CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Background

Nation building for a developing nation is a process through which the country attains social, economic and political growth. The dynamics of nation building are of varied nature and depend on the socio-economic conditions and political environment that prevail at the time the process starts. It also depends on the geographical situation and overall political atmosphere in the international field. Nation building has assumed different dimension in the developing countries of Asia and Africa when the colonial power in those countries withdrew and consequently those countries were free to develop themselves. The Indian model of nation building is different from that of any other Afro-Asian countries which attained freedom in the forties. India's heritage is rich in cultural accomplishments as well as far reaching channels of trade and commerce, but was poor in basic political tasks of building a civil society bound together through a common thread of allegiance of all sections of the people with a secular out-look, defending them from external assult and projecting as a single identity in the world. The political weakness of India was responsible for not providing an identity of the country as a nation. At the dawn of independence, the major task in India was to cast the fabric of the nation overcoming such
difficulties and developing a national consciousness among the prevalent diversities, India's nation builders had to accept a strategy of transformation that was open, democratic, plural but could earn acceptance of the people. This was necessary as there was no other way of building up a nation out of such diversified elements.

In the process of nation building, the Congress Party had to play a vital role. With the arrival of Gandhi in India's political field, the masses were involved in freedom movement. A sense of nationalist feeling developed into them which led to the success of the Congress Party in the freedom struggle. The political leaders also got inspired by the tremendous response from the masses and could proceed further in the task of building a new nation, strong and stable.

Sardar's role

Among the Congress leaders, Sardar Patel came out as the most prominent one, who could steer the country's wheel through the rough weather, prevailing at the time of independence. The political activity of Sardar Patel, which attained its fineness in the early thirties, had yielded the results in the later years, the fruits of which we are enjoying even today. His role as a nation builder could be appreciated in the context of various steps he took at a critical juncture of country's transformation and its far-reaching effect even after three decades.
Security and Stability

The country comprised of a number of princely states which were given special status by the British Government. The existence of such princely states was the biggest hindrance towards integration of the nation. Integration of the native states was the most urgent task in the process of nation building and therefore, Sardar had devoted most of his time and energy in solving this problem. The approach towards the integration of princely states was not uniform throughout but varied from state to state, depending on political situation prevailing there. It was a gigantic task and Sardar knew fully well that only his tact, shrewdness, human touch, friendliness, generosity and mutual confidence would come to his help and not the military might of the country. Sardar proceeded cautiously with patience and kept a close watch on the reaction from the princes. By appealing to their sense of patriotism, giving friendly advice and at times warning them of serious consequence, if they did not follow the dictate of time, Sardar could bring down the princes to earth and ultimately realised his cherished goal of making India one and united. It is remarkable that the biggest threat to the independence of the country was removed by Sardar in the shortest possible time and without a drop of blood. There was no let up in his action and no undue worry of outside forces. The mightiest operation ever witnessed in the history of the integration of the nation in the world went unnoticed in the international arena. When the
integration process was over, Sardar had put India on such a solid political base which was never witnessed in the past.

The influx of unending stream of refugees arriving from West Punjab and East Bengal, as a result of the partition of the country, posed a big threat to India's economic stability. To arrange food and clothing, proper sanitation and abode for those ill-fated refugees who left Pakistan to save life, was a gigantic task. Moreover, concentration of a large number of refugees at a single place, was also dangerous from the point of country's security. By establishing suitable camps for the refugees at various places, by dispersing them from Delhi and adjoining areas, ensuring safe passage to the Muslims, desirous of going to Pakistan and providing security measures for the refugee camps, Sardar ultimately could bring the situation under control. He constantly remained in touch with the situation and gave directions, but entrusted the task of maintaining law and order situation to a small body of able and trusted administrators. Sardar ensured the safe passage of the country's most critical moment. Without any hesitation or inhibition, Sardar issued stern warning to the trouble mongers and deployed military forces at the strategic points so that mass killing and arson were contained in no time. With such speedy, bold and calculated measures, Sardar could save the country from internal collapse and disaster. The greatest refugee problem in the world was solved by Sardar single handed and without any rancour.
For the purpose of maintaining law and order in the country, the administration must be on a strong footing. With the outbreak of riots between Hindus and Muslims, uncompromising attitude adopted by some native States, transition of population from one country to the other, settlements of refugees at the convenient and safe places, an efficient and strong administration was necessary to save the country from any further political chaos. The administrative vacuum developed due to departure of the experienced British Civil Servants and lack of efficient administrators in the Congress Party had to be filled in immediately by evolving a suitable formula. The immediate steps taken by Sardar in retaining the old civil servants, guaranteeing them certain privileges and generating confidence in their mind was an ingenious method only Sardar could think. His initiative in establishing an All India Administrative Service in line with the British Civil Service, as a long term programme, has a great significance when viewed from his farsightedness in providing the backbone of the Indian administration, which was to stand up against the accelerated tempo of economic progress and political development of the country, in the years to come. In the absence of such a nationalised and patriotic administrative system in the country, the process of nation building suffers a setback. The human touch which Sardar gave to the old Civil Servants and the trust which he put in their sense of patriotism paid the results when the experienced Civil Servants worked day and night, to establish the law and order situation in the country. The strong administrative set up, as we see to-day, is due to the spadework done by Sardar in those days.
Democratic Bases:

The Congress Party, which provided the political base of nation building, had to be properly organised for providing requisite leadership to lead the country for further growth. A political party with a broad base and disciplined organisation is a prerequisite for nation building. The party created political consciousness among the masses and worked for political, economic and social goals of the country. A party without discipline is more of a liability than an asset to a leader. Sardar exercised control over the Congress Party through various methods and kept up the morale of the party cadres. During the elections in the centre and provinces, his vital role was to select proper candidates and help them elect by applying strict disciplinary action against anti-party elements at various levels of the party organisation. His handling of defaulting members of the Congress Party was ruthless but enabled the party to come out of the squabbles and intra-party fighting from time to time. Sardar being one of the topmost party leaders, his actions were always aimed at the best interest of the party and the country. No doubt his strict discipline had, at times, generated splits among the senior Congressmen; but he would consider such purging inevitable to purify the party organisation. Even today, due to the strong foundation laid down by Sardar Patel, the Congress Party has remained as the strongest party in the country, in spite of many splits it suffered in the last two decades. With the solid
foundation and strong superstructure erected by leaders like Sardar Patel, the Congress Party has been able to provide stability in the country without which the country could not have embarked upon the experiment of building India, into a great nation.

The citizens of a country can contribute towards national prosperity only when they are able to establish their oneness with the State. By advocating constitutional guarantees to the citizens, Sardar emphasised the importance of democratic spirit and atmosphere in the process of nation building. When the various clauses on fundamental rights were discussed either in the subcommittee or in the Constituent Assembly, Sardar came out with a clear approach towards guaranteeing certain rights to the citizens. His conviction was very clear in the context of democratic government, the Congress Party wanted to establish in the country. He knew fully well that when the people of a country consider themselves as an unseparable part of the country and participate in the field of industrialisation, economic growth, social uplift, the process of nation building can start in full swing and ultimate success. Sardar could bring confidence in the mind of the people by guaranteeing them various fundamental rights. Specially the rights which discriminated between various cultural, religious and racial segments of the society and guaranteed proper justice and right to property were well suited for the democratic growth of the country as a part of nation building. It is, however, worth
noting that such rights were not made absolute but could be amended in case a necessity would arise. Thus he gave a dynamic outlook to the constitution and the rights of the citizens.

A further step in the process of establishing a democratic base in the country was Sardar's attitude towards the minority communities. As the country comprises of various groups of minorities, total homogenisation would not be possible unless confidence was created in the minds of the minorities. When the country faced a series of communal riots during the partition, the safety of the minorities had to be looked into so that they might feel secured. Sardar's efforts in elevating the status of the minorities up to the level of the other communities were in conformity of his desire to accelerate the growth of the country towards solidarity. It was important that the feeling of insecurity in the mind of minority communities should be removed, so that the progress of the country could be achieved fast by the concerted efforts of the various communities residing in the country. Sardar's handling of the crucial problem of minorities, guaranteeing them certain rights and privileges for a specified period bears the testimony of his secular approach and efforts towards national integrity. As a check that the rights and privileges guaranteed to the minorities were properly implemented and the review of the effect of such implementation, the monitoring machinery established shows Sardar's earnest desire for uplift of the minority communities.
When a time bound programme was adopted through constitutional guarantee, Sardar was confident that with the measures drawn up, the minority communities would definitely come up to the desired level of society and contribute towards national growth. Such steps constituted a part of Sardar's efforts for nation building.

Concluding Reflections:

The first task in building a modern state is to create a certain political, military, administrative, economic and social infrastructure without which a state cannot attain a minimum viability. With the integration of native states, the enactment of a democratic constitution, the organisation of a stable administrative machinery, the development of industrial base and the creation of strong military establishment, India, unlike most other states, can be said to have crossed the first stage of nation building.

An attempt has been made here to assess what role Sardar Patel played in helping India to cross this first stage of nation building. The removal of an alien rule might be considered the primary step towards this process, but the task of consolidating the gains of independence was equally challenging. It is in this context that the evaluation of Sardar's role, not as perceived in piecemeal achievements, but in the totality of his contribution to the process of nation building, becomes meaningful.
No country in the under developed world might have faced such varied and complex problems as India did in the wake of her independence. It was in this uncertain and unfriendly environment that Sardar took upon himself the gigantic task of nation building. For him personal position or amount of power or nature of work was perhaps immaterial. His only concern was how to build India into a strong nation. And this thread of his concern for nation-building could be discerned in all his activities whether it was in pre-independence days or post-independence era. His perception of goal was clear, and suitable to the task, whereas personal consideration was almost nil.

Sardar visualised his mission from two angles. In the first, he clearly perceived the importance of security and stability for India, if she were to embark upon the process of nation-building. It was with this understanding that he set his heart on solving the problems of integration of princely states, rehabilitating the lakhs of refugees and reorganising the civil service. However, he was not unaware of the fact that real security and stability to the country would come from the democratic functioning of the polity. This was his second perception. He, therefore, devoted much of his time in organising the Congress Party on a sound footing, especially inculcating the sense of discipline in its rank and file; took personal interest in providing the constitutional safeguards
to the minorities with a view to creating homogenous society in the country and emphasized the need for broadening the base of individual freedom through fundamental rights. But it should be noted that for Sardar everything was subsidiary to the vital need of security and stability of the state, even individual freedom and guarantees to the minorities not withstanding.

Thus, Sardar's real contribution lies in strengthening the democratic base which would in turn ensure the security and stability so essential for the process of nation-building in India or for that matter anywhere in the world.