watch over the Princes. So long as they do that, the Princes will remain good."

The new Rajkot ruler lived beyond his means, squandering away the State Treasury, so much so that additional revenues had to be sought not only through the grant of monopolies in the sale of common, daily-used commodities like rice, sugar, match-boxes and
cinema houses, but also gambling. Even the grain markets and public buildings had to be auctioned. Peasants felt crushed under heavy taxation. Townsfolk groaned under the burden of excise duties, and the creation of monopolies denied them avenues of independent income. The trouble in Rajkot initially involved the workers of the State-owned cotton textile mill, who had to work fourteen hours a day. They launched an agitation, but faced a crafty, shifty Diwan in Durbar Virawala. Not only were they subjected to repression, but fifteen of their leaders were externed from the State. The workers remained united. Behind them stood Patel, rock-like, injecting into them strength and confidence.

In a forceful speech in Bombay on August 18th, Patel compared the ruler with his father and cynically observed, "The indiscriminate and senseless repression in Rajkot has become unbearable for the people. The late Maharaja Lakhajiraj was a noble soul. He used to send for Gandhi (as a child) and publicly honour him by making him sit on his throne. The present ruler is like burnt out coal, while the late Maharaja was like a glowing fire ... Today, a revolution is taking place in the world. Its rumblings have reached the ears of the Princes. They have come to realize what fate awaits them. Therefore, they seem to be determined to carry out repression. In such a situation in Rajkot, who would not lament over the people's predicament?"

Patel exhorted the people of Rajkot by giving them a stirring call, "Wake up from your slumber. Get ready for the fight. Let the heads be smashed. Let blood flow. Fill the jails. The entire country is at your back." Patel made it clear that the struggle would not end till a responsible government was granted, and offered advice which proved prophetic and a forerunner of what he himself implemented in 1947: The Princes should be made to stay away from the administration of their States. They should be paid annual pocket allowances, while we should ourselves rule over the States."10
Patel made a conciliatory speech at the Rajkot States People's Conference on September 8th, in which he said, "No matter what a ruler is like, we do not wish to dethrone him. Our demands are such as would add to his personal glory and respect for his administration. A ruler cannot survive if he squanders away money, like water, on dance, music and prostitutes, while his peasants die of hunger. It is, therefore, no wonder if the people demand a responsible government.' He then added by way of a warning, "The Princes' days are over. The States people are awake. The Congress has told them to stand on their feet."\(^{11}\)

Virawala invited Patel to tea and had a long talk. Patel put matters straight by writing to him: 'I am glad that my mediation has reduced the tension that had developed between the ruler and the people. You were apprehensive that my visit would excite the people and lead to violence. But, as you have seen, nothing of the kind happened. You will, no doubt, see from the enthusiasm among the people that, if it is not directed into proper channels, it might take a wrong turn and become dangerous both for the ruler and the ruled.'\(^{12}\) Virawala felt unnerved. But he was too wily to accept defeat. His meeting with Patel was in reality a clock to cover his real intentions. While he negotiated with Patel, he got the ruler to correspond with the British Resident. As part of a conspiracy, he withdrew from the scene by resigning from his post, but got the ruler a 72-year old Englishman, Patrick Cadell, as Diwan, who had earlier served in Junagadh. He himself assumed the new office of Private Adviser to the Ruler, from which position he could intrigue and foment trouble with a free hand.

Patel remained undaunted by these ominous developments, particularly by Virawala's malicious hope that an English Diwan would bring with him the full backing of the Political Department. Patel issued a grim warning, "The Ruler of Rajkot has brought out
(from England) an Englishman as Diwan, who has spent many years in this country.

“He has been issuing one ordinance after another and has sought to break the spirit of the people. He says that he is anxious to give the people a greater share in the administration of the State. But we do not want a share in such mismanagement ... Let me tell him that, however much he tries, he will not be able to achieve anything worthwhile without my assistance. This is no child’s play. If he builds high hopes on his repressive policy and in creating disunity among the people, he is mistaken, and he will have to go back home as a discredited person.”

Preceding this, Patel had given a general warning to the rulers, “Let the rulers of the Indian States beware. If their arrogance is based on the strength of the British Government, they should realize that if the British Government intervenes in this conflict, it will also have to suffer.”

Patel was not averse to early redress through mediation—mediation of the Diwan of Bhavnagar, Anantrai Pattani. Pattani met Gandhi at Wardha, and thereafter he saw Patel at Ahmedabad and discussed with him a draft proposal to which the ruler had given his approval. To turn the draft into a settlement, Cadell was asked to call upon Patel in Bombay, which he did on November 29th. The draft conceded that seven out of ten members of the Parishad would be selected by Patel; that the Parishad would draw up a scheme of reforms designed to give ‘the widest powers possible to the people’, and that the ruler would restrict the privy purse to one-tenth of the income of the State as decided by the Chamber of Princes. Patel was outspoken in telling Cadell that ‘the position of the ruler was to be that of a ten per cent zamindar -- a zamindar who would receive ten per cent of the revenue and would have nothing else beyond secular dignity.’
This wasn’t to the liking of the Political Department. The settlement was, therefore, looked upon as a blow to its dignity and status; indeed, a challenge to its authority. Both Resident E.G. Gibson and Diwan Cadell were, therefore, opposed to it. They feared it would have serious repercussions on other Kathiawar States; even affect the pattern of administration in the rest of the States in India. The Secretary of the Political Department, Betrand Glancy, reported to London the Raj’s (British) consternation over the Durbar’s complete defeat. Even Viceroy Linlithgow stated, “I have little doubt that, if the Congress were to win in the Rajkot case, the movement would go right through Kathiawar and that they would then extend their activities in other directions.” The crafty Virawala now appeared in a new role – that of a peace-maker working for a settlement; in reality, he harboured the intention of cashing in on the new developments. On his initiative, the ruler persuaded the Raja Saheb of Dharangadhra to intervene, besides himself writing to one Durga Prasad at Dharangadhra on December 6th that Patel was ‘the only person with whom one could come to proper terms and end this impasse.’ Durga Prasad met Patel in Bombay with a letter from the ruler whom he assured: ‘no one in this struggle has any personal hostility towards you. We wish both the State and the people well. No foreigner can be as much a well-wisher of yourself and of your people as we are.’ Patel, therefore, appealed to the ruler: ‘Do not listen to intriguers and selfish men and thereby prolong the struggle.’

At the ruler’s invitation, Patel flew to Rajkot on December 25th. An eight-hour long discussion resulted in a settlement, which stated: ‘After having observed the growth of popular feeling and the regrettable sufferings of our people during the last few months ... and after having discussed the whole situation with the Council and Mr. Vallbhbhai Patel, we are convinced the present struggle and suffering should end immediately. We have decided to appoint a committee of ten gentlemen, who should be subjects or servants of our State ... this
committee will recommend a scheme of reforms so as to give the widest possible powers to our people ... it is our desire that our privy purse shall, henceforth, be regulated in the manner laid down in the circular of the Chamber of Princes.\textsuperscript{18} The ruler expressed his gratefulness to Patel for finding a solution to the impasse. Yet, victory eluded Patel. Virawala still exercised great influence on the ruler, and Resident Gibson knew that he could cause a breach in the agreement by getting him over to his side. Which he did. Virawala changed his side once again.

The resident called the ruler and the members of his Council to see him on December 28\textsuperscript{th}. He bluntly asked them, “How did Vallabhbhai Patel come to Rajkot? Was he invited by the Thakore Saheb?”

Growing nervous, the ruler denied by telling him a lie, “He came of his own accord, and when he asked for an interview, I invited him to tea.”

Gibson then observed, “Well, he is a very unreliable man. You know that Government of India was opposed to outside interference. By settling with him, you have lost the sympathies of your brother Princes and the Government. Although the Government of India does not mind what you do, you have erred in settling through Patel. Even amongst the Congress workers, Patel is regarded as most untrustworthy.” To a question from Gibson as to who would appoint the members of the committee, the ruler replied, “Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel will suggest names.”

Prompt came the retort, “That’s it! That means the Congress workers, who will demand full responsible government with (as stipulated in the agreement) ‘widest possible powers’ ... That’s very bad. You have given up all your cards.”\textsuperscript{19}
In the ruler's embarrassment lay Virawala's gain. The ruler was now anxious for the return of Virawala as his Diwan. The Resident readily obliged him, fully knowing that Virawala would play his game better in securing a breach of the agreement. And the breach did occur in the rejection of certain names Patel had recommended. The controversy that followed led to an agitation again. A communal colour was given with the authorities attempting to crush it through incitement of local Muslims and promulgation of ordinances. Entry of newspapers into the State was banned, and public meetings were prohibited. Many leaders were arrested; and to antagonize the general public, mounted and armed police of the Agency marched through the city and were posted at various places. The Resident strengthened Virawala's position by appointing his trusted men - the agency's additional Superintendent of police, Fateh Mohammed Khan, and a nephew of Virawala.

Patel now carried the struggle a stage further by taking it to the neighboring villages. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, on hearing that satyagrahis were taken to the jungles, beaten up and dragged on thorns, exclaimed: 'Rajkot is our home. How can I sit quiet when men and women there have to put up with so much?' Kasturba and Patel's daughter, Manibehn, were among those arrested for offering satyagraha. This time harsher treatment was meted out to the satyagrahis. The police would 'crowd them together and beat up the volunteers with their fists and feet. On two or three occasions, some volunteers were made to put both their legs round their necks and other to put their hands to their legs so as to from a ball. The policemen stood on them while they were in those postures and pressed various delicate veins and other parts of the body. The resultant pain was intense.'

Gandhi could not keep himself aloof. He sought correct information from the First Member of the Council, Fateh Mohammed
Khan. Not satisfied by his reply, Gandhi arrived in Rajkot on January 27, 1939. He held long discussions with Feteh Mohammmed and even met prisoners in the Rajkot and Sardhar jails. The latter ‘turned out to be even more horrible than what he had heard of or imagined.’ He met the ruler. Virawala was present throughout. Returning very dissatisfied, he commented, “Who is the real ruler of Rajkot? The Thakore Saheb or Durbar Virawala?” The following day some 150 peasants from different villages met Gandhi and gave him ‘lurid accounts in the presence of the First Member, of how the volunteers were being taken in motor trucks into the jungle and beaten up, and deprived of their shoes or chappals and dragged through thorns, and in some cases also deprived of their clothes.’

After a talk lasting an hour and a half with Virawala, Gandhi wrote to the ruler that Virawala ‘gave me cause for intense dissatisfaction. He seems to be incapable of keeping his resolutions from moment to moment’, and that his guidance has harmed the State.’ Gandhi informed the ruler of his resolve, “I will not leave Rajkot without inducing fulfillment of your promise.” He beseeched him to implement his suggestions, failing which he would start a fast on February 3rd. He also wrote to Virawala: ‘During the last three days, you have made me pass through a very bitter experience. I could see no desire on your part to adhere to any statement you made. All the time, you appeared anxious to get out every commitment. Last night’s talk was the culmination, and I am now able to understand why it is that the citizens of Rajkot stand in terror of you.’ A reply from the ruler, in Gandhi’s words ‘merely added fuel to the fire.’ Gandhi also wrote to Gibson: ‘I cannot recall a parallel to such chaos as exists in Rajkot. I do feel that this is a case for the immediate intervention of the Paramount power so as to induce fulfillment of the promise made by the Thakore Saheb.’
Gandhi began his fast on February 3rd. The Viceroy felt perturbed. He happened to be on tour. He cancelled it, returned to New Delhi and sent Gandhi on February 7th a most conciliatory message through Gibson. He suggested that the matter – the breach of faith on the part of the ruler – should be referred to the Chief Justice of India for opinion. The Viceroy assured Gandhi that he would exert his influence to see that the ruler carried out his promises, and pleaded with Gandhi that 'you will allay the anxiety of your friends by abandoning any further strain upon your health.' Gandhi thanked the Viceroy 'for taking up, so promptly and so sympathetically, the matter that necessitated the fast.' He considered the Viceroy's assurance as 'sufficient warrant for breaking the fast.' To Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court, Patel and the Ruler submitted their respective cases. The judgment, delivered on April 3rd, vindicated Patel. It upheld that he could recommend the names of the members of the committee, and these names would have to be accepted by the ruler. Following this, on April 7th, the Viceroy gave a clear guarantee on behalf of the Paramount power that the ruler would honour his word fully.

The wily Virawala hatched another plot: this time instigating the Muslims and Bhayats of the State to press for communal representation on the committee, encouraging them to adopt a hostile attitude towards the Praja Parishad, threatening Gandhi with a counter satyagraha. Six hundred of them stormed Gandhi's prayer meeting on April 16th. Gandhi realized his failure and admitted, "The award, instead of making my way smooth, has become a potent cause of angering the Muslims and Bhayats against me." He accepted defeat and decided to save the situation by surrendering to the ruler the award he had won. Patel accepted Gandhi's decision 'without uttering a single word', although 'it was a totally different question whether he himself would have taken such a step or not.' Patel's comment was philosophical, "god will, no doubt, in His own way deal
with those who have been responsible for making Gandhi fast at Rajkot, and those who have deeply wounded him. He who offends a saint can never be happy.”

Failure in Rajkot was surrender to Muslim communalism. This was not without repercussions. It encouraged the Rulers of Baroda, Limbdi, Rajpipla and Bhavnagar to follow Rajkot’s example. Gibson called a meeting of all Kathiawar Princes at the Rajkot Residency at which, according to Patel, they decided upon ‘a common policy of suppressing the Praja Mandals in their respective States’, and as result, ‘minorities such as the Mussalmans, Garasias, Bhayats etc., have been set up against the Praja Mandals and have been incited to obstruct and break the popular movement for responsible government.’ In Baroda, the Maharastrians were roused against the Gujaraties; in Limbdi, goondas were engaged to assault Praja Mandal workers with knives, swords and guns, to fire on houses and even to loot property worth thousands of rupees; and in Bhavnagar, an attempt was made on Patel’s life on May 14th when some 30 muslims, taking him to be in the car passing in front of the Nagina mosque, rushed out armed with lathis, axes and knives. Being in another car, Patel escaped unhurt, but two of his co-workers died and a number of them were seriously injured.

Undeterred, Patel said at a public meeting the following day, “This was not an act of momentary frenzy. It was the result of a carefully laid-out plot ... there is no reason why we should allow ourselves to be foolish of cowardly. I desire the unity of all communities; but if we wish to preserve genuine unity, we must find out who are the culprits. We should not drop the matter until the evil-doers are genuinely repentant ... If the vast majority of the local Muslims are not in any way responsible for this action, they should have had no objection to making it known to the public. It should be possible for them easily to convince everyone that they, as a
community, are innocent ... Today, we are sitting on the top of a volcano, and if we leave everything to the ruling authorities, we shall ruin ourselves," yet, as a disciplined deputy to Gandhi, he submitted to Gandhi's decision without a murmur.

CHECKMATING BRITISH DESIGNS

In December 1939, when not a speck was to be seen on the horizon to give any indication of India's independence eight years later, Patel had publicly declared with a seeming premonition, "The red and yellow colours on India's map have to be made one. Unless that is done, we cannot have swaraj." Patel was called upon to undertake that task on the transference of power. Mountbatten had confidence in his wisdom and ability to do that most successfully.

Patel had, as Home Member in the Interim Government, come to know of the Political Department's designs to Balkanise the Indian States. He was then a helpless witness. The Princes were under the exclusive charge of the Viceroy as the Crown Representative, but were directly responsible to the Secretary of the Political Department, who, in turn, could directly report to the Secretary of State in London. The British were to terminate Paramountcy simultaneously with the transference of power to India, so that they could make the princes independent, and there by they could negotiate, individually or jointly, with the new government in British India on equal terms. This was an attempt to implement Churchill's plan, of which Wavell records in his journal on March 29, 1945: 'He seems to favour partition into Pakistan, Hindustan, Princetan etc.' This was the upper tip of the iceberg. What was being maneuvered underneath hardly anyone could see or know. Patel was no exception.

Such maneuvering followed the two pronouncements of the Cabinet Mission: the memoranda of May 12th, and the Plan of May 16th. The former stated: 'when a new fully self-governing or
independent Government or Governments come into being in British India ... HMG will cease to exercise the powers of paramountcy ... the rights of the states which flow from their relationship to the crown will no longer exist and that all the rights surrendered by the states to the paramount power will return to the states. Political arrangements between the states, on the one side, and the British Crown and British India, on the other, will thus be brought to an end. The void will have to be filled either by the states entering into a federal relationship with the successor government or governments in British India, or, failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them.\textsuperscript{34} As Patel commented later, "Nobody could have been so innocent or ignorant as to presume that overnight small rulers could be converted into 'Their Majesties'? That position would have been full of dangerous possibilities and potentialities."\textsuperscript{35} In its statement of May 16th, the Mission virtually put a seal on the states' sovereign status by declaring, "paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government."\textsuperscript{36}

The Cabinet Mission made another dangerous move in the suggestion that for the seats allotted to the princes in the Constituent Assembly, the Chamber of princes should nominate a Negotiating Committee for parleys with its counterpart from British India. Two dangers lurked in that. Since 'practically every matter which concerns the States has been committed to the care of the States Negotiating committee', Patel wondered 'whether their Negotiating Committee has to settle the question of determining the method of election of States' representative to the Constituent Assembly, or whether the Negotiating Committee has even a wider field of discussing other subjects concerning the States.' Further he wrote to Munshi: 'Another important question for us to decide is whether the Constituent Assembly will have any say in the matter of grouping of States, which the Chamber of Princes might decide on, or which any group of States independently might agree upon.' He also told Munshi in his letter of
December 7, 1946: 'You know efforts are being made to form groups of States, either independently or under the inspiration of the Chamber of Princes.' Not much later such fears came out in the open when Bhopal and Conrad Corfield, Secretary of the Political Department, began organizing the Princes into blocs.

An accident of history changed the course of events and determined the fate of the country. An official file, casually falling into his hands after taking charge of Home in the Interim Government in September 1946, opened Patel's eyes to the dangers India faced. Bastar, whose 'Raja was a minor and a weakling and the Prime Minister a foreigner' and which had rich mineral and other resources, was being 'mortgaged to Hyderabad State by means of a long lease' and was to be 'exploited to the prejudice of India.' The Political Department evaded Patel's inquiries. He was told that those in-charge of the department were 'the guardians of the minor and that they could enter into the contract in the interests of the minor.' Patel told them that 'they were now going away and they should not bother about their wards. Their guardianship would now devolve on us, and they should do nothing without our agreement, or which was contrary to the interests of the people.' Not satisfied with the Political Department's response, Patel sent for the Ruler. 'When I saw the ruler,' he records, 'how young and inexperienced he was! I felt that it was a sin to make him sign such an agreement. It was then that I was made fully conscious of the extent to which our interests were being prejudiced in every way by the machinations of the Political Department, and came to the conclusion that the sooner we were rid of these people, the better. Their main aim was to further their own interests and to cause as much damage to India as possible. I came to the conclusion that the best course was to drive out the foreigners even at the cost of partition of the country. It was also then that I felt that there was only one way to make the country safe strong and that was the unification of the rest of India.'

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In a letter of February 2nd, 1947, Patel explained himself further: 'sovereignty in England vests in the people of England and not in His Majesty the king... No man in his senses in the modern world believes that sovereignty vests in any single individual, whether he be a prince or a monarch, a Czar or a Hitler.' On February 26th, after Attlee's policy statement of February 20th, Patel wrote to a friend: 'From June 1948 there will be no Sovereign in India, and paramountcy will evaporate in the air.' By such utterances, he was forewarning the British and checkmating their designs in India. No other Indian leader had Patel's boldness and courage. Later, after the transference of power, he grew still bolder to state: 'paramountcy can never be annihilated. It must ever reside in the Central authority; for, it belongs to the people. Whoever will challenge it will perish.' That was a warning to the Princes playing into the hands of Bhopal and Corfield.

Nevertheless, from January onwards till he had power in his hands, Churchill's Princestan worried Patel. His fears were later confirmed from some of the Indian Diwans of the states. No less a person than Corfield himself admitted at Mountbatten's staff meeting on March 26th that he was supporting Bhopal's conspiracy with some princes against their joining the Indian Union and that he was making efforts to set up the Princes as potentials third force." Which was another name for churchill's Princestan. At a conference of Residence and political officers, held in the second week of April, Corfield asked them 'to enable the States to stand on their own feet to encourage them to hold together and, at the same time, to cooperate fully with British India.' There was also a sinister motive in the political departments proposal to hand over to the States the Crown Representative's Police force. Ingeniously, Patel killed the proposal by immediately changing the name to the Central Reserve Police. In the hands of the states, the force could have been a source of potential mischief.
Patel maintained his characteristic coolness: an attitude of conciliation and compromise rather than confrontation, and yet he was firm in his resolve, and, when an occasion demanded, he was blunt in expressing his views. In an effort to woo the Princes, he told them, “There are many in the country who believe in the total elimination of the Indian States. Gandhi and I dream of the old world in the fond hope that the Princes will once again create Ram Rajya. That is the policy of the Congress, which desires to befriend the Princes on such a basis.” In contrast, Nehru's occasional outbursts scared the princes. V.P. Menon characterized as 'a rather inauspicious start' Nehru's speech in the Constituent Assembly on December 21st (1946) on the crucial resolution on the appointment of a Negotiating Committee for talks with a similar body of the Chamber of Princes. Nehru said, “I regret, I say frankly, that we have to meet the ruler's Negotiating Committee. I think that, on the part of the States, there should have been on the Negotiating Committee representatives of the people of the States. I think even now the Negotiating Committee, if it wants to do the right thing, should include some such representatives; but I feel that we cannot insist upon this at this stage.” Even much later, Nehru's attitude had remained unchanged. Speaking at Gwalior on April 19th, he gave the Princes 'a virtual ultimatum either to join the Constituent Assembly or to be treated as hostile.' According to Hodson, Mountbatten 'privately rebuked him', for two reasons: first, it would scare the Princes from joining the Indian Union; and, secondly, 'for his demagogy, especially as a Member of the Interim Government who ought not to speak in such terms without Cabinet approval. Pandit Nehru took this castigation meekly, explaining that he was speaking in a personal capacity as President of the States People's Conference.  

Nehru's speech in the Constituent Assembly (December 21, 1946) helped Bhopal and Corfield in the hardening of the Princes' attitude. The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes held
many meetings and even sought the Political Department's advice on several issues. At their Bombay conference on January 29th, the Princes resolved that the constitution of each State, its territorial integrity and the succession of its reigning dynasty shall not be interfered with by the union, nor should the existing boundaries of a States be altered except by its free consent. Far more alarming was their decision that the Constituent Assembly was not to deal with questions affecting the internal administration or constitutions of the States. The resolution 'provoked a good deal of controversy'; in particular, 'public opinion was considerably agitated over the statement made by some rulers that, if the fundamental propositions were not accepted by the Congress, they would boycott the Constituent Assembly.'46

That amounted to playing the Bhopal game, and thereby play into the hands of Jinnah. Cochin and Baroda were the only States who were not party to the Bombay resolution. The Maharaja of Cochin had announced earlier on July 30th his decision to participate in the proceedings of the proposed Constituent assembly through popular representatives elected by the States's Legislative Assembly. Now, Boroda, guided by its Diwan, B.L. Mitter, announced its decision to join the Constituent Assembly on February 8th when the two Negotiating Committees met. The majority of the Princes were still with the Chamber of Princes under Bhopal's influence. Bhopal seemed to have received a shot in the arm with Travancore and Hyderabad joining his battle. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Diwan of Travancore, said on March 17th that his State 'will be an independent State and will revert to the 1750 states.'47 On behalf of the Nizam, Dr. Syed Abdul Latif had earlier declared on February 27th that Hyderabad would 'automatically become a kingdom' on the transfer of power and that the Nizam would proclaim himself 'His Majesty the King of Hyderabad.'48 This was just after Attlee's statement of February 20th.
Addressing the joint meeting of the two Negotiating Committees on February 8th, Patel and Nehru suggested that, even when it did not form part of the agenda, the two committees should decide, in the larger interest of the country, on the manner in which the states representatives could enter and participate in the work of the Constituent Assembly. The proposal did not find favour with the rulers, Bhopal as the Chancellor pointing out that the Chamber of Princes 'by its resolution of January 19th had laid down certain fundamental proposition on which they wanted satisfactory assurances before they could enter the Constituent Assembly.'

Bhopal's was a deep game. On the second day of the meeting he deliberately attempted to keep the Princes' attitude irreconcilable by, once again, laying emphasis on the imperative need for adhering to the Bombay resolution. He stated that he was prepared to discuss how 'a satisfactory settlement of the fundamentals' could be secured 'either formally or informally with somebody competent to do so, and in the meanwhile proposed a postponement of the discussions.' Patiala checkmated Bhopal's move for a deadlock through postponement by seeking a clarification of the position as it had emerged from the previous day's meeting. Because of Nehru's 'persuasive approach' and 'conciliatory statement, the atmosphere became more friendly.\textsuperscript{49}

The meeting was adjourned till March 1\textsuperscript{st}. the two committees asked the Secretaries of the Constituent Assembly and the Chamber of Princes to jointly work out a scheme for distribution of the seats allotted to the States. At such a time when the two committees could have, if left to themselves, worked out a mutually acceptable solution, Attlee's statement of February 20\textsuperscript{th} threw overboard whatever limited progress the talks seemed to have made. The statement served as an encouragement to Bhopal and his group of Princes to sit on the fence by declaring Britain's intentions 'not to hand over their power and obligations under Paramountcy to any government of British India', as
also ‘not to bring Paramountcy, as a system, to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power.’

At the scheduled meeting on March 1st, Patel, sensing trouble ahead, assumed a stern attitude and spoke to the Princes in a mixed tone of frankness and deliberate pessimism. He is reported to have said, “Freedom is coming. But I am afraid it may not last long. Before that happens, nothing may be left of the Princes as well. It was a stern warning, which turned the tide in his favour. Such pessimism on the part of India’s ‘iron man’ surprised many Princes, especially Bikaner and Patiala, on whom, because of the closeness of their States to Pakistan and because of happenings in Punjab, a new realization had dawned: how vulnerable their States could be to new dangers. They, therefore, refused to follow Bhopal’s policy in their negotiations with the Congress. Impressed by the realism of Patel, the Bikaner-Patiala group assured him of its cooperation in achieving a united, strong India. Prime Minister K.M. Panikkar informed Patel, on March 10th, of Bikaner’s decision to participate in the Constituent Assembly. Patel replied, “I am glad that so many Princes are getting out of the cordon (of Bhopal). Let us hope that they will come in now ... You have seen what is happening in Punjab. I hope there will be no sympathy from any quarters for the Muslim League any more, not even amongst any of the Princes.”

The Bikaner-Bhopal differences were in the limelight with the absence of the two rulers at Mountbatten’s swearing-in ceremony on March 24th. Since both were Mountbatten’s two oldest personal friends in India, and in view of ‘the importance attached by the Princes to ceremonial etiquette’, their absence could not be explained except as ‘a good indication of disunity and crisis in their ranks.’ Both of them saw mountbatten later to give their explanation. Their interviews ‘revealed the full scale of the split among the princes.’ According to Campbell-Johnson, “This is a great grief to Bhopal, who
feels that Bikaner and the other 'dissidents', by allowing themselves to take part in the Constituent assembly, are becoming the tools of the Congress and undermining the whole bargaining position of the states .... Bhopal thought the time -limit was quite impossible, and, if enforced, must involve bloodshed and chaos.' That sounded Jinnah-like to some of the princes. Bikaner, on the other hand, held Bhopal responsible for the split, 'who, by his attitude to the interim government, had caused the communal issue to be raised among them (princes)."

The real danger, however, lurked in the support Bhopal had of Corfield, who, at his meeting with Mountbatten on March 26th,'argued with some bitterness that Bikaner, by taking his place in the Constituent Assembly, had seriously weakened the bargaining power of the princes52.' With his baking, Bhopal continued with his efforts to influence the princes. As Chancellor, he got his Secretariat to circulate a memorandum for the meeting of the Standing Committee, with recommended a policy of 'wait-and-see'. Bikaner now openly questioned 'the advisability and wisdom' of such a policy. He countered Bhopal's move by circulating among the princes a statement, which argue:' Even if the Muslim League Ultimately decided not to participate in constitution-making, it is beyond question in the interests of the states as a whole, interspersed as they are with territories in British India, that by June 1948, a strong Central Government should be created which can take over power. The only safe policy for the States, therefore, is to work fully with the stabilizing elements in British India, to create a Center... which would safeguard both the states and British India in the vacuum that would be created by the withdrawal of the British Government... The interests of the people of the states obviously lie in joining hands with British India establishing a strong Centre. And they are keenly alive to that necessity. If the princes were to help in attaining to that object, then the interests of the people and the princes would continue to
remain identical.’ Bikaner was followed by Patiala, who in the public statement deprecated the policy of ‘sitting on the fence.’

The Maharaja’s of Bikaner and Patiala together forced a new group among the princes, which, through still in a minority, was openly anti-Bhopal and pro-India. Their point of view had its salutary influence on the Princes’ meeting on April 2nd. As a result the original draft was ‘watered down’, and another one was adopted instead, which reiterated the ‘willingness of the states to render the fullest possible cooperation in framing an agreed constitution and towards facilitating the transfer of power on an agreed basis.’ Seeing the situation going out of hand, Bhopal played a trump card by suggesting to Patiala, who chamber should adhere to its recommendations, ‘not with-standing any personal differences of opinion.’ Patiala retorted by saying that his holding the office imposed no obligations on his Government, nor on his pursuing a policy he considered necessary in the interests of his State.’ He told Bhopal that he was sending his representatives to the Constituent Assembly because he felt that ‘the stage for the States, participation in the constitution-making process had definitely come, and that any delay in doing so would be prejudicial not only to his own interests, but also to the wider interests of the Country.’ Menon characterized the wind of change as ‘the beginning of the end of the united front put up by the Chamber of Princes.’

Patel saw in the opening of the big chink in the Chamber of Princes Bhopal had built as a bastion to give the Congress a strong fight. His statesmanship lay in turning the disunity among the Princes to his advantage. Now he rode among them like a rancher, gently shepherding his scattered flock back home. The operations had to be completed before the ‘return’ of paramountcy to the princes on August 15th. Patel told the Princes on April 15th, “In a short time India will be free... I congratulate Princes who have wisely sided with the Congress.
Only those Princes will be able to rule who carry their people with them; those who fail to do so will find their thrones disappear ... Many of the Princes are yet sitting on the fence, waiting to see what shape coming events will take... I appeal to such princes to join us now. It would not behove them to do so in the hour of their defeat."

Patel further told them, "Many Princes seem to believe that they should collect arms to establish their authority. But India is not the same today as she was when the British came here ... in the end, every State will have to come in. But those who come in last will deny themselves the honour they will enjoy now. It will be said of those who come in now that they helped bring about unity and establish peace in India. The rest will be classed as mere spectators." He, however, assured the Princes, "We want to uphold the Princes' prestige, their honour ... Those amongst them who have ability, intelligence and bravery can take up leadership of the Army. They can also enjoy the glory of serving India abroad as our Ambassadors. What for are you rotting in your small pits? Come out into the open ocean of national life."54

Patel's speech had its salutary effect. He won over many important Princes to his side. Baroda, Bikaner, Cochin, Jaipur, Patiala and Rewa took their seats in the Constituent Assembly on April 28th. This set the ball rolling; and, as a result, other States began coming in one after another. Yet some kept aloof. An official document says: 'Bhopal .... Was acting as an agent of Pakistan, ... he was circulating to other rulers false statements to the effect that, as a result of the efforts of his group of rulers, the instrument of Accession was being revised, and that, if all of them stood firm, they would be able to obtain or extract more favorable terms.'55 He established his sincerity with the Princes by telling them that the lapse of Paramountcy would take place prior to the actual transfer of power, so that they could be in a better position to transfer of power, so that
they could be in a better position to bargain with the successor Government. Yet, Bhopal succeeded in misleading many States, especially those strategically placed. Jodhpur, Jamnagar and even Travancore were among them.

The concept of lapse of Paramountcy was, according to Menon, 'the greatest disservice the British had done us as well as the rulers.' Patel held the same opinion. The disservice lay in the June 3 Plan which was to sow the seeds of disruption by making Paramountcy lapse simultaneously with the transfer of power on August 15th; whereas under the Cabinet Mission Plan, Paramountcy would have lapsed 'only after the constitution had been set up and power transferred to the successor Governments.' Even as late as June 3rd when the Pakistan demand had been conceded, Corfield and Jinnah endeavored to aggravate the situation for India by trying to establish States' sovereign status under the Plan. Jinnah stated on June 18th that every Indian State was a sovereign State and that the States were 'fully entitled to say they would join neither Constituent Assembly.' Liaquat Ali was more explicit in stating, "The Indian States will be free to negotiate agreements with Pakistan or Hindustan as considerations of contiguity or their own self-interest may dictate..." This was fishing in Indian waters not without purpose. If he could force acceptance of his interpretation, Jinnah expected accession to Pakistan not only of Kashmir, Hyderabad and Bhopal, but also Indore, Jodhpur, Junagadh, Jamnagar and even Baroda.

Corfield's stress on the Government of India being not a successor to the functions and powers of the Crown Representative and the Political Department was a deliberate and mischievous twisting of the facts in contradiction of what Viceroy Reading had told the Nizam in March 1926:...'the sovereignty to the British Crown is supreme in India, and, therefore, no ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on equal
footing.' In the transference of power, the Government of India was assuming such supremacy as a successor to the British Government. Corfield's views also had ominous overtones in respect of the British Government's instructions to Mountbatten that the Government of India could take over the residencies only if the Princes agreed. Mountbatten also admitted that he was not entitled to force a State to continue to accept an Agent of the Central Government in its territory. He was convinced that it was for the States to decide whether to send representatives to either Delhi or Karachi or receive representatives from the successor Governments. This amounted to declaring each State independent.

The situation as it prevailed on June 3rd had dangerous potentialities. Patel told Menon that 'if we did not handle it promptly and effectively, our hard-earned freedom might disappear through the States' door.' Events rushed past like a hurricane, leaving many baffled by its speed and befogged by the resultant uncertainties which hung over the horizon. Many Princes lost their moorings. But Patel held fast to his anchorage. Panikkar echoed Patel's thoughts when he told him in March 1947: "Paramountcy is like a string that holds together all the 500 odd precious stones and pearls: remove the string, all of them will fall apart. And then it will be our job to collect them again and find out a formula that binds them to us. "Such a string had broken with the Bikaner-Patiala group joining the Constituent Assembly. Bhopal and Corfield had attempted to mend the string not only through the formation of autocratic federations of groups of States, but also through various provisions of the June 3 Plan which favored the Princes' position. They were outmaneuvered by Patel. Bhopal faced the futility of his efforts in Patel's success in Jodhpur, Kathiawar and even Travancore. He realized the wisdom of what C.S. Venkatachary had told Corfield as early as February when the latter believed that he and his clan could 'prop them up': The Princes will have no bargaining power the moment two independent Dominions
are created and power transferred to the two Central Governments, which will be so strong as to shift the balance of power in their favour and against the Princes. ⁵⁹

Patel’s assumption of charge of the newly-created States Department (not a Ministry yet) on July 5th was significant in the prevailing confused, complex and dangerous situation. The new department was to replace the Political Department without the latter’s functions, powers and even records. With Patel these things mattered little. He was capable of creating his own functions and powers that suited the nation’s interests. And he did create them. Princes were drawn towards him because of his powerful personality, which gave them firm assurance of a new, hopeful future in an atmosphere of unsuspecting, benign friendship of one who exuded humanity, humility and broad-mindedness. Ample evidence of this was seen in Patel’s policy statement on taking charge as Minister of States. The Statement was acclaimed as a masterpiece of diplomatic finesse, reflecting Patel’s transparent sincerity. He stirred up the nobler sentiments of the Princes by recalling the Princes’ proud, glorious past, when ancestors of some had played highly patriotic roles in the defence of their family honour and the freedom of their land.

Patel proudly told the Princes that among them ‘I am happy to count many as my personal friends. ‘He reminded them, “It is the lesson of history that it was owing to her politically fragmented condition and our inability to make a united stand that India succumbed to successive waves of invaders. Our mutual conflicts and internecine quarrels and jealousies have, in the past, been the cause of our downfall and our falling victims to foreign domination a number of times. We cannot afford to fall into those errors or traps again. “ He told them, “ We are on the threshold of independence...the safety and preservation of the States, as well as of India, demand unity and mutual cooperation between its different parts. “ Patel urged the
Princes to consider that in the exercise of Paramountcy, 'there has undoubtedly been more of subordination than cooperation', and that 'now that British rule is ending, the demand has been made that the States should regain their independence. Insofar as Paramountcy embodied the submission of States to foreign will, I have every sympathy with this demand, but I do not think 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 interest and welfare, or which might result in the abandonment of that mutually useful relationship that has developed between British India and Indian States during the last century.'

Patel grew somewhat sentimental when he told them, "We are all knit together by bonds of blood and feeling, no less than of self-interest. None can segregate us into segments; no impassable barriers can be set up between us...I invite my friends, the Rulers of States, and their people to the councils of the Constituent Assembly in this spirit of friendliness and cooperation in a joint endeavor, inspired by common allegiance to our motherland for the common good of us all. 'In the same breath Patel gave them the assurance that 'it is not the desire of the Congress to interfere in any manner whatsoever with the domestic affairs of the States." He further assured them: "They (the Congress) are no enemies of the Princely Order, but, on the other hand, they wish them and the people under their aegis all prosperity, contentment and happiness. Nor would it be my policy to conduct the relations of the new department with the States in any manner which savors of the domination of one over the other; if there would be any domination, it would be that of our mutual interest and welfare.”

In a masterly peroration, Patel declared, "We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavor, 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 together in the minimum of common tasks. Let not the future generations curse us for having had the opportunity but failed to turn it to our mutual advantage. Instead, let it be our proud privilege to leave a legacy of a mutually beneficial relationship 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.60

Patel received profuse felicitations from many a Prince, big and small. Bikaner's rich compliment was: 'May I take this opportunity of sending you my very best wishes in the onerous duties which have fallen upon you...The fact that one of the most respected and mature statesman and leaders of your experience and judgment has been chosen is, I feel, a happy augury. It is most gratifying to recall that you have always shown a realistic and cordial attitude towards the States. The friendly hand that you have so spontaneously extended to the Princes and States, as evidenced by your statement, is, I need hardly assure you, greatly appreciated by us. We are confident that we may look forward to an association of full cooperation with you and a sympathetic understanding at your hands of the very important problems vitally affecting the States at the present transitional stage, thus enabling the States to take their due and honoured place in the future Union of India, in the making of which we are all proud to give our wholehearted support. I know that the interest of the Princes and States are safe in your hands.61

Mountbatten's preference for Patel to Nehru was for good reasons. 'I am glad to say', he wrote, 'that Nehru has not been put in charge of the new States Department, which would have wrecked everything. Patel, who is essentially a realist and very sensible, is going to take it over.62 He told the Princes at his last conference with them on July 25th, 'In India the States Department is under the
admirable guidance of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel...You can imagine how relieved I was, and I am sure your will yourselves have been equally relieved, when Sarder Vallabhbhai Patel, on taking over the States Department, made, if I may say so, a most statesmanlike statement of what he considered were the essentials towards agreement between the States and the Dominion of India."63 Mountbatten thought that Patel, being the 'strongest pillar of the Cabinet', alone could help him fulfill his assurance to the Kind on two matters: India's membership of the Commonwealth, and fair treatment for the Princes.

In dealing with the Princes, the roles of Patel and Mountbatten were complementary. Mountbatten got Patel's strong support for the Commonwealth membership and his pursuit of the middle path in the integration of the States. Patel, on his part, felt satisfied with Britain's decision that the Indian States could not enter the Commonwealth as a Dominion. Patel secured another point. While giving his consent to India's membership of the Commonwealth, he made it a condition: 'Let Paramountcy be dead. You do not directly or indirectly try to revive it in any manner... The Princes are ours, and we shall deal with them.'64 Hodson records a meaningful dialogue between Patel and Mountbatten prior to the farmer's acceptance of the charge of the States Ministry. Patel said, "I am prepared to accept your offer provided that you give me a full basket of apples."

"What do you mean?" asked Mountbatten.

'I'll buy a basket with 565 apples, but if there are even two or three missing, the deal is off.'

"This", said the Viceroy, 'I cannot completely accept, but I will do my best. If I give you a basket with, say, 560 apples, will you buy it?'

'Well, I might'. Replied Patel.65 That nearly settled the Princes problem, so far as Patel was concerned.

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C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, who, as the Diwan of Travancore, was the first to declare a revolt against his State joining the Indian Union, accuses the British of duplicity: their ‘inconsistent and dissimilar approaches’ to the Princes and the Congress. The British Rulers and Lord Mountbatten, he writes, ‘could be justly charged with trying to please both the parties, and finally giving way with an ill-grace to the inevitable force of Indian political pressure. If it had been made clear from the first that the Indian States could not expect to maintain themselves as self-governing entities, the history of the negotiations might have taken a different course. A great deal of avoidable confusion and misunderstanding was created by ambiguous utterances by various authorities.’ C.P. quotes Mountbatten having told the Princes, “My scheme leaves you with all practical independence that you can possibly use.”

Patel on his part showed tact and diplomacy in his handling of the Princes. They feared his firmness, even his wrath; but they could enjoy his genuine friendship if they didn’t override the country’s interests. Presiding over a press conference addressed by Menon on July 5th, Patel gave a blunt warning, “Whoever denounces such agreements takes the responsibility for the consequences.” And yet, no one could match his humility. He showed profuse consideration in giving Their Highnesses what they passionately loved: their regal status, their royal splendor, their scintillating titles, and, above all, the Princely Order, Patel had come to a decision, about which Reginald Coupland had speculated in 1945, “An India deprived of the States would have lost all coherence. They stand between all four quarters of the country...India could live if its Muslim limbs in the north-west and north-east were amputated, but could it live without its midriff?” And that is what Patel instinctively meant when he stated, “Hyderabad is, as it were, situated in India’s belly. How can the belly breathe, if it is cut off from the main body? “The States formed India’s heart and Patel’s genius lay in preserving, integrating and
strengthening that heart at all costs, and thereby saving India from the frightening prospects of Balkanisation. Patel prevented a situation which was ‘fraught with the gravest danger to the integrity of the country’; and falsified what prophets of gloom had predicted that ‘the ship of Indian freedom would founder on the rock of the States.’

**THE REVOLT OF C.P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR OF TRAVANCORE**

The redoubtable C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, a super-egoist like Jinnah, dreamt of a status completely independent of a Union Government headed by Nehru and Patel. His, was the first State to have raised the banner of revolt, even when he was its non-Travancorean Diwan. C.P.declared on May 9, 1947, in an interview with *The Hindu*, that if it was not possible to frame a constitution for the country as a whole without dividing it, Travancore would have no alternative but to declare herself a free and independent State, and to take all necessary steps for it.  

C.P. was an acknowledged intellectual, the Diwan of a premier State, and a stalwart who had occupied the centre of the political stage during the Home Rule movement. He was Secretary to its founder, Mrs.Annie Besant. This was in 1916-17, prior to Gandhi’s emergence on the political horizon. The seriousness of his revolt lay in Travancore’s strategic position: a premier Hindu State at the southernmost tip of India with a sizeable seaboard, and ancient maritime tradition. And it was trotted out that, with the discovery of uranium deposits, for Travancore ‘the lapse of Paramountcy now assumes new strategic significance.’

Patel was among the first to have sensed that C.P. was spearheading a dangerous move among the Indian States. According to K.M.Munshi, his ‘intransigence gave a new ray of hope to those Princes who had been dreaming of evolving a “Third Force” out of the States.’ They were, indeed, ‘dreaming of a States League and looking to the wizard of Travancore, who at least has a seaboard for the export of his coconuts and uranium,’ C.P. had, however, isolated himself
from the major Hindu States, including his neighbour, Cochin, whom Patel had won over earlier. The Maharaja of Cochin had said on April 27th: 'The States are subservient autocracies and helpless under the subjugation of a Superior Power.' He had, therefore, advised his brother Princes 'to play a useful part in the country's future by willingly assuming the role of constitutional rulers,' But C.P. derived his inspiration and arrogance from the support he enjoyed of Bhopal and Corfield. In spite of such a discouraging situation, it was diplomatic of Patel to have written to C.P. a short but sweet letter, breathing friendliness, on May 31st, and timed it with C.P.'s visit to New Delhi to see Mountbatten prior to the announcement of the June 3 plan. Patel's intention was to soothe C.P.'s pride and to wean him away from the dangerous path he was pursuing.

Patel's letter to C.P. read: 'It is in my nature to be a friend of the friendless. You have become one by choice, and I shall be glad if you will come and have lunch with me tomorrow at 1 p.m.' Patel was rather impish in the use of the words 'friendless' and 'you have become one by choice', as these few words conveyed what C.P. had, unfortunately, reduced himself to - an isolated man. C.P., nevertheless, remained intractable, infatuated as he was with overpowering pride- a pride born out of his mistaken, though deep-rooted belief in his personal friendship with the British. The young Maharaja of Travancore had allowed himself to be led by the nose, especially in C.P.'s hoodwinking Patel with the fallacious argument that no one could negotiate as the State was ruled 'in the name and on behalf of the tutelary deity, Sri Padamanabha. 'Mischievously did Patel retort: how could Travancore rulers allow the Lord to become subservient to the British Crown?

C.P. rode the high horse from which, he was sure, nobody could dismount him. His reply to Patel's invitation mirrored his character and reflected his mood: 'I appreciate your letter, and the kind thought underlying. It, however, so happens that the "friendless" person
referred to has an engagement with a person for lunch today, and he cannot, therefore, avail himself of your generous invitation. Hoping for better luck later on, and renewing my thanks for the friendliness displayed by you. The person C.P. was lunching with was Mountbatten; and ‘later on’ C.P., instead of finding ‘better luck’, had to eat humble pie.

At the State Negotiating Committee’s meeting with Mountbatten on June 3rd, C.P. ‘pleaded for a loosening or lapse of Paramountcy before the transfer of power, in order to strengthen the bargaining power of the States and enable them to negotiable on equal terms with the prospective Dominion Governments. ‘Obviously, C.P. felt encouraged by Mountbatten’s reply that he would consider ‘the premature lapse of paramountcy in special cases if it could be proved that its continuance was a handicap to negotiation. Brimming with hope and confidence, C.P. was bold to announce on June 10th Travancore’s decision to declare itself independent on August 15th. He asked the people of the State to stand’ solidly by His Highness’ on ‘a matter of life and death’, made ‘a fervent appeal to the great traditions and glorious heritage, unique history and unquestioned patriotism of Tranvancoreans’, urging them ‘to cogitate and decide whether they wished to cherish their freedom and independence, or preferred to be submerged and absorbed as an adjunct to a dominion in a divided India, or be a colony or dependency.’ He held out the alluring prospect of Travancore being ‘destined to be the savior of South India.

C.P. roused people’s emotions by raising the slogan: ‘Travancore for the Travancoreans’; and he went on to say, “The future for the next hundred years at least of Travancore is in the making. The Maharaja does not act, has not acted, will not act as an autocrat. He conceives himself as the trustee and the spear point of Travancore’s activities and of Travancore’s will, and I am making this appeal on behalf of the Maharaja and with his special permission, and on behalf of the dynasty he represents.” He asserted, “There is no question that
Travancore is ever going to enter the Constituent Assembly. There is no question that Travancore is now going to join the Indian Union. Travancore will be an independent State, and will function as an independent State from August 15th. I have told the Viceroy —and this is no secret—that from the next day, next to the 2nd of this month on which I met him, namely the 3rd instant, I propose to prepare Travancore to fulfill its role and play its part as an independent State.”

The demagogue in C.P. raised the emotional appeal to a still higher pitch, “I may tell you that the Maharaja is prepared for the worst that may happen. This is clear. Either this State fulfils its destiny- as by its resources, by the intelligence of its people, by the equipment of its people, by the education of its people, by the history of its people, it is fit to do; or, on the other hand, if this State prefers inglorious existence, prefers to be submerged and suffocated, then His Highness is prepared for every step that may have to be taken, for every risk that may have to be faced. “And with a dramatic touch he added, “... from the 15th of August no power on earth, short of an open war for which we are prepared, can prevent Travancore from declaring its independence ... from the 15th of August Travancore will be an international entity... people may laugh at us, people may deride us for the time being, but we shall be in exactly the same position as any State in the world. If Switzerland, if Norway, if Sweden, if Denmark can be independent, notwithstanding their small area, notwithstanding their small population, notwithstanding their small revenue, I do not see why Travancore should not be.” Referring to Travancore’s population of six and a half million and a revenue of about Rs.9 crores, C.P. asserted, “Travancore wants to live its own life. Travancore wants to pursue its own ideals. It is distinct and separate from the rest of India by its culture.”

C.P.’s rhetoric was an empty burst of eloquence, hidden underneath which was his anti India, pro-Jinnah game. This became unmistakably clear when C.P. announced his intention to appoint a Trade Agent in Pakistan.
On the heels of C.P.'s declaration came that of the Nizam of Hyderabad on June 12th. Such developments had grave portents. V.P. Menon thought that 'these events gave rise to apprehensions lest other States should adopt a similar attitude and India be split into fragments. Jinnah was quick to add fuel to the fire by stating on June 17th that constitutionally and legally, the Indian States will be independent sovereign States on the termination of Paramountcy and they will be free to decide for themselves to adopt any course they like; it is open to them to join the Hindustan Constituent Assembly or the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, or decide to remain independent.. Neither the British Government, nor the British Parliament ,nor any other power or body, can compel them to do anything contrary to their free will and accord. And since the major States had during the Second World War strengthened their armed forces and the Indian States comprised two-fifths of India, their’ return to a state of complete political isolation’. In Menon’s opinion, was ‘fraught with the graves danger to the integrity of the country.’

R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, a former Diwan of Cochin, voiced his grave concern over C.P.’s stand on June 22nd, stating, “The most disquieting feature of the Indian political situation is not so much the fact of division or the potentialities of communal troubles, but the declaration of some of the Indian States that they intend to remain as independent sovereign States on the termination of British Paramountcy... the creation of the separate State of Pakistan may not be a damaging blow to India’s prestige or influence... The real danger to the unity and prestige of India is the attitude of certain Indian States. If a considerable number of Indian States choose to follow the example of Travancore and Hyderabad, it would mean the Balkanisation of India.’ Shanmukham Chetty, therefore, regretted, “It is one of the ironies of fate that the Diwan of Travancore, who has been the champion of pure Indian nationalism and a strong Central Government, should now make an alliance with Jinnah.”
Gandhi could not withhold his voice of deep concern. He stated on June 25th: "If the Travancore Diwan were allowed to have his way and his example were followed by others, India would be split up into several States — a disaster too dreadful to contemplate. Those many States would need an Emperor, and the Emperor who was leaving might even return with redoubled force." 83 Patel, had earlier unequivocally stated at the AICC meeting on June 16th, "Probably the statesman who made declaration of independence and sovereignty did not understand the implications of those terms. So long as the Congress continued to have a foothold in Travancore, there is no question of independence and sovereignty." 84

C.P. indulged in sabre-rattling again on June 23rd and continued doing so almost throughout July. K.P.S Menon, who later became India’s Foreign Secretary, thought that C.P. had declared Travancore independent in a moment of megalomania’. Which had led him to the next step when ‘he expressed his intention to establish diplomatic relations between Travancore and Pakistan, and even selected a retired police officer for the post of Ambassador of Travancore in Karachi’. 85 Travancore sat on a power-keg. Afraid of an explosion, C.P. resorted to repression, which was a reminder of 1938 when he had faced a somewhat similar situation and to check which ‘he had his Gestapos searched through every nook and corner and preyed upon unarmed victims, who had asked for freedom to live and work, talk and write, associate and organize, (and) subjected them to oppression.’ 86

On July 10th Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore State Congress, informed Patel by telegram that C.P. ‘attempts suppression of public opinion... terrorist organizations composed of goondas are formed throughout country under control of police and other Government agencies to wreck public meetings and assault public men... Life of public men is in danger. Members of (these) organizations parade public streets armed with lathis, knives and
other weapons... Life and property insecure... Conditions rapidly degenerating into widespread violence... Travancore is subjected to unbridled dictatorship by an irresponsible non-Travancorean Diwan.\(^8\) When C.P.'s rogue elephant politics got worse' with the indiscriminate loosening of its fiery temper, the Keralite in K.M. Panikkar felt so emotionally stirred as to decide to jump into the fray and fight C.P. face to face. He gave up his decision on Patel's advice that 'there was no need for me to do any such thing and he would solve the Travancore problem himself.'\(^8\) Patel was 'furious and determined, if necessary, to deal severely with Travancore.'\(^9\)

Two events, almost simultaneously happening, took the situation to its climax, then to its ludicrous descent, and, finally, to its quiet passing away and getting lost in the pages of history. One was, according to insiders, Patel's direct handling of the Maharaja, who, being in his early thirties, had proved incapable of standing up to C.P. Patel telephoned the Maharaja and asked him in a voice that was soft, firm but blunt, "Who is standing in your way?" The second was an attempt on C.P.'S life on July 25\(^{th}\) when he was attending a cultural function at Trivandrum. The first unnerved the Maharaja; the second, C.P. Both felt rattled. Immediately after the incident, the Maharaja communicated to Mountbatten his decision to accede to India; while a humiliated, defeated, mollified C.P. wrote to Patel from his retirement at Ootacamund on November 11\(^{th}\):'May I take this opportunity to convey to you my sincere felicitations over the forthright and unequivocal policy adopted and maintained by you during the present time of crises and momentous decisions. I have differed from you on several occasions, but cannot refrain from paying my tribute to the consummate talents of leadership manifested by you and Pandit Jawahararl Nehru at this juncture. In his characteristic magnanimity, Patel replied: 'We both know how much we have differed in the past. But, in spite of those differences, I have always regretted that we could not make use of your undoubted talents in a wider sphere of
activities. C.P.'s praise for Patel increased as time passed. He wrote to Purushottam Tricumdas on March 27, 1948: '... generally speaking, all the great Kshatriya rulers- descendants of the Sun and Moon - behave like mendicants and sycophants, and have no more spirit than a parcel of frightened rabbits or sheep. They deserve (their) fate, and I congratulate Patel on the brilliant results of his downright policy.'

Forgetting the past, Patel was anxious to harness C.P.'s services in the Governments. He was motivated to do so not so much by the request he had received from Mountbatten to rehabilitate C.P. as by his own conviction. Patel, therefore, suggested to Nehru, in a letter of May 6, 1948, C.P.'s appointment as India's Ambassador to the USA, in the belief that 'his abilities and talents should be utilized by us in the service of the country.' He impressed on Nehru, "Men like Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar start with a great advantage in external fields, as they carry a prestige and a position which comparatively unknown personalities have to build up, and their already established contacts provide a useful stepping-stone for further efforts in that direction."

Patel tried to mollify Nehru's deep-rooted prejudice with the plea, "I know how bitterly he has been opposed to us, but I do feel that we should be generous and forgiving in our adversary's defeat, and that we should not let go waste his undoubted talents and capacity. "Patel suggested." Irrespective of party or personal considerations, therefore, we should have in Washington a very able and competent man. I feel that we have such a man in Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, and that if only we could rise above the past, we could utilize him."

Nehru could not forget C.P.'s past and he could not rise above it. He rejected Patel's suggestion with the comment, "I feel quite clearly that C.P. would not be the right man for Washington, or any of the important ambassadorial posts. This has nothing to do with his past, except that the past has created a prejudice against him among large numbers of people in India and his appointment would be very unpopular. "Nehru also stated, "I have received advices from the US
that while his capability and intellect were greatly admired, he is looked upon as a man out of touch with developments and rather lopsided in his approach. If that was the reaction in America itself, you can well imagine reactions elsewhere ... C.P. talks unrestrainedly about world politics and this is likely to create difficulties." 91 With that the matter ended, and C.P. continued to hibernate in political wilderness. Patel could not oblige Mountbatten. More importantly, his failure was the country’s loss. C.P.’s presence in the U.S. as Mountbatten must have thought, could have contributed to securing stable, happy Indo-American relations. Since the matter related to foreign affairs, the decision rested with Nehru.

The inauguration of the United State of Travancore and Cochin on July 1st, 1949 was one of the happiest and momentous events for Patel. He could not attend the inaugural function in Trivandrum owing to ill-health. But his message described the union as ‘the culminating point of the policy of consolidation of States which was inaugurated not more than eighteen months ago; and which, with the cooperation and assistance of the rulers and the support and consent of the people of the States, has been my proud privilege to implement.’ Not taking all the credit to himself, Patel paid handsome tributes to all those concerned with its success: It has also been my unique pleasure to find among the Princes and the people a willingness to make sacrifices in the cause of the country- that sense of public duty which only true patriots can exhibit, and that realization of the urgency and pre-eminence of the country’s interest which call forth the best and the truest in human beings. The Rulers of Travancore and Cochin, the two Premiers and their colleagues and the local Congress organizations have given by this act of union an unmistakable proof of these virtues, and the complete unity of purpose and devotion to duty thus symbolized by them are a happy augury for the success of this unique enterprise. 92 The historic significance of Patel’s success was underlined by Mountbatten: ‘The
adherence of Travancore, after all C.P.'s declaration of independence, has had a profound effect on all the other States and is sure to shake the Nizam. Patel's was a major victory.

**JINNAH FISHED IN JODHPUR WATERS.**

Jinnah's fishing in the distant waters of Travancore and Hyderabad was to achieve his objective of weakening the Government in New Delhi. Kathiawar, including jungadh, was on Jinnah's priority list, but that did not provide so favorable a situation to Pakistan as Jodhpur. The state lay across Pakistan's border; and was most strategic from the point of view of making inroads into the heart of India. 'The case of Jodhpur,' admits H.V.Hodson, 'illuminates the lengths to which Jinnah was prepared to go in order to wean States from India.' Events in Jodhpur took a dramatic turn with the sudden death of Maharaja Umed Singh in June 1947 and the succession to the throne by his son, Hanwant Singh, who was young, rash, headstrong and given to irresponsible, emotional outbursts. Hanwant Singh's father had cast his lot with India, and was among the first few Princes whose representatives took their seats in the Constituent Assembly on April 28, 1947.

On the occasion of the Rajtilak (crowning) ceremony on June 21, the new Maharaja announced that Jodhpur would continue to be associated with the Constituent Assembly of India. He even expressed the desire that Jodhpur, in close association with participating States in the Assembly, would work wholeheartedly for the formation of a Union of India. But the presence of Bhopal in Jodhpur was a most disturbing factor in an otherwise quiet situation. He had flown in, ostensibly, to offer his felicitations to the young Maharaja; but he had a secret mission- that of an emissary of Jinnah. On the latter's behalf, he was to arrange a few meetings in New Delhi at Jinnah's residence, at which Bhopal, along with his Legal Adviser, Mohammad Zafrullah, was to be present to assist Jinnah in winning over Jodhpur, and thus
weaning the Maharaja away from India. Jinnah harboured a grand plan – a Karachi-Jodhpur-Bhopal axis, which was looked upon by Patel as ‘a dagger into the very heart of India.’ This way Jinnah wanted to avenge Patel’s forcing on him a truncated Pakistan. Jodhpur’s defection would have given a fatal blow to Patel’s dream of unification of the Rajput States, which stretched along Pakistan’s eastern border and Rajput’s disunity, distrust and friction in the past had helped the Moghuls to build their Empire in India. Jinnah seemed to be angling for a similar role for Pakistan, with Jodhpur repeating history by playing a quisling.

C.S. Venkatachar, the Prime Minister of Jodhpur, came to know about Bhopal’s secret mission from whispers floating around the palace. Deeply concerned over what was ominously taking shape, he sent H.V.R. Iengar, Home Secretary to the Government of India, a hand-written note through a special messenger, so as ‘to avoid being spied upon’, giving news of the utmost gravity for the very stability of India.’ The note also stated that ‘the ruler had been approached by Jinnah and had been persuaded to stay out of the Indian Dominion,’

Ienger took the note to Patel and apprised him of the ‘gravity of the situation. ‘A great danger lurked in Bhopal, Indore and a few other Central India States forming an independent federation under Bhopal’s leadership with ultimate accession to Pakistan. Bhopal expected Baroda to join his group on Jinnah’s promise that he would be allowed to exercise control over his port of Bedi Bandar on the Saurashtra coast. Jinnah was hopeful of roping in the Jamsaheb of Nawanagar as well in his grand plan.

Jodhpur was hesitant to see Jinnah alone. He took with him the Maharajkumar of Jaisalmer. Jinnah’s argument with Jodhpur was, “As long as the Central Government in India is weak, we are both strong.. Your Highness, I sign on the dotted line, and you fill in the conditions,” The ambitious Maharaja was tempted by four offers: a sea-outlet through the use of Karachi as a free port, free import of
arms and continuance of manufacture of firearms in his State, jurisdiction over the Jodhpur-Hyderabad (Sind) railway, and a large supply of grain for famine relief. This was Jinnah’s ‘basket of apples’. Which Bhopal had already successfully sold to Jodhpur. The Maharaja seemed to be so happy with the offer that he invited the Maharana of Udaipur to join the Bhopal plan. The reply was to shock Jodhpur: ‘My choice was made by my ancestors. If they had faltered, they would have left us a kingdom as large as Hyderabad. They did not. Neither shall I. I am with India.’ Bikaner also refused Jodhpur to accompany him to Jinnah.

Anxious not to let the fish escape from his net, Jinnah at his meeting with Jodhpur ‘signed a blank sheet of paper and gave it to Maharaja Hanwant Singh along with his own fountain pen, saying: “You call fill in all your conditions”... The Maharaja was prepared to line up with Pakistan. He then turned to the Maharajkumar of Jaisalmer and asked him whether he would follow suit. ‘Jaisalmer’s one condition was, “If there was any trouble between the Hindus and the Muslims, he would not side with the Muslims against the Hindus. “ This was ‘a bombshell that took Maharaja Hanwant Singh completely by surprise.’ Zafrullah tried to make light of the whole affair and pressed Jodhpur to sign the instrument. The Maharaja could not immediately make up his mind. Taking advantage of his vacillation, the Maharaja’s A.D.C., Col, Thakur Kesari Singh, whispered into his ears, ‘Your Highness, before you sign, you must ask your mother,’ the Maharaja greatly respected her. Known as Rajdidi, she was ‘a woman of great character, power and influence.’ The Maharaja suggested to Jinnah that he would go back to Jodhpur and return the next day.

Since power had not yet been transferred, Patel could only exercise patience. He had no authority to deal with the Princes officially and his approach to Bhopal could only be through Mountbatten as the Crown Representative. Mountbatten took up the
matter with Bhopal, telling him that Patel had received information that 'His Highness had made contact with the young Maharaja of Jodhpur and induced him to come with him to Jinnah. That at this meeting Jinnah had offered extremely favorable terms on condition that he did not sign the Instrument of Accession, and that he had even gone so far as to turn round and say to the Maharaja of Jodhpur, "Here's my fountain pen. Write your terms and I will sign it." Bhopal gave an evasive version of the story. But Mountbatten took the opportunity to warn Bhopal: I pointed out to His Highness that no amount of friendship would enable me to protect either himself or his State or the new ruler of the State, if the future Government of India thought that he was acting in a manner hostile to that Government by trying to induce an all-Hindu State to join Pakistan.  

Patel, thus, faced three extremely intrepid, intractable and unpredictable men in Jinnah, Bhopal and Jodhpur. The first was astute and clever, proudly basking in the glory of his victory in getting away with Pakistan, and now hunting for opportunities to stir up trouble for India by other ways. The second was a peerless Machiavellian who carried influence with some of the Princess as the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princess. And the third, the Maharaja of Jodhpur, was headstrong, emotional and impulsive, capable of committing any rash act irrespective of the consequences.

The Maharaja returned to New Delhi after a three-day stay at Jodhpur for a final round of talks with Jinnah and Bhopal. He didn't seem to be the same as earlier- apparently subdued by his mother's talk, as also by what his guru, a swami, reportedly told him, "How could a Hindu State like Jodhpur agree to accede to Pakistan which will be a Muslim State?" Yet, Venkatachar did not leave matters to chance. He followed him to New Delhi to keep a watch on his moves. V.P. Menon too moved into the arena of manoeuvring. He was informed that unless he handled the Maharaja 'quickly, the chances were that he might accede to Pakistan.' It was decided, as part of
the strategy, that before Patel stepped into the scene, Mountbatten might handle the Maharaja first. The latter agreed to do so, rather hopefully. Before Bhopal could get in touch with the Maharaja on Jinnah’s behalf, Menon contacted the young Prince and told him that Mountbatten, who was still the Crown Representative, would like to see him.

Without losing time, Menon drove the Maharaja to the Viceroy’s House. Mountbatten explained to the Maharaja that from a purely legal standpoint, there could be no objection to Jodhpur’s acceding to Pakistan, but he should not overlook the fact that his was a predominantly Hindu State: if acceded to Pakistan, his action would surely be in conflict with the principle underlying the Partition of India on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority area; and serious communal trouble inside the State would be the inevitable consequence of such affiliation. The Maharaja remained non-committal. He tried to put Mountbatten off by asking for ‘impossible concessions’. An exasperated Mountbatten used all his persuasive powers- first as a well-wisher, and then as his ‘uncle’ by telling him in plain language that ‘his father had been a great personal friend of mine having been on the Prince of Wales’ staff with me in 1921-22...he had been supporting my scheme for the accession of the States to the Dominion of India, and that Jodhpur would have acceded if he had not died. To me it was tragic that his successor should not follow the wisdom of his father, and should have been misled by Jinnah...’Mountbatten admits:’ I could not get the Maharaja to agree then and there, although I had obviously shaken him, and I then conceived the idea of getting V.P. Menon to take him to see Sardar Patel before returning to Jodhpur...

The Maharaja saw Patel at the latter’s residence. Patel was extremely polite, exceedingly courteous, but firm in tone’ the conversation between the two was very brief. The awe-inspiring looks of Patel made the Maharaja somewhat shaky. He faltered in tone.
Patel purposely put up a show that was an anti-climax to what had happened at the Maharaja's meeting with Mountbatten. He treated him with overflowing kindness and disarming smiles. The conversation between the two briefly was:

Patel: I hear Your Highness has met Lord Mountbatten.
Maharaja: Yes, Sardar,
Patel: so, what talk did you have with him?
Maharaja: No...thing...Sardar.
Patel: I also hear Your Highness has met Jinnah and have decided to remain independent.
Maharaja: Yes, Sardar,
Patel: Well, I have no comments to make. Your Highness is free to stay out, if you like. But if there is trouble in your State as a result of your decision, you will not get the slightest support from the Government of India.¹⁰⁴

According to Ienger, 'there was a clear warning that there would be trouble in the State', and Patel 'left the ruler in no doubt that the move initiated by Jinnah was dangerous not only to India, but to the ruler himself.'¹⁰⁵ Patel closed the conversation with a mild admonition by saying that the Maharaja's father, who was his friend, had left him to his care as a ward; and if he did not behave as he should, Patel would have to act the role of a guardian to discipline him. The Maharaja felt unnerved. He broke out in a cold sweat. Sobered, subdued, he quietly got up from his seat and told Patel in a mollified voice, "Well Sir, I have decided to go back to Lord Mountbatten and sign the Instrument of Accession right now."

One drama was over,. Another one began soon after at the Viceroy's House. Even when the Maharaja had committed himself to Patel, he could still give Menon the slip and motor down to Bhopal's residence. Menon could not allow that. He himself drove the Maharaja straight to Mountbatten. Immediately after the Instrument of Accession had been signed, Mountbatten went out of the room.
During his short absence, in a fit of emotional outburst, narrates Menon, the Maharaja 'whipped out a revolver, leveled it at me and said, “I refuse to accept your dictation.” I told him that he was making a very serious mistake if he thought that by killing me, or threatening to kill me, he could get the accession abrogated. ‘Don’t indulge in juvenile theatricals.’ just when the incident was over, Mountbatten returned to the room. Menon told him what had happened. He wisely made ‘light of the episode and turned it to a jest’ by patting the Maharaja on his back and telling him. “Don’t show such bravado.’ Let us now finish the business first.”

In the settlement of the Jodhpur affair, a great calamity was averted. Both Patel and Mountbatten played their respective, but complementary roles. The ultimate success was, nevertheless, due to Patel. He made Jinnah suffer a humiliating defeat. It was for Bhopal too. Patel’s greatest gain, however, was: winning the abiding loyalty of the Maharaja. While the Maharaja struck a deep, warm, lifelong friendship with Menon, his relations with Patel grew deeper and warmer from then onwards. He gave Patel the reverence he would have offered to his late father. His devotion to Patel led the Maharaja to serve him as an ‘errand boy’, who happily flew in his aircraft from Prince to Prince and from State to State carrying Patel’s messages. He always felt proud to accompany Patel to various places, wearing ‘a spotless white, jewel-buttoned coat and Jodhpur is,with a coloured turban and a leather belt across his left shoulder replete with a revolver and cartridges.

An interesting incident of such devotion took place on March 29, 1949 when the Maharaja accompanied Patel in an Indian Air Force aircraft to Jaipur to attend the inauguration of the Union of Greater Rajasthan the following day. Beyond Alwar, the aircraft force landed owing to engine trouble. Passing through valleys and hills, the pilot, Bhim Rao, showed great skill in manoeuvring the aircraft to avoid dashing against one of the hills. There was also the danger of
the aircraft bumping on stony ground, and of the fuel tank catching fire. In such tense moments, the Maharaja’s corpulent body provided a diversionary amusement to all, including Patel, with Shankar suggesting that the Maharaja would have to be the last to go, because, if his figure got stuck in the exit, there would be no chance for the others to get out. The Maharaja took all this in good humour, and even participated in such light conversation. But the danger of a tragedy was real. Patel, however, looked unruffled. The aircraft landed on a soft, sandy, dry river-bed near the village of Shahpur. All got out-the Maharaja, of course, the last! They rested for a while under a tree. Hearing the noise of the landing, the villagefolk came running to witness the accident. Coming to know who was involved, they fetched a few cots. Patel was ‘calm and composed’, and enjoyed folk music and folk dance offered by a group of village boys and girls.

The nearest town, Sikar, was several miles away. The Maharaja thought of indulging in some purposeful adventure-walking some distance in search of the main road and finding some transport which could carry Patel and his party to Jaipur. He stood near the centre of the road, trying to stop the passing cars and trucks. But the drivers, on seeing a bulky man with two revolvers hanging on either side of him, would press the accelerator and speed away. His appearance frightened many a car-owner too. Meanwhile, K.B. Lall, Administrator of the United States of Matsya, on securing information from a bystander, reached the place where Patel was resting. He happened to be travelling by car from Alwar to Jaipur to attend the same function. Seeing him, Patel gave a broad smile and enquired how he managed to reach there. Lall gave a high-hearted reply, “A note from his Private Secretary called him to his duty!”

Humorously, Patel quipped, “Somehow you manage to turn up from somewhere in critical situations.”107 Lall found Patel settled comfortably in a chair which had been detached from the aircraft. He appeared composed, with no trace of worry or annoyance or agitation.
He was content with the situation he was in. But his mind was set on Jaipur. He asked how long it would take him to reach those who would be anxiously waiting to receive him. On being requested by Lall to get into his car, he insisted on waiting for the Maharaja’s return. But time was running out, and he could not delay his departure if he were to reach Jaipur on time. He wanted Lall and others to satisfy him that they would take care of the Maharaj, and that adequate arrangements would be made for everyone.

The sun had set. Dusk was settling down. The journey to Jaipur was long. Reluctantly Patel agreed to Ball’s suggestion, but on the assurance that the Maharaja would be looked after. He thought that he would meet him on the main road. Not seeing him there, he organized a search. It was unsuccessful. Lall followed Patel in another car, keeping a watch-out along the road. At some distance, he recognized the Maharaja standing on the roadside, still in search of a vehicle! Maharaja Hanwant Singh was head strong but he was essentially a simple-minded and sincere human being. He proved to be the most lovable of the Princes, whose courage and Patriotism flowered under the paternal affection of Patel. The Prince died in a plane crash in 1952.

At the other end, in the Jaipur palace, the scene was equally dramatic- the uncertainty getting on everybody’s nerves. A whisper by someone into the ear of the Maharaja of Jaipur broke the gloom. M.K.Vellodi records that ‘the effect was electric. The Maharaja jumped out of his chair and yelled with joy and hugged the Jamsaheb... all of us on the terrace hugged each other... In a matter of minutes we saw a small group of people approaching the palace on foot with a petromax light leading the way. It was the Sardar and his retinue. We were transported with joy, and when he came on to the terrance we nearly wept (in sheer joy!). The Sardar put his arms round the Jamsaheb and broke into a broad grin. He was as cool as a
That was characteristic of him: calm, unperturbed, unruffled even amidst grave crises.

**JINNAH CASTS AN EYE ON KATHIAWAR**

The position of the Jamsahab of Nawanagar in Kathiawar was strategically no less important than that of the Maharaja of Jodhpur in Rajasthan. If the unification of the Rajasthan States largely depended on Jodhpur, equally so was that of Kathiawar on the attitude of the Jamsaheb, who, unlike the Maharaja of Jodhpur, commanded a position of respect and influence among the Princes of Kathiawart. A sinister situation, similar to that in Jodhpur, was developing in Jamnagar around May-June 1947. On July 1st, B.L. Mitter, Diwan of Baroda, wrote to Nehru: The Jamsaheb is reported to be negotiating with Jinnah regarding his port of Bedi Bander. If this port and Veraval, the Junagadh port, come into the orbit of Karachi, Bombay will be seriously affected. And with the accession of Veraval and Junagadh to Pakistan, the whole of Kathiawar would have come under Jinnah’s domination.

Much earlier, on November 22, 1946, Mitter had informed Patel: The Princes Chamber is playing Jinnah’s game... The Jamsahab has bought his immunity by selling his soul to the Political Department. His confederation plan is sponsored by the department. His confederation plan is sponsored by the department. Mitter wrote to Patel on March 26, 1947 that the Chief of Wadia (in Kathiawar) had told him, “The Jamsaheb was strengthening his armed forces...was aspiring to be the overlord of Kathiawar.” About mid-June, a gathering of Kathiawar Rulers, with the Jamsaheb as the leader, met in a secret conference at Mount Abu under the president ship of the Resident. The view propagated was that if Travancore can declare its independence, the Kathiawar States, being maritime States, can do likewise...they can rule without any interference from Delhi and develop their ports and they need not depend upon India for

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anything.' The conference decided to form a 'Union of Kathiawar', comprising as many as seven States, which were Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Gondal, Porbandar, Morvi, Dhrangadhra and Junagadh. In the event of its accession to Pakistan, Junagadh would enter into an offensive and defensive treaty with the Union. Mitter also told Patel, "The Resident is helping and the Jamsaheb has promised to put up a crore of rupees in furtherance of the scheme. The Resident and the Political Agent are out to Balkanise India." There was something sinister in granting Junagadh the right to either 'declare separate independence or to join Pakistan. The move unmistakably implied severance of links with India. Jinnah expected Junagadh to play a role in Kathiawar similar to Bhopal's in Central India after its accession to Pakistan.

The situation in Kathiawar was more complex and difficult than that in Jodhpur. In the latter, Patel had to face the challenge of a single ruler; in Kathiawar, seven rulers were uniting to declare their independence. And while Maharaja Hanwant Singh was young and immature and Patel could treat him as a boy, the Jamsaheb was 'a tower of strength'. Patel watched the developments with deep concern but with equanimity, waiting for an opportunity when he could act. Such an opportunity arrived on May 11th. The Jamsaheb and some other rulers were halting for a short while at the New Delhi airport, on their way to some Rajput State to sell the confederation idea. The Jamsaheb's, brother, Himatsinhji, informed Patel of this. Patel sent him in his car to bring the Jamsaheb to his residence for lunch. Accompanied by Her Highness and Himatsinhji, the Jamsaheb lunched with Patel. The meeting proved momentous. It changed the course of event. Patel's influence on the Jamsaheb was irresistible. The Nawanager ruler seemed to have been won over by Patel at his very first meeting. Happy over the outcome, Mitter wrote to Patel on the 14th: 'you have converted the Jamsaheb. Now you will have to fashion the Kathiawar and Gujarat units for the Union.'
Patel was cautious in expressing his opinion: The Jamsaheb had come here yesterday (May 11th)... He is still hopeful of his confederation scheme succeeding, and he has gone to Kotah for that purpose. Udaipur has already joined the Constituent Assembly and I do not know whether it will join the confederation now. From his talk I understood that all the Kathiawar States, except for Junagadh and Bhavnagar, have joined the (proposed) confederation. I have, of course, expressed no opinion about the merits of this scheme.114

Patel, however, made the Jamsaheb appreciate the dangers India faced from Pakistan all along the border from Rajasthan to Kathiawar. Events in Jodhpur and Junagadh more than convinced the Jamsaheb of Patel's logic in checkmating Jinnah's designs to destroy Indis's unity. A hopeful indicator of Jamsaheb's mind, as also of the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra, was what they told Menon by way of a warning that 'with Shah Nawaz (Bhutto) in the saddle, there was a possibility of Jundagadh going over to Pakistan.115'

The decks having been cleared, Patel got into action to face Jinnah's challenge through the unification of the Kathiawar States. Since he came from Porbander, Gandhi was 'intensely interested' in it; and in its achievement was the fulfillment of Gandhi's dream. For Patel it meant political consolidation of the country in a big way. The unification was highly necessary like the unification of the Rajput States. It was complex, as it involved 222 States of great diversity and covering an area of over 22,000 square miles. As many as 46 States had an area of two or less than two square miles; the smallest one had an area of 0.29 square miles, a population of 206 souls and an income of Rs.500 a year! Many of the States had scattered pockets of territory outside their own boundaries. Such a chaotic state of affairs rendered law and order poor and even unmanageable, hampered trade and encouraged extensive smuggling. 'In fact, all the worst effects of political fragmentation were to be seen in Kathiawar.' Patel inaugurated the United State of Kathiawar on February 15, 1948.

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Speaking on the occasion, he paid handsome tributes to the Jamsaheb and other rulers who had joined the Union. He said, “But for their vision, wisdom and patriotism, the happy result you are seeing today would not have fructified. It was Mahatma Gandhi’s dream that Kathiawar should be united, and it gladdens my heart that the dream of such unification has come true.”

The Jamsaheb significantly replied, “It is not as if we were tired monarchs who were fanned to rest. It is not as if we have been bullied into submission. We have by our own free volition pooled our sovereignties and covenanted to create this new State so that the United State of Kathiawar and the unity of India may be more fully achieved.” It was a tribute as much to Patel as to rulers of Kathiawar when Nehru described the event as ‘a great step forward... one of the most notable in contemporary Indian history’, and called it a far-sighted act of statesmanship. Nehru was more specific when he wrote to the provincial Chief Ministers on February 20th: ‘Six months ago, it would have been considered an idle dream to think of an administrative merger of the hundreds of Kathiawar States, let alone such a merger accompanied by full responsible government. The Peninsula was ridden by factions and jealousies; and it was a crazy patchwork of States of varying degrees of sovereignty with only one thing common, namely, autocratic rule. On the February 15th, the whole of the peninsula became one unit under one responsible Government. This is an achievement for which Sardar Patel has deservedly won high tribute.’

Mountbatten wrote to Patel: ‘... It appears that you have again scored a brilliant success in your handling of the Kathiawar States’ problem.'

**Bhopal’s Challenge and Surrender**

Bhopal’s challenge to India’s unity was far more pernicious than that posed by Ramaswami Aiyar on behalf of Travancore or even by the Nizam of Hyderabad; whereas his surrender had a great drama.
Apprising Gandhi of the dangers inherent in the situation, Patel wrote to him on August 11th: ‘For the last fifteen days I have been occupied with the Princes. It is so taxing. There seems to be no end to the Nawab of Bhopal’s intrigues. He is working day and night to cause a split among the Princes and to keep them out of the Indian Union. The Princes are weak beyond measure. They are full of selfishness, falsehood and hypocrisy.’ Gandhi’s reply showed the great confidence he had in Patel, “We are faced with difficulty, and difficulties seem to be increasing... The problem of the States is difficult. But I know you will successfully tackle it.”

Bhopal was sly and aggressive, who surreptitiously but swiftly moved from one Price to another, tempting one and all to join hands with him in torpedoing Patel’s dream of One India. He played his game from a position of advantage. He enjoyed encouragement and active support of the Political Department and its powerful Secretary, Conrad Corfield. He was also manoeuvring at the behest of Jinnah. The British had amputated India only in the west and in the est. Bhopal’s machinations aimed at dismembering India criss-cross in a multiple fracture. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Kathiawar to Eastern India, the country would have been fragmented into many independent States. Such Balkanisation would have been the worst in Indian history. Only Patel seemed to possess the strength of a Hercules and the political acumen of a Chanakya to meet the formidable challenge and avert the catastrophe. He did that with rare boldness and wisdom, and succeeded in making Bhopal lick the dust.

Bhopal had two objectives: to establish the Princes as a potential ‘Third Force’ on behalf of Corfield; and, on behalf of Jinnah, to secure their accession to Pakistan, if not immediately but ultimately. Along with the Residents and Agents he endeavored to persuade the Hamlets among the Princes to form independent confederations outside the Indian Union. As Jinnah’s emissary and one of his ‘closest advisers’, Bhopal was ‘not averse to playing an
important role in the higher politics of Pakistan later by migrating to that country. Before that he was to secure either accession of Hindu States to Pakistan, or their staying out of the Indian Union as independent entities with diplomatic ties with Pakistan. The crafty shepherd was confident of satisfying both Corfield and Jinnah by driving the fear-stricken, bewildered lambs among the Princes into the pens each was building to rope them in.

All this bravado was by a Muslim ruler of a small, predominantly Hindu State. The ruler, Nawab Hamidullah Khan, enjoyed a status and influence with the British and the Princes out of proportion to the State's population, area and revenue. It stood no comparison with the larger and richer States like Kashmir, Hyderabad and Travancore, or the Rajasthan States which glowed with the pride of a glorious heritage, or the Kathiawar States whose maritime traditions descended from the misty dawn of the Indus Valley civilization. Bhopal's importance was all in the forefront of the Princely Order by virtue of his personality as a Muslim ruler who could be a most trusted ally of the British. He ascended the throne in May 1926 and came into prominence at the time of the Round Table Conference in 1931. With the British support, he became Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes first from 1931 to 1932, and again from 1943 till his resignation under force of circumstances in 1947. His second term coincided with the most crucial period of Indian history when the future of a united India was on the anvil. K.M. Panikkar, who was Secretary to the Chamber during 1931-32, writes: 'One year's stay in Bhopal had taught me that Hamidullah was a Muslim partisan and an enemy of the Hindus. I was certain that he manoeuvred to gain the Chancellorship at this time (1943) to strengthen the voice of the Muslims and to weaken the Hindu claims with the instrumentality of the Hindu Princes who, looking upon the Political Department as their patron saint, became tools of Bhopal.'
Bhopal packed the Chamber Secretariat with pro-Pakistani Muslims. Assured that the Secretariat would play his game and hopeful of many Hindu Princes' support, Bhopal played an anti-Indian role in the proceedings of the States Negotiating Committee on the issue of the Princes joining the Constituent Assembly. He attempted to browbeat weak, vacillating Princes by prophesying 'bloodshed and chaos' in the States if a time-limit on their joining the Constituent Assembly was imposed. He tried to influence them by word of mouth, besides pressing into service his Pakistani dominated Secretariat, to make them adopt a policy of wait and see. In spite of the shrewdness Bhopal possessed and the patronage he enjoyed of the Political Department, Patel outmanoeuvred him, and made him suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Maharajas of Bikaner and Patiala. And also through a vocal opposition built up within and outside the Chamber by the State Prime Minister- Diwans Mirza Ismail of Mysore, V.T.Krishnamachari of Udaipur, Panikkar of Bikener and B.L.Mitter of Baroda. This resulted in the weakening of Bhopal's position, and was naturally a matter of 'great grief to Bhopal'. Yet, because of Corfield's support and inspiration from Jinnah, Bhopal continued, undeterred, to persuade the Princes sitting on the fence to keep off the Bikaner-Patiala group.

Panikkar and some other Diwans believed that Bhopal was acting as an agent of Pakistan; and that 'Bhopal came forward as the standard-bearer for Hyderabad', having entered into a compact with the Nizam whereby the former (Bhopal) agreed to use the Chamber to rally Hindu Princes to undermine Hindu power in India and the Government of Hyderabad was to finance this devious scheme.'124 Bhopal had every hope of success. Like Jinnah, he believed that a government in India, weakened by the hostility of the Hindu Princes to the Congress, would not dare to offend Muslim public opinion and impose its will on the Nizam. He was of the firm opinion that Hyderabad, as large as England and having a population of 17 million
and a revenue of Rs.20 crores, would survive; and that his 'tiny island in a Hindu ocean' could do so 'in association with Hyderabad'. Such a dream turned sour with Britain's change of mind to transfer power on August 15, 1947, and not by June 1948 as decided earlier; and in this regard Patel had played a decisive role. The speed at which events moved left the Princes bewildered. Bhopal suffered, as his isolation increased thereafter. Yet, his 'evil genius was not quite played out' right till he acceded to the Indian Union.

Simultaneously with the announcement of the June 3 plan, Bhopal resigned from the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes on the ground that Bhopal State would, as soon as Paramountcy is withdrawn, be assuming an independent status. He went so far as to say that Bhopal would negotiate directly with the successor Governments of British India, which meant either Pakistan or Hindustan. Bhopal felt so embittered, and even frustrated, that he refused to attend the meeting of the Rulers and States representatives called by Mountbatten on July 25th in his capacity as the Crown Representative. He dismissed it with the contemptuous remark that the rulers had been invited like the Oysters to attend the tea-party with the Walrus and the Carpenter. Mountbatten regretted to stay, "I have spent more time on Bhopal's case than on all the other States put together. It would be a tragedy if he were to wreck the State by failing to come in now."

As August 15th drew nearer, Bhopal realized that his game was up. He also realized that in losing the battle to Patel, and not to Mountbatten, he might lose all in the end. He found himself in an anomalous and difficult position. So, He approached Mountbatten to find out whether he could sign a Standstill Agreement without acceding to India. What lay behind this move, it can only be conjectured. He perhaps wanted to see how strong Patel would be after the transfer of power. Would he be exercising full control or partial or none at all? On that basis he wanted to formulate his
strategy. He was, however, told that this was not possible. Thereupon, he sent his Constitutional Adviser, Zafrullah, to seek clarification of the terms of accession from V.P. Menon. This could not inspire confidence in Bhopal’s intentions, especially so because of Zafrullah’s credentials. Zafrullah was an ardent Pakistani, who was soon to represent the Muslims on the Radcliffe Boundary Commission and later as Pakistan’s nominee in the UNO to argue Pakistan’s case on Kashmir and Hyderabad. Menon told Bhopal that there could be no exception, and he would have to join on the same terms as any other ruler. At his meeting with Mountbatten on August 11th, Bhopal sought his help to save face. He wanted his accession to be announced ten days after the creation of the Dominion of India- i.e. by August 25th. Mountbatten expressed his helplessness unless Patel agreed. Patel was generous to grant Bhopal’s request, even when Bhopal had something up his sleeve.

After the announcement of his accession on August 25th, Bhopal wrote to Patel on the 26th. The letter was in the nature of his gratitude for the spirit of accommodation Patel had shown, and an open confession of his guilt. He wrote: By the time you receive this letter, you will have heard the news that I have decided to join the Union of India. I do not disguise the fact that while the struggle was on, I used every means in my power to preserve the independence and neutrality of my State. Now that I have conceded defeat, I hope that you will find that I can be as staunch a friend as I have been an inveterate opponent after the announcement of his accession on August 25th, Bhopal wrote to Patel on the 26th. The letter was in the nature of his gratitude for the spirit of accommodation Patel had shown, and an open confession of his guilt. He wrote: By the time you receive this letter, you will have heard the news that I have decided to join the Union of India. I do not disguise the fact that while the struggle was on, I used every means in my power to preserve the independence and neutrality of my State. Now that I have conceded defeat, I hope that
you will find that I can be as staunch a friend as I have been an inveterate opponent. I harbour no ill feelings towards any one; for, throughout I have been treated with consideration and have received understanding and courtesy from your side. I now wish to tell you that so long as you maintain your present firm stand against the disruptive forces in the country and continue to be a friend of the States as you have shown you are, you will find in me a loyal and faithfully ally.’

He further told Patel, “I shall stand by you and if ever you need my assistance in maintaining communal harmony, you have only to say the word and I will do everything in my power to help.”

Patel’s reply reflected a generous, forgiving heart. He wrote: ‘Quite candidly, I do not look upon the accession of your State to the Indian Dominion as either a victory for us or a defeat for you. It is only right and propriety which have triumphed in the end, and in that triumph, you and I have played our respective roles. You deserve full credit for having recognised the soundness of the position and for the courage, the honesty and the boldness of having given up your earlier stand, which according to us, was entirely antagonistic to the interests as much of India as of your own State. I have noted with particular pleasure your assurance of support to the Dominion Government in combating disloyal elements, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, and your offer of loyal and faithful friendship.’

With this, the anti-Indian front of the Princes, Bhopal had built, collapsed. There followed total confusion among the rulers of his group. They were completely ‘routed’; and were so crestfallen that they sought interviews with Patel, looking for some saving grace in his forgiveness. One such ruler was the Maharaja of Indore, Bhopal’s closest ally.’ Erratic and bad-mannered’, he did not, like Bhopal, attend the Rulers’ meeting Mountbatten had called on July 25th. On July 30th, Mountbatten sent six of his fellow Mahratta Princes, headed by Baroda, to Indore with a personal letter from the Viceroy urging the Ruler of Indore to come to Delhi.’ The Maharaja insulted his brother
Princes by declining to see them. Baroda told Menon that all of them were waiting in the Maharaja's drawing-room when he came in and went past them on his way upstairs as though they did not exist. With Bhopal's having fallen from his earlier 'high' position, Indore realized his position was no longer safe. Along with Bhopal, he saw Mountbatten on August 4th, and was given a dressing-down of painful severity.

For what was Bhopal playing Jinnah's game? Obviously for a price. In return for the services rendered, Bhopal hoped to succeed Jinnah as Governor-General of Pakistan. The succession story saw the light of day immediately on Jinnah's death on September 11, 1948, when the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore published a news-despatch from its New Delhi correspondent, apparently inspired by the Newab himself, which purported to say that Bhopal would succeed Jinnah's as Governor-General of Pakistan. The ruling clique looked upon the news with disfavor, characterizing it as sinister. A usurper appeared to be coming to Pakistan to become the head of the State. An agitation was whipped up. A procession went through some of the main streets of Lahore staging a protest. A worked-up crowd gathered outside the newspaper office on the Mall, and made a bonfire of copies which carried the news. The Christian News Editor got so many threatening telephone calls that he had to seek police protection.

Yet, the story could not be dismissed as a canard. Bhopal had lodged with Mountbatten his Instrument of Accession in a sealed envelope for handing it over to the Ministry of States on August 25th, 'unless the Nawab instructed otherwise.' According to H.V.Hodson, 'three days before this period of grace expired', Bhopal had a long talk with Patel and then saw Mountbatten, when he explained the reasons for his hesitation: 'he had ambitions to play a big role in the Muslim world in the future, and he feared that if he acceded, Jinnah would denounce him as a traitor to the Muslim cause. 'Bhopal had flown to Karachi to meet Jinnah, who, though 'sufficiently magnanimous'
towards the Nawab, must have by then seen opposition from Liaquat Ali and other Muslim leaders. It was thereafter, on his return from Pakistan, that the State of Bhopal acceded to India and ‘its ruler decided not to resign his gadi to his daughter, as he had intended to do in order to take office in Pakistan.’

Bhopal's surrender was a great victory for Patel. It meant an ignominious end to Jinnah's game to weaken India and of the Political Department's plans to Balkanise the country. Bhopal's surrender opened up a new chapter in the unification and consolidation of Independent India.

**JUNAGADH’S ACCESSION TO PAKISTAN**

In Junagadh's accession to Pakistan on August 15th, Patel saw 'the first danger sign for splitting India again. He admitted, "After Partition, we had a huge problem. Those who partitioned the country had mental reservations. They thought that this Partition was not the last word, and they started the game immediately thereafter. Among the Kathiawar States, they went to Junagadh and got its accession to Pakistan... We woke up in time and those who tried to play that game saw that we were not sleeping." The situation in Junagadh was in marked contrast with that of Jodhpur; and one which was much to Patel's disadvantage. In the case of Jodhpur, he had foiled Jinnah's efforts to entice the Maharaja; in Junagadh, he was presented with a fait accompli.

The gravity of the situation further increased by Mountbatten's recognizing Junagadh as 'Pakistan territory' in his report to the King, in which he stated: 'My chief concern as Governor-General was to prevent the Government of India from committing itself on the Junagadh issue to an act of war against what was now Pakistan territory,' Further in the report, Mountbatten gave out what seemed to be his major role in India as her Governor-General: 'But at the same time I was aware that, in the wider aspect, my own physical
presence as Governor-General of India was the best insurance against an actual outbreak of war with Pakistan. That he wanted to safeguard Pakistan's position, Mountbatten confessed to Nehru much later, "Pakistan is in no position even to declare war, since I happen to know that their military commanders have put it to them in writing that a declaration of war with India can only end in the inevitable and ultimate defeat of Pakistan." However, Mountbatten's views expressed to the King seemed contrary to the advice he gave the Princes on July 25th: to recognize 'geographical compulsions which cannot be evaded' as also 'the communal majorities of the ruler's subjects.' Mountbatten had also told the Princes, "You cannot run away from the Dominion Government which is your neighbor any more than you can run away from the subjects for whose welfare you are responsible" In spite of such professions, Mountbatten made a serious attempt to play a role in Junagadh which was not in India's interest. He had no control over Jinnah's actions, but he thought he could use his position as Governor-General in averting a war with Pakistan by binding India to three conditions: first, reference of Junagadh to the UNO; second, Indian troops should not enter Junagadh territory; and, third, offer of holding a plebiscite in Junagadh.

Patel reluctantly agreed to a plebiscite, even when Jinnah had not asked for it. But he rejected outright the first two, The first would have, by giving Pakistan locus standi in Junagadh, internationalized the issue, as it happened later in the case of Kashmir. Patel's terse comment was, "There was a grave disadvantage in being the plaintiff in such cases." Mountbatten overlooked the fact that in Junagadh's accession to Pakistan would lie 'Jinnah's tactical shrewdness. He must have seen – or, if he did not see, it certainly turned out- that the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan placed India in an acute dilemma from which any escape could be turned to the advantage of Pakistan. There was also the danger of Pakistan securing a
foothold in Junagadh by landing troops through its port of Veraval, a
course she secretly adopted later in Kashmir by sending tribal
invaders there. Once Pakistani troops were on Junagadh soil, it would
have been difficult for India to dislodge them from there. A graver
danger would be Jinnah’s claim to Hyderabad on the Nizam’s
accession to Pakistan and to Kashmir for reasons of the State’s
contiguity to Pakistan and its people being predominantly Muslims.
Patel refused to oblige Mountbatten on two grounds. The first,
according to him, was the ‘forcible dragging of our eighty percent of
Hindu population of Junagadh into Pakistan by accession in defiance
of all democratic principles,’140 The second was that accession would
have set up a dangerous precedent. On Campbell-Johnson’s
admission, it ‘would automatically be a direct challenge to the
essential validity of the whole accession policy, with disastrous effects
both upon the Kathiawar States and upon the Hyderabad
negotiations,’141 Junagadh brought home to Patel’s critics ‘the
possibilities of disintegration if the policy of accession had not been
implemented.'142

The situation in Junagadh presented certain complications. The
ruler, Nawab Mahabatkahan Rasulkhaji, was an eccentric, who ‘loved
dogs to excess’ and he was said to have owned 800 job them,’ each
with its human attendant, and to have spent 20 lakshs of rupees
(150,000) on a wedding for two of them, for which he proclaimed a
State holiday, His Diwan, Shah Nawaz Bhutto, was a Muslim League
politician from Karachi and father of Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto who later
became the Prime Minister of Pakistan. But what supported India’s
claim was that, unlike Jodhpur, Junagadh had no contiguity with
Pakistan by land, though it could establish a direct link with Karachi
through its port of Veraval- just 300 miles away. Landlocked
Junagadh’s was separated from Pakistan by the territories of Kutch,
Baroda, Nawanagar, Porbandar and Gondal. Junagadh’s map,
according to H.V.Hodson, had ‘absurd complexity:’fragments of other
States were embedded in Junagadh, and fragments of Junagadh were embedded in other States, while an arm of Junagadh separated one substantial outlying portion of the Mahratta State of Baroda from another and from the sea.\textsuperscript{143} Whatever geographical impediments, Jinnah expected Junagadh's accession to give Karachi mastery over the Arabian Sea. Equally important was the fact that Jinnah wanted Junagadh to serve as a test case on the basis of which he could claim Kashmir. He built his hopes on another calculation, about which Pyarelal writes: Right till the end of the British rule in India, Jinnah and the Muslim League had ridden in triumph on the "heads I win, tails you lose" principle ... Junagadh marked the turning-point.\textsuperscript{144} This was entirely due to Patel's toughness, whereas Mountbatten's suggestions would have given Jinnah the veto the British had purposely placed in Jinnah's hands to wreck political talks since the Simla Conference in 1945.

Patel called Junagadh's accession to Pakistan an act of perfidy. As early as April 11, 1947, this Muslim ruler had camouflaged his real intentions by stating that 'what Junagadh pre-eminently stands for is solidarity of Kathiawar, and would welcome the formation of a self-contained group of Kathiawar Startes.'\textsuperscript{145} Accession to Pakistan was purposely not mentioned. Junagadh seemed to be adhering to the policy advocated by Corfield, though the Diwan of the Start, Abdul Kadir Mohammed Hussain, categorically repudiated on April 22\textsuperscript{nd}, allegations that Junagadh was thinking of joining Pakistan. In May, Kadir left for Europe for medical treatment, handing over charge to Bhutto. In spite of this change of Diwanship, Junagadh's representative at the ruler's conference on July 25\textsuperscript{th}, Nabi Baksh, told Mountbatten that his intention was to advise the Nawab to accede to India. He had also given a similar impression to Patel when he called upon him, as also to the Jamsahed of Nawanagar, his neighbour. This was despite the fact that Junagadh had already secretly recruited to the State forces Baluchis and Hurs from Pakistan, and a decision had
been taken that the local Bahauddin College was to be affiliated to the Sind University in Karachi.

Hodson thinks that handling of Junagadh’ would be full of traps, and there was good reason to suspect that some of those traps had been deliberately laid by Pakistan.’ Hodson justifies his suspicion from the fact that Bhutto obeyed Jinnah’s advice, given on July 16th, to keep out under all circumstance until August 15th. With the termination of Paramountcy Bhutto could take an independent decision. Meanwhile, Jinnah assured Bhutto that he would not allow Junagadh to starve as ‘Veraval is not far from Karachi.’ Jinnah’s assurance was to allay Bhutto’s fears which he had expressed in his communication:’ Junagadh stands all alone surrounded by Hindu rulers’ territories and British Indian Congress provinces. We are, of course, connected by sea with Pakistan. In geographical position by land was fairly considered, Kutch, Jamnagar and other territories adjoining Junagadh geographically should be considered connected with Pakistan, as they once in the past actually formed part of Sind. Though the Muslim population of Junagadh is nearly 20 percent and non-Muslims form 80 percent, seven lakh Muslims of Kathiawar survived because of Junagadh. I consider that no sacrifice is too great to preserve the prestige, honour and rule of His Highness and to protect Islam and the Muslims of Kathiawar’

Patel saw dangerous implication of the Jinnah -Bhutto conspiracy. If Junagadh were allowed to accede to Pakistan, Menon thought, ‘its detachment would turn it into a hot -house plant with no powers of survival. What worried him most was ‘the immediate potentialities for turmoil when stability was ‘the crying need of the hour. The Nawab’s action would have undesirable effects on law and order in Kathiawar as a whole. It would extend the communal trouble to areas where at present there was peace. There was also the fear that it would encourage the intractable element in Hyderabad.’ In one of his bellicose utterances, Hyderabad’s Razakar leader, Kasim Razvi,
confirmed this when he said," Why is the Sardar thundering about Hyderabad when he cannot control even little Junagadh? ¹⁴⁸

Junagadh’s accession to Pakistan on August 15th was kept a closely guarded secret. Mountbatten, the Crown Representative, was kept in the dark by the Political Department, the Residents and Agents keeping mum. And so was the British Government – the Paramount Power. The Government of India too had no inkling. It came to know about it on the 17th from newspaper reports. On an enquiry being made, Junagadh simply confirmed the news. Pakistan having not yet formally accepted the accession, India moved into the matter constitutionally by inviting the attention of the Pakistan High Commissioner to India to the invalidity of accession on grounds of Junagadh’s geographical contiguity to India, the composition of its population and the need for consulting the views of the people. Pakistan was discreetly silent. Even a reminder sent on September 6th evoked no response. Jinnah expected that nothing serious would take place. Mountbatten would not let India take precipitate action; Britain would hesitate to take sides; and Nehru would show his usual hesitancy in taking a firm decision. Through this haze of inaction he would carry the day – surreptitiously achieving Junagadh’s accession. He had made one serious miscalculation- Patel’s capacity to act strongly and quickly, bypassing all the rest.

As Jinnah expected, Nehru showed constitutional inhibitions and wanted to pursue a policy of soft-pedalling. On Nehru’s suggestion, a telegram addressed to Liaquat Ali was sent on September 12th. It indicated India’s willingness to abide by the verdict of the people of Junagadh. This was playing into Jinnah’s hands, as he could expect the same in Kashmir later- people’s right for self-determination. Lest India’s message was ignored like the earlier ones, the telegram was personally carried by Ismay to Karachi. He also carried Mountbatten’s message to Jinnah that, if Pakistan accepted Junagadh’s accession. It would lead to a dispute between the two
Dominions and that if Jinnah wanted any State to accede to Pakistan, he could not have chosen a worse State. Pakistan merely telegraphed on September 13th confirming acceptance of Junagadh's accession.

The Junagadh crisis, according to Campbell-Johnson, erupted as if from a wholly unexpected quarter and in the welter of great events immediately before and after the transfer of power, Junagadh was simply overlooked. Not only did Pakistan take advantage of this, but also seemed to have bracketed Junagadh with Hyderabad and Kashmir. Repudiating such a situation, Patel was ready to go on the warpath. He rejected Nehru's soft-paddling in the suggestion that it would be desirable for us to send a message to the British Government about the Junagadh affair with the polite comment: I am not quite sure whether we need say anything to the British Government at this stage. Patel was not willing to let India revert to the pre-Independence years and allow the British to play their earlier partisan role which was pro-Muslim and pro-Jinnah. He proved vindicated by Britain's partisan role later in Kashmir and Hyderabad. Patel was confident of acting on his own, untroubled by what worried Nehru and Mountbatten: the former with an exaggerated notion of international opinion; the latter by an anxiety which reflected the mood of a Briton, fearing that a war might knock Pakistan out of existence.

Junagadh's decision sent a wave of indignation and protest among the people and Rulers of Kathiawar- Nawanagar, Bhavnagar, Morvi, Gondal, Porbandar and Wankaner. All condemned it as strongly as they could. The Junagadh affair turned the rulers to Patel for handling the situation in the same manner as he had in Jodhpur. Junagadh's accession made the Kathawar rulers anti Jinnah. The Maharaja of Dhrangadhra asked the Nawab of Junagadh in a personal letter to reconsider the decision as it was opposed to geographical compulsions, and, no less, the wishes of the people; and that failure to reverse it would cause disruption of Kathiawar. The Nawab's reply
was: The Indian Independence Act did not, and does not, require a ruler to consult his people before deciding on accession. I think we are making an unnecessary fetish of the argument of geographical contiguity. Even then this is sufficiently provided by Junagadh’s sea coast with several ports which can keep connection with Pakistan.'151

The Jamsaheb rushed to New Delhi personally to tell Patel that the rulers and people of Kathiawar were greatly agitated over Pakistan’s attempt to encroach on Indian territory, and how difficult it would be to restrain the people of Kathiawar from retaliation, and that, if the Government of India did not take immediate and effective steps, the Kathiawar States would lose faith in the will and ability of the Indian Dominion to carry out all the obligations arising from their accession to India'152 Mountbatten and Ismay were concerned not so much with this as with deterring India from any physical action. Mountbatten had long talks with Nehru and Patel. He did not have much difficulty in carrying conviction with Nehru; with Patel it was a difficult task. According to Campbell-Johanson, Mounbatten reiterated Ismay’s thesis that the whole manoeuvre was almost certainly a trap and part of a wider campaign which Jinnah might be expected to launch for the express purpose of presenting Pakistan to the world as the innocent weak State threatened by the ruthless aggressor,'153 Patel remained unconvinced. World opinion did not weigh so much with him. He was primarily concerned with saving Junagadh from falling into the hands of Jinnah. If he agreed to withhold action, it was in deference to the wishes of Mountbatten and Nehru.

Two developments pushed the crisis to a boiling point. One was Liaquat Ali’s reassertion on September 25th that the Nawab had every right to accede to Pakistan regardless of the State’s territorial location. The other related to the Nawab’s declaration of accession of Babariawad and Mangrol to India as invalid, claiming both as integral parts of Junagadh territory. Junagadh refused to withdraw its troops

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sent to Babariaward. For Patel, it was an act of aggression, which must be met by a show of strength, with readiness in the last resort to use it.\textsuperscript{154} To avert war, Mountbatten sought a solution in a reference to the UNO. Patel rejected the suggestion on the ground that Junagadh was not a disputed matter, but was a case of blatant interference on the part of Pakistan. Had the issue been referred to the UNO, Junagadh would have gone the way of Kashmir, Mountbatten expected that Nehru and Gopalaswami Ayyanger would lend him their support. Since they did not, his proposal was dropped. Patel also rejected Mountbatten's other suggestion that the Central Reserve Police, and not the Indian Army, should be entrusted with the task of occupation of Babariawad and Mangrol. To Patel, the suggestion meant taking unnecessary risks; he was firm that the operation should be handled by the Indian Army.\textsuperscript{155}

Avoiding direct violation of Junagadh territory, Indian troops under a newly created command, the Kathiawar Defence Force, were deployed in the adjoining States with a view to creating steadying effect all over Kathiawar; and carry out occupation of Babariawad and Mangrol on November 1st. Simultaneously the people of Kathiawar, under the leadership of Samaldas Gandhi, formed a provisional Government with headquarters at Rajkot and recruited volunteers. This was, obviously, with Patel's blessings, meanwhile, over two and a half months political stalemate and economic stagnation had reduced Junagadh to near bankruptcy, resulting in a steep fall in the State's revenues and leading to a fast deteriorating food situation. Since no help reached from Pakistan, the Nawab saw the writing on the wall and fled to Karachi, together with his family, many of his dogs, and all the cash and negotiable assets of the State Treasury.\textsuperscript{156}

From Karachi, the Nawab authorized Bhutto to use his judicious discrimination as the situation demanded and to negotiate with the proper authorities\textsuperscript{157} Bhutto wrote to Jinnah on October 27\textsuperscript{th} telling him of the fading of Muslim ardour for accession, as also:
Today our brethren are in different and cold. Muslims of Kathiawar seem to have lost all enthusiasm for Pakistan. A completely dispirited Bhutto called a meeting of the Junagadh State Council on November 5th, which decided: The position arising out of the economic blockade, interstatal complications, external agitation and internal administrative difficulties make it necessary to have a complete reorientation of the State policy and a readjustment of the relations of the earlier decision to accede to Pakistan.

In pursuance of the State Council’s resolution, Bhutto opened negotiations with Samaldas Gandhi on November 7th through Capt, Harvey Jones, a senior member of the Council, for handing over power. The Muslim Jamiat of Junagadh desired that the administration be handed over to the Government of India. Bhutto, therefore, told the Indian Regional Commissioner in Kathiawar, N.M.Buch, that the Government of India could take over the administration. When Buch rang up Menon at New Delhi, he was at Nehru’s residence. It was past midnight. On Nehru’s advice, Menon drafted tow telegrams: one to Bush; the other to the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The latter was to convey India’s decision to concede to the request of Bhutto, and to assure Pakistan that the Government of India has no desire to continue this arrangement and wished to find a speedy solution in accordance with the wished of the people of Junagadh Pakistan was also assured of India’s desire to discuss this question and other allied matters affecting Junagadh with representatives of Pakistan at the earliest possible moment From Nehru’s residence Menon motored to Patel’s and woke him up at that past midnight hour to seek his approval to the drafts. Nehru was obviously toeing the Mountbatten line, whereas Patel was strongly not be made since the Nawab had fled and Bhutto had voluntarily offered to hand the State over to the Government of India, Patel’s view was that in these circumstances, to commit ourselves to a plebiscite in regard to accession was unnecessary and uncalled for. Ultimately,
under pressure, Patel agreed to Nehru's sending a telegram to Pakistan, but rejected the offer of a plebiscite.

Patel, however, took the earliest opportunity the following day (November 10th) to clarify his views. He had no difficulty in carrying the Cabinet with him in the decision that India could not agree to a joint India-Pakistan plebiscite in Junagadh. He yielded only to the other part – a plebiscite under the UNO auspices, though subsequent developments ruled that out. However, Liaquat Ali stated that since Junagadh had acceded to Pakistan, neither the Diwan nor the ruler could negotiate a temporary or permanent settlement with India, and that it was a violation of Pakistan territory and a breach of International law. Since Junagadh was the States Ministry's responsibility, Patel had the upper hand in playing a master tactician's game. Underestimating Patel, Mountbatten and his advisers had hoped that Patel would be satisfied for a decision on the occupation of Junagadh itself to lie in the pending tray until greater problems were safety resolved. Mountbatten was tactfully left in the dark. By the time he discovered what was afoot, troops were already on the move. According to Campbell Johnson: All these developments were only brought to Mountbatten's notice late in the evening (of November 8th). It is the first time since the transfer of power that the Government have carried out a major act of policy without fully consulting or notifying him in advance of the event. He feels this may be due to Patel's and V.P.'s (Menon) desire to spare him embarrassment. 

It was due to Patel's firm handling of the Junagadh crisis that the storm blew over in no time. The Government of India took over the Junagadh administration on November 9th. On the 13th Patel visited Junagadh. He was given a rousing reception. Addressing a mammoth public meeting on the grounds of the Bahauddin College, he assured the people that India would abide by their wishes. And then, dramatically, by way of oratorical flourish, asked the audience to
indicate whether they wished the State to accede to India or Pakistan. Over ten thousand hands were immediately raised in favour of accession to India.'\textsuperscript{161} Patel also did some plain speaking. “The action of the Nawab of Junagadh would be a lesson to those who are persisting in their chimera of attachment to an authority with which they have no natural ties... The State is no property of a single individual. Paramountcy has lapsed- certainly not by the efforts of the Princes, but by those of the people.'\textsuperscript{162}

A plebiscite, as Patel had promised, was held on February 20, 1948, which went overwhelmingly in favour of India. Out of a total of 201,457 registered voters, 190,870 exercised their franchise. Only 91 cast their votes in favour of accession to Pakistan. A referendum was held at the same time in Mangrol, Manavadar, Babariawad, Bantwa and Sardargarh, which showed that out of 31,434 votes cast in these areas, only 39 went in favour of Pakistan. Jossleyn Hennessy, of the \textit{Sunday Times}, and Douglas Brown, of the \textit{Daily Telegraph}, who were in Junagadh at that time, confirmed that they could find little fault with the manner in which the referendum was conducted.'\textsuperscript{163} Patel was the recipient of congratulations from many quarters for his ‘crowning success’ especially the Princes who eulogized his ‘noble efforts’ in achieving a unique victory over Junagadh without causing loss of life and property. All Kathiawar Princes and people felt grateful to Patel for preserving the integrity and unity of Kathiawar by your timely action.'\textsuperscript{164}

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