

Role of Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala as the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes

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Abstract:

Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala remained as the chancellor of the Chamber of Princes from 1926-1931 and from 1933-1936. As the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes he played a very important role in order to highlight the main issues of the princes like the question of nature of relationship between the British government of India and the princes with the viceroy lord Irwin. As result of this Butler Committee was appointed in 1927, which presented its report in February 1929 and princes were invited to attend the first Round Table Conference.

Key words: Standing Committee, Chancellor, Butler Committee, Crown, Paramount Power.

Introduction: Maharaja Bupinder Singh was born at the Moti Bagh palace Patiala and educated at Aitcheson College. At the age of nine he succeeded as the Maharaja of Patiala state upon the death of his father Maharaja Rajinder Singh on 9 November 1900. A council of Regency ruled in his

name until he took partial powers shortly before his 18th birthday on 1 October 1909 and was invested with full powers by the viceroy of India lord Minto on 3 November 1910. He represented India at the league of Nations in 1925, and was Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes for ten years between 1926-1938 and also being a representative at the Round Table Conference. He died on 23 March 1938 at the age of 46 years in Patiala

Objectives: The objectives of the research paper Role of Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala as the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes are as under:

1. To highlight his role in the Conference of Princes held at Patiala.
2. To highlight the constitutional achievements of the States during his chancellorship.
3. To highlight his support to smaller States in their relationship with the paramount power.

4. His role in connection with the development of the movement for the establishment of immediate Dominion Status for India

Role of Maharaja of Patiala as the Chancellor of Chamber of Princes:

His Highness the Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala remained as Chancellor for eight years in two tenures from 1926-1931 and from 1933-1936. During his Chancellorship various activities of the Chamber of Princes as (a) Improvement of the working of the Constitution of the Chamber of Princes, (b) Maintenance of the rights and privileges of the princes, (c) Indian States and the problem of British reforms, (d) The recognition and appreciation of the position and rights of the smaller States, (e) Safeguarding the States under federation, (f) Codification and simplification of the political practice, The Chancellor Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala took up the question of the determination of the rights of the States trust as the Princes were much anxious to ascertain their exact position in political and economic sphere. It had long been felt by the Princes that the States trust as the Princes were much anxious to ascertain their exact position in political and

economic sphere. It had long been felt by the Princes that the vague and unclear character of their relationship with the Paramount Power was burdened with serious danger to their future, especially in view of the possibility which was becoming increasingly clear of a general transfer of political power from the British into Indian hands. As a result of the Conference held in February 1927, Viceroy Lord Irwin was pursued to recognise the necessity of having the nature of the relationship examined and defined between the States and British Indian properly. For this purpose the Indian States Committee was appointed with Sir Harcourt Butler as Chairman to report on the question. The Butler Committee published its report in February 1929. Though the Committee accepted the claims of States that the relationship thus established could not be transferred to a new government without their consent. It also makes clear that whether or not a state makes a contribution to the cost of defence it is the duty of Paramount Power to protect it. Unfortunately the report did not afford satisfaction to the Princes on the question of Paramountcy. The Committees dictate such as Paramountcy must remain Paramount, it must fulfil its obligations by defining and adopting itself to the

necessities of the time and the progressive development of the States and usage lights up the dark places of the treaties seemed to leave the States in a worse position than before. His Excellency the Viceroy made his historic announcement on 31st October 1929 regarding the Indian Round Table Conference which was received with great satisfaction by the Princes. During the first period of the Chancellorship of the Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala the results on the constitutional position of the States were achieved are as(a) That the States were by their treaty entitled to be defended free(b)That the relationship could not be transferred without the consent of the States to a new government in British India.(c)It established the position never accepted before by the government and contested by British India, that the treaty relationship of the state were with the Crown. With regard to the routine work of the Chamber, satisfactory progress was made during this period and several subjects were disposed of finally while agreement was reached on same.

During his period the Chancellor Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala continuously supported the interest of the smaller States in their relationship with the Paramount power. The importance of the smaller States was recognised when the Butler

Committee was appointed. Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala realised their position and invited them to special Conference to meet Sir Leslie Scott who was in India in connection with the Princes case to be presented before the Butler Committee. The Chancellor gave full assurance of support at another Conference held at Bombay. The Butler committee Report did not contain any recommendations with regard to the smaller States. After great efforts of the Chancellor, the government of India ordered an inquiry into the position of these States. The result was that Bihar, Orissa and Central Provinces States were brought in to direct relations with the Viceroy. The Chancellor did not forget the smaller States at the time of nomination of the States were brought into direct relations with the Orissa and central province States were brought into direct relations with the viceroy. The Chancellor Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala did not forget the smaller States at the time of nomination of the States representatives to the Round Table Conference and the Raja of Singli was nominated to represent the smaller States group. Afterwards the Chancellor Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala advocated the claims of these smaller States to be admitted into the

Chamber of Princes whose internal autonomy entitled them to that privilege. The Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala always held that the importance and authority of the larger States should be adequately recognised. He also laid stress that the Chamber of Princes should give admission to all rulers who can legitimately claim to be sovereign. He emphasized this point in the meeting of the Special Committee held at Delhi on 25TH March 1933. The Chancellor circulated a note of dissent on the subject and also made the following personal appeal to the viceroy in the note. That he may be pleased to expedite the settlement of this question and the consequent removal of restrictions on these States.

Another important achievement during his Chancellorship was his efforts in connection with the development of the movement for the establishment of immediate Dominion Status for India. The problem was to find a solution acceptable to British India and the States which appeared to be a corollary to the appointment of the Butler Committee. The policy of Private discussions with British Indian leaders was initiated in pursuance of the dual policy of ensuring the rights of the States and of supporting the legitimate claims for British India adopted by the

Chamber of Princes. Informal discussions took place with prominent representatives of British India. The result was that the idea of an All India Federation as an effective solution of the Indian problems came out from these discussions which started in Delhi and continued in London. The Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala's speech that he made at a banquet at Patiala is important in this connection. For the prior determination of the rights of the States in relation to the Crown, the Chancellor arranged another Conference with the Viceroy which was held in July 1930 and served as a preliminary step to the work of the Chamber of Princes. It is due to the Maharaja of Patiala's initiative and Statesmanship that the wise policy of close consultation between Indian States and British India was inaugurated; that a progressive and forward policy was officially adopted by the Chamber of Princes in regard to the claim of British India for a self government while insisting strongly and unbendingly on the just and legitimate rights of the States. The summoning of the Round Table Conference, the subsequent history of the cooperation between British India and the Indian States in the framing of the federal constitution with central responsibility and the prospect of an honourable settlement

between the Crown, British India and the States are but the outcome of that wise policy. It was admitted that the Chancellorship of the Maharaja Bupinder Singh of Patiala laid the foundation stone of Greater India –an India in which the States as equal and autonomous entities will take their due share in the government of free and federated dominion.

It was during his period several constitutional changes took place in the Chamber of Princes. A permanent secretariat was created for the Chancellor. The informal meetings of the Standing Committee become a regular feature of the work of the Chamber of Princes. Unlike earlier Chancellors secretary was permitted to attend the meetings of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee was given the power to frame its own agenda and also of the Chamber of Princes for the approval of His Excellency the Viceroy. It could also invite experts to attend the Standing Committee meetings and to take their advice on technical matters when it was found necessary. The informal meetings of the Standing Committee resulted in transferring to it much of the preliminary work which used to be done in the presence of the political Secretary and it also improved the status of the Chancellor .The informal Conference of

princes which was held before the Chamber of Princes secession annually also changed in its character. And procedure was adopted by which the Chancellor was to preside at all informal meetings. The Chancellor also initiated the system of having the discussions at the informal Conferences on the basis of notes and memoranda prepared for the occasion. For the first time systematic and audited accounts began to put before the Conference. The cumulative effect of all these changes was to convert the Chancellor from an official into an authorised spokesman of the princes, in relation to the viceroy and the political department. The change in the position is evidenced by the fact that on all important public questions like the work in regard to the Butler Committee, the action to be taken on their report, etc; the chancellor effectively moulded the opinion of the princes. In one year alone His Highness issued thirty two circulars calling attention to various points and bringing together the points of views of the States. During this period all these important changes strengthened further the position of the Chamber of Princes and gave a new life to the institution.

During the period 1933-1936 the Standing Committee of the Princes was mainly

occupied with the work relating to the Joint Select Committee. The Standing Committee met informally and considered the question of the nomination of the representatives of the Chamber of Princes to the Joint Select Committee and of the instructions to be given to them on the behalf of the Princes. There was one formal meeting in January 1934 under his Chancellorship and subjects which were discussed are as (a) Construction of dams in Indian States, (b) Resolution regarding the radio broadcasting in British India and its application to Indian States.

Certain other questions were also discussed with the political secretary informally by the standing Committee out of which the question of restrictions on the import of arms and ammunition was finally disposed off. There was no session of the Chamber of Princes in 1936 as there were no suitable questions in the agenda. And chancellorship of the Maharaja of Bupinder Singh of Patiala ended in 1936. He died on 23 March 1938 at the age of 46 years.

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