CHAPTER - II

PARTITION OF INDIA AND REHABILITATION OF THE REFUGEES

Nation building in India had to pass through a series of upheavals and difficulties to take the shape of today. One of the most important and critical factors, which nation building had to surmount, was the danger for the solidarity due to the partition of the country into India and Pakistan. The partition and its aftermath posed a threat to the country and complete solidarity would have been shattered if proper steps were not taken at that juncture by able leaders like Sardar Patel.

Most of the critics, dealing with the problems of nation building in India, sometimes forget that India, as we find today, was to be built into a nation not only from its poverty and backwardness but from its truncated body created due to partition of the country into India and Pakistan. It goes without saying that the mechanics of nation building in India became more complex due to the partition of the country into two sovereign states. It is worth noting that though India had abundant quantity of jute, cotton, wheat, rice etc. to supplement its economic growth, partition resulted into loss of such fertile land into the hands of Pakistan and damaging her economic prosperity to a great extent. Irrespective of the
irreparable damage to the economy of the country, partition posed a serious threat to the unity of the country due to the humane problem as a result of influx of over a crore of refugees from West Punjab and East Bengal and their subsequent resettlement. Such an influx was unheard of in the history of refugee resettlement anywhere in the world. In fact, it can well be imagined that such a situation completely upset the economy of the newly freed country and its overall administration irrespective of its other problems. The chaos created in Delhi, the capital of the country, was so serious at a time that it passed through a state of administration without any authority and it was feared that the administrative machinery of the country would break down. Such a situation demanded the presence of an able leader who could take the complete control, steer the country through such a rough weather, uphold the law and authority and ultimately bring the situation under control. Under such circumstances, problems of partition and its aftermath played a very important role in the process of nation building in India. Due to the important part Sardar played at that time, the nation building in India has a direct link with Sardar Patel and partition of the country. Had not Sardar tackled the problem judiciously, the process of nation building would have come to a halt. Thus, our study on the role of Sardar Patel in nation building in India, demands a study into his role during the period of partition.
Reason for Partition and Sardar's Attitude

Partition of India became inevitable due to the change in the political atmosphere of the country in the early 40s. Though the Indian National Congress had launched the freedom struggle on the basis of a United India, free from any communal feelings between Hindus and Muslims, their objective could not be achieved due to the emergence of a leader like M.A. Jinnah of the Muslim League and the indirect support he received from the British Government. Jinnah was a shrewd politician and he fought tooth and nail to gain ground for Pakistan. This demand was further strengthened due to the communal riots which broke through the country on the eve of the partition. Congress leaders could not visualise the actual impact of Jinnah’s action and finally fell a prey to the evil idea of partition of the country as can be gathered from the events of that period. But it is true that had the transfer of power been delayed, the country would have passed through a period of a blood-flooded civil war, the impact of which would have been very serious.

The Congress struggle for freedom was for a free and United India. Gandhiji's call for freedom movement was also based on such considerations. Different political leaders, like Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel had also

declared from time to time that they would not accept any partition of the country. Sardar in his letter to D.N. Banerjee, dt. 14-4-'46 said:

"...Congress, as a whole, stands for the unity of India and it cannot agree to any division of which you have such grave apprehensions."2

But when it was revealed that the British intention was to support Jinnah and partition was a must, the leaders had no other choice but to reconsider the issue. Gandhiji was totally opposed to the idea of partition. It was Sardar Patel who could foresee the things coming ahead, if the partition were not accepted. He could realise that due to the hatred in the mind of the Muslim League members and widespread communal riots in the country, it would be very difficult to avert a civil war, without partition.3 Just after the failure of Cripps Mission on April 11, 1942 the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution stating that the working committee could not think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will.4

Sardar Patel, at a later date, strongly supported the partition proposal; he realised that without partition it would

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3. Ibid., p. 178.
be difficult to control violence and if such a condition continued, it would lead to the end of the Congress and the freedom would be remote. Sardar was correct in his assessment as Munshi said:

"The soundness of Sardar's opinion was brought home to me when, in the light of the riots of 1946-47, I realised that if there had been no partition and the Muslim League had come into the Constituent Assembly, as envisaged by the Cabinet Mission Plan, our efforts to find a sovereign democratic State would have failed".5

Though a right decision at the right time was taken by the Congress under the foresightedness of Sardar Patel, some people could not realise the implications of such a decision which appeared to be against the interests of the country. Sardar's greatest critic Maulana Azad had said:

"If we waited for two or three years, the Muslim League would be forced to come to terms. I realised that if a decision was taken now, partition was inevitable, but a solution might emerge after a year or two".6

This observation is not correct, since political atmosphere at that time was surcharged with communal hatred and there was no hope for any solution in the near future. Even Gandhiji and

5. Munshi K.N. in his book "Pilgrimage to Freedom", had described that he had talked to Sardar regarding the partition proposal. Munshi was surprised when Sardar expressed that he was accepting the partition proposal. On hearing the argument of Sardar regarding the effect if partition was not accepted, Munshi could not but praise him for his foresightedness. Opp. Cit., pp. 125-127.

Nehru who were at the outset against partition, finally agreed with the opinion of Sardar and accepted the proposal of partition. Sardar Patel stood by his conviction and steered the resolution on the acceptance of partition in the AICC session of June 14-15, 1947. Michal Brecher observed that it was Patel who delivered the keynote address where he used the analogy of a diseased body and argued that if one limb was poisoned it must be amputated quickly lest entire organism suffer irreparably. By accepting partition, Sardar did not accept two nation theory. He never believed the idea that India was meant for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims which was contradictory to the concept of secularism. Mrs. R. Coondoo says:

"On the contrary the idea was that Pakistan was for Muslims (for that section of it who wanted to go and stay there) and India for the rest of the Indians including Muslims. So nationalised Muslims had no ground to feel it as an anomaly".

In continuation of the same spirit of thought and conscience, Frank Moraes has observed that the worst sufferer of 1947 turmoil was the Mahatma as he viewed everything happening against his wishes as a helpless spectator. Mahatma had to see that no less loyal colleagues than Nehru, Patel, Azad and Rajagopalachari were bowing before the evil desires of the creation of Pakistan. But Frank Moraes admits that the choice of those leaders was the dictate of time.

Initially a strong supporter of an undivided India, Sardar Patel got convinced only gradually that the division was an inevitable evil. Innumerable problems of which Muslim League was the composer, were too formidable for Sardar Patel to keep attached to the idea of an undivided India. He observed that it was better to allow the Muslims to have a land of their own and live peacefully than to precipitate a catastrophe in the coming days. He did not feel sorry to support H.M.G.'s statement of June 3, 1947 in the light of his experience gained through his working during the last nine months with Muslim League members. Sardar argued:

"Had they accepted the state paper, the whole of India would have gone to Pakistan way. Today they had 75 to 80 per cent of India which they could develop according to the rest of the country. League Council which met in camera evidently nursed the ambition to capture the whole of India after August, 15".10

In his reply of 18th June '47 to a letter written by K.C. Neogy, Sardar indicated that with the partition, India would be free to develop 70 to 80 per cent of the country. If India could consolidate and have a strong army the country would make remarkable progress within five years11.

Sardar argued that the position, due to obstructions from Muslim League, had been largely different from what it should have been and that people should look into the reality without

any emotion and sensitivity. He did not agree that Congress accepted partition due to any fear but only to restore peace and remove violence. According to Sardar, Congress was opposed to Pakistan but the resolution before the Congress High Command accepted partition. Whether A.I.C.C. liked it or not there was already a Pakistan in action both in Punjab and in Bengal. In the circumstances, he would prefer a real Pakistan. After Pakistan had become a reality, there would be a chance to vitalise the country and build up a strong Indian nation.

Discussions with Cabinet Mission were opened and continued by Agad, the then Congress President till July 6, 1946 and then by Nehru; but Sardar played a key role in those discussions and in formulating the policy of the Congress. V. Shankar feels that from the published correspondence, it appears that Sardar played an important role in getting Congress accept the scheme.

In his letter dt. 15th December, 1946 Sardar wrote to Stafford Cripps:

"...You know when Gandhiji was strongly against our settlement I threw my weight in favour of it".

Sardar felt that by accepting Cabinet Mission Plan, it would be possible to maintain the integrity of the country and

peace would return. He could never think of a divided India. He was sure that with the acceptance of Cabinet Mission Plan, the idea of Pakistan would be buried for ever. He remarked that Jinnah and the League had secured nothing for the Muslims after a struggle of five years spreading communal bitterness and his main demand for Pakistan was buried for ever. 

Any person with Sardar’s foresightedness would have seen that the situation towards the last months before the independence of the country was swiftly going against all noble intentions of keeping India undivided. Or else, it would have been an India worse than the diseased body of an old man stinking from every corner. Neither Muslims nor Hindus felt secured in the undivided India. Only the courage of a bitter realist could proceed through a path full of thorns yet not unsurmountable. The political situation in the country was surprisingly inconsistent and in 1946, Sardar felt very happy that there were hopes for a United India with Muslim League’s participation in the Interim Government and Constituent Assembly. He wrote to Munshi:

"... Thank God, we have successfully avoided a catastrophe which threatened our country. Since many years for the first time authoritative pronouncement in clear term has been made against the possibility of Pakistan in any shape or form..."16


This proves clearly that Sardar from his heart did not like the country to be divided. Munshi has also observed that it was evident that Sardar was prepared to pay a price for averting the partition of the country and was willing to share power with Muslim League. This proves his great statesmanship.

When Mountbatten was thinking in line of partition of the country to stop catastrophe, Sardar and Nehru also get convinced that partition, how bad it might be would save the country. The option left with the Congress leaders was to choose between Pakistan and chaos. Sardar Patel said:

"I felt that if we did not accept partition, India would be split into many bits and would be completely ruined... We would not have a Pakistan but several".

Sardar indicated that best course was to hasten the departure of those foreigners even at the cost of the partition of the country. The approach of Sardar towards partition is thus to be understood in the context of the communal atmosphere and the attitude of the British Government and his intention for nation building.

Sardar's approach towards the partition of the country, can be better analysed from sequence of events from the Cabinet Mission Plan. Prior to this, Sardar had always been a strong supporter of the Congress ideology of a United India, a dream of

Congress freedom fighters of that period. When the Cabinet Mission in their announcement dt. 16th May, 1946, observed:

"We ourselves are also convinced that any solution which involves a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal, as this would do, would be contrary to the wishes and interests of very large properties of the inhabitants of these provinces." 21

Sardar felt very happy and it can be concluded that he was not at all in favour of any partition of the country. Regarding the interview made by Cabinet Mission in Delhi in May '46 Sardar wrote to Nehru:

"It is difficult to understand why this procedure has been adopted... it leads one to believe that local bureaucracy must be behind it". 22

This gives an idea of the reaction of Sardar to Cabinet Mission. It indicates that Sardar was not hopeful of any acceptable settlement regarding British quitting the country through the proposal brought forward by Cabinet Mission; but Sardar welcomed the observation of the Mission. During the subsequent days also Sardar could not reconcile himself to the idea of a partitioned India and could not agree with the various possibilities put forward by different political leaders. At one time Viceroy persuaded Sardar:


"Think of the peace if the Muslims could be banished once and for all from their own (very small and unworkable) country. No opposition to Congress plan. No cunning campaign against the owners of the Congress money-bags. A free India under one party regime free to carry out its plan without interference."23

The Viceroy's pursuasion was actually designed to bring a bad name to the rank and file of the Congress party. It would have allowed the progeny to denounce their leaders who simply for personal gains accepted the demand for Pakistan. It was only due to Sardar's political honesty that the Viceroy's cunning proposal was not accepted. Sardar wanted united India for the people of the Indian soil and not an India which was to shrink into the whims and eccentricities of a few leaders of the Congress party. It would have defeated the very concept of India as a welfare state. The slogan of Akhand Hindustan by K.M. Munshi was only an emotional protest against Jinnah who wanted to shatter the very foundations of India.24 Though Sardar supported K.M. Munshi's campaign for Akhand Hindustan, certainly he was not unmindful of giving perfect peace and security.

Early in 1947, Sardar accepted V.P. Menon's formula of two dominions for the withdrawal of the British power and he himself behind the scenes took steps necessary for partition.25

Congress leaders including Patel and Nehru believed that it would not be possible for them to come to an agreement with the Muslim League and atrocities and communal riots could not be stopped. They found that the only solution to stop all such problems was to accept partition of the country as suggested by the British Government. Thus Sardar's attitude towards partition of the country was very clear and we understand that considering the political situation of that time in its proper perspective, Sardar impressed upon the Congress leaders to accept partition in order to save the country from civil war and segmentation, though he himself from the very beginning was in complete harmony with Gandhiji and did not dream of the partition of his beloved motherland. This foresight had made him a leader of leaders of Indian Nation.

In formulating the policies of Congress, Sardar had to face a lot of problems and in some cases his ideas were not accepted at the first instance; as a result, various complications in the process of struggle for independence arose and the result had not always been to our advantage. Maurice Zinkin, one British official, has observed:

"I believe that if Vallabhbhai Patel had been in charge of the Congress from 1945, a deal might conceivably have been done with the league. But Gandhiji was too big a man, in everybody's eyes for it to be possible for him to do a deal and to Nehru with his socialism and his secularism, the League was like the scarlet woman of Rome to an orangeman."27


Had the idea of Sardar Patel been implemented a number of problems would have been averted.

From logical point of view, Congress would not have accepted partition as it vouched for one nation theory. Azad felt that Congress accepted two-nation theory; but it was not so. Congress was opposed to the partition, but it had to accept Pakistan due to the common interest of the citizens.

Partition of Punjab

As per British scheme, the partition would be effected by dividing Punjab and Bengal into two parts on the basis of Hindu and Muslim population. Sardar sharply reacted to such a proposal and he said:

"As far as the Congress is concerned, it will not be a consenting party to the creation of a weak and loose centre or to any such arrangement of dividing India into religious groups and handing over the present provinces of Bengal and Punjab much less Assam to the so called Pakistan area."28

The position of Punjab was different from the rest of India. Sardar had to play a vital role in solving various problems that arose as a result of the partition. Sardar's viewpoint with regard to the proposal for the partition of Punjab is clearly indicated in his letter dt. 16th July, 1947, to Parmanand Trehan where he expressed that partition proposal

had been accepted after a great deal of thought and that India would definitely take care of the minorities of West Punjab. He was sure that in the interest of the Muslims in India, Pakistan would not ill treat the non-Muslims in Pakistan.  

The general atmosphere in the country prior to departure of the British was full of hatred and ill feeling between the Hindus and Muslims especially in the provinces where dual population was predominant. Frequent clash between the two communities was the order of the day and Punjab was also one of those affected provinces. As early as January/February, 1947 riot between the Hindus and Muslims attained such a height that it appeared to slip out of human control. Sardar in his letter dt. 15th March, 1947 to Lord Wavell, the then Viceroy, expressed his great concern over the mass killings in Punjab. As per Sardar:

"The situation in the Punjab has been a matter of grave concern and anxiety to me since the past few days and I have been considering how best we could bring it under control as soon as possible"  

He again reminded the Viceroy that the situation in Eastern Punjab was full of explosive possibilities. The message from the President of Sind Sabha, Gujarkhan to the Managing Editor, The Hindustan Times gave a painful picture of what was happening in Punjab and Sardar lost no time in bringing the

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matter to the attention of the Viceroy.\textsuperscript{31} Being informed about the plight of non-Muslims in Punjab, Sardar was very much disturbed. He immediately contacted the appropriate authority for remedy. He even took up the matter with acting Viceroy Sir John Colville in his letter dt. 21st May, 1947. When he did not get a satisfactory answer he once again reminded the Viceroy that action to deal with the situation should be both swift and timely and to start with the sterner the measures, the better the hope of localising the trouble.\textsuperscript{32} Sardar Patel could realise from the action of the Government of India that situation in Punjab would worsen and accordingly he sent a telegram to the Viceroy on 26th May, 1947 expressing his great concern over the failure of police to control the situation in Lahore and that the consequences might not be confined to Punjab alone.\textsuperscript{33} Sardar as the Home Minister, had always kept himself abreast with the latest situation regarding riots in various parts of the country and took immediate steps to control the situation. Before the partition, complete responsibility of law and order rested on the Viceroy; so Sardar had to convey his concern to the Viceroy.

\textsuperscript{31} As per Singh Sabha President, "The Muslims have launched a campaign a general slaughter and arson of the Sikh life and property ... To save their honour and religion, hundreds of women jumped into well and committed suicide" - Sardar's letter dt. 22-3-47 to Lord Wavell - Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.


\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, P. 21.
As soon as the decision about the partition of Punjab was announced, the situation took a serious turn there and India had to face a wholesale influx of refugees from West Punjab. In the process of transfer of population of West Punjab to India as refugees, there were a number of problems due to the ill-treatment by the government on the other side of the border. The process was not at all smooth due to torture, intimidation by the Muslims and non-cooperation by the government of Pakistan. The refugees were harassed unnecessarily; even the vehicles by which they travelled were detained indefinitely. Seeing a dreadful plight of the refugees from West Punjab, Sardar immediately took up the matter with the concerned officials so that those poor people could be repatriated safely. In this connection, Sardar's letters to Chandulal Trivedi, Governor of East Punjab, Sriprakasa, Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan and to Maharaja of Patiala are worth noting. Khushwant Singh, in his book, "A Train to Pakistan" has narrated about the great sufferings of refugees in West Pakistan. It was the duty of the Government to see that the transfer of population was as peaceful as possible. On Indian side, Sardar Patel tried to keep the violence under control so as to enable an easy transfer of population. In a letter

34. Sardar Patel wrote to Trivedi, Governor of East Punjab on 24th August '47 to get in touch with Ghazanaffar Ali Khan of Pakistan for proper protection of refugees and arrange immediately transfer to East Punjab. Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel. In his letter to Sri Prakasa dt. 26th August '47 he informed that 15,000 refugees have been isolated and stranded in Sialkot and were in danger. They should be escorted to Kashmir and he should investigate immediately, Miss Maniben Patel. (Courtesy).

35. The horror of communal disturbance has been focused in the newspaper of that period and some details are available from Home Ministry files, Govt. of India.
to Nehru, Sardar suggested to deploy non-Muslim troops at the troubled areas for stopping the disturbance and bring safety and normalcy. He protested against unilateral steps taken by Pakistan through Commander Boundary Force to evacuate Muslim refugees in East Punjab. In order to stop disturbance in Punjab, Sardar advised Trivedi to get in touch with the rulers of Punjab States and to request them to help stopping atrocities. Sardar himself in his telegram, dt. 25th August, 1947 to the Maharaja of Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot, Sind, Kapurtala and Malerkotla urged them to prevent depredation of Jaths from their States to Jullandar City, to take security measures and to cooperate with Government of India in establishing law and order. In order to stop atrocities on Muslims, migrating to Pakistan, Sardar took all necessary steps. On receipt of a message from Ghazanafar Ali Khan that Muslims at Patiala and Bhatinda were being murdered indiscriminately, Sardar immediately contacted Maharaja of Patiala and advised him to take steps to protect the minorities; he pointed out that such steps in turn would help in stopping atrocities on minorities in West Punjab. Sardar even went to request Gandhiji to deploy Friends Unit in East Punjab to cope with the situation. He wrote:

36. Sardar's letter to Nehru through District Magistrate - courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.

37. Telegram by Trivedi to Sardar, dt. 25th August, '47 and telegram by Sardar, dt. 25th August '47 to various rulers - courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.

38. Sardar's letter, dt. 26th August, '47 to Maharaja of Patiala courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.
"In present situation in East Punjab, I feel, Friends Unit would be valuable. Hope you will succeed in pursuing Horace Alexander to send a Unit to East Punjab. I am telegraphing him directly".39

He also requested Alexander to spare Friends Unit for East Punjab. Thus, Sardar was sincerely trying to protect the minorities in Punjab from any kind of intimidation and torture and tried for their safe passage to Pakistan.

The situation on the other side was, however, entirely different. The Non-Muslim population of West Punjab and Sind who wanted to migrate to India, were harassed by the Muslims in Pakistan and their passage to India was not peaceful. The refugees were collected at various camps prior to their departure for India. Such camps were established in Rawalpindi and other places. The plight of those refugees in Pakistan did not escape Sardar's attention. Sardar, through his telegram to Liaquat Ali Khan, informed him that Gandhiji had to stay at Wah, non-Muslim refugee camp near Rawalpindi due to hostile attitudes of Muslims in the neighbourhood and withdrawal of non-Muslim troops guarding the camp. He pointed out that ration supplied to the refugees was inadequate and suggested that proper military protection should be given to them and the camp should be shifted to East Punjab.40 In the letter, dt. 22nd August 1947 Sardar Ishar Singh, Manager, Gurudwara Committee, Hasan Abdal


(Attock) Punjab, intimated Sardar about the mass killing of Hindus and Sikhs through the main line from Lahore to Lala Musa. Hindus and Sikhs were butchered and the disturbance was spreading all around and about a lac of Hindus and Sikhs were surrounded by Muslims from all sides. Similar reports were also received from other sources and Sardar advised Sri Prakasa to take up the matter with Pakistan authorities and arrange protection of the refugees.  

The effort of Sardar to point out to higher authorities of Pakistan Government about the atrocities on non-Muslims had an effect and Liaquat Ali Khan and Gazanfar Ali Khan informed him that proper ration had been provided to the refugees and they were safe.  

The report of Deputy Superintendent of Police, dt. 29th September, '47 indicated that whole of West Punjab was in lawlessness and even the Government was forcing non-Muslims to quit West Punjab; the Muslims were not allowing them to take valuable articles. Armed Afridis and other tribesmen were taking part in mass killing and looting of non-Muslims; Muslims were given military training and new armed factories were established. Till 25th September, '47, 1,98,000 non-Muslims were killed, 1,00,000 were converted to Islam and 12,0000 women were abducted and about 10,00,000 non-Muslims were waiting to come to India.  

41. Sardar's telegram dt. 27.8.47 to Sri Prakasa - Courtesy to Miss Maniben Patel.  
Sardar was aware of the situation and wrote to Nehru that matter should be brought to the notice of Pakistan Government that if such conditions continued, India would be compelled to retaliate. He appreciated Baldev Singh's stand regarding steps to be taken to rescue abducted women.

Sardar was not at all in favour of taking retaliation when refugee trains in East Punjab were attacked. Sardar, in his telegram to Gopichand Bhargava, urged him to take strong action by imposing collective fines on villages in which the trains were attacked. He advised not to have any attack on the people going to West Pakistan.

Sardar did not fear to criticise even the Government of India in any of its actions. In his letter dt. 1st September '47 to Nehru, he expressed his great concern about the treatment of refugees by Pakistan and Indian Government; he pointed out that in East Punjab non-Muslim refugees were even shot at and no action was taken against the trouble shooters. He intimated Nehru about the public psychology prevailing in India when people heard about the indiscriminate murders of non-Muslims in Pakistan, whereas Muslims were freely moving on the streets of Delhi. When Pakistan Government diverted two trains carrying East Punjab records, as a protest a goods-train carrying food for Pakistan was burnt in India and public were not in a mood to listen to any reasoning, Sardar suggested:

... I earnestly feel that the Pakistan Government should be asked to make immediate attempts to put down lawlessness and disturbance with strong hands.46

Sardar felt very much sorry about the conditions of the Sikh communities repatriated from West Pakistan. Reciprocating their sentiment he wrote to Maharaja of Patiala that he had great sympathy for the valiant community, and at the same time he rejoiced that they had been saved due to the partition and that:

"At least our brothers and sisters from across the border have a place where they would be welcome and where they could under the influence of time the great healer, attend to their lacerated wounds and rehabilitate themselves."

He, in his letter, dt. 2nd November, '47 to Maharaja, assured him that false propaganda against the Sikh community by Pakistan in foreign countries would be stopped through Indian embassies and his press conferences with the foreign correspondents. Thus Sardar was in full control of the situation due to the horror of the partition and its aftermath. He was sure that a great Indian nation would emerge through the problems and turmoil of the partition. These are definitely the qualities of a balanced man and the true leader of people.

In spite of an unprecedented influx of refugees from West Pakistan, Sardar was not at all shaken; he tried his best to redress those riot stricken people. Due to the continued problem

47. Sardar's letter to Maharaja of Patiala dt. 23, '47 - Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.
of influx of refugees from West Punjab, Sardar arranged to establish a refugee organisation headed by a senior officer to look after food, clothing and sanitation, to study the problems, to coordinate about the treatment of the refugees, to collect information of property of the refugees and to conduct a census of the refugees with a view to looking into the possibility of their return to their provinces. He had the proposal passed by the Cabinet. ⁴⁸ When Nehru wrote a letter to him on 4th November, 1947 explaining the position of East Punjab refugees, Sardar in reply on 8th November, '47 said that the influx of refugees had created a big problem for the government and he suggested that another refugee camp could be opened at Kurukshetra to redress the ill-fated people, coming from various corners of West Punjab. ⁴⁹ Sardar at different stages suggested that a full fledged department should be established for the efficient handling of refugee problems. It was thus Sardar who played the most dominant role in tackling the problem of East Punjab refugees; his astute judgement alone could help those refugees to be settled properly in spite of being uprooted as a result of the partition.

The financial adjustment of the assets and liabilities was also a problem. When Sardar was told about the demand by Pakistan for 150 crores of rupees, he did not immediately react, but wanted that the matter might be further discussed in the meeting of partition committee. ⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The Hindu, March, 18; 1947 (Press report).
⁴⁹ Sardar's letter to Nehru dt. 8.11.47 - Courtesy to Miss Maniben Patel
⁵⁰ Sardar's Correspondence with Punjab Civil Secretariat dt. 21.7.47 - Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.
The details of violence and atrocities were published in various newspapers and brought to the notice of Sardar Patel, when he indicated that he would like to talk to the press and request them to apply restraint so that the situation could not escalate further. 51

Bengal Partition

The position of Bengal was different from that of Punjab. Basically the people of Bengal had the same culture and social background irrespective of Hindus and Muslims and they had a common language. In fact the Muslims in Bengal are basically Hindus converted to Islam during the Muslim regime. They were leaving peacefully as brothers and communal harmony existed till the time Muslim League could propagate the idea of Pakistan, a separate State for Muslims. The population ratio of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal was almost equal and just before the partition, Bengal had a Muslim ministry, headed by Suhrawardy who was determined to include Bengal into Pakistan. The distribution of population of Muslims and Hindus in Bengal was also very peculiar and it was not possible to demarcate an area predominately as Muslim or Hindu area. If Bengal was to be divided purely on population basis, it was quite possible that India would get some areas surrounded in all directions by Pakistan. Moreover, to have Bengal partitioned into India and

51. Govt. of India, File No. 33/12/47-Poll-(i) National Archives of India - New Delhi.
Pakistan, was disadvantageous for Pakistan, since there would be no link with West Pakistan except through a long separated coast line. The economy of the divided part of Bengal (to be awarded to Pakistan) would mostly depend on India and it was felt that a portion of Bengal as a part of Pakistan might not be viable. But, just before the transfer of power by British Government, Bengal saw a series of communal riots in various parts between Hindus and Muslims, which led to the idea that it would not be possible for the communities to stay together peacefully. At the same time, the evil propaganda of the Muslim League ministers had led to the thinking that only partition of Bengal would solve the various complicated issues. Actually, at the back was the idea to create a Pakistan also in the Eastern part of India, Pakistan was to remain a source of constant enemy of India even after the partition. To counteract the Muslim propaganda, the Hindus also started a propaganda for a united Bengal and the situation became so critical that the Congress leaders were puzzled and wondered that of Bengal might be separated as a third unit outside India and Pakistan. It was thus concluded that Bengal also should be divided into India and Pakistan on population basis and a Boundary Commission headed by Sir Cyril Redcliff was formed. Thus, the idea of a united India was defeated in the case of Bengal also.
The scene in Bengal before partition was extremely violent and people had to pass through days of terror. A riot between Hindus and Muslims broke out in Noakhali and Gandhiji went with his mission to establish peace. Calcutta, the principal city, was divided into pockets containing Hindus and Muslims. Infighting and mass killing were the order of the day. Sardar was very much concerned about the difficult situation prevailing in Bengal and from time to time he took steps to bring the situation under control.

Sardar in his letter, dt. 22nd April, '47 to Baldev Singh, the Defence Minister, informed that the Muslims in Calcutta were trying to create panic and advised him to find out the way to frustrate the ill plan of Bengal Government. The Muslim provincial Government in Bengal created panic over the state and wanted to convert the whole of Bengal into a sovereign State known as Azad Pakistan, whereas, as per the idea of Congress, when partition became inevitable, Bengal was to be partitioned to save the Hindu community from coercion under the Muslim rule. Even leaders like Sarat Chandra Bose and Kiran Shankar Roy also got illusioned and tried to propagate for a sovereign Bengal, but Sardar kept himself informed about the day to day development in Bengal politics and


warned those frustrated leaders. He could ultimately destroy the ill plan of Azad Pakistan and sovereign Bengal. Sardar wrote to K.C. Neogy:

"... The only way to save the Hindus of Bengal is to insist on partition of Bengal and to listen to nothing else. That is the only way to bring the Muslim League in Bengal to its senses." 54

Sardar propagated in the mind of the Hindus that partition was beneficial to them. In spite of the concern expressed by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee regarding the designs of the Muslim League, Sardar expressed that the future of Hindus in Bengal was quite safe, so long as they stand firm and continue to give the centre their best support. 55

Studying the political situation in Bengal, Sardar was convinced that Bengal should not be isolated and expressed his sentiment through his letter to Binoy Kumar Roy on 23rd May, '47:

"Bengal cannot be isolated from the Indian Union. Talk of an idea of a sovereign republic of independent Bengal is a trap to induce the unwary and unwise to enter into the parlour of the Muslim League. The Congress Working Committee is fully aware of the situation in Bengal and you need not be afraid at all. Bengal has got to be partitioned, if the non-Muslim population is to survive." 56

56. Sardar's letter to Binoy Kumar Roy dt. 23.5.47- Courtesy to Miss Maniben Patel.
Sardar’s confidence in the Hindus of Bengal was further expressed when he stated that people of Bengal had seen through the whole game, and it was not likely that except for a few selfish individuals any body would yield to propaganda carried on in the name of sovereign Bengal. When similar fear was expressed by some other leaders about the partition idea getting defeated and sovereign Bengal propaganda gaining ground, Sardar observed that public opinion would force the leaders of Bengal to realise the urgent call of the situation and to take up a united stand against nefarious designs. Sardar’s intelligence and farsighted was worth appreciating.

Had Bengal not been partitioned the situation would, certainly have been worse than in Punjab. The distribution of population on in Bengal was peculiar and Muslim League hooligans would, certainly, have taken undue advantage of the distribution of population. This would have made the lives, basically of Hindus at stake, and Hindu nationalism would never have found its true expression. Those were the shrewd observation of Sardar. He was capable of seeing much beyond the exigencies of the present. At the same time his success in persuading the Hindu political leaders to accept the inevitable the partition of Bengal, proves his excellent statesmanship. That the partition was much to the liking of any sensible person, can be seen

57. Durga Das (Ed.) - Ibid., P. 52.
58. Durga Das (Ed.) - Sardar Patel’s Correspondence - Vol-IV
in the words of B.M. Birla who spoke of his happiness upon the settlement of the issue of Bengal partition and he in his letter written to Sardar, gave the entire credit of the solution to Sardar. Though it was expected by the Congress leaders that the Boundary Commission would be able to do proper justice to the people of Bengal, it did not do so. The basis of partition was population which could not be maintained in the case of Bengal. The population ratio between the Hindus and Muslims had not been considered for dividing the area between India and Pakistan. Moreover, Chittagong Hill Tracts, a predominantly Hindu area was awarded to Pakistan. Sardar protested to Mountbatten against such a bad design of Bengal Boundary Commission. He expressed that such a step would affect Tripura State which had joined Indian Union and Constituent Assembly.

But despite his protest, he could not reverse the decision of the Commission. Sardar tried his best to bring into India, the areas where Hindus were predominant, so that a synthesis could be brought for national integrity. The conditions of refugees from East Pakistan to West Bengal were also very bad and the situation was much different from what existed in Punjab. The basis of the partition for Punjab was exchange of population; but the same basis was not adopted for Bengal. The Hindus, in spite of being a majority community in some parts of East Pakistan, could not bear the atrocities committed on them by

59. Sardar's letter to B.M. Birla dt. 5-6-47.
   Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.

60. Durga Das (Ed.) - Sardar Patel Correspondence - Vol-IV
the Pakistan Government. They had to seek shelter in West Bengal. The influx of refugees in West Bengal was much more as compared to the arrangements made for their relief and rehabilitation. As a result, those ill-fated refugees had to face great difficulties even after migration to West Bengal. It is found that the steps taken by the Government of India were not adequate for the rehabilitation of the refugees of Bengal. Sardar as Home Minister could not take as much effective steps to rehabilitate Bengal refugees as he did showing his activeness in the case of the Punjab refugees.

The political conditions in West Bengal were also not so stable and the government was not fully geared up to look after the welfare of such a large contingent of refugees. Bengal had a considerable number of Muslims supporting League ideology and they had good leaders commanding strong hold on the Muslims. Moreover, Bengal had seen mass killing, riots and hooliganism much more due to the inactiveness of the Muslim League government at the time of independence. It is even said that the last Primer Mr. Surawardy wanted Calcutta to be a part of East Pakistan. Thus inefficient Bengal government was mainly responsible for ineffective handling of the refugee problem. Sardar, who was formulating the policy matters, could not be blamed for non-implementation of his policy.

Though Sardar was very much effective and successful in his activities related to the partition of the country, he could not achieve the desired results so far as Bengal and
Assam were concerned. It may be noted that a part of Sylhet district, which was predominantly Hindu populated and adjacent to Assam, was awarded to East Pakistan, in spite of protests by the leaders of that region. The matter was also brought to the notice of Sardar by leaders of Sylhet but Sardar contended that the fate of Sylhet would be decided by her own population.\textsuperscript{61} It seems that Sardar found himself helpless in doing anything for the people of Sylhet. The problem of refugee influx in Bengal had lasted for a long period due to the heavy burden on the provincial government.

The partition of Bengal was, however, in line with the overall policy taken by the Congress for attainment of freedom and removal of British Power in India. The policy for establishing a strong Indian nation by giving a portion of the country to Muslim League as Pakistan, was well thought of and Sardar aimed at attaining full success of the policy. In order to rehabilitate the refugees coming from Bengal and Punjab, Sardar, as a general policy, took steps with regard to evacuee property. He said that the refugees for whom facility for exchange of property was not available, government should identify evacuee property and arrange distribution of same among the incoming refugees. He suggested that Indian government should also demand from Pakistan compensation for such refugee property left over in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{62} This was a wise step thought over by him for bringing unity in the country.

\textsuperscript{61} Durga Das (Ed.) - Sardar Patel's Correspondence - Vol. IV, Opp. Cit. p. 24.

In the early stages of the partition and disturbance in Bengal, Sardar, however, took interest and tried to solve the problem of communal hatred. During disturbances in Calcutta and Noakhali in August/September, 1946, he felt so much distressed that in his letter, dt. 19th October, '46 to Sir Stafford Cripps he said,

"You will realise how difficult for an Indian Home Minister to sit on his seat quietly day after day when innumerable appeals and complaints are received for some kind of help which would give those unfortunate and helpless victims some protection."63

He also made strong protests to Lord Wavell and pointed out that as per Section 41 of 9th Schedule of Government of India Act, the Home Member and his colleagues were competent enough to propose measures for restoring peace. 64

Delhi Disturbance:

During the period of partition, in addition to the disturbed situation prevailing in Punjab and Bengal, Delhi was a scene of violent activities and it was most important that the situation be tackled with great care for gaining ground in favour of India. Sardar could realise the importance of handling the Delhi problem and acted accordingly. In fact, Delhi was the greatest attraction of Muslim League and League members tried their best to take possession of Delhi and make sure that Delhi formed a part of West Pakistan.


64. Ibid, pp. 216-217. - Sardar's letter to Lord Wavell dt. 28.10.46.
Delhi being very close to Sind and Punjab, Muslim League was trying its best to convince the British Government for the inclusion of Delhi to Pakistan. But, the population of Delhi was mostly non-Muslim pockets spread all around. Basically, Delhi was the place for Muslims, who were staying there since the time of Muslim rulers and was also inhabited by the people of Punjab, mostly Sikhs. The massive build up of arms and ammunitions by different communities was practically in line with the attitude adopted by masses in other parts of the country. On the eve of the partition, Sikhs started manufacture of Kirpans and carried those at the time of procession. The Muslims tried to concentrate in strategic places and started building up arms and weapons, as a measure of self defence.

Sardar realised that the situation in Delhi was so critical that immediate steps had to be taken to protect the capital of the country. It was quite clear that until and unless the situation in Delhi be brought under control and reactive forces were dispersed, there would be every danger for the disintegration of newly born India and efforts for building a united India would be lost.

As early as May, '47 Sardar apprehended trouble in Delhi; he wanted to find out the measures to be taken to stop any violence. He instructed V. Shankar to find out how the authorities intended to control any probable riots and strengthen

Also see : Johnson Allen Campbell - Mission with Mountbatten - Jaico Publishers, Bombay, 1953 p. 5.
the police force. The matter was investigated by the Chief Commissioner, who replied on 26th May, '47 to Secretary, Home Department that the danger of communal trouble in Delhi would continue till the time the political atmosphere in the country stabilised. The different communities in the city were busy in making secret warlike preparations, generally as self defence against any possible attack from other communities. But, the Kirpans carried by the Sikhs were both for the purpose of self defence and also might be useful for any possible offensive. There were some preparations of fire arms but no explosion took place and preparation was not on a large scale. It was planned that on 2nd June, '47 Muslim League would observe Pakistan Day and would demonstrate the right to carry swords. The R.S.S. members were consolidating by collecting firefighting apparatus and steel helmets. Section 144 CRPC and other prohibitory orders were in force as precautionary measures. The Chief Commissioner suggested strengthening of police forces. Sardar suggested that the deficiency in police force should be made up without delay and recruitment should be done with proper communal adjustment. This proves how eager Sardar

66. Letter from V. Shankar to RN Banerjee, Secretary, Home Department dt. 21.5.47 from Mussoorie, Shankar wrote: "H.M. has received some reliable communication that trouble is apprehended in Delhi owing to the preparation made by one or the other community ... He would particularly like to know how for their intelligence authorities were alert..." - Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.


68. Home Member's P.S.'S. note dt. 28.5.47 on the comments of Home Secretary about Chief Commissioner's letter dt. 6.5.47 — G.O.I. File — National Archives — New Delhi.
was to look into the security problem of Delhi. It was reported in Hindustan Times dt. 14th May '47 that Delhi would have special police force which would consist of people from public as a safety measure when an emergency like communal flare up would take place and civil life would break down in the city. 69

To control the situation in Delhi an emergency committee was set up and it consisted of Cabinet Ministers and officials. C.H. Bhaba and H.M. Patel were the chairman and vice-chairman respectively of that committee. The committee was to look into the details of controlling violent situation in Delhi. This was very much helpful. The committee worked under Sardar who gave quick decisions as and when necessary. This was a positive step for restoring normalcy. 70

Pandit Nehru was seriously worried about the situation in Delhi and wrote to Sardar on 9th October, 1947; but by that time Sardar gained full confidence about maintaining security of the capital. He in reply explained to Nehru on 11th October, 1947 that he had explained the strategy in his public statement and muslims were being dispersed from the capital. About his suggestion for creating separate muslim pockets Sardar indicated that creating such pockets for any large number of population would create tension. His strong determinations in a problematic situation has been reflected in his reply. 71

Sardar could find out the deficiency in Delhi Administration and did not hesitate to take up the matter with Viceroy. He, in his letter to Viceroy, pointed out the inaction and indifferent attitude of the Delhi Administration. He protested against Chief Commissioner's remarks regarding Sardar's instructions on carrying lathis and sticks by volunteer organisations. He said that instructions given by senior Police Superintendent to Punjab Government regarding disproportionate representation of Muslims were objectionable.  

To contain disturbance in Delhi, Sardar along with Chief Commissioner suggested certain measures like control of essential services, collective fines if found necessary, control of camps and parades and trial by special courts. Such steps proved Sardar's intelligent handling of the situation without rousing any communal feeling.

Sardar could find some loopholes in applying Bombay Public Security Measures Act, 1947 and suggested certain modifications so that the revised draft could be placed before the cabinet for consideration. He was not against such measures, but was very careful in keeping the powers of the government to the safest level. He said:

"Unless the application of all powers is immediately necessary, it would not be desirable to apply the whole act and therefore there is no getting away from peaceful enforcement of various provisions... In communal disturbances of the nature, we have recently become accustomed to, summary trials by summary courts have some deterrent effect".

73. Home Political - Govt. of India, File No. 5/8/47/Poll-(I).
The partition also created a serious problem in Delhi. Complaints started pouring in to Sardar Patel regarding atrocities committed by both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the city. To ensure that the situation would not go out of control, Sardar suggested that refugees should not be allowed to enter Delhi since this would create more problems of law and order situation in the capital. Due to the security measures taken by the Home Department, the situation in Delhi was overall satisfactory and no major casualty occurred in the capital. Muslims, who wanted to go to Pakistan, were given sufficient facilities to do so. Their transit was guaranteed. Sardar pointed out to Nehru that Muslims, leaving Delhi for Pakistan, were selling property in black market prices to West Punjab refugees and the same should be stopped immediately. Sardar once again suggested to Nehru that there should not be any separate Muslim pocket in Delhi as that would be against their security. He intimated that in the matter dealing with Muslims and refugees, he was completely in agreement with AICC resolutions.

The problem in Delhi became more critical due to food problem. No food was available in the city. Sardar, with the help of food secretary, Sri Vishnu Sahay, arranged for rushing


75. Ibid letter dt. 22.11.47 p. 364.
of food stuffs from the other parts of the country and distribution through ration shops. Sardar suggested that if the civil authorities failed to meet the emergency complete administration should be handed over to the military.

Sardar also observed that in Delhi police, there were a large number of Muslims who could not be discharged as they were permanent government employees. He suggested to Pakistan government to exchange them. It was a thinking in line with practical solution of the problem of police inaction in Delhi.\(^76\)

During the partition period, Lady Mountbatten started a relief organisation in Delhi named United Council for Relief and Welfare and sought financial help from Sardar. Sardar was very much sympathetic to that organisation and was much impressed by its relief work in Punjab and Frontier provinces and arranged for the desired fund.\(^77\) This proves that Sardar was quite eager to rehabilitate the uprooted refugees to the best possible extent. He realised that if the capital went up in flames it would be impossible to arrest the course of events in the country as a whole.\(^78\)

Sardar adopted various measures to dissuade the citizens from violent activities and thereby restore normalcy. In this speech on 30.10.47, he appealed to the people of Delhi to

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76. Govt. of India, Home Department, File No. 2/82 - September-October '47 - National Archives, New Delhi.
77. Durga Das (Ed.) - Sardar Patel's Correspondence - Vol.IV Opp. Cit. p. 27 letter dt. 28.9.47 by Sardar to Lady Mountbatten.
exercise restraint and help the authorities in establishing peace and normalcy. Sardar said:

"... Would you like the Congress Government to indulge in shooting and arresting people? Delhi had to feel ashamed for the conduct of its citizens, your action in Delhi made you lose face in your own eyes."79

Sardar also explained that the Muslims who were willing to migrate to Pakistan should be allowed a free passage and people who had sought shelter in Delhi should be welcome.

To have closer control over the situation in Delhi, Sardar made it a point that daily reports specially during the critical situation be prepared and reviewed by the Government. Those reports were analysed by Sardar, Mountbatten and other officials and appropriate instructions were given for further action.80

In addition to such measures, Sardar tried to appeal to the people of India to abandon violent methods and establish peace and communal harmony. Sardar categorically explained:

"Violent methods cannot solve problems. Our problem can be solved by peaceful and not by violent methods. Let us not disgrace ourselves in the eyes of the world. Hindus and Muslims were labouring under a misconception that they were enemies and not brothers."81

79. The Hindustan Times (press report) - dt. 31.10.47.
80. Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.
81. Government of India, File No. 22/1047 - National Archives of India, New Delhi.
Sardar's appeal had a soothing effect on the Sikh and consequent to the strong action taken the situation in Delhi came under control. He even did not hesitate to impose carfew in Delhi for a short period.82

Sardar's quick decisions and precautionary measures were worth noting. At one point he arranged a contingent of three hundred men from control province for the security of Delhi. At another occasion when H.M. Patel and V.P. Menon were discussing about future action, Sardar anguishly exclaimed:

"What is the point of waiting and discussing here? Why don't you all get on with the business and do something and do what you think right?"83

Such quick steps and decisions taken by Sardar helped the country to come out of the situation created in Delhi and elsewhere.

Though it was accepted as a foregone conclusion that partition would ease tension between Hindus and Muslims and peace and amity would prevail, the actual effect of the partition period communal tension, riots, murder, looting and hooliganism increased in disproportionate way and the helpless people had to seek for assistance. Sardar was always thinking for the ways and means to ease tensions. He realised that when the news of atrocities were ventilated the tension was

bound to increase, resulting in more trouble. Newspapers contributed to such propaganda to a great extent. It was, therefore, of primary importance that newspapers, the mass media of information should be controlled. On 13th October, 1946, Sardar attending the All India Newspaper Editor’s Conference, indicated that certain code of practice formulated by Central Press Advisory Committee had to be followed.\(^{84}\) He later convened a meeting on 10th November, 1946 of the editors of newspapers in Delhi and urged upon them to adopt certain control over the publications of matter of communal concern. He urged,

"The press should not only refrain from publishing matter calculated to aggravate communal tension but should contribute in a positive way to the restoration of peaceful conditions in the country."\(^{85}\)

Accordingly, a Press Advisory Committee was set up. In order to further tighten control over press, a Press (Special Powers) Ordinance, 1947 was introduced on January 29, 1947 by the initiative of the Home Department and the draft was finally made in line with the suggestions of Home Member. The headline, in the Dawn of 31st January, 1947, "in favour of freedom of Press; but Sardar could not afford to allow free hand to press

\(^{84}\) Govt. of India, Home Department, File No. 6/5/46 - Poll - (i) - Sardar said "The press must have unfiltered freedom in the presentation of name and expression of views, but it also has the deligation to preserve the integrity of the state and support the legitimate activities of a popular government. It must, when occasion demands, help the government, in defeating the forces of disruption. Negatively as well as positively the press should discourage unruly elements" - National Archives of India, New Delhi.

\(^{85}\) The Dawn, dt. 31.1.47 - Home Department File No. F. 110.
for the publication of any news which would be disruptive. Sardar, in the conference of Central Press Advisory Committee in Delhi, referred to the situation created by Calcutta tragedy followed by Noakhali and Bihar and urged that the press could help more by nipping the mischief in the bud. He observed:

"Popular Administration cannot afford to encroach on the liberties of the Press but at the same time they are entitled to its cooperation... I want you to think out some agreed measures of restrain and discretion in publishing news and offering comments on topics of communal nature... If Press could not take any measure the Government would step in for restrictions."86

The determination of Sardar played a good part and it was agreed by the Ad-hoc Committee that during the emergency due to communal disturbance, the Press would refrain from publishing matters that might create communal tension and would also contribute in a positive way to restore peaceful conditions in the country.

In addition to restriction of Press, Sardar felt that the All India Radio could be utilized for the purpose of peace appeal. He in his letter dt. 20th April, '47 to Lord Mountbatten intimated that through AIR the government would appeal to the people for restraint.87 In his message to newspaper he emphasized that the press can make a worthy contribution not only by

featuring the appeal prominently at intervals or whenever tension and communal feelings threaten to get the better of human reason or judgement but also bearing in mind the treatment and presentation of communal matter. He had every hope that the government and his press would work hard in hand for the nation building task. 88

Due to the partition, problem arose about the minorities both in India and Pakistan, whereas the minorities in Pakistan were treated inhumanly. India observed greatest restraint in dealing with the Muslim minorities. Sardar did not consider that India would be a purely Hindu State; thus he could gain confidence in the mind of the minorities. He stated:

"...I do not think it will be possible to consider Hindustan as a Hindu State with Hinduism as state religion. We must not forget that there are other minorities, whose protection is our primary responsibility. The State must exist for all irrespective of caste or creed." 89

Pakistan created a problem regarding distribution of assets and common services like P & T, Civil Aviation and Sardar on 9th July, '47 brought to the notice of Mountbatten that to avoid complications at a later date, the administrative arrangements for such services should be settled in advance and ultimately he organised everything in such a manner including the management of Indian Railways, that no difficulty

88. Home Department - Poll (I) F. No. 33/31/47 Poll (9) - National Archives of India - New Delhi.
could be seen on such services. Similarly, he wanted to formulate a method for the exchange of properties between India and Pakistan. He wrote to Viceroy that Pakistan should take a reasonable stand regarding the sharing of public debt.  

When Sardar's notice was brought to the fact that the Muslim refugees were allowed passage to Pakistan unchecked and they were carrying arms and weapons from defence factories, Sardar suggested that checking could be arranged through Railway Ministry and to stop the menace from root it was advisable to investigate the method of distribution of arms from ordnance factories. He also suggested a quick transfer of Pak officers to Pakistan. This action by Sardar indicates how deeply he could approach to a problem to find an end to it from the root.

The victims of the partition due to the atrocities and communal riots, posed a big problem; but Sardar could tackle the same efficiently. He, in his letter, dt. 27th October, '47 to Refugee Minister, K.C. Neogy expressed his great concern about the families of the deceased Central Government employees in Pakistan who opted for India but either died or were untraceable during the disturbances. He suggested that Govt. should take the responsibility of such families. He said:

90. Letter to Viceroy dt. 3.8.47 P. 195-196.

"I do not think that the government can shirk its responsibility for the families of the government servants who remained attached to their duty up to the last and they lost their lives and left their families in destitute conditions. ..."92

The catastrophe due to partition was many; but Sardar with strong vigilance could bring the situation under control within a reasonable time. When a problem arose he instructed his juniors for a specific action and he followed it up personally to find out about the result achieved, sometimes, during riot in Delhi, Agad pointed out that how Sardar could protect each and every individual from the hands of hooligans; but Sardar replied that in general every effort was made to protect the life of citizens and in case an individual approached the authorities his grievances would be looked after.93

Thus Sardar kept himself alert even to the smallest details necessary to establish peace in the country.

The horrors of partition and its effect on the nation as a whole were subjects well known to Sardar Patel. Irrespective of problems created in Punjab, Bengal and Delhi, partition had spread its shadow all over the country. The effects of partition due to localised riots, mass killing and influx of refugees were far fetched.

Pre-partition period saw riots in Bombay and mutiny in Naval Ratings. The main task to deal with the critical situation


93. Sardar's letter to A.K. Azad dt. 27.11.47 - Courtesy Miss Maniben Patel.
had to be created from that time and Sardar Patel had concentrated in the proper direction to face the onslaught at a later date.  

The influx of refugees after the partition was a matter of concern as those uprooted people had to be given shelter, clothing and food. The resources available with the government were insufficient to deal with such an unprecedented situation. To cope up with the situation, Sardar appealed to the public to contribute their mite to help the illfated refugees. Sardar explained that everyone in the country was better off compared to the incoming displaced persons and they should consider the refugees as their brethren. He even suggested that for the impending winter contribution in the form of blankets and winter garments would be acceptable.

The political situation in the country would have taken a serious turn when the report of massacre of the Hindus in Pakistan was received in India but it was due to Sardar Patel that the people of India exercised partial restraint. He specifically said:

"I would, therefore, appeal to the friends to exercise all possible restraint and to utilise better experience through which they have passed, not for accentuating the misery and danger of those who are still left behind."

To bring the violent situation under control Sardar found that an appeal above might not be sufficient. He warned that the miscreants would be dealt with seriously and might face death penalty. He also directed the police officers to remain impartial and discharge their duties judiciously. He derived that the administrative personnel should contribute their best to speedy restoration of peace and tranquility. 97

The inrush of the refugees towards various corners of the country had to be controlled, otherwise complete chaos and misunderstanding would prevail. The in-coming refugees from West Pakistan were taken to different refugee camps established by the Government for the stay of the refugees. When the refugees started moving in Bhopal Nawab of Bhopal appealed to Sardar to divert those refugees outside and arrange for additional funds so that the state could cope up with the financial liabilities for the refugees. Sardar realised the position and arranged diverting the refugees elsewhere and the Nawab of Bhopal was also helped with financial assistance. 98

When the influx of refugees continued unabated, the economy of the country was in a very shattering condition. Sardar wanted Pakistan to stop passage of refugees from East Pakistan to Bengal. In his speech in Nagpur Sardar warned

Pakistan of the dire consequence if the refugees continued to come to India. He demanded that Pakistan must part with a part of her territory to enable the rehabilitation of those refugees. His conviction in this regard was so forceful that he wanted to stop unending miseries to the ill-fated people driven out from Pakistan. However, Pakistan could be brought to her senses and agreed to discuss the issue at the next interdominion meeting.

After the partition of the country, Mountbatten went to Simla on holiday. As the situation was going out of control, V.P. Menon called Mountbatten back to take over the administration as Nehru & Patel were finding the situation out of their control. Mountbatten returned to Delhi on 6th September 1947, and a consultancy committee was formed with the consent of Nehru and Patel. This incidence was narrated in 'Freedom at Midnight'. Of course Mountbatten acted as a head of the Indian Union and his counsel was sought by Sardar and Nehru. Sardar thus always tried to take necessary help in his task of controlling riots and establishing solidarity of the country. But he did not surrender to Mountbatten complete administration fearing that he would not be able to administer and succeed in such a crucial situation. Sardar only wanted advice from Mountbatten but kept the administration under his control.

This proves his administrative ability.

In order to sort out the division of properties and personnel, a partition council was formed with representatives from Pakistan and India. Where H.M. Patel was representing India, Pakistan was represented by Mohammed Ali. Sardar was quite reasonable in settling the division of armed forces, civil servants and properties and did not create any situation which might create dispute between the two countries. It was his desire that when Congress had accepted division of the country, both India and Pakistan should part with each other in a friendly manner. This is definitely an indication of Sardar's human approach to Pakistan.

Summing up:

The great onslaught India had at the time of partition was difficult for the country to sustain during its infancy. The overall situation of the country, whether it was in political, social and administrative field was in an unstable condition, creating an atmosphere not congenial for its marching ahead towards national integration and solidarity. Such a critical situation demanded the service of able leaders, who could bring forth political stability, social integration and administrative control and consequently lead the country towards nation building. In such a juncture, the country was blessed with a number of administrators, and

and politicians headed by Sardar Patel, who worked untiringly to establish overall control of the situation and bring back normalcy in the country.

Overall, Sardar had his thought spread all over regarding the various problems of partition and he could nicely forge ahead the divergent elements so as to find out an equitable and accepted solution to various problems which would be best suited for the country's interests. He could the difficulties the country had to encounter in the eve of partition and could bring synthesis among the heterogenous elements of Indian society and establish himself as a great leader who could build up a great Indian nation. As a member of Home Department, Information and Broadcasting, Partition Council, AICC, Emergency Committee during Delhi disturbances and overall as a national leader, his contribution towards formation of an Indian Nation is invaluable.

For the purpose of nation building the country needed social, political and administrative stability. Sardar Patel by virtue of his long experience could steer through the problems in all of these three fields and bring forth a synthesis to project the country as a nation. The problem due to the influx of innumerable refugees, who had to leave their home, clothes and all other belongings needed a humanitarian consideration. Sardar tackled such a problem with human approach. He untiringly worked for the resettlement of the refugees
arriving from West Punjab, Sind and East Bengal, arranged for their food and clothing, looked after their security, health and sanitation, by establishing refugee camps at various parts of the country. Side by side, he also ensured that the emigrants desirous of going to Pakistan were allowed free and safe passage from India. When it was reported that the non-Muslim refugees desirous of migrating to India from Pakistan were terribly harassed and intimidated, he went a step further and took up the matter with Pakistan Government so that such humiliation to those helpless people were stopped. Sardar's human approach could bring back confidence in the mind of those refugees. Sardar's appeal to the citizens of India for bringing back peace and harmony, bears the testimony of his attempt towards social consolidation of the country. With his efforts, he could rehabilitate the displaced persons and develop a sense of brotherhood among the various communities in the country. His secular approach had contributed towards social integration of the country.

The administrative problems at the time of partition were also plenty. The riots, arson and murder which were the order of the day during the partition period, had to be controlled and normalcy had to be restored. Due to the division of the country, army and the administrative staff were divided and the country was short of experienced people to tackle such a critical situation. Sardar could identify appropriate persons...
for the task ahead and with his own ingenuity and overall supervision could bring the situation under control. By marching the military in the disturbed areas, by imposing curfew in Delhi, by posting proper officers of his confidence, by monitoring the situation every day, by personally visiting the troubled areas and by giving stern warning to the miscreants about the dire consequences, he could establish administrative control over the riot-ridden country. As he imposed restriction of arms and weapons, the activity of the militant group could be brought under control. The country could thus come out of the administrative instability resulted on the eve of partition.

The political situation in India also became unstable due to the unfriendly attitude of Muslim League, anti-Muslim organisations like Hindu Mahasabha and R.S.S. At one point the Muslim League tried to gain control over Delhi, on the other hand militant stands Hindus in Bengal tried to establish undivided Bengal. When the country came out of spell of communal riots before the partition, it was quite natural that further disturbance, would lead to political instability which ultimately may lead to invasion by any outside agency. Sardar had to move carefully to establish political stability at the earliest possible time. By defeating the evil design of the Muslim League to establish control over Delhi, by destroying the desire of Muslim League ministry in Bengal to establish Pakistan in the entire Bengal by adopting control over Press and adopting strong
control and establishing confidence among the masses through democratic means, Sardar could bring political stability in the country.

Through his entire actions and interactions in the eve of partition, Sardar could establish an overall stability in India so as to enable the country to march forward towards nation building.