

Integration of Princely States: Notes for UPSC History

Integration of Princely States is an important chapter in Indian history for the UPSC exam. At the time of independence, there were more than 500 princely states in India that were not a part of the British Empire officially.

These states were given the choice to accede to either India or Pakistan or remain independent. In this article, you can read about the integration of these states with India through persuasion, diplomacy, military force or plebiscite, for IAS exam

Why was the Integration of the Princely States necessary?

Post-independence, one of the first and major problems that surfaced was the integration of the princely states into the concept of a single unified, uniformly administered India. Since these princely states were patronized by the British on a large scale during the 19th and 20th centuries, they were not comfortable with the idea of giving away their power and prestige. Some of these states that posed problems were Jodhpur, Bhopal and Travancore **before independence** and Junagarh, Hyderabad and Kashmir **post-independence**.

The newly-formed Government of India was against the idea of having independent nations within the state would only jeopardise the internal and external security of India. It was speculated that in case of an act of aggression by a foreign power, these Princely States would be used as the staging ground for an attack on the country at large. It wasn't just the Indian Government trying to woo the Princely states but also Pakistan as well. Thus it was necessary to integrate the Princely states as soon as possible.

How were all the Princely States integrated into the Union of India?

India's first Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhai Patel used a combination of political manoeuvring and brute force to integrate the Princely states. Some of his notable actions on these states are listed below:

Jodhpur: The services of the Diwan of the neighbouring state of Bikaner were used to persuade the King of Jodhpur to align herself with India. Thus, the Instrument of Accession with Jodhpur was signed.

Bhopal: After Lord Mountbatten asked the Nawab of Bhopal to sign the Instrument of Accession, he tried to avoid any integration to the Union of India by reasoning the interests of Muslims in the Hindu dominated region will be compromised after the accession. But the people

of Bhopal had realized that this was only being done to preserve the Nawab's own power in the state and had nothing to do with the genuine interests of any community. Hence, the Nawab had to sign the Instrument of Accession with India.

Travancore: Since Travancore had good reserves of natural resources, it was believed it could survive on its own and hence wanted to remain independent. The Dewan of Travancore, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, was invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to Delhi, in an effort to persuade him, but he refused to sign the Instrument of Accession. CP was also unpopular with the Communists of the Kingdom for his anti-communism stands. An assassination attempt was made on C. P. on 25 July 1947. From his hospital bed, he advised the King of Travancore to accede to India and thus the Instrument of Accession was signed.

Junagarh: Junagarh was a princely state which had a majority of Hindus but ruled by a Muslim ruler. It had already signed the pact with Pakistan to be a part of the latter's territory. However, India firmly believed in the will of the people for such a decision. Hence, V.P Menon and V.B Patel tried to convince the Diwan of Junagarh (Shahnawaz Khan Bhutto) to conduct a plebiscite. But not before severing air and land links of Junagadh. Following clashes between Indian and Junagadhi armies, the Nawab fled with his family to Pakistan. His Dewan Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, the father of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, decided to invite the Government of India to intervene and wrote a letter to Mr Buch, the regional commissioner of Saurashtra in the government of India to this effect. The subsequent plebiscite held later saw the accession of Junagadh to India.

Hyderabad: The indication that the power of the rulers of Hyderabad was short-lived, could be sensed through the events such as the movement of peasants under the communist leadership against the Jagirdars and Talukdars, the Telangana uprising, and the spread of Gandhian programmes such as Prabhat Pheri and Khadi. The Nawab of Hyderabad succeeded in mobilizing a group of orthodox Muslims called the Ittehadul **Muslimeen** and a militia called **Razakars**. They challenged the idea of India and hence finally a police action was taken by the Government of India in 1948. The Nawab agreed to accede Hyderabad to India. In return, he was made the Rajpramukh (Governor) of the democratic state of Hyderabad. This can be referred to as a smooth transition of the king into democracy without feeling a sense of dethronement.

Kashmir: At the time of Independence, Kashmir was neither a part of India nor Pakistan. When on 22nd Oct 1947, a section of Pakistanis backed by their army attacked Kashmir, the King of Kashmir Maharaja Hari Singh requested for help from the Indian Government. After the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession, the Indian Army was sent to the help of Kashmir. Finally, a ceasefire between India and Pakistan took place on 31st Dec 1948. India took this matter to the United Nations. As a result in 1951, the United Nations asked Pakistan to remove its army and asked India to hold a plebiscite in the area. However, Pakistan has not pulled its army away from the area and till today, it is a matter of conflict between the two nations. The area held by Pakistan is referred to as 'Pak occupied Kashmir' by India and is referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' by Pakistan.

