

# Integration of Princely States

At the time of Indian independence, all the princely states under British Crown authority were also supposed to gain independence with the end of British rule. Therefore, the integration of princely states was another subject of concern for the Indian leaders. In respect of the area, these 562 states covered around 48% of India before independence, forming a major chunk of the Indian state.

- As per the Indian Independence Act 1947, these princely states were offered to either integrate into India or Pakistan or retain their status as independent sovereign states.
- India's first Deputy Prime Minister, **Sardar Vallabhai Patel**, was handed over the responsibility of accomplishing this task of integration of Indian states into the Indian union.

Sardar Patel tried to convince the Indian princes to merge their states by reminding them of the risk of anarchy in case they denied it. Certain states didn't like either of the options and wanted to merge with Pakistan and become a part of it.

## Why was the Integration of Princely States Important?

After India's independence, one of the major tasks was the **integration of Indian states** into the Indian union. This was important because integrating the princely states into India meant transferring authority and power from the British Crown to India.

- The main idea was to create one united independent nation called India.
- Although there were many roadblocks while fulfilling this purpose, many states were unwilling to merge with India or Pakistan and were not in favour of losing their freedom and authority.
- The new Indian government was not in favour of having independent small states within the country as it would lead to a high-security risk for the entire country. These independent princely states could be targeted in case of a foreign attack and could put the nation at risk.
- On the other hand, Pakistan was also in the race to merge these states and increase its power; therefore, it was all the more important for India to fasten the process of **integration of princely states** into the Indian union as soon as possible.

## Role of Sardar Patel In Integration of Princely States

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first deputy prime minister of India and the home minister, was handed over this integration task of Indian states. V.P.Menon (secretary of the Ministry of the States) was supposed to assist him in this task.

- Sardar Patel adopted various measures to achieve his goal, looking at the seriousness of the situation at the time. He tried to instill patriotism in the Indian princes to convince them to integrate their states into the Indian union.

- The concept of “**privy purses**” was also introduced by Sardar Patel while trying to make the integration of princely states possible. The concept of “privy purses” referred to the payment made to the royal families if they agreed to the merger of their state with India.
- The role of Sardar Patel in the integration of princely states can never be ignored or denied. Let us see how other states were made to agree to this integration of princely states in India.

## How Did India Achieve the Integration Of Princely States?

Bikaner, Gwalior, Baroda, and Patiala were the first to integrate their states into India on 28th April 1947. Trace the path to find out the way India achieved the integration of princely states.

### The Princely State of Travancore

Travancore was a princely state in southwestern India, now part of Kerala. It was earlier known as the kingdom of Travancore, which was quite popular then. Today, it is called Kerala. Travancore was also known as the maritime state and therefore contributed to the maritime trade for the country as well.

It also possessed abundant natural resources, due to which it thought of itself as a self-sufficient state and therefore did not want to merge with the Indian union.

- The Dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, had officially declared in 1946 that he was unwilling to let go of the independence of his state & refused to merge.
- He was then invited to Delhi by Jawaharlal Nehru so that he could be convinced, but he did not change his decision & did not agree to sign the ‘Instrument of Accession’.
- He only changed his decision when he survived an assassination attempt made by a member of the Kerala Socialist Party. He advised the king of Travancore from his hospital bed to sign the Instrument of Accession.
- Travancore joined the Indian union on 30th July 1947.

### Bhopal

The state of Bhopal was also one of the princely states that declined the integration of princely states. The situation in Bhopal was slightly different from other states where a Muslim Nawab, Hamidullah Khan, was ruling the Hindu-dominated population. The Nawab of Bhopal was ordered a close aide of the Muslim League & thus strictly opposed the integration of princely states.

- Lord Mountbatten offered the Nawab of Bhopal the Instrument of Accession.

- The Nawab of Bhopal refused to sign the Accession claiming the protection of Muslim rights in a Hindu-dominated state.
- By July 1947, he finally accepted and signed the Instrument of Accession as the people of Bhopal also realized that the Nawab was only interested in gaining power.

## Jodhpur

The princely state of Jodhpur was a Rajput state with a Hindu population ruled by a Hindu king. It still was more inclined towards merging with Pakistan. The Hindu king ruling over Jodhpur, Hanvant Singh, was young and had less experience, so he easily got attracted to the deal from Pakistan.

- The deal he received from Jinnah was a blank signed paper where the Prince was asked to list his demands along with free access to the Karachi port.
- Sardar Patel instantly offered some perks to the king of Jodhpur and tried to stop him from acceding to Pakistan.
- The Dewan of Bikaner was also said to have convinced the Jodhpur king to accept the integration of the princely states.
- The king of Jodhpur finally signed the Instrument of Accession on 11th August 1947.

## Junagarh

The princely state of Junagarh was situated in southwestern Gujarat. This state also showed disinterest in merging with the Indian union. It comprised a large Hindu population and was ruled by a Muslim Nawab, Muhammad Mahabat Khanji III.

- The king of Junagarh had initially agreed to merge with Pakistan on 15th September 1947, claiming it adjoined Pakistan by sea.
- Later on, two states, Mangrol and Babariawad, under the purview of Junagarh, announced their independence by acceding to the Indian union. The Nawab, in response, forcefully took control of these states by adopting military measures.
- The rulers of Mangrol and Babariawad pleaded for assistance from the Indian Government.
- Looking at the complex situation, Sardar Patel & V.P.Menon tried to convince the Dewan of Junagarh to call for a plebiscite.
- After many clashes & hardships, the plebiscite was held, resulting in Junagarh acceding to India.

## Hyderabad

**Nizam Mir Usman Ali** was the Muslim king ruling over the large Hindu population of Hyderabad. It was the richest among all the princely states of India. The king of Hyderabad denied the possibility of acceding the Indian union.

- The king also led a group of Muslims called Ittehadul Muslameen & a militia called Razakars to cause disruption and threatened the idea of a unified Indian state.
- This led to a police action being taken against Hyderabad by the Indian Government in 1948, when on 13th September, it sent troops under 'Operation Polo'.
- All these instances eventually led the Nawab to surrender Hyderabad and later sign the Instrument of Accession.

## Integration of Kashmir

Kashmir has always been a much-debated topic for years for India and Pakistan. At the time of Indian independence, Kashmir was neither a part of India nor Pakistan. It was when some Pakistanis attacked Kashmir on 22nd Oct 1947 and the King of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, had to request the Indian Government to rescue his state.

- Only after the king signed the Instrument of Accession did the Indian Government send its Army for Kashmir's rescue.
- After the Indian Army was sent for assistance, a ceasefire occurred between Indian and Pakistan on 31st December 1948.
- India then raised concerns to the United Nations, resulting in Pakistan being asked by the UN to withdraw its army. However, Pakistan has not removed its army from Kashmir even today, which has been a concern for India for years.
- India was later asked to hold a plebiscite in the state.