

THE NEW IRON MAN

Amit Shah and the Patel Tradition of Nation-Building

"Sardar Patel unified some 600 princely states in roughly eighteen months, but the task of integrating Jammu and Kashmir remained unfinished. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now completed that remaining work."

— Amit Shah, 24 August 2019

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Dedication

To all those architects of the nation's unity and integrity who chose the path of long-term nation-building over fleeting popularity — from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel down to the present day.



Acknowledgements

This book has been prepared on the basis of countless archives, parliamentary proceedings, news sources, biographies, and research documents that have preserved the story of independent India's nation-building. Every effort has been made to verify the facts, dates, and quotations against authentic sources wherever possible, so that this work might be not merely a tribute but also a reliable account.



Preface

History grants only a few individuals the opportunity to reshape the geographic and constitutional soul of a nation anew. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one such individual. When India won its freedom in 1947, that freedom arrived in the form of a fractured, scattered land — 565 princely states, each asserting its own sovereignty, poised to splinter a subcontinent into hundreds of fragments. It was Patel’s iron will, his diplomatic acumen, and his readiness to use force when necessary that wove these fragments into a single nation. For this reason he came to be called the “Iron Man.”

But history also leaves behind unfinished tasks. One of Patel’s dreams remained incomplete — the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir. The “temporary” arrangement that took shape in the form of Article 370 stood for seven decades as a permanent anomaly. Patel passed away untimely on 15 December 1950, and this unfinished work of his was entered onto history’s waiting list.

This book is woven around a central idea: that within that same tradition of independent India’s Home Ministry, seven decades later, another individual arose who placed the nation’s long-term unity above short-term political appeasement — Amit Shah. On 5 August 2019, when he moved the resolution in the Rajya Sabha to render Article 370 inoperative, it was not merely a legislative act; it was the completion of Patel’s unfinished work.

This comparison is no exaggeration; it is a clear line drawn repeatedly by the government itself, by the BJP's thinkers, and by numerous commentators. The 182-metre-tall "Statue of Unity" standing at Kevadia, the "National Unity Day" observed every 31 October, and the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 — these three together establish a single narrative in the public memory: Patel began it, Shah completed it.

The tone of this book is unmistakably admiring. It presents Amit Shah as a nation-builder. But admiration does not mean turning away from facts. Every date, figure, and quotation presented here rests upon authentic sources. A book that wishes to honour its hero has no need for the crutch of falsehood — truth itself is its most powerful argument.

Critics will say that Shah's decisions have been controversial; that sharp objections were raised against Article 370, the CAA, and the Uniform Civil Code. This book does not avert its gaze from these objections — rather it confronts them, and shows that the very mark of a nation-builder is that even in the storm of criticism he does not waver from his long-term resolve. As Shah himself said: "*Come what may*" — the government will not stray from its path.

This is the story of that very steadfastness.



Introduction — Two Iron Men, One Resolve

Imagine two scenes, separated by exactly seven decades.

The first scene: the years 1947–48. In a chamber in New Delhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is seated. Before him lies a map of India — but it is not the map of a complete nation; it is the map of hundreds of independent princely states. The Nizam of Hyderabad dreams of independence; the Nawab of Junagadh leans towards Pakistan; and the clock in Kashmir ticks on. Patel has neither unlimited time nor unlimited resources. What he has is a single, unshakeable resolve — that this land shall remain one, shall remain undivided. And he fulfils this resolve — here through diplomacy, there through compromise, and where necessary, through force.

The second scene: 5 August 2019. The chamber of the Rajya Sabha is packed to capacity. Home Minister Amit Shah rises from his seat and moves a resolution that for seven decades had been deemed “impossible” — the abrogation of Article 370. The clamour of the Opposition reaches its peak, but Shah’s voice is steady. Within a few hours the resolution is passed, and the seven-decade-old special status of Jammu and Kashmir becomes history. That evening, Amit Shah sat in the very chair of the same Home Ministry once occupied by Sardar Patel.

The line between these two scenes is no coincidence. It is a deliberate historical continuity, to which Amit Shah himself gave words at a gathering in Anadpur on 24 August 2019: *“Sardar Patel unified some 600 princely states in roughly eighteen months, but the task of integrating Jammu and Kashmir remained unfinished. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now completed that remaining work.”*

This book is the story of that continuity. It is the story of two men who, in different eras but in the same office, stood with the same resolve — that the unity and integrity of the nation is greater than any short-term political gain.

But this is not merely the story of Article 370. It is the story of an entire philosophy that we may call “long-term nation-building versus short-term appeasement.” The abolition of triple talaq, the steps towards a Uniform Civil Code, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the decisive campaign against Naxalism, and the centuries-old resolve of the Ram Mandir — all of these are strung upon a single thread. Each decision was controversial at the outset; each drew sharp criticism; and behind each stood the same argument — that the long-term interest of the nation stands above the short-term appeasement of any particular community.

In the pages of this book we shall trace Amit Shah’s life from its beginning — from a merchant family of Mansa to that chair in North Block from which the nation’s internal security is directed. We shall see how a sixteen-year-old swayamsevak, the youngest chairman of a cooperative bank, and a strategist renowned as the “Modern Chanakya” gradually transformed into the man who today is called the inheritor of Patel’s tradition.

This is a story of patience, of discipline, and above all — of that steadfastness which is the mark of any true nation-builder.

The Structure of This Book

This book is divided into four parts and twenty chapters. Part One — “Roots and Formation” — presents Amit Shah’s early life, his initiation into the Sangh, the rise of his cooperative-organisational career, and the saga of Sardar Patel’s nation-building, so that the reader may understand the foundation upon which this entire edifice stands.

Part Two — “Power, Organisation, and Integration” — covers the journey from Home Minister of Gujarat to National President of the BJP, and finally to the historic abrogation of Article 370.

Part Three — “Reform and Resolve” — examines Shah’s principal decisions one by one: triple talaq, the Uniform Civil Code, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the end of Naxalism, the Ram Mandir, and the cooperative revolution.

The fourth and final part — “An Unwavering Vision” — analyses Shah’s parliamentary steadfastness, the tradition of the Iron Man, the symbolism of the Statue of Unity, and finally the central philosophy that is the thread of this entire book — long-term nationalism versus short-term appeasement.

Each chapter opens with a powerful scene or quotation, advances through facts and the sequence of events, underscores the Patel–Shah parallel, and concludes with a summation. At the end of the book are appended a chronology, a compilation of criticisms and their rebuttals, and a note on sources.

A Word About Criticism

One distinctive feature of this book is that it does not avert its gaze from criticism. Despite being an admiring work, it presents the most powerful criticisms of every major decision, and then offers a rebuttal. This is because the greatness of a true nation-builder lies precisely in his remaining steadfast even in the storm of criticism. To conceal criticism

would be to weaken that steadfastness; to confront it is to strengthen it further.

This is a story of patience, of discipline, and above all — of that steadfastness.

Let us, then, begin this journey where every story begins — at the roots.



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Part One — Roots and Formation



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CHAPTER 1

From Mansa to Bombay: Lineage, Childhood, and Formation

“A person’s destiny is determined not by birth, but by the values instilled in him.”

The most authentic path to understanding any life runs through its roots. On the stage of politics we know Amit Shah as a formidable strategist, an unwavering Home Minister, and a man at whose mere glance the bureaucracy stands alert. But behind this public image lies a long, patient journey nourished by formation — and that journey begins in the narrow lanes of a small town in Gujarat. In this chapter we shall examine the foundation upon which this future personality was built.

In the Gandhinagar district of Gujarat, about fifty kilometres north of Ahmedabad, lies a small town — Mansa. Filled with temple bells, narrow lanes, and traditional mansions, this town has for centuries been a centre of trade. Here, in these very lanes, the roots of Amit Shah’s family are sunk at least four generations deep. And this is not merely a geographic fact — it is the cornerstone of the character that would go on to become Indian politics’ most organised strategist.

Amit Anilchandra Shah was born on 22 October 1964 in Bombay (present-day Mumbai). The Government of India’s official biography describes his family as “an affluent Gujarati family.” But the heart of the family beat not in Bombay but in Mansa — that Mansa which lay roughly four hundred and fifty kilometres north of Bombay, and where four generations of the family had already passed their lives. Shah’s great-grandfather was the “nagarseth” of the princely state of Mansa —

that is, the foremost citizen of the town and adviser to the ruler. This position was not merely a symbol of honour; it carried with it the authority to mediate in matters of commerce and civic affairs. To come from a lineage in which trade and civic leadership walked side by side left its imprint on both aspects of Amit Shah's personality — the calculating subtlety of the merchant and the organisational capacity of the leader.

The family comes from the Gujarati Hindu Bania caste — Gujarat's traditional class of traders and moneylenders. Here a misconception must be set right: many people assume Shah to be a Jain, but he himself has clarified — *"I am a Hindu Vaishnav, not a Jain."* The Vaishnav tradition, with its devotion to Vishnu and its ritual discipline, was the spiritual atmosphere in which this family breathed. Daily worship, vegetarian food, and a calendar of fasts and festivals — Janmashtami, Diwali, Navratri — gave structure to the household's routine.

The Nagarseth of a Princely State: The Social Ground of the Lineage

Mansa was no ordinary town — it was the capital of one of the hundreds of small princely states of pre-independence India whose integration would later become the greatest work of Sardar Patel's life. It is a poignant coincidence that the man who would later be called the inheritor of Patel's tradition of integration came himself from a family that had for generations been settled at the very centre of that same princely order which Patel wove into the Indian Union.

The position of nagarseth held a distinctive place within this princely structure. He was not only the most distinguished merchant of the town but also the bridge between ruler and ruled. The settlement of commercial disputes, the protection of the community's collective interests, the management of money and leadership in times of crisis —

all these were the responsibilities of the nagarseth. To be born into such a family meant to be born into an inheritance in which leadership was not an external ambition but the natural disposition of the lineage. Thus Amit Shah inherited not merely affluence but an innate formation in social responsibility and mediation.

The Father's Business, the Mother's Discipline

Amit Shah's father, Anilchandra Shah, was a businessman of Mansa who built two distinct enterprises. The first was a successful factory manufacturing PVC pipes — a unit producing thermoplastic pipes, which supplied Gujarat's rapidly growing rural and urban water-infrastructure projects. The second, and far more notable, was the chairmanship of the Ahmedabad Stock Exchange. This meant that the family sat at the very crossroads of Gujarat's industrial and financial arteries. The father gave his son the opportunity to observe how markets function, how capital flows, and how networks are built.

This was no ordinary inheritance. On the one hand, the PVC pipe factory was teaching the lessons of production, supply chains, and scalable manufacturing; on the other, the chairmanship of the stock exchange taught the assessment of numbers, risk, and human behaviour. When Amit Shah was later called the “Modern Chanakya” — a strategist who had mastered booth-level arithmetic — the seeds of that capacity had been sown in this very family environment.

His mother, Smt. Kusumben Shah, played the role traditionally assigned to women in Gujarat's Bania families — guardian of the religious routine, sentinel of dietary discipline, and the moral centre of the home. Kusumben passed away on 8 June 2010 owing to an illness — a loss about which Shah has spoken very little in public. The mother's formation laid the foundation of that discipline which is

visible in his daily life even today — whether it be vegetarianism, punctuality, or unwavering devotion to his work.

It is noteworthy that in a Bania-Vaishnav household this role of the woman was by no means a subordinate one. The household's religious routine — from the morning worship to the elaborate calendar of fasts and festivals — was governed by the mother's discipline alone. The strictness of vegetarianism, the purity of food, and the organised order of the day — these were all the values that, under the mother's care, sank deep into the boy's mind. Later, when Amit Shah would partake of vegetarian food brought from home even in his office in North Block and would never stray from this routine, he would in truth be carrying forward those very values instilled by his mother.

Childhood in Mehsana: A Boy of a “Quiet Temperament”

Researchers who have reviewed Shah's early life have described him in childhood as a boy of “a rather quiet temperament” — cricket in the lanes and marbles on the ground, these were the simple pleasures of his small town. His childhood was divided between two places — primary schooling in Bombay and high-school education in Mehsana in northern Gujarat. But beneath this quiet surface lay a curious irony. According to the same reporting, other students would harass him — breaking his slate, snatching his tiffin. School, at first, did not give him the self-confidence that family life had given; teachers would often summon him to the principal's office for “bad behaviour.”

This episode is not incidental. It points to the resolve that was quietly taking shape behind the surface of a “quiet temperament” — an instinct for survival, which would later transform into organisational struggle. The boy who stood his ground in the schoolyard for his slate and his tiffin was the same man who would later stand like a rock on the political battlefield.

It is worth lingering a little longer on this contradiction, for it is a central key to Shah's personality. "Quiet temperament" and "resolve" — these two seem not opposed but complementary. The boy who made no noise, who did not advertise his suffering, but who quietly stood firm for his slate and his tiffin — in him is already visible that distinctive combination which would later become his signature: calm without, steel within. On the future stage of politics too he would never raise unnecessary noise; he would quietly, patiently weave his strategy, and when the time came, would stand unwavering. The first glimpse of that temperament appeared in that very schoolyard in Meh-sana.

Shah's adolescence was spent in a traditional mansion — that house with a Gujarati courtyard which serves both as ancestral dwelling and social stage. Such houses are also centres of religious life, and Shah grew up steeped in Vaishnav ritual. This ethos of Bania discipline — a blend of frugality, organisational order, and religious devotion — sank deep within him. He lived in Mansa until the age of sixteen, and then moved with his family towards Ahmedabad for his studies.

Life in the Mansion: A Subtle Lesson in Culture

The Gujarati mansion is not merely a building; it is the microcosm of an entire social order. In its central courtyard family members gathered, guests were welcomed, and communal decisions were taken. In one corner stood the place of worship, where the day began and ended in devotion. Here respect for elders, hospitality towards guests, and devotion to collective life were not sermons but daily conduct.

A child raised in such an environment naturally absorbs certain values — respect for hierarchy, devotion to the collective interest, and loyalty to order. When Amit Shah would later settle so easily into the hierarchy of the Sangh shakha, and then into the organisational

framework of the BJP, this was no accidental adaptation — it was the natural extension of that mansion-life in which he had grown up. Organisation and hierarchy were for him not unfamiliar concepts but life-orders familiar since childhood.

A Student of Biochemistry

After his schooling in Mehsana, Shah came to Ahmedabad for higher education and enrolled at C. U. Shah Science College, from where he obtained a bachelor's degree (B.Sc.) in biochemistry. Affiliated with Gujarat University, this private institution was a respectable destination for science students in the Ahmedabad of the 1980s.

The choice of biochemistry seems somewhat curious for a man who is today renowned as a political strategist. But it accorded entirely with that methodical, data-loving discipline which became the hallmark of his personality. Biochemistry is a subject that joins the rigorous labour of the laboratory with practical analysis — thinking in terms of input, process, and measurable outcome. Alongside his studies, Shah also continued to work in the family's PVC pipe business — an early apprenticeship in entrepreneurship. Science taught him to think in terms of processes and outcomes; home taught him the art of bargaining. Together, these two laid the groundwork for that booth-level arithmetic for which he would later become famous.

In the biochemistry laboratory a particular mental habit is formed — that outcomes are determined not by emotion but by evidence; that every experiment must be repeatable with controlled variables; and that the smallest of details can alter the final result. This scientific disposition was later clearly visible in Shah's political working style. When he would break down an electoral campaign to each single page of the voter list, when he would himself verify the details in order to assess ground realities — *“verification of the details was necessary for an*

accurate assessment,” he said — he was in truth applying the method of a laboratory scientist to politics.

The Bania-Vaishnav Ethos: A Culture That Became Character

To understand Amit Shah’s personality, it is essential to understand Gujarati Bania-Vaishnav culture, for this was not merely a religious or caste identity — it was an entire way of living, which would later be translated into his political working style.

The Bania community has for centuries been the backbone of India’s trade and finance. The ethos of this community rests upon certain distinctive values — frugality, meticulous bookkeeping, long-term planning, careful assessment of risk, and above all, patience. A Bania trader knows that profit does not come overnight; it is earned gradually, one transaction at a time, one relationship at a time. This very patience, this very long-term vision, became the hallmark of Amit Shah’s politics — the man who, for fifteen years, built organisation without contesting an election, and who held the resolve to patiently resolve seven-decade-old constitutional anomalies.

Another dimension of the Bania ethos is the culture of accounting — the *bahi-khata*. In a Bania family an account is kept of every transaction, every item is reckoned, and nothing is left unplanned. This is a culture of accountability and measurability. When Shah would later make the BJP’s organisation accountable down to each booth, each worker, each page, this would in truth be the political translation of that very *bahi-khata* culture. To cast organisation into numbers, to fix the accountability of every unit — this was a Bania’s natural grammar.

The Vaishnav tradition added a spiritual dimension to this. Daily worship, the discipline of fasts and vigils, the strictness of vegetarianism, and a temple-centred social life — all these were shaping a personality for whom discipline was not an external imposition but a

natural routine arising from within. Later, when journalists would note that Home Minister Shah has vegetarian food brought from home to his office itself and does not return home to eat, they would in truth be encountering that very Bania-Vaishnav discipline that had been steeped into this mansion.

The Nagarseth Lineage: An Inheritance of Leadership

Shah's great-grandfather being a "nagarseth" was not merely a title; it was a role that shaped the family's collective character. The nagarseth — that is, the foremost citizen of the town — was a bridge between ruler and ruled. He would settle commercial disputes, represent the interests of the community, and provide leadership in times of crisis. It was a role that demanded all three: mediation, organisation, and decisiveness.

The significance of this ancestral tradition is that, in Amit Shah's family, leadership was not a new or acquired thing — it was in the blood. When a young Amit Shah would later organise booth-level workers, or carry forward Patel's tradition of integrating princely states, he would in truth be fulfilling that very inheritance of mediation and leadership that his great-grandfather had fulfilled in the lanes of Mansa.

The Father's Twofold Inheritance: Production and Capital

It is necessary to dwell a little longer on Anilchandra Shah's two enterprises — the PVC pipe factory and the chairmanship of the stock exchange — for together they created an extraordinary educational environment.

The PVC pipe factory was an enterprise of the "real economy" — where raw material arrived, production took place, supply chains ran, and a tangible product reached the market. Here the young Amit learned that any great result is the sum of small, well-ordered steps — a

lesson that would later echo in his “Panna Pramukh” model, in which a vast electoral victory was broken down to each single page of the voter list.

On the other hand, the world of the stock exchange was an “intangible economy” — where the play of numbers, probabilities, and human psychology unfolded. The lesson here was: the assessment of risk, decision-making amid uncertainty, and the reading of crowd psychology. This very skill was later visible in that “Modern Chanakya” who read the electoral map with a speculator’s subtlety and a mathematician’s precision.

The chairmanship of the stock exchange carried yet another implication — the experience of running an institution. A stock exchange is not merely a market but also a complex organisation of members, rules, and interests, whose chairman must strike a balance among various parties. The boy Amit would have watched his father in this institutional role — mediating among interests, settling disputes, and running an organisation smoothly. This sight was but a modern version of the role of the nagarseth that his great-grandfather had performed. Thus, generation after generation, an unbroken thread of institutional management and mediation ran through the family.

In this way, Amit Shah inherited not merely affluence but two distinct kinds of intelligence — the systematic intelligence of production and the strategic intelligence of capital. And the union of these two gave rise to that unique personality which was equally adept in both organisation and strategy.

The Imprint of Lineage

When we view Amit Shah’s early life in its entirety, a clear picture emerges. The nagarseth lineage of Mansa gave him an instinct for mediation and civic leadership. His father, chairman of the stock

exchange, gave him an early lesson in numbers, networks, and risk-assessment. Vaishnav-Bania culture gave him frugality, discipline, and religious devotion. And the challenges of the Mehsana schoolyard gave him that quiet resolve which would later become his signature.

This was no accidental political figure who had reached the summit by chance. This was a “forged” personality — the offspring of a lineage in which the currents of trade, leadership, and devotion flowed side by side. And the next, and perhaps most decisive, phase of this forging began when this adolescent first set foot in the shakha of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

That story belongs to the next chapter.



CHAPTER 2

The Schooling of the Sangh and That Meeting of 1982

Every great partnership has a point of origin. The point of origin of Indian politics' most influential partnership — that of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah — is the Ahmedabad of 1982. But before we can understand that meeting, we must understand the institution that brought these two close to each other, and that shaped Amit Shah's worldview — the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

The Call of the Shakha

Even before enrolling in college, Shah had begun attending a local RSS shakha in his neighbourhood. Inspired by the ideology of the Sangh, he formally entered the Sangh as a swayamsevak in 1980, at the age of sixteen. He has proudly called himself “a proud swayamsevak” in interviews, and has emphasised that being a swayamsevak or pracharak means — *“the renunciation of all comforts for the sake of nation-building.”*

The Sangh inscribed within him three lasting habits, which would later become the foundation of his entire political life.

The first was — *discipline through routine*. The drills, parades, and physical training of the shakha gave rise to a capacity for long hours of work and high physical endurance — a capacity still visible today, when he puts in fourteen-hour workdays in North Block.

The second was — *a network of peers and senior mentors*. The Sangh’s ladder of pracharaks and local sanghchalaks, which also became a guide for advancement upwards.

The third was — *a tolerance for ideological struggle*. That culture of debate, the mobilisation of swayamsevak, and front-line activism, which prepared him for electoral campaigns.

After a year of initiation in the Sangh, Shah joined the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) — the Sangh’s student wing — in 1983. The work of the ABVP gave him his first introduction to the routine of political organisation: rallies, agitations, study circles, and the challenging of leftist-dominated student unions at the hostel level. By the time he completed his biochemistry degree, he had in truth completed two parallel curricula — one in science, and one in the organisational doctrine of the Sangh.

“The Renunciation of Comforts”: The Foundation of a Life-Philosophy

Shah’s statement — that to be a swayamsevak means *“the renunciation of all comforts for the sake of nation-building”* — is not merely a slogan but the essence of the Sangh’s entire vision of life. In the Sangh’s tradition, a pracharak is a man who renounces marriage, wealth, and personal ambition to devote himself full-time to the organisation. Although Shah himself did not become a pracharak and chose the life of a householder, this ideal of renunciation and devotion sank deep within him.

The echo of this very ideal is later heard in his famous statement, which he made from a public stage in the presence of his wife Sonal: *“I cannot find time for the family; the family chooses to find time for me.”* This sentence may seem harsh, but within it lies that same Sangh-trained philosophy — that personal pleasure is secondary to the work of

the nation. The ideal that a sixteen-year-old adolescent absorbed on the field of the shakha remained the guide of his way of life even six decades later.

1982: The Birth of a Four-Decade Partnership

The most decisive early relationship of Shah's life began to take shape in 1982, when, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, through the local RSS circles of Ahmedabad, he met Narendra Modi. At that time Modi was an RSS pracharak — a full-time propagator of the Sangh — in charge of three districts of Gujarat.

The balance of power in this relationship was clear from the very beginning. Modi was older in age, more senior, and a travelling pracharak — in the Sangh's language, a kind of “embedded organisational missionary.” Shah was a young swyamsevak, newly initiated. According to those who watched this relationship take shape, it was a bond of guru and disciple, in which Modi took a particular interest in Shah's organisational talent.

In the years that followed, the two worked side by side in Gujarat's BJP and Sangh structures. According to a well-known observation, Modi maintained a clean image because he would entrust the “hard and laborious work” to Shah, which Shah would carry out with extraordinary efficiency and resolve. This division of labour later became the operating mechanism of the BJP — Modi the public face, Shah the organisational mind.

Two metaphors recur in describing this partnership. The first comes from the BJP's own political vocabulary: Modi the public face, and Shah the “road roller who levels the obstacles in his path.” The second, which is more intimate, is that of “Ram and Lakshman” — Modi the face, Shah the deed, bound in a verse-like complementarity. Both

metaphors usefully underscore the fact that Shah's indispensability is doubted by no one — not even his critics.

The Form of a Guru-Disciple Tradition

At the time of this meeting in 1982, the gulf of age and experience was decisive. Modi, who was about fourteen years older than Shah, had as a travelling pracharak already passed through the rigorous discipline of organisation — journeying from village to village, building cadres, and spreading ideology. Shah was entering the shadow of that experience like an eager disciple. But this was no one-sided relationship; the particular quality that Modi recognised in Shah was his extraordinary talent for casting organisation into numbers and structure.

In the Indian tradition the guru-disciple relationship is not merely a transmission of knowledge but a relationship of character-formation. Modi taught Shah not only the practical skills of organisation but also a political vision — that power is not an end in itself, but a means to nation-building. And Shah, with his Bania-Vaishnav formation and his initiation into the Sangh, cast this vision into a measurable, executable method. This relationship proved so firm that for the next four decades — from the BJP of Gujarat to the national power of New Delhi — it never broke, but on every test grew only stronger.

Life in the Shakha: A Laboratory of Discipline

Without understanding the Sangh's shakha, any understanding of Amit Shah's discipline remains incomplete. The shakha — that hour-long assembly held daily in some field or open space — is the foundation of the Sangh. Here, morning or evening, swayamsevaks gather, the flag is saluted, physical exercises and games take place, intellectual discussion is held, and at the end there is prayer. This routine continues year after year, without a break.

For an adolescent, the effect of this daily discipline is profound. It teaches him punctuality, collective work, and devotion to a larger purpose. When we see Amit Shah today putting in fourteen-hour workdays, working even on holidays, and managing dozens of committees at once, this is the fruition of that very shakha-discipline that was planted in the fields of Mansa and Ahmedabad. A junior minister once remarked that Shah alone could handle “eighty committees,” “let alone eight” — a capacity that arose from that very early training.

The shakha teaches another important thing — the hierarchical structure of leadership. The mukhya shikshak, the gatanayak, the sanghchalak — this ladder provides a young swayamsevak both a path and a guide for rising within the organisation. Shah absorbed this organisational grammar so deeply that he would later reorganise the BJP along precisely these lines — clear hierarchy, trained cadre, and accountability at every level.

Here a deeper thread becomes visible. The Sangh’s shakha is a system in which the individual is secondary and the organisation is paramount; in which there is no single hero, but countless devoted swayamsevaks who form the backbone of the organisation. This very philosophy lay at the centre of Shah’s organisation-building — that the real strength of a political party lies not in its top leadership but in its last-line worker. The seed of his aspiration to make the BJP the world’s largest political party lay in this very shakha-philosophy.

ABVP: The First Political Battlefield

His entry into the ABVP in 1983 was Shah’s first direct political battlefield. The universities and hostels of that era were often strongholds of leftist student organisations, and the work of the ABVP was to extend nationalist ideology into these strongholds. This was no

easy task — it involved ideological debate, organisational building, and often direct confrontation.

It was here that Shah acquired the skills that would later become his signature: mobilising students around issues, organising agitations, and standing firm on his position in the face of opposing ideology. This apprenticeship in the ABVP was in truth the first lesson in that philosophy of steadfastness for which he would later become famous — that one must not retreat from ideological struggle, but confront it.

The work of the ABVP was also a kind of laboratory for Shah, where he first learned that idea and organisation are complementary to each other. A good idea is not effective until a well-organised body of workers stands behind it; and an organisation is not durable until a clear idea stands behind it. This insight — the inseparable bond of idea and organisation — became the guiding thread of Shah's entire political journey. When he would later emerge from that initiation in the ABVP and enter the organisation of the BJP, he would carry with him this very art of harnessing idea and organisation together.

The Depth of a Partnership

It is necessary to dwell a little longer on the Modi-Shah meeting of 1982, for it was not merely the meeting of two individuals — it was the confluence of two complementary talents. Modi was a charismatic orator, a mass leader, a thinker; Shah was an organiser, a strategist, an executor. The strength of one lay in reaching the heart of the people; the strength of the other lay in transforming that reach into organised, measurable, and replicable power.

This complementarity is the very secret of the longevity of this partnership. For four decades — from the BJP of Gujarat to national power — this pair walked together, and at every stage their division of labour grew clearer. Modi gave vision, Shah gave structure; Modi made

the call, Shah built the organisation. And when Article 370 was abrogated in 2019, it was the fruition of that same four-decade-old partnership — the vision of one, the execution of the other.

Here a historical parallel arises of its own accord, which the coming chapters will discuss in detail. Just as the pair of Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon made the integration of the princely states possible — one a source of political authority and resolve, the other of administrative detail and execution — so too the pair of Modi and Shah made the integration-works of modern India possible. In history, this division of labour between vision and execution has been the mark of great nation-building, and it is no coincidence that behind India's two greatest integration efforts stood precisely such complementary pairs.

The Connection Between the Sangh-Vision and Nation-Building

It is important to understand that the schooling of the Sangh gave Amit Shah not merely organisational skill; it gave him a worldview at whose centre stood the nation. In the vocabulary of the Sangh, “nation-building” is no abstract slogan but a daily discipline — the discipline of renouncing personal pleasure and devoting oneself to the collective interest. This very vision later echoed in those decisions of Shah which the coming chapters of this book will examine in detail.

When Shah would later present Article 370 in the context of “national integration,” or connect the abolition of triple talaq to the philosophy of “not appeasement, but development,” he was speaking from that same Sangh-trained framework in which the long-term unity of the nation is paramount. It is no coincidence that Shah calls himself a “proud swayamsevak” and describes the Sangh as the source of “nation-building.”

A central element of this worldview of the Sangh was — long-term vision. The Sangh never works for immediate political gain; it thinks on

the scale of generations, builds workers gradually, and roots its ideas in society. This philosophy of the “long innings” was already in Shah’s blood — in the form of the Bania’s patience — and the Sangh provided it an ideological foundation and a national purpose. When Shah would later, after entering politics, contest no election for fifteen years and remain absorbed only in organisation-building, this would be the expression of that very Sangh-initiated long-term vision.

The Confluence of Ideology and Practice

The most valuable thing that the schooling of the Sangh gave Amit Shah was the inseparable confluence of ideology and practical organisation. Many ideology-driven movements fail because they rest only upon ideals, neglecting ground-level organisation; and many organisations become directionless because they have no clear ideological foundation. The Sangh taught the art of harnessing these two together — on the one hand the clear ideological goal of nation-building, and on the other the subtle, disciplined organisation at the shakha level.

This confluence became the guiding thread of Shah’s entire political journey. When he would later build the organisation of the BJP, he would build not merely an electoral machine but an ideologically committed, cadre-based organisation. And when he would execute the great decisions of nation-building, behind them would lie not merely political calculation but also a clear ideological vision. This very confluence — of ideal and organisation, of idea and execution — was the distinctive gift that the shakha of the Sangh gave to this adolescent.

The Lasting Imprint of the Shakha on Shah’s Daily Life

It is noteworthy that the influence of the Sangh’s shakha-initiation was not confined to some early phase of Shah’s life; it echoed throughout

his entire daily routine, lifelong. Physical discipline, punctuality, and a consciousness about health — these were all values of the shakha, which remained a part of his life thereafter as well. This was particularly manifest when, after the Covid pandemic, he reduced his weight from roughly 135 kilograms to 85 kilograms through three hours of pranayama and exercise each day — a remarkable display of self-discipline, in which he also advised the young to exercise daily and to get sufficient sleep.

This self-discipline was no accidental quality; it was the continuation of that very shakha-formation that had been planted at the age of sixteen. The shakha teaches that the disciplining of both body and mind is a precondition for the work of the nation — that only a healthy, disciplined person can render long-term service to the nation. Shah fulfilled this lesson lifelong, and this is why, even at the age of sixty, he could put in fourteen-hour workdays in North Block.

Seed and Tree

This period of the early 1980s — entry into the Sangh, activism in the ABVP, and the meeting with Modi — was that fertile period of Amit Shah's life in which the seeds of the future were sown. On the one hand, the Sangh-initiation into discipline and organisation; on the other, a four-decade-long apprenticeship alongside a senior partner whose ambitions accorded perfectly with Shah's organisational expansion.

The first great branch to sprout from these seeds shot up in the field of cooperatives and organisation. A thirty-six-year-old young man who became the youngest chairman of a district cooperative bank — and who gave that bank an identity by his own name in village after village — was the same man who would later read India's electoral map like a laboratory.

To that story we shall proceed in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 3

From Cooperatives to Organisation: The Rise of the Strategist

After his bachelor's degree, Amit Shah chose a path far removed from academic biochemistry — he leapt into business. At first he tried his hand at the stock market — a skill inherited in part from his father, who ran a PVC pipe unit and was chairman of the Ahmedabad Stock Exchange. In those early years he was described as a “stock broker,” who was simultaneously active in the family's pipe-manufacturing business.

The recollections of his contemporaries throw light on the character of this young man. One acquaintance described him, even at this age, as “an extraordinarily hard-working man, with a remarkable capacity for political strategy-making”; another called him “extremely hard-working and focused.” These descriptions are not incidental — diligence and focus are the two threads woven through the entire fabric of Shah's life.

The Training of the Stock Market: The Grammar of Numbers and Risk

Shah's early years as a stock broker were a silent laboratory for his future political life. The stock market is a field that demands two distinct skills — the precise assessment of risk, and the ability to read crowd psychology. A successful broker is one who trusts data rather than emotion, who remains unmoved amid short-term fluctuations, and who possesses the vision to recognise long-term trends.

These were precisely the qualities that would later become the hallmark of Shah's political style. When he looked at an electoral map, he read it with the subtlety of a speculator — where lies the risk, where the opportunity, and where patience is required. The lesson that had begun in the world of his father's stock exchange matured in the son's business life, and finally attained its full expression on the stage of politics.

“Amit Shah's Bank”

But the deepest training-ground for Shah proved to be the field of cooperative banking. He rose to the chairmanship of the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank (ADCB) — known in rural Gujarat simply as the “ADC.” The official biography describes him as the youngest chairman of this bank at the age of thirty-six; his formal tenure ran from 22 January 2000 to 22 December 2002, though his election had already taken place in 1999.

Here a fact is noteworthy: in rural Gujarat, people had begun to call the ADC “Amit Shah's bank.” This was an extraordinary degree of name-association — an intimacy that would later become the precursor of his own brand-management. When the name of a politician becomes so deeply linked with an institution that the ordinary villager calls it by that very name, it is proof of a rare capacity for organisation and public connection.

The ADCB gave Shah three decisive instruments. The first — *grass-roots financial trust*: the ability to persuade thousands of small farmers, traders, and families to deposit and borrow through a cooperative institution. The second — *real data on caste, community, and economic geography*: the cooperative's customer base was a living map of Gujarat's social fabric, which would later be directly useful in his booth-level targeting. The third — *a public identity beyond politics*: the

villagers called the ADC by his name, an exercise in brand-building that would later be translated effortlessly into his political work.

In addition, Shah also served as chairman of the Gujarat State Chess Association, chairman of the Gujarat State Financial Corporation, and vice-president (2009) and later president (2014) of the Gujarat Cricket Association. The coincidence of chess is symbolic here — a game that demands foresight, patience, and the prior calculation of the outcome of every move; precisely those qualities that would later become the hallmark of his political style.

Cooperatives: A Living Map of Rural India

To understand the field of cooperative banking is the key to understanding Amit Shah's political genius. In a state like Gujarat, cooperative institutions are not merely financial institutions; they are the arteries of rural society. From dairy cooperatives to credit societies, this network is spread across village after village and touches the daily lives of millions. The man who sits at the centre of this network in truth keeps his hand on the pulse of rural society.

Through the chairmanship of the ADCB, Amit Shah learned to read this pulse. He gained direct knowledge of which community is settled where, what each one's economic condition is like, which networks are effective, and how public trust is built and broken. This data was no bookish data; it was living data, risen from the ground. When Shah would later devise electoral strategy and make a subtle assessment of every booth, every community, every page, he would in truth be applying on a grand scale the lesson he had learned in that very cooperative experience.

Here a deeper thread becomes visible, which connects with the tradition of Sardar Patel. Patel too had earned his political power from the ground, from among the peasants — by organising the farmers of

Bardoli and Kheda. Patel's legitimacy was not imposed from above but earned from below. In exactly the same way, Shah's organisational power too was earned from among cooperative societies and booth-level workers, from the bottom upwards. The foundation of both their politics was that subtle, ground-level understanding of public connection which comes only from long and patient work.

Gujarat State Fertilizers Corporation: A First Glimpse of Management

In 1995, as chairman of the Gujarat State Fertilizers Corporation (GSFC), Shah gave an early glimpse of his management skill. According to him, during this period he brought about a notable increase in the corporation's net profit, launched its IPO, and introduced an arrangement for lease-purchase financing. This was a small but instructive prelude to his later administrative tenures — proof that he was not merely an organiser but also a manager who could make institutions results-oriented.

The Arithmetic of the Booth: The Birth of an Organiser

It was in these very years that Shah's identity was taking shape — the one that would later make him the “Modern Chanakya.” From 1991 to 2009 he served as the personal election manager of Lal Krishna Advani (Gandhinagar) and Atal Bihari Vajpayee (Gandhinagar). This was no ordinary responsibility — managing the constituencies of two of the country's most senior leaders was a laboratory in which Shah attained mastery of the intricacies of the voter list, booth-level organisation, and worker management.

Shah's organisational philosophy was simple yet revolutionary: elections are won not by rallies or speeches, but by booth-level discipline. Reaching every voter, knowing the voters of every page

(panna) by name, and turning every booth into a permanent, well-equipped unit — this was the core of his method. This philosophy emerged directly from his cooperative-banking experience, where he had learned that public trust is built one person at a time, one transaction at a time.

“Win the Booth, Win the Election”: The Mature Form of a Method

The full expression of Shah’s electoral method would later be seen in Uttar Pradesh, but its principles had already taken shape in these early years. His strategy was multi-tiered — seat, cluster, zone, and state. The eighty Lok Sabha constituencies of a state were divided into twenty-one clusters, and these into eight zones. At every tier, clear accountability, clear targets, and clear organisation.

At the booth level, this arithmetic was finer still. The arrangement of a vehicle at every booth to bring ten voters to the polling station, and the organisation of more than a hundred thousand booths. A special campaign video for the inaccessible “dark areas,” a fleet of GPS-equipped vans, and thousands of full-time volunteers. To exceed the attendance at rallies, even a central call centre was established. And most notably — connecting the “second most influential” leader of every village to the organisation, that is, a network of some eight thousand rural second-rung leaders.

Behind this subtlety lay Shah’s own philosophy. He had said that *“verification of the details was necessary for an accurate assessment,”* and also that he had decided to “set his ego aside.” This statement reflects that scientific disposition which had arisen from the biochemistry laboratory — that the final outcome is determined not by emotion but by subtle, verified data. This very method later became the basis for making the BJP the world’s largest political party.

Chess, Cricket, and a Network of Institutions

To understand Amit Shah's organisational rise, it is necessary to attend to the various institutions he led. These were not merely positions; they were schools of influence, networks, and organisational skill.

The chairmanship of the Gujarat State Chess Association is a symbolic coincidence. Chess is the game that demands foresight, patience, and the prior calculation of the multi-tiered outcomes of every move. A chess player thinks not merely of the next move but of the ten moves that follow it. This very mindset became the hallmark of Shah's political style — whether in electoral strategy or in the step-by-step execution of a complex constitutional move such as Article 370.

His role in the Gujarat Cricket Association — first vice-president (2009), then president (2014) — was another important stage. Cricket in India is not merely a game but a vast organisational and social apparatus. The management of this apparatus was, for Shah, another exercise in large-scale institutional administration. It is noteworthy that this very stage later paved the way for his son Jay Shah's rise in cricket administration, who went on to become chairman of the International Cricket Council — the third Indian to hold this post, after Dalmiya and Srinivasan.

GSFC: The Proof of Management

Shah's tenure at the Gujarat State Fertilizers Corporation (GSFC) was solid proof of his management skill. To lead a public enterprise towards profit, to launch its IPO, and to introduce new financial arrangements — this demonstrates that Shah was not merely a political organiser but also a capable administrator. This was the very capacity that would later manifest in the form of institutional reforms in the Home Ministry and the Ministry of Cooperation.

Across all these roles a common thread is visible — the capacity to organise institutions, to make them results-oriented, and through them to earn broad influence. This very thread became the centre of Shah’s method of nation-building: identify a stable institution, strengthen it, and use it as the stage for the next goal.

Here another thread of Patel’s tradition becomes visible. For Patel too, nation-building was not merely geographic integration but also the building of institutions — he called the All India Services India’s “steel frame.” In exactly the same way, for Shah, political success was not merely winning elections but the building of lasting institutions — whether a cooperative bank, a fertilizers corporation, or later a National Forensic Sciences University. For both of them, the institution was the real unit of nation-building.

An Organiser’s Philosophy: “Every War Must Be Won”

Through all these roles, a distinctive organiser’s philosophy was maturing in Amit Shah, glimpsed in those recollections of his contemporaries who described him as one with “a remarkable capacity for political strategy-making” and as “extremely hard-working and focused.” This philosophy rested upon certain clear principles. The first principle was that one must never take any election or campaign lightly — whether a municipal election or a Lok Sabha one, each must be fought with full seriousness and the entire force of organisation. The second principle was that the work of organisation takes place not at the time of an election but in the years between elections — the building of a permanent, active cadre that remains ready at all times.

The third, and most distinctive principle, was that leadership means the direct confrontation of ground reality — not dependence upon an aide’s report, but the verification of details oneself. Shah’s statement — that he had decided to “set his ego aside” and to himself investigate the

ground-level data — is the essence of this philosophy. A leader who does not think himself so great that he shies from putting his hand into the booth-level detail is the very leader who can build a real organisation. This was that rare combination of humility and subtlety which set Shah apart from other politicians.

This organisational philosophy was in truth a modern form of Patel's Bardoli-tradition. Just as Patel, in Bardoli, built an invincible movement by dividing the taluka into units, appointing volunteers in every village, and keeping discipline paramount, so too Shah built an invincible organisation by dividing India's electoral map into the units of booth, page, and worker. For both of them, organisation was no auxiliary instrument but the primary source of power.

A Strategy of the “Long Innings”

A noteworthy fact about Shah is that, after entering politics, he contested no election for more than fifteen years. His view was that the “building of organisation” must come first. This was unusual in a system where most politicians, from the earliest opportunity, set about maximising their personal electoral footprint. Shah's “long innings” was no slogan but a method — that institutional depth defeats fleeting fame.

It is necessary to understand the depth of this decision. In an age where politics is driven by immediate visibility and personal ambition, a young leader's remaining away from the electoral stage for fifteen years, absorbed only in the silent building of organisation, is the mark of an extraordinary self-discipline. This was that same Bania-patience, that same Sangh-trained long-term vision, which prioritised lasting structure over short-term gain. Shah knew that power earned without a strong organisation is fleeting, whereas power earned with a strong organisation is long-term and irreversible.

This very patience, this very long-term vision, would later become the cornerstone of his philosophy of nation-building. The man who, for fifteen years, built organisation rather than contesting elections was the very man who could also hold the resolve to patiently resolve seven-decade-old constitutional anomalies.

Thus, the merchant-lineage of Mansa, the discipline of the Sangh, the public connection of cooperative banking, and booth-level arithmetic — these four currents together forged the Amit Shah who would later become Indian politics' most organised strategist. But before we enter the story of his national rise, we must understand the man whose tradition he is said to inherit — Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.



THE NEW

CHAPTER 4

Sardar Patel: The Architect of a Nation

If one is to understand the story of Amit Shah, then it is essential to understand the story of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. For the central parallel on which this book stands has Patel as one of its poles — the architect of modern India who wove a scattered subcontinent into a single nation.

The Furnace of Bardoli: The Birth of the “Sardar”

Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel was born on 31 October 1875 in Nadiad, in the Bombay Presidency, into a Leva Patidar landowning family. He received his training as a barrister from the Middle Temple in England and built an exceedingly successful legal practice in the Ahmedabad and Bombay High Courts — by the early 1920s he was among the highest-earning barristers in Gujarat.

But history remembers him not as a lawyer but as a leader. After joining Gandhi’s swaraj movement in 1917, he organised the peasants in the Kheda Satyagraha of 1918. And then came the moment that made him the “Sardar” — the **Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928**.

When the Bombay Presidency announced a 22% increase in land revenue in a year in which the monsoon had failed, the villagers of Bardoli turned to Patel. Patel laid down three decisive principles that would later become the hallmark of his entire life: that the British ultimatum be refused outright (no compromise), that signatures be gathered in open defiance, and that no violence ever erupt from the movement. The administration’s surrender was complete by August 1928.

This honorific came after the success of the movement, not alongside it: after the British government had retreated, the women of the villages of Bardoli formally bestowed upon Patel the title of “**Sardar**” — that is, chief, leader. This was not a British- or Congress-conferred honour, but an indigenous honour fashioned in his own village, by the very beneficiaries whom he had led. This fact underscores the nature of Patel’s legitimacy — it was a legitimacy earned from below, not conferred from above.

Here a poignant parallel emerges: just as Patel’s legitimacy was built from booth-level, village-level support, so too Amit Shah’s organisational power was built by converting booth-level workers into a parliamentary majority. The political foundation of both was not imposed from above but earned from below.

The Deeper Lesson of Bardoli: Organisation Is Power

The Bardoli Satyagraha was not merely an anti-revenue movement; it was an excellent example of organisational skill, and for this very reason it is especially relevant to the Patel–Shah parallel. What Patel did in Bardoli was not merely protest — it was a well-organised, disciplined, and strategic campaign. He divided the taluka into units, appointed volunteers in every village, built a mechanism for the dissemination of information, and gave the peasants the conviction that, remaining united, they were invincible.

This organisational subtlety was what set Patel apart from other leaders. Where many leaders relied upon ideals and speeches, Patel knew that ideals remain ineffective until a disciplined organisation stands behind them. He ensured that no violence erupt anywhere in the movement, for even a single violent incident could destroy the moral force of the entire campaign. This organisational adeptness, this insistence on discipline, and this strategic subtlety — these are precisely

the qualities that would later become the hallmark of Amit Shah's organisational style. Both men understood that the real game of politics is played at the level of organisation, not on the stage.

Deputy Prime Minister and First Home Minister

On 15 August 1947, in the first cabinet of independent India, Sardar Patel held three roles at once — **Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister, and Minister for the States**. This was a concentration of authority that no later Home Minister came near. He had supervisory authority over the integration of the princely states, internal security, the intelligence apparatus, and the future All India Services — over all of it.

This comparison is noteworthy here: seven decades later, Amit Shah too became Home Minister in a dispensation that revived, to some degree, the structural conditions of 1947 — the reorganisation of the Home Ministry, and the creation in 2021 of a new Ministry of Cooperation, separated from agriculture and entrusted personally to Shah. This tendency of Patel's to “gather the levers” echoes in Shah.

For Patel, the office of the Home Ministry was no ceremonial post; it was the chief instrument of nation-building. In that chaotic period, when a flood of refugees from Partition was surging, when communal violence was ablaze, and when hundreds of princely states were deciding their future, the Home Ministry was in truth the axis of the newborn nation. Patel steered this axis with his resolve, his decisiveness, and his organisational capacity. It is noteworthy that after his death the Ministry of States was separated from the Home Ministry, and no later Home Minister ever attained that concentration of authority.

The Integration of 565 Princely States

At the midnight of 14–15 August 1947, the British Indian Empire dissolved, and some **565 self-governing princely states** — covering roughly 40% of the new nation’s area and 23% of its population — became free of British paramountcy and at liberty to decide their fate. This was a moment that could have splintered India into hundreds of fragments.

Patel’s method rested upon several moving parts. At the centre was the **States Department**, whose secretary was V.P. Menon and whose minister was Patel himself. Its greatest weapon was the **Instrument of Accession** — a one-page document that handed over only three subjects — defence, foreign affairs, and communications — to the Union. This document was legal, not political; immediate, not multi-volume; and so limited in the surrender of sovereignty that a ruler could sign it without losing his internal prestige.

Accompanying it was the arrangement of the **privy purse** — compensation to the former rulers — and the diplomacy of dignity-preserving persuasion, whereby princes emotionally torn by indecision were brought round with honour. But Patel never took force off the table. His written and oral warnings — *“if necessary, we will fight”* — were deliberate, and worked as a credible fear standing behind consent.

Of the 565, only three princely states held back from early accession — **Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Jammu and Kashmir**. The stories of these three are the most dramatic stories of the integration of modern India, and each of them bears a deep parallel to Amit Shah’s Kashmir policy.

The Diplomacy of Persuasion: “Talk, Tea, Dinner”

A distinctive dimension of Patel’s method of integration was — dignity-preserving persuasion. Patel and Menon knew that the princes

had for centuries been accustomed to power and honour, and that bringing them round with honour would be more effective than bending them by force. They therefore adopted a diplomacy in which the princes were invited for talks, were hosted, were assured of the protection of their prestige, and had their economic interests secured through the privy purse.

But behind this persuasion there always stood a firm resolve. Patel's persuasion was no weakness; it was a strategy. The princes knew that if they refused the opportunity presented to them with honour, they would have to face a firm national power. This was the diplomacy of "an iron fist in a velvet glove" — courtesy without, unshakeable resolve within. This very combination — the union of diplomatic flexibility and principled firmness — was the essence of Patel's art of nation-building, and this very combination would later echo in Amit Shah's working style.

Junagadh: "Diplomacy First, Then Force, and a Plebiscite at the End"

About 80% of Junagadh's population was Hindu, yet on 15 August 1947 its Nawab decided to accede to Pakistan — even though Junagadh had no land border with Pakistan. Patel's argument was that the decision to accede should be made not by the ruler alone but by the people of the state.

The sequence of events was swift: on 25 September 1947 the proclamation of a provisional government (Arzi Hukumat) in Bombay; the blockade and takeover of 160 villages; and on 9 November 1947 the Nawab's flight to Karachi, after which India took over the administration. As per Patel's word, a plebiscite was held on 20 February 1948 — and of 2,01,457 voters, 1,90,870 voted in favour of India, that is, 99.95%. Junagadh was merged into Saurashtra in January 1949.

This framework of “diplomacy first, force in reserve, and a plebiscite at the end” later became a lasting strategy of the Indian state. And although the legal form of Amit Shah’s Kashmir action of 2019 was different — not a plebiscite, but parliamentary abrogation — the underlying architecture was the same: declare locally where legally possible, and render integration with the nation irreversible.

Hyderabad: Operation Polo

The Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan, was dreaming of independence or accession to Pakistan — even though about 80% of his subjects were Hindu. He allowed the “Razakar” militia of Qasim Razvi to organise, numbering at its peak some 2,00,000, which spread a “reign of terror” in the Hindu rural areas.

The difference within the cabinet was clear: where Prime Minister Nehru initially favoured negotiation, **Sardar Patel adopted a hard line and showed no patience for negotiation.** Law Minister B.R. Ambedkar too regarded Hyderabad as a problem that could become a cause of further fragmentation for India. After the failure of the “Standstill Agreement” of November 1947, and after an ultimatum was issued by Nehru on 7 September 1948, **Operation Polo** began on 13 September 1948. Some 35,000 Indian troops, in five days — from 13 to 18 September — defeated roughly 22,000 state troops and irregular forces, and the Nizam signed the Instrument of Accession. This was called a “police action,” not a war.

This episode of Hyderabad became a direct example for Amit Shah — that a situation of internal disorder can be resolved through the completion of integration rather than through negotiation. When Shah argues for firmness in the context of Kashmir, this historical example of Hyderabad provides his argument with a constitutional-historical foundation.

The Detailed Episode of Junagadh

The episode of Junagadh presents a fine study of Patel's working style. Nawab Mahabat Khan's decision to accede to Pakistan was "legally correct" — under the doctrine of paramountcy, the ruler had the right to accede. Lord Mountbatten and V.P. Menon too regarded it as legally valid.

But Patel advanced a higher principle — the principle of self-determination. He argued that the decision to accede should be made not by the ruler alone but by the people of the state. The people of Junagadh, with their 80% Hindu majority, did not wish to accede to Pakistan. Thus Patel transformed a legal question into a moral and democratic one.

The sequence of events was patient but decisive. A provisional government (Arzi Hukumat) was proclaimed in Bombay under the leadership of Samaldas Gandhi, which functioned as an alternative authority prior to accession. Then came the blockade and takeover of 160 villages. Finally, after administrative and financial collapse, the Nawab fled to Karachi, and India took over the administration to "restore peace." And then, as per Patel's word, a plebiscite was held on 20 February 1948, in which 99.95% of the people chose India.

This framework of "diplomacy first, force in reserve, a plebiscite at the end" is the essence of Patel's working style — and it presents a deep structural parallel with Amit Shah's Kashmir action.

Hyderabad: The Limit of Patience

The episode of Hyderabad displays a different dimension of Patel's working style — that patience too has a limit. The Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, who at the time was among the wealthiest men in the world, wanted independence or accession to Pakistan. He allowed the Razakar

militia of Qasim Razvi to organise, which spread a “reign of terror” over a population with an 80% Hindu majority.

Here there was a clear difference in the viewpoints of Patel and Nehru. Nehru initially favoured negotiation; Patel adopted a hard line and showed no patience for negotiation. Law Minister B.R. Ambedkar too regarded Hyderabad as a problem that could become a cause of further fragmentation for India.

After the failure of the “Standstill Agreement” of November 1947 and the rising violence of the Razakars, Operation Polo began on 13 September 1948. Two army columns — from Vijayawada and Solapur — advanced towards Hyderabad. In a mere five days, by 18 September, the Nizam’s army was defeated and he signed the Instrument of Accession.

This was called a “police action,” not a war — a deliberate vocabulary that signalled that this was not a war against an allied prince but a legitimate action of the state against internal disorder. This principle — that internal disorder can be resolved through decisive action rather than negotiation — later echoed in Amit Shah’s policies on Kashmir and Naxalism.

“The Iron Man”

Patel is universally called “the Iron Man of India” — a title that emphasises firmness of character, clarity of purpose, and unwavering patriotism. This title is the essence of his entire working style: a leader who does not hesitate to take hard decisions, who is not in favour of leaving unresolved questions hanging, and for whom the unity of the nation is paramount. (The deeper historical and philosophical implications of this title — particularly the comparison of Patel and Bismarck — are discussed in detail in a later chapter of this book, where we shall examine the concept of “the New Iron Man” in full.)

Here it is sufficient to say that Patel's distinction was that he attained the goal of unity not through authoritarianism but through the constitutional and democratic path. He laid the foundation of a democratic, secular republic. And as we shall see further on, the most notable feature of Amit Shah's Kashmir action was precisely that it was accomplished not by force but by the parliamentary and constitutional path — a kind of "Patel 2.0."

V.P. Menon: An Invisible Partner

Patel's saga of integration is incomplete without an important partnership — his partnership with V.P. Menon. Menon was the secretary of the States Department, and Patel's most trusted associate. Where Patel provided political authority and resolve, Menon handled the work of administrative detail, legal drafting, and personal negotiation with the rulers.

This partnership presents an interesting parallel. Just as the pair of Patel and Menon made the integration of the princely states possible — one political authority, the other administrative execution — so too the pair of Modi and Shah made the integration-works of modern India possible. In both eras, this division of labour between vision and execution was the secret of success.

Menon's book *The Integration of the Indian States* (1956) is still regarded as the most authentic first-hand account of this historical process, and it shows that integration was no accidental event but a well-planned, patient, and subtle process — precisely such as Shah's working style is. The importance of this book lies also in this: that it shows that a great political leader requires an equally capable administrative partner — without both vision and execution, no great national task is possible.

“The Steel Frame”: The All India Services

Patel’s vision of nation-building was not confined to geographic integration alone; it extended also to administrative integration. Patel established the All India Services — the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) — which he called India’s “steel frame.” The Indian Administrative Service was constituted on 26 January 1950, and was given institutional form through Article 312(2) of the Constitution and the All India Services Act, 1951.

In his famous speech in the Constituent Assembly, Patel had warned: *“There is no alternative to this administrative system... These men are the instrument. Remove them, and I see nothing but a picture of anarchy all over the country.”* This vision — that the nation requires a permanent, apolitical, and capable administrative cadre — remains the cornerstone of the Indian state even today.

This foresight of Patel’s was extraordinary. He fashioned this “steel frame” in such a way that an officer would have that security of tenure which would enable him to say “no” to a partisan chief minister. That is, Patel wanted the administration to remain above politics, and to keep the continuity of the nation independent of changes of power. This institutional foresight — that individuals will come and go, but institutions must remain permanent — was the central pillar of Patel’s vision of nation-building.

Here another parallel emerges. Just as Patel regarded the building of administrative institutions as an integral part of nation-building, so too Shah, during his tenure, laid emphasis on institution-building — from a Forensic Sciences University to a nationwide police network for crime and criminal tracking. For both of them, nation-building was the name not merely of dramatic decisions but also of the patient building of lasting institutions.

Patel's Life-Philosophy

At the core of Patel's vision of nation-building lay a clear life-philosophy. Addressing the students of Surat in 1928, he had said: "*Until you know how to die, it is futile for you to learn how to kill. India will not benefit from brute force.*" This statement gives a glimpse of a leader who harnessed firmness and non-violence together — who did not hesitate to use force when necessary, but for whom force was the last option, not the first.

Likewise, Patel's view on the matter of religion was clear. At Ernakulam on 15 May 1950 he said: "*Religion is a matter between man and his God.*" This statement reveals the vision of a nation-builder who envisioned a secular republic — where religion is a matter of personal faith, and the unity of the nation stands above it. These life-values establish Patel not merely as a capable administrator but as a profound statesman.

The Unfinished Work

Patel passed away on 15 December 1950 — a mere three and a half years after independence. In his lifetime the integration of 562 of the 565 princely states had been completed. But the question of one princely state — Jammu and Kashmir — remained unfinished, in the form of the "temporary" arrangement of Article 370.

This was the very unfinished work that remained entered on history's waiting list for seven decades. And the story of this very unfinished work — the story of the triangle of Patel, Nehru, and Kashmir — is the subject of the next chapter.



CHAPTER 5

The Unfinished Dream: Patel, Nehru, and Kashmir

In the story of the integration of modern India, Jammu and Kashmir is the chapter that remained unfinished. It was the third “holdout” princely state, and the most controversial in Patel’s saga. Without understanding this chapter, neither can the significance of the abrogation of Article 370 be understood, nor the line drawn between Patel and Shah.

October 1947: Invasion and Accession

At the midnight of 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh was an independent sovereign, putting off the decision between India and Pakistan. This dilemma of the Maharaja arose from the distinctive situation of Kashmir — a Hindu ruler, a Muslim-majority population, and borders adjoining both newborn nations. He was perhaps imagining an independent princely state, which might maintain a neutral position between the two countries. But history did not grant him this luxury.

Around 22 October 1947, tribal raiders (Pakhtun lashkar) from Pakistan began crossing the border. This was no spontaneous invasion; it was a well-planned incursion, whose aim was to seize Kashmir by force, taking advantage of the Maharaja’s delay in deciding. The raiders advanced swiftly towards Srinagar, looting and committing violence. This invasion compelled the Maharaja to sign the **Instrument of Accession** on 26 October 1947, immediately after which the Indian Army was airlifted to Srinagar.

It is noteworthy that the accession of Kashmir took place under precisely the same framework of the Instrument of Accession that Patel and Menon had prepared for the other princely states — handing over the three subjects of defence, foreign affairs, and communications to the Union. In this sense, the accession of Kashmir was legally just like the accession of the other princely states. The difference arose later, with the “temporary” arrangement of Article 370.

Patel’s Stance versus Nehru’s Caution

On the matter of Patel’s stance regarding Kashmir there is disagreement among historians, and this book acknowledges that complexity. One view is that Patel wanted a firmer stance with regard to Kashmir, and disagreed with Nehru’s internationalist caution. The BJP thinker Ram Madhav gave clear words to this view: that Patel’s inclination, immediately after the signing of the Instrument of Accession, was to “send the Indian Army to Srinagar,” but Nehru internationalised the matter and removed it from Patel’s jurisdiction. Ram Madhav went so far as to say, on 7 November 2020, that *“if Sardar Patel had been India’s first Prime Minister, the problem of Jammu and Kashmir would not have existed at all.”*

Here there were two decisive factors that set Kashmir apart from the other princely states. The first, Nehru’s taking the matter to the United Nations on 1 January 1948, which turned an internal question of integration into an international dispute. The second, the declaration of a ceasefire in 1948 — at a time when, according to many Indian strategists, the Indian Army was gaining the upper hand. Both these decisions proved decisive in leaving the Kashmir question unresolved, and became the root of a lasting dispute for decades.

This is the very historical controversy that Amit Shah and Narendra Modi would later raise again and again. On National Unity Day, 31

October 2025, Prime Minister Modi said: *“Sardar Patel wanted to merge the whole of Kashmir into India, just as he had done with the other princely states. But Nehru ji did not let his wish be fulfilled.”*

Here intellectual honesty demands that we also acknowledge that some historians challenge this narrative, and argue that V.P. Menon’s account does not clearly record any advocacy by Patel, prior to the invasion, for “the accession of the whole of Kashmir.” But the fact that is incontrovertible is that the question of Kashmir remained unresolved — and this very lack of resolution, this very “temporary” arrangement, remained a permanent anomaly for seven decades.

“Hyderabad First, Kashmir Later”: Patel’s Vision of Priorities

To understand Patel’s stance on Kashmir, the mention of an important fact is necessary — Patel regarded Hyderabad as more important than Kashmir. This was no accidental priority but the considered vision of a realist strategist. Hyderabad lay in the heart of India — a vast princely state which, had it remained independent or pro-Pakistan, would have become a permanent thorn in the geographic centre of India. For Patel, the integrity of internal unity was paramount.

This vision of priorities reflects Patel’s realism. He was a leader who took decisions not by emotion but by strategic calculation. He recognised the reality of limited resources and limited time, and concentrated his full force upon the most immediate threat — Hyderabad. But this in no way meant that he was in favour of relinquishing Kashmir. Patel’s entire working style was one of decisiveness, and he was opposed to leaving unresolved questions hanging indefinitely. This is why the leaving of Kashmir unresolved was for him an unfinished task, not an accepted compromise.

Article 370: A “Temporary” Arrangement

Article 370 was adopted on 17 October 1949 as a *temporary* provision, which gave Jammu and Kashmir its own separate constitution and autonomy over all subjects except defence, foreign affairs, and communications. According to a widely current account, when Nehru asked Patel to get it passed in the cabinet, Patel accepted it reluctantly.

The word “temporary” is decisive here. The framers of the Constitution placed it not as a permanent arrangement but as a transitional provision. The very placement of this article in Part XXI of the Constitution, whose very title is “Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions,” is itself proof of its nature. It was an arrangement that was meant to end with time, a bridge meant to lead from a special circumstance to a normal state.

But in the absence of political will, this “temporary” provision was deferred decade after decade, and became a permanent anomaly which — according to critics — produced a “second-class” citizenship in Jammu and Kashmir and a cover for cross-border terrorism. The provision that was meant to become an instrument of transition became a permanent symbol of separation. This was the very irony that sat for seven decades, like an unresolved knot, at the centre of the Indian nation-state.

Patel’s Foresight: The Warning of Tibet

Another proof of Patel’s vision of national security is his letter of 7 November 1950, which he wrote to Nehru a mere few weeks before his death — in which he warned India about China’s designs in Tibet. This is among the most often-quoted intelligence counsels of the founding era. This letter shows that for Patel, foreign policy, integration, and home affairs — these were all parts of a single question.

He was a statesman who placed long-term national interest above fleeting diplomatic convenience.

The historical significance of this letter is extraordinary. The warning Patel gave at that time regarding China proved tragically true later, in the India-China war of 1962. This letter is proof that Patel was not merely an integrator but also a far-sighted strategist, who could see the future threats to India's northern borders long before his time. This vision of his — that border, security, and sovereignty are inseparable — became a central thread of the philosophy of Indian nation-building.

This vision — the priority of long-term national interest — is the very thread that connects Patel to Amit Shah. Just as Patel showed foresight regarding Tibet, so too Shah showed the long-term resolve to resolve, regarding Kashmir, a seven-decade-old anomaly.

The Correspondence of September 1947

The correspondence between Patel and Nehru over Kashmir reveals a delicate moment of history. In a letter to Patel on 27 September 1947, Nehru expressed the urgency of the situation — that Pakistan's strategy was to infiltrate Kashmir before the winter and then take advantage of the valley becoming cut off. Nehru himself visited Kashmir in early October, while Patel and Menon remained active in Jammu. Menon went to Jammu and got the Instrument of Accession signed by the Maharaja on 26 October, after which the Indian Army was immediately sent by air.

This correspondence underscores an important fact — that Patel and Menon had a central role in the practical, administrative work of Kashmir's accession. It was this very Patel-Menon pair that had made the integration of the other 562 princely states possible, and the signing of Kashmir's Instrument of Accession too took place through the efforts of that same pair. This correspondence shows that the question

of Kashmir was complex from the very beginning, and that within it many factors — military, diplomatic, and constitutional — were entangled with one another. But the fact that is incontrovertible is that ultimately this question remained unresolved, and the “temporary” arrangement of Article 370 became a permanent knot.

An Honest Presentation of a Historical Controversy

The intellectual honesty of this book demands that we present the controversy over Patel’s stance on the Kashmir question with impartiality. On the one hand, the narrative of the BJP and right-wing thinkers is that Patel wanted a firmer stance with regard to Kashmir, and that Nehru’s caution squandered that opportunity. On the other hand, some historians argue that V.P. Menon’s contemporary account does not record clear advocacy by Patel, prior to the invasion, for “the accession of the whole of Kashmir.”

The truth lies, perhaps, somewhere between these two extreme viewpoints. Patel was a realist; he had regarded Hyderabad as more important than Kashmir. But it is also incontrovertible that Patel’s entire working style was one of decisiveness, and that he was not in favour of leaving unresolved questions hanging. This is why, when Modi and Shah invoke Patel, they invoke a statesman whose hallmark was firmness and decisiveness — and whose unfinished work, according to them, lay waiting upon history.

This honest presentation does not weaken the narrative of this book but strengthens it. For whatever Patel’s personal stance may have been, the fact is incontrovertible that Kashmir was the one story of Indian integration that remained unfinished. And in history, unfinished tasks await their inheritor. Patel’s realism and decisiveness — these two qualities are the very touchstone on which future leaders would be tested.

The Distinctiveness of Kashmir: A Princely State That Became the Exception

To understand the Kashmir question in its entirety, it is necessary to see for what reasons this princely state differed from the other 562, and why it became the exception where all the rest became the rule. The first reason was geographic — Kashmir lay on the border adjoining both Pakistan and India, and its strategic position made it a sensitive region. The second reason was demographic — the combination of a Hindu ruler and a Muslim-majority population, which was precisely the opposite of that logic of Partition upon which Pakistan had been created.

But the most decisive factor was political. In the episodes of Junagadh and Hyderabad, whether by the path of a plebiscite or of a “police action,” integration was accomplished with speed and completeness. In Kashmir, by contrast, the invasion, the ceasefire, the internationalisation of the matter at the United Nations, and finally the “temporary” arrangement of Article 370 — all these together rendered integration unfinished and uncertain. Where the accession of the other princely states attained a definite, irreversible end-point, the accession of Kashmir hung suspended as an open, unresolved question.

This contradiction is the very central point of the Patel–Shah narrative. The question of two of the three “holdout” princely states — Junagadh and Hyderabad — was decisively resolved within Patel’s own lifetime. Only the third — Kashmir — remained unfinished. And this very incompleteness became the legacy that stood, like an unanswered question, before the generations to come.

The Permanence of the “Temporary”: A Constitutional Irony

The most ironic aspect of the story of Article 370 is that a provision that was, in its original form, in its very words, and in its constitutional

placement, “temporary,” became, as it ran on decade after decade, a permanent institution. This irony exposes a deep tendency of Indian politics — that the deferral of hard questions seems convenient in the short term, but in the long term that procrastination itself becomes a permanent problem.

This was precisely the tendency that Patel was opposed to. Patel’s entire working style was one of resolving unresolved questions decisively — whether it was Junagadh, Hyderabad, or the vast work of integrating the princely states. For him, deferring a question indefinitely by means of a “temporary” arrangement was a political failure, not a solution. And this is why the leaving of Kashmir unresolved was an exception against his vision of nation-building.

Without understanding this constitutional irony, one cannot understand that historical resolve which would later arise towards completing this unfinished work. The remaining of a “temporary” provision as permanent for seven decades — this was not merely a constitutional-technical question, but a fundamental question of national unity and the power of resolve.

The Legacy of an Unfinished Question

Thus, in the vast edifice of modern India that Sardar Patel built, one window remained unfinished — Jammu and Kashmir. This incompleteness was no minor detail; it was a central unresolved knot of the Indian nation-state. On the one hand, the complete and irreversible integration of 562 princely states; on the other, one princely state, which, in the constitutional shadow of a “temporary” arrangement, somewhat apart from the national mainstream, remained hanging in suspense.

Patel’s death left this question unresolved. And decade after decade, this “temporary” provision became such a permanent anomaly that it

gave rise to many questions — the question of the completeness of integration, the question of national unity, and above all, the question of that resolve which would have the courage to complete this unfinished work.

And it is here that the story of Amit Shah connects with the story of Patel. For the responsibility of completing the window that history had left unfinished came upon the shoulders of a man who regarded himself as the inheritor of Patel's tradition. But before reaching that historical moment, Shah had a long journey to travel — from the laboratory of governance as Home Minister of Gujarat, to the making of the BJP into the world's largest political party.

To that journey we now proceed.



THE NEW

**Part Two — Power,
Organisation, and Integration**



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CHAPTER 6

Gujarat Home Minister: A Laboratory of Governance

When Narendra Modi led the BJP to victory in the Gujarat Assembly elections of December 2002, Amit Shah was sworn in as Minister of State for Home — and, alongside it, given charge of an extraordinary roster of more than a dozen portfolios: Home, Law and Justice, Prisons, Border Security, Civil Defence, Excise, Transport, Prohibition, Home Guards, Village Defence Force, Police Housing, and Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs. This breadth of portfolios reflected both Modi's confidence and Shah's capacity for hard work.

This was the period we might call the “laboratory of governance” — the span in which Shah first learned to operate the levers of state power, and conducted those administrative and institutional experiments that would later be replicated at the national level.

The Journey to Ministerial Office

It is essential to understand that when Shah was handed this extraordinary charge in 2002, he was no newcomer descended from the sky. The appointment was the natural outcome of two decades of quiet toil. In 1977, at only thirteen years of age, while pasting up posters in Mansa for Maniben Patel, the Jana Sangh candidate, he had caught the eye of senior figures in the Sangh. In 1982 he met Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad, at the time a Sangh pracharak in charge of three districts. From a booth worker to secretary of the Ahmedabad city BJP, and then to vice-president of the Gujarat state BJP in 1999 — this steady ascent

was proof of the same patient method of striking roots within the organisation that would later become his hallmark.

In the meantime, he had also proven his administrative ability in the cooperative and corporate worlds. As chairman of the Gujarat State Financial Corporation (GSFC), by his own account, he raised net profit by 214 per cent and even took the institution to an IPO. As the youngest chairman of the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank, he had assembled in his mind a living storehouse of data on the caste, community, and economic geography of rural Gujarat. Thus, when he became Minister of State for Home in 2002, he already knew the language of all three — figures, institutions, and public trust.

The Law-and-Order Record

By Shah's own account, under his leadership the Gujarat Home Ministry recorded one of the lowest rates of police encounters in the country — a remarkable figure for a decade that had begun with the largest communal violence in the recent history of independent India. The official biography credits his tenure with a fall in the overall crime rate and the safeguarding of communal harmony.

Shah's own case for this period centres on three claims: crime declined, communal harmony was preserved, and institutions were built to professionalise the security apparatus. This was a posture of long-term institution-building rather than of crisis management — a posture that would go on to drive every act of construction he undertook after 2014.

The significance of this “fewest encounters” claim deepens further in its historical context. After the violence of 2002, the gaze of the country and the world was fixed upon Gujarat; every incident was watched minutely. To run a security apparatus in such an atmosphere so that it rested on order and prevention rather than on the use of force

demanded an administrative maturity. For Shah’s supporters, this record is proof that being a firm Home Minister and being a restrained Home Minister are not mutually contradictory — they are, rather, two facets of a single discipline.

Legislative Output

Two bills steered by Shah as Minister of State for Home became pillars of his later national reputation:

The first was the **Gujarat Freedom of Religion Bill, 2004**, which criminalised conversion that was “forcible” or “induced” through marriage, misrepresentation, or allurement, and laid the foundation of the doctrinal template that, two decades later, became the subject of a broad national debate over anti-conversion laws.

The second was the **Gujarat Control of Organised Crime (Amendment) Bill, 2004**, which strengthened the powers of preventive detention and witness protection available to the police, and prefigured those national-level instruments that would later become part of the internal-security architecture.

Legislative Foresight: The Birth of a Template

The true significance of both these bills lies not in their immediate impact but in their far-reaching resonance. In 2004, when Shah placed the Freedom of Religion Bill before the House, it appeared to be a piece of state-level legislation. Yet, looking back, it was the first draft of a national debate. In the years that followed, several states framed their anti-conversion laws on this very model, and the subject returned again and again to the national discourse. This is an enduring feature of Shah’s method — he conducts an experiment in one state, tests it, and then presents it as a national model. This same method of “from state-experimental to nationally-standardised” was later to be repeated even

on subjects such as the Uniform Civil Code, where Uttarakhand became a testing ground.

The story of the Control of Organised Crime Bill is also emblematic of this same foresight. Powers such as preventive detention and witness protection — which Shah granted to the police in Gujarat — are indispensable parts of the modern internal-security framework. A Home Minister who thinks all the way down to the niceties of the evidentiary system and witness protection is not merely an administrator but a legislative architect. This was the same systematic intelligence that would later be revealed in the intricate legal construction of the abrogation of Article 370, and in the framing of the three new criminal laws.

Institution-Building: The Forensic Sciences University

In February 2009, Shah inaugurated the **Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU)** in Gandhinagar — in his own words, “the first and only university in the world dedicated to forensic, behavioural, cyber-security, digital forensics, and allied sciences.” In October 2020 it was declared an institution of national importance and renamed the **National Forensic Sciences University**.

This institution is an ideal example of Shah’s method — the building of a permanent institution that would later be replicated at the national level. By 2022 he could claim that 16,390 police stations across the country had been connected to the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems), and that he was actively striving to integrate central agencies onto this platform.

The Foresight of a University

The very conception of the Forensic Sciences University is extraordinary proof of Shah’s foresight. In 2009, when in most countries of the

world forensic science was merely an auxiliary branch within a handful of select laboratories and police departments, Shah conceived of granting it the standing of an independent, dedicated university. Digital forensics, cyber-security, and behavioural science — these were fields whose indispensability the world would only come to fully grasp in the decade ahead. In this sense, this institution was almost a decade ahead of its time.

When the Home Minister of a state lays the foundation of a university, the message is clear: here, security is being viewed not as an emergency response but as a scientific-institutional capacity. This was that same long-term, nation-building mindset that accords with the tradition of Sardar Patel, who, in the immediate aftermath of independence, built the capacity of the future nation by laying the foundations of the all-India services and administrative institutions. Patel forged the administrative steel; Shah, the framework of scientific security. Both built the infrastructure that remains unseen, yet on which the long-term strength of the nation rests.

The Burden of Twelve Portfolios: A Trial

To entrust Shah, as Minister of State for Home, with more than a dozen portfolios at once was an extraordinary decision. Ordinarily, so many portfolios are not handed to a single minister. It was proof of Modi's confidence that Shah could bear this burden — and of Shah's own singular capacity for hard work that set him apart from other politicians.

The diversity of these portfolios is noteworthy — from Home to Transport, from Prohibition to Parliamentary Affairs. Each portfolio had its own complexities, its own stakeholders, and its own challenges. To manage so many diverse fields at once was an administrative training that would later prove invaluable at the national level. When Shah

would go on to run a vast ministry like the Home Ministry, or to reorganise a vast sector like Cooperation, he would draw on the very same experience of multi-portfolio management that he had earned in Gujarat.

This multi-portfolio burden also reveals a core quality of Shah's character — his tireless attention to detail. To handle twelve portfolios at once is possible only when a person can store the minutest particulars of each in his mind. A junior colleague's famous remark that Shah "can handle not eight but eighty committees" arose from this very Gujarat-era trial. This trial was, in a sense, a rehearsal for the national role that lay in waiting ahead.

CCTNS: The Digital Integration of the Police

Another dimension of Shah's institution-building in Gujarat was the modernisation of the police apparatus. Later, at the national level, this vision was realised in the form of the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) — a digital platform that links 16,390 police stations across the country into a single network.

This initiative is an example of that core method of Shah's which we saw earlier — linking institutions to data. Just as he turned BJP workers into "queryable" data, so too did he turn the police apparatus into an integrated, searchable digital network. This was a quiet yet powerful form of modern nation-building — the infrastructure that remains unseen, yet on which the capacity of the state rests.

The philosophical significance of this digital integration is that it institutionalises the memory of the state. In a country where an offender registered in one state could effortlessly vanish in another, the CCTNS wove a national web of memory. Shah's conviction that central agencies too should be linked to this very platform was an expression of that same integrative mindset that is the thread running

through his entire political life — to integrate the fragmented, to join the scattered, and to mould the nation’s capacity into a coherent whole.

Political Exile and Return

This decade ended abruptly. On 25 July 2010, Shah was arrested in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case. He had to resign from his ministerial office, and was effectively compelled to remain outside Gujarat from 2010 to 2012. In December 2014, a special CBI court acquitted him, citing “a lack of evidence and the political nature of the charges.”

Shah’s supporters view this episode as a politically motivated case that targeted him precisely because he was a rising organiser whom the political establishment feared. The court’s acquittal lends strength to this view. And this period of exile, ironically, became the very span in which Shah pursued ideological study and political reconstruction — deepening still further his principle of “first build the organisation.” Those two years, which appeared to be a crisis, were in fact a period of preparation for the national role that lay in waiting ahead.

The First Lesson in Steadfastness

This period of exile was the first public test of that central feature of Shah’s character which this book calls the “iron quality” — to remain unshaken in the face of adversity. In 2012, the words he spoke regarding the charges levelled against him present the essence of his state of mind: *“I am afraid of no one. We will fight the legal battle, and we will expose those who tried to do us injustice in court.”* This was the very firmness that would later be revealed amid the storm of criticism in the abrogation of Article 370, and in standing unmoved on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Another poignant facet of this period was that on 8 June 2010 — in the very weeks before the arrest — his mother, Kusumben Shah, who had been the guardian of religious discipline in the family, passed away. Even amid this double burden of personal grief and political crisis, Shah did not lose his psychological steadiness. It was that same Vaishnavanurtured patience, that same shakha-trained restraint, that helped him emerge from this ordeal by fire even more steadfast. In the view of his supporters, this period was for Shah what the furnace is for steel — a process that does not weaken the metal but makes it harder still.

The Modi-Shah Pairing: An Administrative Laboratory

Another enduring result of this Gujarat decade was the maturing of that administrative pairing of Modi and Shah which would go on to define national politics. The friendship that had begun in 1982 had now settled into a division of labour — Chief Minister Modi’s vision and public communication, and Minister of State for Home Shah’s organisation, legislative skill, and relentless execution. One Gujarati politician underlined it in these words: that Modi “handed over all the hard tasks to Shah, which he executed with firmness.”

This pairing was, in a sense, tested and proven in Gujarat itself. It was here that they learned how one leader’s vision and the other’s capacity for execution could together create a political force far more effective than any single personality. This administrative laboratory of Gujarat, in this sense, was not merely a laboratory of policies and institutions — it was also a laboratory of that partnership which would go on to make historic decisions such as Article 370 possible.

This laboratory of Gujarat — legislative skill, institution-building, and steadfastness even in crisis — was to be replicated on a far larger stage. And that stage was: the national presidency of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Chapter 6



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CHAPTER 7

The Rebuilding of the BJP: The World's Largest Party

When Amit Shah was elected president of the Bharatiya Janata Party on 9 July 2014, the party had just won 282 Lok Sabha seats — its first clear parliamentary majority in three decades. But Shah did not arrive as a triumphant spectator: the 2014 campaign had already been his handiwork. He came with a clear mandate — to make the BJP the “world’s largest political party,” as a permanently institutionalised welfare and electoral organism, and not merely the heir of a single victory.

A Resolve to Build at the Moment of Victory

The hardest moment in politics is often the moment of victory. Defeat alerts an organisation; victory slackens it. After the historic victory of 2014, it would have been the natural temptation of any ordinary organiser to savour the achievement and grow lax. Shah did precisely the opposite. He regarded that very moment of victory as the most opportune occasion for the expansion of the organisation — for it was the very moment when support was at its peak and could be converted into permanent membership.

This outlook sprang from Shah’s core conviction that an electoral victory is not a destination but a resource — a capital that ought to be invested in institutional capacity. It is simple to win once by riding the wave of a charismatic leader; to turn that wave into a permanent, self-renewing organisational machine — this was the task that Shah took

into his own hands. This was that philosophy of the “long innings” which is the thread of his entire personality.

From 110 Million Members to the World’s Largest Party

Shah’s first decisive act was a **membership drive** that added new fee-paying members on an industrial scale. By July 2015, the BJP claimed the enrolment of 110 million members — a figure larger than the population of most countries. By March 2015 the party had crossed 100 million members, and this expansion continued throughout Shah’s tenure, ultimately making the BJP larger even than the Chinese Communist Party (99 million) — reaching, by later claims, nearly 180 million. Whatever the audited figure may have been, the effect of this drive was that passive supporters were turned into fee-paying, data-tagged party workers.

A comparison is useful in grasping the vastness of this figure. For a political party to grow larger than the ruling Communist Party of China — the party of a nation whose population is comparable to India’s — was in itself an organisational achievement without parallel in world history. But for Shah this number was not a matter of self-satisfaction; it was an instrument. Each member was a point of contact, a potential booth worker, a unit that could be entered into the data and with whom contact could be maintained. This was that same Bania ledger-keeping mentality — where an account is kept of every unit — now being applied on the scale of national politics.

Turning Lists into Organisation

Shah's structural innovations were deliberately plain in their terminology yet revolutionary in their impact:

- **A district office in every district** — standardised party headquarters with salaried staff, in place of temporary rented rooms.
- **19 functional departments** — vertical specialisation such as organisation, training, IT, legal, and media.
- **The digitisation of party documents** — online membership and a booth-worker app, which made the party “queryable” like a technology firm.
- **The Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Vistarak Yojana** — the two-year deployment of trained BJP workers, which sent Sangh-trained cadre directly into the electoral battlefield.
- **Booth management committees of 7–10 members for every booth** — together with the “panna pramukh” (page in-charge) system, in which each worker was placed in charge of one “page” of the electoral roll (roughly 200–300 voters).

Each of these reforms transformed a loose tradition of Indian party politics — a charisma-based rally, a handwritten voter list, a fee-paying worker — into a standardised, supervisable, and replicable process.

Building Permanent Infrastructure

Among these reforms, the least discussed yet perhaps the most enduring in its impact was — a permanent party office in every district. This appeared to be an ordinary decision, but its implications were profound. A temporary office running out of a rented room may

scatter after every election; a permanent building, with salaried staff, grants the organisation a permanent institutional existence. This was precisely the method that Shah had adopted in building the Forensic University in Gujarat — to raise a permanent institution that would survive even independently of the leadership’s personal charisma.

The significance of the Vistarak Yojana, too, lay in this same institutional permanence. To deploy Sangh-trained workers for two years in grassroots political work — this was, in a sense, a confluence of ideological commitment and electoral machinery. These vistaraks struck the roots of the organisation even in regions where the BJP’s traditional presence was negligible. It was this very scheme that would go on to yield miraculous results in regions such as the Northeast.

Victory State by State

Shah’s tenure as president is an unprecedented series of state-assembly victories: - **2014**: Maharashtra, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand. - **2016**: Assam — the first BJP government in the Northeast. - **2017**: Uttar Pradesh (312 of 403), Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh. - **2018**: a two-thirds majority in Tripura — the end of a 25-year-old left rule — and government in Nagaland and Meghalaya.

The result in Tripura is especially noteworthy. Before Shah’s tenure the BJP had no notable presence there; the CPI(M) had been ruling for 25 years. Shah personally deployed organisational resources — web-TV vans, Sangh-trained vistaraks stationed in the districts, and a direct door-to-door programme. “The BJP has no future in the Northeast” — this decades-old assumption was overturned in a single electoral cycle.

Assam: The Gateway to the Northeast

In this series of state victories, the Assam of 2016 holds a special place, for it was the BJP's first government in the Northeast — the first foothold in a region long regarded as the impregnable bastion of the Congress and regional parties. The victory in Assam was not merely the acquisition of a single state; it was the gateway to an entire geographical-cultural region. Shah viewed it as a strategic pivot — the organisational base and political credibility gained from Assam went on to make possible the expansion of the BJP and its allies across the whole of the Northeast.

This regional expansion was proof of that geographical imagination of Shah's which refused to abandon a region by deeming it "unattainable." Where other strategists would concentrate resources in their traditional bastions, Shah deliberately invested in those regions where the party was weak. It was a long-term investment whose returns were to come years later — and come they did.

Panna Pramukh: The Smallest Unit of Democracy

Among Shah's organisational innovations, the most minute and the most revolutionary was — the panna pramukh system. Its idea was simple yet profound: every "page" (panna) of the electoral roll lists roughly 200–300 voters. Shah devised an arrangement to appoint a dedicated worker — a panna pramukh — for each page, whose task was to know every voter on that page by name, to maintain contact with them, and on polling day to bring them to the booth.

The philosophical basis of this system rests upon a deep insight: most voters never meet any candidate or major leader. The people they do meet — the workers of their own neighbourhood, of their own page — are the "party" for them. In this way the panna pramukh system

turned the election away from distant charisma and into the closest human contact.

In Uttar Pradesh alone, management committees of 7–10 members were formed for roughly 140,000 booths, led by the panna pramukhs. This was an unprecedented level of organisational minuteness — and it was the political transposition of that very same Bania ledger-keeping mentality which Shah had inherited, where an account is kept of every unit.

The panna pramukh system had another dimension that is often overlooked — it created a chain of accountability. Each panna pramukh was responsible for his 200–300 voters; each booth committee for its booth; each level reported to the level above. In this way, a country of hundreds of millions of voters was divided into small, measurable, accountable units. This was that same administrative genius of “divide and manage” which transformed a vast, seemingly unmanageable democracy into a well-organised, executable system.

Tripura: An Impossible Victory

The most dramatic proof of Shah’s organisational ability was Tripura. Before 2018, the BJP had no notable presence in this state; the CPI(M) had been ruling unbroken for 25 years. Political analysts had deemed the BJP “unattainable” there.

Shah challenged this assumption personally. He sent web-TV vans, stationed Sangh-trained vistaraks in the districts, and ran a direct door-to-door programme. The result was stunning — the BJP won a two-thirds majority on its own, and also entered government in Nagaland and Meghalaya. In a single electoral cycle, the Northeast — regarded for decades as a bastion of the opposition — became a bastion of the BJP.

This victory in Tripura was proof of that “long innings” and patient method of organisation-building of Shah’s which made the impossible

possible. And it was another form of that same long-term vision which would later be revealed in the larger decisions of nation-building.

Tripura was also an ideological victory. For the BJP to triumph in a state that had become the last fortress of Marxist politics in India was not merely the result of a seat-arithmetic; it was the announcement of an ideological transition. For Shah this must have been especially satisfying — for it was the culmination of that ideological struggle which he had begun in his ABVP days, contending against left-dominated student politics. The patience of decades had at last borne fruit in a historic victory.

2019: 303 Seats

In May 2019 the BJP won 303 Lok Sabha seats — the largest mandate for any single party since 1984. As one BJP councillor put the essence of this journey: *“It is because of Modi and Shah alone that the BJP went from two seats in the 1984 election to 303 seats in 2019.”*

This journey from two seats to 303 — it is not merely an electoral figure, but proof of that organisational patience and discipline which is the hallmark of Shah’s entire personality. And it was this same organisational strength that became the foundation upon which, standing firm, the Modi government could take those historic decisions that this book will go on to examine in detail — the first and the greatest of which was: the abrogation of Article 370.

From Two Seats to 303: The Meaning of a Journey

To grasp the depth of this journey, we must recall that moment in 1984 when the BJP, in its then form, was reduced to only two seats in the Lok Sabha. At that time many political commentators regarded the future of this party as doubtful. In thirty-five years that very party became the world’s largest political organisation, and the master of a

sweeping majority with 303 seats in Parliament. This transformation was not the result of any single electoral wave; it was the cumulative reward of decades of patient organisation-building.

Shah's role was in the final and decisive stage of this journey — the stage in which a competitive party was transformed into a dominant one. He turned the BJP into a machine designed not merely to win an election, but to keep winning permanently. This was that same institutional permanence which Patel had sought in building administrative institutions after independence — a framework greater than individuals, one that would continue to serve the nation for generations to come.

An Enduring Organisational Legacy

The most enduring bequest of Shah's tenure as president lies perhaps not in any single electoral victory but in the organisational culture he planted within the BJP. He gave the party a mentality in which no election — however small it might be — is taken lightly, and no region — however adverse it might be — is deemed “unattainable.” It was a culture of perpetual campaigning, in which the organisation, rather than resting after one election, immediately set to work for the next.

This culture was, in a sense, the political transposition of that Sangh-trained discipline which Shah had received from adolescence — ceaseless toil, minute organisation, and ideological commitment. When he moved from the presidency to the Home Ministry in 2020, he left behind an organisational framework that did not depend on his personal leadership but was self-driven and permanent in itself. This is the very touchstone of a true institution-builder — that the framework he has built continues to flourish even in his absence.

But before we reach that historic moment, a glimpse is needed of the personality that made this entire organisational miracle possible —

that “Modern Chanakya” whose strategic genius redefined Indian politics anew.



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CHAPTER 8

The Modern Chanakya: From the Booth to the Nation

One simile returns again and again in Indian political journalism — “the Modern Chanakya.” This simile has been applied to Amit Shah so often that it has become almost a permanent epithet. But behind this simile lies a concrete method, a way of working without an understanding of which any understanding of Shah’s philosophy of nation-building will remain incomplete.

“A Mind Sharper Than Chanakya’s”

The most vocal form of this simile came from a former BJP politician, Yatin Oza, who had worked alongside Shah for decades: “*Shah has been granted a gift from God — a mind sharper even than Chanakya’s.*” The comparison with the ancient strategist Chanakya, who unified India under Chandragupta Maurya, is, in Oza’s view, both a tribute and an acknowledgement — that Indian political literature has no other reference point for Shah’s way of working.

This comparison carries a deeper implication. Chanakya was not merely a strategist; he was a nation-builder, who moulded a scattered subcontinent into a unified Mauryan empire. When Shah is compared with Chanakya, that comparison is not confined merely to his electoral skill — it also signals that broader ambition of nation-building which is the centre of his political life. And this comparison accords too with that Patel tradition which this book underlines — for Sardar Patel too

was often addressed as the “Modern Chanakya,” as the man who turned the dispersal of the princely states into a unified republic.

The Miracle of Uttar Pradesh: The Arithmetic of the Booth

No example of Shah’s method is better than the victory in Uttar Pradesh in 2014. This was the state that had defeated the BJP for two decades. Shah adopted a four-tiered strategy — seat, cluster, zone, and state. He divided Uttar Pradesh’s 80 Lok Sabha seats into 21 clusters of 3 to 5 seats each, organised into 8 zones.

For each cluster he worked out the *arithmetic of the booth*: the target of one Bolero vehicle to bring 10 voters to each polling station. With more than a hundred thousand booths in Uttar Pradesh, this arithmetic turned into a pre-calculated crowd-organisation system that, through organised, replicable presence, produced a visible “Modi wave.”

To reach into the “dark zones” (areas with no access to television or newspapers), Shah deployed a 16-minute campaign video, 450 GPS-equipped vans, and 800 full-time volunteers. Rallies were designed to draw crowds from a radius of 175 kilometres, and a call-centre at the Lucknow headquarters verified attendance figures against ground reports. His field-level strategy also included a recruitment policy of bringing in the second-most-influential leader of every village, which built a network of 8,000 rural leaders across the state.

The result: the BJP and its allies won 73 of Uttar Pradesh’s 80 Lok Sabha seats — a near-total reversal of two decades of SP-BSP dominance.

In Shah’s own words: “*The verification of details was necessary to obtain an accurate assessment of the ground reality, so that we could fine-tune our campaign.*” And in this entire strategy there was also a personal humility — he said that he had decided to “set his ego aside.”

Social Arithmetic: Another Layer

There was another layer to this tale of the arithmetic of the booth that is often overlooked — the subtlety of social arithmetic. In a caste-complex state like Uttar Pradesh, logistical organisation alone was not enough; a social balance also had to be struck in the selection of candidates. Shah handled this dimension too with as much mathematical precision as he had brought to the calculation of Bolero vans. In distributing tickets across the 80 Lok Sabha seats, he struck a careful social balance — alongside the backward classes, Brahmins, and Thakurs, he focused special attention on small, often-neglected communities — Nishads, Binds, Kushwahas.

This social arithmetic reveals a core principle of Shah’s method: no community is so small that it can be ignored, and no community is so large that it can be taken lightly. This minute, all-inclusive arithmetic was the echo of that Bania-Vaishnava ledger-keeping tradition in which an account is kept of every entry, however small it might be.

“The Details Man”: The Art of Micro-Management

The phrase most frequently used by Shah’s colleagues is — “the details man,” the man of details. His friend and Ahmedabad councillor Devang Dani, in a famous 2024 profile, gave the most-quoted line: *“Whether it is a village panchayat or Parliament, no election is too small. For Amitbhai, every war must be won.”*

This sentence is the essence of Shah’s way of working. What we abstractly call “data-driven organisation” — voter lists, booth stratification, caste-arithmetic, beneficiary-identification — Shah was implementing long before those terms came into fashion.

A strategic profile by the BBC portrayed him as “the second most powerful man in the country,” and “the details man who gets the job done,” and “an outstanding organiser and campaign strategist.” These

three descriptions are three facets of a single truth — that the source of Shah’s power is no accidental charisma, but a systematic, industrious, detail-centred way of working.

“Road Roller”: The Meaning of a Metaphor

Another metaphor used for Shah is — “road roller,” the machine that flattens the obstacles in the path. This metaphor reveals an important facet of his way of working: once a goal has been set, Shah moves towards it unswervingly, removing obstacles one by one.

It is this very “road roller” quality that is a source of fear for critics and of admiration for supporters. But both agree on a single fact: Shah’s capacity for execution cannot be doubted. When he resolved upon the abrogation of Article 370, he removed every legal, constitutional, and political obstacle patiently and systematically — like a road roller, slow but irresistible.

This metaphor has a complementary form as well, which defines the pairing of Modi and Shah — the simile of “Ram and Lakshman,” in which Modi is the “face” and Shah is the “road roller that flattens the obstacles.” This division of labour is not a coincidence but the result of a well-considered partnership — of a four-decade-old friendship and trust that began in 1982 in the Sangh circles of Ahmedabad. The vision and public communication of the one, the organisation and execution of the other — this is the very equation that redefined Indian politics.

The Discipline of Data

The simile of the “Modern Chanakya” also has a technical dimension — Shah’s discipline towards data. Long before the term “data-driven politics” even came into fashion in Indian journalism, Shah had already put it into practice. Voter lists, booth stratification, caste-arithmetic,

beneficiary-identification — all of these were integral parts of his way of working.

His organisational reforms — the digitisation of party documents, the 19 functional departments, and the Vistarak Yojana — were in fact the equivalent of a modern “operating model.” He replaced a charismatic leader’s notebook with a queryable, transferable system. This was that same systematic intelligence which he had inherited from his father’s PVC-pipe factory and the stock exchange.

The roots of this data-discipline were sunk deep in Shah’s family background. In a family where the father was chairman of the Ahmedabad Stock Exchange, and where the Bania-Vaishnava ledger-keeping tradition was a way of life, this natural reverence for numbers and accounts was received as a sacrament. As the youngest chairman of the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank, he applied this discipline to a vast, mass-level storehouse of data — the geography of the caste, community, and economy of rural Gujarat was etched as a living map in his mind. When this same vision was applied on the scale of national politics, the result was that “Modern Chanakya” whom the world beheld.

The Philosophy of the Long-Term Vision

The deepest meaning of the simile of the “Modern Chanakya” lies in his patience. A BBC profile notes that, after entering politics, Shah did not contest a single election for more than fifteen years; he said repeatedly that he first had to “build the organisation.”

It is this philosophy of the “long innings” that is the thread linking Shah’s organisational skill to his resolve for nation-building. The person who can hold the patience of fifteen years in organisation-building is the very person who can also hold the resolve to resolve seven-decade-old constitutional anomalies — Article 370, triple talaq, the Uniform

Civil Code — patiently, step by step. And the person who lives by the principle that “every war must be won” does not swerve from his path even in the storm of criticism.

The Karmayogi of North Block: A Study of a Daily Routine

The genius of the “Modern Chanakya” lies not only in strategy but also in discipline — and Amit Shah’s daily routine is living proof of this discipline. A senior journalist who has observed four Home Ministers from close quarters has given a detailed account of Shah’s way of working.

Shah reaches the Home Ministry (North Block) between roughly 9:40 and 10:00 in the morning, and leaves only after 8 p.m. Unlike his predecessors, who worked from home in the afternoons, Shah schedules almost all his meetings at the ministry itself. He does not return home for meals; every day at exactly 12:45 p.m., his vegetarian meal arrives at the ministry from home, in a well-arranged basket. He works even on holidays, even on festivals.

A junior minister captured the essence of it in these words: “If the senior minister is in the office, then we too have to be there.” And about Shah’s capacity for work a remark is famous — that he “can handle not eight but eighty committees.” It is that same Bania-Vaishnava discipline, that same shakha-trained daily routine, now devoted to the service of the nation.

A subtle yet important facet of this routine is that it leads by example. Bureaucrats “fall into line” of their own accord — not because they are intimidated, but because, when the highest leadership itself works with such rigorous discipline, no justification for slackness remains. It was that same principle of the Sangh shakha that had been planted in Shah in his adolescence — that to be a swayamsevak is to “renounce all comforts and conveniences for the sake of nation-

building.” That 12:45 p.m. meal-basket in North Block, that work done on holidays — these are the daily, silent expressions of that very renunciation.

Family: Sonal, Jay, and a Private Life

In contrast to the intensity of his public life, Amit Shah’s family life has been intensely private and restrained. He married Sonal Shah in 1987, a homemaker who prefers to stay away from the public glare.

His son, Jay Shah (born 1988), earned a B.Tech. degree from Nirma University, and traced a remarkable journey in cricket administration — from the Gujarat Cricket Association to secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), and then, on 1 December 2024, to becoming the fourth chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Jay Shah is the third Indian to become ICC chairman, after Jagmohan Dalmiya and N. Srinivasan.

On the balance of work and family, at the News18 Rising Bharat Summit — where his wife Sonal too was present in the audience — Shah said something poignant: *“I cannot make time for my family; my family makes time for me.”* This sentence offers a glimpse into the life of a man who placed the service of the nation above all, and whose family has been a silent partner in this devotion.

In this sentence lies a profound emotional acknowledgement. It is the self-portrait of a man who knows that he has devoted the greater part of his private life to a larger purpose, and whose family not only understands this sacrifice but, becoming a participant in it, bridges this gap by making time of its own. The silent presence of his wife Sonal in the audience at that summit was a symbol of this partnership — a family that, even while staying away from publicity, has continued to offer its oblation in this sacrificial fire of nation-service.

The Rebuilding of Health: Another Proof of Discipline

Another remarkable proof of discipline is Shah's health journey. After recovering from Covid-19, Shah lost 50 kilograms — from 135 kilograms to 85 kilograms — through three hours of pranayama and exercise daily. He used this platform to inspire the young, urging them towards two hours of exercise and six hours of sleep each day.

This is a tale of personal reconstruction that accords with Shah's entire way of working — that through discipline and firm resolve any goal can be attained, whether it be an electoral victory, a constitutional reform, or one's own health.

The symbolic significance of this health journey lies in its figures. Fifty kilograms — this is no trifling change, but the relinquishing of nearly a third of the body's weight, and that by a person whose work schedule is among the busiest in the world. To set aside three hours daily for pranayama and exercise — amid the formidable demands of the Home Ministry — demands in itself an extraordinary discipline. And in this there was an echo too of the Indian tradition: making pranayama and yoga the means, rather than some foreign method. This was the very man who used to say that every war must be won — and he won this war against his own body too, with that same road-roller-like steadiness.

A Human Portrait

The significance of these personal details — the daily routine, the family, the health — is that they reveal the man behind the image of the “Modern Chanakya.” Here is a man who lives by an extraordinary discipline, who loves his family yet places the service of the nation above all, and who applies to himself the same rigorous discipline that he applies to his organisation. This human portrait makes more comprehensible that steadfastness which is the hallmark of his public life.

This organisational genius, this patience, and this steadfastness — all three were revealed together in that historic moment which this book regards as its centre: 5 August 2019, the abrogation of Article 370.

Towards that historic day we now move.



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CHAPTER 9

Article 370: Patel's Unfinished Task, Completed

5 August 2019 — this date is inscribed in the history of modern India in the same way as the dates of the integration of the princely states. On this day, Home Minister Amit Shah placed before the Rajya Sabha the resolution that had been deemed “impossible” for seven decades — the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A, and the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir. This is the purest and most direct proof of the central thesis of this book: Patel’s unfinished task, completed by Shah.

A Constitutional Anomaly

Article 370 granted Jammu and Kashmir a special autonomous status, while Article 35A gave the state legislature the power to define “permanent residents” and their special rights. Critics — among them advocates of integration such as Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee — had long argued that these provisions created within India a “anti-women, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal” order of second-class citizenship, and, under the cover of “temporary” autonomy, allowed cross-border terrorism to flourish.

The Modi government’s mandate of 2019 (303 Lok Sabha seats) gave the BJP the parliamentary majority with which it could do what previous governments had kept postponing.

Seven Decades of Waiting

The roots of this anomaly lay in that turbulent period of India's Partition and the integration of the princely states, the detailed history of which has already been seen in an earlier chapter of this book. Here it is enough to recall that, whereas Sardar Patel merged almost all the princely states into India with firmness and diplomacy, the integration of Jammu and Kashmir remained unfinished, resting upon a “temporary” provision. This “temporariness” — clearly inscribed in the Constitution — remained a permanent reality for seven decades.

In these seven decades many governments came and went, but none summoned the courage to resolve this anomaly. Behind this lay not merely the absence of political will, but also a deep apprehension — that to touch this provision would be to invite a political and legal upheaval. This was the very backdrop against which the decision of 2019 became so historic. The task that had been deemed “impossible” for seven decades was turned into a parliamentary reality, in a matter of hours, by a prepared, firmly resolved leadership.

The Legal and Constitutional Mechanism

The abrogation was accomplished through two presidential constitutional orders, in a single day: - **The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 (C.O. 272)**, which amended Article 367 to interpret the phrase “Constituent Assembly” as “Legislative Assembly.” This was a legal innovation. - **C.O. 273**, which declared almost the entire body of Article 370 inoperative.

Thereafter, the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** divided the state into two Union Territories — Jammu and Kashmir, with a legislative assembly, and Ladakh, without one. Both came into effect on 31 October 2019. With this, Article 35A too was abrogated.

The Genius of a Legal Strategy

The subtlety of this legal mechanism was proof of that “Modern Chanakya”-like strategic genius of Shah’s which was underlined in the previous chapter. The greatest legal obstacle was that, according to Article 370, the recommendation of the “Constituent Assembly” of Jammu and Kashmir was required to abrogate it — but that Constituent Assembly had been dissolved as far back as 1957. Thus, taken literally, abrogating the article appeared all but impossible, because the very institution whose assent was required no longer existed.

It is here that the genius of C.O. 272 is revealed. By amending Article 367 — which lays down the rules of interpretation of the Constitution — it was established that wherever “Constituent Assembly” was written, its meaning would be understood as “Legislative Assembly.” Since Jammu and Kashmir was at that time under President’s Rule, the powers of the legislative assembly were vested in Parliament. In this way a seemingly insurmountable legal obstacle was removed by a well-considered, constitutionally valid path. This was that same “road roller” that flattens obstacles not by force but by systematic intelligence — vaulting over one obstacle with the aid of another constitutional arrangement.

The Conduct in Parliament

The Rajya Sabha passed these by 125 votes to 61 on 5–6 August; the Lok Sabha ratified them on 6 August by 370 votes to 70. The President’s assent was received on 9 August 2019. It is noteworthy that so historic and contentious a decision was passed by both Houses of Parliament with such a clear majority.

In the Rajya Sabha, where the government did not have a clear numerical strength, the passage of this resolution by so broad a majority was especially noteworthy. This was another proof of Shah’s political

skill — that ability to bring various parties to one’s side which only a skilled arithmetician and organiser can possess. It was that same mentality of the arithmetic of the booth, now transposed into the arithmetic of votes on the floor of Parliament.

Shah’s Five-Pillared Argument

On the floor of Parliament, Shah raised a five-pillared argument:

1. **National integration:** He linked this step to the unfinished vision of Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and B. R. Ambedkar, and presented the abrogation as the attainment of “one, united, and integrated India.”
2. **The human cost:** *“A long era of bloodshed in Jammu and Kashmir is about to end... had Article 370 not existed, 41,849 people would not have had to lose their lives.”*
3. **The argument of equality:** Shah described Article 370 as “anti-women, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal,” and underlined that 106 Indian laws, including 9 constitutional amendments, could not be applied in Jammu and Kashmir.
4. **The refutation of the temporary-provision:** *“Article 370 of our Constitution is a temporary provision. It is not permanent.”*
5. **Development and sovereignty:** Shah argued that the arrangement of Article 370 bred a doubt in people’s minds as to whether Kashmir was an integral part of India, while it obstructed the eradication of poverty, health, education, tourism, and the empowerment of women in the state.

That same evening, addressing the nation, Prime Minister Modi called upon the “youth, sisters, and daughters” of Jammu and Kashmir

and Ladakh to take into their own hands the reins of the development of their region.

The Structure of an Argument

The structure of these five pillars was in itself a reflection of Shah's way of working. Each pillar addressed a different audience and a different objection — to the nationalist, the argument of integration; to the humanitarian, that of the cost in bloodshed; to the egalitarian, that of equality; to the constitutionalist, that of the “temporary provision”; and to the pragmatist, that of development. It was an argumentative web in which each thread neutralised some specific resistance. This was that same multi-dimensional, detail-rich preparation that set Shah apart from an ordinary orator.

“41,849 people” — this figure was especially powerful, for it lifted the debate away from abstract constitutional principles and onto the concrete ground of human loss. It was that same data-discipline that is Shah's hallmark — where even a moral argument is reinforced with a precise number. And “anti-women, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal” — this three-word formula was so memorable and so effective that it inscribed the moral basis of this decision permanently in public memory.

The Patel-Shah Parallel: In Its Purest Form

It is here that the central thesis of this book is revealed in its purest form. On 24 August 2019, Shah himself gave this line words: *“Sardar Patel unified 600 princely states in roughly eighteen months, but the task of the integration of Jammu and Kashmir had remained unfinished. Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has completed that remaining task.”*

On 1 April 2024 he said still more plainly: *“Former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru committed a blunder by applying Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.”* And on 29 September 2019 he said that *“the de-*

claration of a ceasefire in 1948, when our army was winning, was a blunder.”

This comparison is not merely rhetorical. There is a structural similarity between the two Home Ministers: Patel used “a mixture of diplomacy and force” for the integration of the princely states; Shah, “a mixture of the constitutional path and political will” for the integration of Jammu and Kashmir. The difference is only one of means — Patel’s means was physical force, Shah’s means was constitutional process. But the goal was the same: to make the unity of the nation irreversible.

The Difference and Likeness of Two Iron Men

In the depth of this parallel lies a subtle difference too, which makes it all the more meaningful. Patel’s task was horizontal — he gathered 565 scattered units into a single centre. Shah’s task was convergent — he removed an exception and brought it level with the rest of the nation. Patel had that specific historical opportunity in the immediate aftermath of Partition, when the princely states had no practical option other than merging into India; Shah had to grapple with a seven-decade-old, deeply entrenched anomaly, with established political interests, and with a complex legal framework.

In this sense, some commentators have argued that Shah’s task was, in its own way, far more complex — because he had to do all this while remaining within the constitutional proprieties of a mature democracy, with the full possibility of judicial review. A famous remark by Ram Madhav presents the essence of this idea — that had Sardar Patel been the first Prime Minister of India, the problem of Jammu and Kashmir would never have arisen at all. Shah, in a sense, undertook the task of correcting that “if” of history — completing the unfinished integration that the Iron Man, Patel, had already begun.

5 August 2019: The Scene of a Historic Day

The scene in the Rajya Sabha that day was inscribed in the history of Indian Parliament. From the morning itself there had been speculation that the government was about to take some major step regarding Jammu and Kashmir. But no one had imagined its scale.

When Amit Shah rose and placed the resolution, a stunned silence fell over the House for a moment, and then an uproar arose. Members of the opposition rose from their seats, slogans began to be raised. But Shah's voice remained steady. He clarified each provision one by one, explained the constitutional basis, and answered the objections. In his presentation there was neither agitation nor excitement — only a prepared, fact-rich firmness.

This scene was in itself a symbol of Shah's way of working. The preparation of decades, a strategy crafted in secrecy, and then a decisive execution in a single day — this was that same “patient swiftness” that is his hallmark. Outside the House, across the country, this news spread like lightning. What had been deemed “impossible” for seven decades became, in a matter of hours, a parliamentary reality.

International Reaction and the Assertion of Sovereignty

The international reaction to the abrogation of Article 370 was also noteworthy. Pakistan tried to raise it on international platforms, but India's stance remained clear and firm — that this was India's internal and sovereign matter. Shah and the government underlined repeatedly that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India, and that the decision of its reorganisation was wholly a domestic, constitutional process.

This firm assertion of sovereignty was an echo of that tradition of Patel's in which no compromise is made on the unity and integrity of the nation. Just as Patel, in the cases of Hyderabad and Junagadh, held

national unity supreme without regard for international pressure, so too did Shah in the case of Kashmir.

The Legacy of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee

It is essential to place the abrogation of Article 370 in its historical context. Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, had struggled against the special status of Jammu and Kashmir as early as the 1950s. His famous slogan was — *“In one country, two constitutions, two heads, two flags will not do.”* Mookerjee died a mysterious death in 1953 during his detention in Srinagar, and this struggle of his remained unfinished.

When Shah abrogated Article 370 in 2019, he presented it explicitly as the completion of Mookerjee’s unfinished vision. In this way the decision became a symbol of a twofold historical continuity — on the one hand, the completion of Sardar Patel’s unfinished task of integration; on the other, the culmination of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee’s unfinished struggle. Both heroes held national unity supreme, and the unfinished task of both was completed in a single decision of Shah’s.

The significance of this ideological lineage is that it establishes the decision of 2019 not as some incidental political action, but as the culmination of a long-term ideological resolve. Shah himself was the product of that same tradition of the Sangh and the Jana Sangh whose foundation Mookerjee had laid. For him this abrogation was far more than a personal political achievement — it was the repayment of an ideological debt, the final culmination of a resolve carried forward from generation to generation.

The Argument of Security and Development

A central dimension of Shah’s argument was the coupling of security and development. His claim was that Article 370 had inflicted two kinds of harm upon Jammu and Kashmir — one at the level of security, where, under the cover of “temporary” autonomy, cross-border terrorism flourished; and the other at the level of development, where the people of the state were deprived of the benefit of those 106 central laws that citizens enjoyed in the rest of India — the right to education, the property rights of women, and many welfare schemes.

Shah argued that this arrangement was unjust especially towards women, Dalits, and tribals — which is why he called it “anti-women, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal.” For example, if a woman of Jammu and Kashmir married outside the state, she lost her property rights — a provision that was against the very principle of gender equality. After the abrogation, all these anomalies came to an end.

This security-development coupling was the essence in miniature of Shah’s entire philosophy of nation-building. For him, security and development were not mutually opposed goals but two facets of a single coin — an unstable, unequal, and isolated region can neither remain secure nor become prosperous. From this perspective, the abrogation of Article 370 was not merely a political or legal action, but the first stage of a comprehensive development strategy.

After the Abrogation: A Changing Landscape

In the years following the abrogation, the government claimed many changes in Jammu and Kashmir — the extension of central laws, the pace of development projects, and, in 2024, Lok Sabha elections conducted normally after a decade. Shah said firmly in August 2024: *“There is now, or ever, no place for Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. It will never be restored.”*

This firmness — that a decision once taken in the long-term national interest is irreversible — is the essence of Shah’s entire politics. It is that same steadfastness that makes him the heir of Patel’s iron tradition.

The Seal of the Supreme Court

On 11 December 2023, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370, holding that the State of Jammu and Kashmir had retained no element of internal sovereignty after its accession. This judgment was the seal of constitutional validity upon Shah’s step — a proof that this action had been accomplished not by force but by remaining within the Constitution.

The significance of this unanimous judicial verdict is beyond exaggeration. For the country’s highest judicial bench to approve unanimously a decision that critics had called even undemocratic and unconstitutional — this was the final confirmation of that legal strategy of Shah’s which was seen in the crafting of C.O. 272. The “road roller” that flattens obstacles by the constitutional path found its path validated, in the end, even by the supreme interpreter of the Constitution.

By August 2024, Shah could declare: *“There is now, or ever, no place for Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. It will never be restored.”* The Lok Sabha elections of 2024 were conducted there normally after a decade.

Facing Criticism

It is essential to acknowledge that this decision also drew sharp criticism. Critics pointed to fear among Kashmiri residents and to concerns of centralisation; they described the restoration of full

statehood and assembly elections as a pending question. But it is precisely here that that feature of Shah's is revealed which is the central theme of this book — a nation-builder does not swerve from his long-term resolve in the face of criticism. He neither apologised nor retreated; he firmly repeated his argument that the long-term interest of the nation stands above any short-term political convenience.

To understand this steadfastness, it is useful to recall that broader political disposition of Shah's which is visible throughout his life — whether it be the period of political exile of 2010–12, or his “come what may” firmness on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. For Shah, once a decision has been taken in the national interest and is constitutionally valid, to retreat from it would be a kind of self-betrayal. It is this very iron quality that links him to the tradition of Patel — that firmness which remains unshaken even in the storm of criticism, because its roots lie not in short-term political calculation but in a long-term national vision.

The abrogation of Article 370 was the first and the greatest example of Shah's philosophy of nation-building. But it was not the only one. Alongside it, and after it, came a whole series of reforms — triple talaq, the Uniform Civil Code, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, and the decisive campaign against Naxalism. All of these were linked by a single thread: not appeasement, but nation-building.

Towards that series we now move.



Part Three — Reform and Resolve



CHAPTER 10

Triple Talaq: The Dignity of Millions of Sisters

Nation-building is not merely a question of geography; it is also a question of justice and equality. And one of the most poignant chapters in Amit Shah’s philosophy of nation-building is the abolition of Triple Talaq, which gave millions of Muslim sisters the dignity of which they had been deprived for decades.

From Shah Bano to Shayara Bano

The practice of instantaneous triple talaq (talaq-e-biddat) had survived despite earlier reform efforts — even after the Shah Bano judgment of 1985. According to estimates, lakhs of Muslim women were being divorced by a single utterance. In the historic 2017 judgment of **Shayara Bano v. Union of India**, the Supreme Court declared instantaneous triple talaq unconstitutional.

Shah and Prime Minister Modi resolved to transform this judgment into criminal law — presenting it as the final test of whether India’s “minority” women would receive the same legal dignity as other Indian women.

Shayara Bano’s Battle: The Courage of One Individual

It is essential to remember that the Supreme Court’s 2017 judgment did not descend from the sky; it was the result of years of legal struggle by a courageous woman. Shayara Bano — a woman from Uttarakhand, abandoned by her husband through instantaneous triple talaq —

herself knocked on the doors of the Supreme Court. She challenged the practices of instantaneous triple talaq, polygamy, and nikah-halala as being contrary to Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution. Her case did not stand alone; the petitions of many other aggrieved women were joined with hers, turning it into a broad constitutional question.

In August 2017, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising judges of various faiths, declared instantaneous triple talaq unconstitutional and void by a 3-2 majority. It was a historic moment — but it was only half a victory. The Court had declared the practice unconstitutional, yet there was an absence of any effective enforcement mechanism against it. The ground reality was that the practice continued — because there was no penal provision to stop it. It was here that the Shah and Modi government intervened, and completed that unfinished victory.

The Legal Framework and the Parliamentary Journey

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 made any pronouncement of instantaneous triple talaq (spoken, written, or electronic) a cognizable, non-bailable offence, with provision for imprisonment of up to three years and a fine. Significantly, it made it mandatory for the husband to provide for the maintenance of the wife and children, and bail could be granted only if the magistrate first heard the aggrieved woman — a thoughtful, gender-sensitive structure.

It was a long legislative journey. An attempt in 2018 failed in the Rajya Sabha; the government issued an ordinance, and then reintroduced the bill. Ultimately the Act was passed in the Lok Sabha on 30 July 2019 and in the Rajya Sabha on 1 August, and came into effect from 1 August 2019.

The Steadfastness of Legislative Resolve

The legislative journey of this Act is itself a story of that firmness which is a recurring theme of this book. When the bill stalled in the Rajya Sabha in 2018, many political observers surmised that the government would abandon this “controversial” issue. After all, it was a politically risky step — a reform opposed by powerful orthodox organisations.

But the government did not retreat. It filled the legal vacuum through an ordinance, and then, returning with a thumping majority in the 2019 general elections, reintroduced the bill. It was a thoughtful strategy — just as Shah does in each of his political campaigns, he saw this reform too as a long-term resolve, to be completed despite short-term obstacles. When the bill was finally passed, it was the combined result of parliamentary skill and political firmness.

“Not Appeasement, but Development”

On 19 August 2019, at the Constitution Club of India, Shah gave words to the philosophical essence of this Act: *“We believe not in appeasement, but in development.”* He described political appeasement as a “shortcut” that obstructs holistic social progress.

He said: *“The abolition of triple talaq will ensure dignity and equality for millions of Muslim women.”* And citing a survey in which 92.1% of Muslim women had expressed the desire for the abolition of this practice, he placed it in the context of long-term national interest: *“This is about restoring honour and dignity to Muslim women. This is about establishing gender equality.”* He described the passage of this bill as “historic.”

The Message of 92.1%: The Community's Own Voice

It is necessary to dwell on that figure of 92.1%, for it is the axis of Shah's entire argument. Critics attempted to portray this reform as "an external intervention upon a community." But when more than nine out of ten women of that very community were awaiting the end of this practice, this argument collapses. This reform was not imposed upon any community; it was the answer to a long-suppressed demand of the women of that community.

Shah underlined this point repeatedly. His argument was that in a truly secular and democratic nation, the religious character of a practice does not place it above the touchstone of justice. If that practice violates the dignity of millions of women, and the women themselves demand its end, then it is the state's duty to stand on their side — and not on the side of those orthodox elements who wish to keep the practice alive under the cover of religion. This was the core of the "development versus appeasement" equation.

Shah Bano: A Historic Blunder

It is necessary to place the question of triple talaq in its historical context, for it is linked to one of the most controversial narratives in the politics of independent India — the Shah Bano episode.

In 1985, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of a divorced Muslim woman named Shah Bano, granting her the right to maintenance. This judgment was a historic step in the direction of gender justice. But the Rajiv government of the time, under pressure from certain orthodox elements, passed a law in Parliament that overturned this judgment. This step — widely regarded as the most explicit example of "appeasement" — is a symbolic reference point for the central thesis of this book.

The Shah Bano episode drew a clear dividing line: on one side, those who were prepared to sacrifice gender justice for short-term political gain; on the other, those who held the principle of equality to be supreme. When, three decades later, Shah and Modi abolished triple talaq, they in effect corrected the historic blunder of the Shah Bano episode. This is why they make it a symbol of the philosophy of “not appeasement, but development.”

A Cycle of Three Decades: From 1985 to 2019

The three decades between the Shah Bano episode and the Triple Talaq Act may be seen as a historical cycle. In 1985, a judicial victory was overturned in the name of political appeasement. In 2017, the Supreme Court once again ruled in favour of gender justice. And this time, in 2019, rather than overturning that judgment, the government strengthened it further — through a law that made it enforceable.

It is this very contrast that defines Shah’s political philosophy. The government of 1985 overturned the judiciary’s gender-justice judgment under political pressure; the government of 2019 implemented the judiciary’s gender-justice judgment with political resolve. Two opposite responses by two governments to the same question — this is precisely what clarifies the difference between “appeasement” and “nation-building.” Prime Minister Modi called it the correction of a “historic blunder,” and that description is apt — for it was truly the correction of that blunder of 1985.

The Silent Suffering of Millions of Sisters

Behind the practice of triple talaq lay the silent suffering of millions of Muslim women. By a single utterance — whether in anger, in intoxication, or even through a phone call or a message — a woman’s entire married life could be ended in an instant. She had neither any legal

protection, nor any economic security, and often not even any guarantee of her children's future.

This was not merely a religious or cultural question; it was a question of human dignity. And Shah presented it in precisely this form. The expression by 92.1% of Muslim women of the desire for the abolition of this practice was proof that this reform was not imposed upon a community, but was the answer to the silent demand of the women of that very community.

Here emerges an important point that lies at the heart of the anti-appeasement philosophy: true secularism lies not in the appeasement of a community's most orthodox elements, but in the protection of the rights of that community's most vulnerable members — especially women. Shah's argument was precisely this: that what had been done for decades in the name of "appeasement" was in reality an injustice to Muslim women.

A New Shield of Marital Protection

Understanding the protective provisions of the Act is essential to understanding its nature. Critics raised the apprehension that sending the husband to jail would render the wife and children even more helpless — for the breadwinner would be in prison. But the framers of the law had anticipated this apprehension and incorporated the provision for maintenance: the guilty husband must arrange for the sustenance of the wife and children. In addition, hearing the aggrieved woman was made mandatory in the bail process — so that her will and safety would remain paramount.

It was a subtle and thoughtful structure, demonstrating that this law was made not for punishment, but for prevention and protection. Its actual effect was precisely this: according to many reports, after the law came into being, there was a notable decline in incidents of

instantaneous triple talaq — because the practice now had legal consequences. This demonstrates that an effective law does not merely punish offenders; it changes behaviour itself, and thus prevents incidents that would otherwise have occurred.

The Cornerstone of the Anti-Appeasement Philosophy

This chapter on triple talaq is an important dimension of the central thesis of this book. It demonstrates that Shah’s principle of “not appeasement, but nation-building” is not against any community, but in favour of equality. The argument that had prevailed for seven decades — that to touch the “personal laws” of minority communities was possible only at the cost of their appeasement — was overturned by this Act. Shah put forward that true justice lies not in the short-term appeasement of a particular community, but in granting equal dignity to every citizen — especially to every woman.

Critics argued that this law only punishes Muslim men, and turns a civil matter into a criminal one. But the government’s rejoinder was clear: criminal provisions were necessary to make enforceable a practice already declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, and the safeguards of maintenance and bail addressed the criticisms. As Prime Minister Modi said, this law corrects a “historic blunder” and ends an “antiquated and medieval practice.”

Patel’s Echo: The Courage of Equality

Here the parallel between Patel and Shah emerges in a subtle but significant form. Sardar Patel too, in his own time, stood firm on the question of social reform, and he too placed the unity and equality of the nation above short-term political convenience. Just as Patel refused to bow before any orthodox resistance in the integration of the princely

states, so too did Shah refuse to bow before orthodox pressure on the question of triple talaq.

For both, the equality of the nation and the equal dignity of every citizen was an inviolable principle — not something that could be bargained away for political gain. The abolition of triple talaq was a modern expression of this very vision: a decision that was difficult in the immediate term, but that strengthened the nation's ideal of equality in the long term.

The abolition of triple talaq was the first flower of Shah's philosophy of "one nation, one justice." The next, and far more expansive, flower of that philosophy was the Uniform Civil Code.



CHAPTER 11

The Uniform Civil Code: One Nation, One Law

If triple talaq was the abolition of a specific injustice, then the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is the establishment of a broader principle — that in one nation, there be one uniform law for every citizen. It is a step in the direction of fulfilling an unfinished promise of the Indian Constitution, and a central pillar of Amit Shah’s philosophy of nation-building.

The Constitutional Basis: Article 44

Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, listed in Part IV (the Directive Principles of State Policy), directs the State to “endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.” But successive governments evaded it, treating it as politically untouchable.

The BJP’s argument — which Shah articulated — is that the personal laws outside the Hindu code (especially Muslim personal law) produced a “two-track” Indian citizenship at the familial level, which fractured the principle of equality before the law. This BJP demand goes back to the Jana Sangh’s manifesto of 1951, and by 1967 the Jana Sangh had explicitly resolved upon a uniform civil code governing marriage, adoption, and succession for all citizens.

The Constituent Assembly’s Dream

The very existence of Article 44 is proof that the Uniform Civil Code was not a later political invention, but a part of the original vision of the

framers of the Constitution. In the Constituent Assembly, many prominent framers, including Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, expressed the aspiration for a uniform civil code. It was acknowledged that implementing it immediately after independence would not be feasible — and that is why it was placed as a “directive principle,” that is, a goal towards which the State should continually strive.

Shah’s argument is centred precisely here: the directive principles are not rhetorical mottoes, but obligations given for implementation. The framers of the Constitution said “endeavour” because they knew it would be a gradual process — but process means not deferring, but advancing. To not even make the effort to touch this goal for seventy-five years was, according to Shah, a betrayal of the very vision of the framers of the Constitution. Ambedkar himself had said that however good a constitution may be, its fate depends upon those who implement it — and Shah makes this very courage of “implementation” the centre of his political philosophy.

Uttarakhand: The First Laboratory

The Uttarakhand government of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama passed the **Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code Bill** in the State Assembly on 7 February 2024, and notified comprehensive rules effective from 27 January 2025. This Code covers marriage, divorce, maintenance, succession, and live-in relationships. It provides for a uniform age for marriage (21 for men, 18 for women), equal succession rights for sons and daughters, and the mandatory registration of live-in relationships.

This step by Uttarakhand is an example of that very method of Shah’s that we have seen before — first a state-level laboratory, then national expansion.

From Laboratory to Paradigm

The significance of the Uttarakhand model lies not merely in one state's law, but in the paradigm it presented. It was the first instance in independent India of any state actually implementing a comprehensive uniform civil code. For decades this question had remained merely a subject of theoretical debate — some saying it was impossible, some saying it would be divisive. Uttarakhand gave a practical answer to these apprehensions: by creating a functioning, enforceable code.

This method is itself a reflection of Shah's organisational genius. Just as he had made Gujarat his governance laboratory, and just as he had expanded the BJP state by state, so too did he adopt the Uniform Civil Code as a gradual, state-based strategy. First to prove in one state that it is practically possible; then to expand it to other BJP-governed states; and ultimately to advance towards a national paradigm. This was his characteristic style of playing the “long innings.”

Gujarat and Assam: A Cascading Strategy

On 1 December 2024, Shah reaffirmed that “the BJP government will bring a uniform civil code in every state” and praised Uttarakhand's initiative. On 27 May 2026, after the Assam Assembly passed a UCC bill, Shah, congratulating Assam, said: “*The Uniform Civil Code has been the BJP's resolve from the very day of its founding... BJP-governed state governments are establishing one uniform law for every citizen.*” In this manner, Assam joined this list alongside Gujarat and Uttarakhand.

The Continuity of a Resolve

In Shah's response to the initiatives of Assam and Gujarat, one word returns again and again — “resolve.” This is not incidental. For Shah, the Uniform Civil Code is not an electoral issue or an immediate

political manoeuvre; it is the culmination of a seven-decade-old ideological resolve, running from the founding days of the Jana Sangh. When he says that it “has been the BJP’s resolve from the very day of its founding,” he presents it as a political lineage — an ideological commitment that has lived on across generations.

This continuity is a fundamental feature of Shah’s philosophy. Whereas many political parties keep changing their principles for short-term gain, Shah presents an ideological constancy that advances in the same direction for decades. The state-by-state cascade of the Uniform Civil Code — Uttarakhand, then Assam, and the declared commitment of Gujarat — is direct proof of this very patient, phased resolve.

Shah’s Constitutional Argument

On 17 December 2024, replying to the debate in the Rajya Sabha on the 75th anniversary of the Constitution, Shah presented a structural defence of the UCC that ties together many threads of his political philosophy:

- *“Muslim personal law was brought in as the beginning of appeasement in this country after the Constitution was adopted.”*
- *“If Shariah is to be applied, then apply it in full — why was it selectively removed from criminal law?”*
- *“If the spectacles through which we view the Constitution are foreign, then true Indianness will never become visible.”*

Shah’s fundamental argument is that the UCC is not some cultural imposition, but the constitutional fulfilment of Articles 14 and 21 (equality and a life of dignity). And the sequence of Uttarakhand-Gujarat-Assam is direct proof of this.

The Metaphor of “Foreign Spectacles”

The most memorable phrase in Shah’s arguments is the metaphor of “foreign spectacles.” In this metaphor Shah was saying something ideologically profound — that many of India’s policymakers and intellectuals view their nation’s problems through imported ideological frameworks, and for this very reason the fundamental nature of the Indian reality remains hidden from them. His argument was that the tendency to regard the Uniform Civil Code as “anti-minority” is itself a product of this very “foreign spectacles.”

According to Shah, if India is viewed through its own civilisational vision, then equality and uniformity are not foreign concepts, but natural expressions of Indian unity. In a nation that proclaims “unity in diversity,” the principle of civic equality is not against the identity of any community, but in favour of the nation’s shared citizenship. This metaphor was part of Shah’s broader cultural-nationalist vision, in which the solution to India’s problems must be sought within India’s own civilisational consciousness.

A Subtle Analysis of the Argument

The second point of Shah’s Rajya Sabha argument is especially sharp, and it is necessary to dwell upon it. His question was: if religious law is indeed to be applied for a community, then why is it applied selectively? In criminal matters, all citizens are subject to one and the same penal code — for theft, murder, or fraud, one and the same law applies to all. Why then, only in family matters such as marriage, divorce, and succession, separate personal laws?

In this question Shah points to a deep inconsistency. His argument is that this selectivity is itself a logical contradiction — a system that, as convenient, accepts now a uniform law and now a separate law. The Uniform Civil Code ends this contradiction, transforming it into a

coherent principle: just as criminal law is one for all, so too let civil law be one for all. This argument carries the constitutional principle of equality to its logical conclusion.

The Law Commission and the Constitutional Debate

The question of the Uniform Civil Code has been at the centre of Indian constitutional debate for decades. The 21st Law Commission issued a consultation paper on family law reform in 2018, in which it stated that the UCC “is neither necessary nor desirable in the present context” — but it also acknowledged the inconsistencies of the personal laws.

The BJP’s argument is that this consultation paper leaves the issue open for study, rather than closing it. Article 44 of the Constitution gives a clear directive, and to defer it for 75 years is, according to the BJP, itself an injustice to the vision of the framers of the Constitution. This argument is part of Shah’s broader vision that the directive principles of the Constitution are not merely mottoes, but goals for implementation.

The Historical Context of the Hindu Code Bill

Here an honest mention of a historical irony is necessary. In the 1950s, when Hindu personal laws were reformed through the Hindu Code Bill, its purpose was to bring gender equality into Hindu society. But reforms of the same kind were not made in the personal laws of other communities. Thus a “two-track” system came into being — reform in one community, the status quo in others.

Shah’s argument is that the Uniform Civil Code removes this historical inconsistency. If, in a secular nation, gender equality is a universal value, then it must apply equally to all citizens — not to any one community, but to all. This is the core of the philosophy of “one

nation, one law”: the principle of equality is not against any community, but the same for all.

Confronting an Honest Inconsistency

Here historical honesty demands that one fact be clearly acknowledged: at the time of the Hindu Code Bill, certain elements of that ideological family — with which today’s BJP traces its lineage — themselves opposed those reforms. This is a historical fact, and no attempt should be made to conceal it.

But in this very fact is also visible the maturity of Shah’s vision. A political movement is to be evaluated not by any single historical moment of its existence, but by its long-term trajectory. The Uniform Civil Code that the BJP and Shah advocate today is in reality the universal extension of that original ideal of gender equality of the Hindu Code Bill — carrying a reform confined to one community to all communities. In this sense, Shah’s advocacy of the UCC is the rectification of that initial hesitation, not its continuation. It demonstrates the capacity of a political ideology to refine and expand its ideals over time.

Live-In Registration and Women’s Protection

A particularly discussed provision of Uttarakhand’s Uniform Civil Code is the mandatory registration of live-in relationships. Critics called it an intrusion into privacy. But supporters argue that this provision is in reality for the protection of women — so that women living in live-in relationships may receive legal protection from abandonment and exploitation.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama described this Code as “a milestone for the rights of women,” one that would ensure equality in marriage, maintenance, and succession. This demonstrates that for

Shah and the BJP, the fundamental purpose of the Uniform Civil Code is not cultural uniformity, but gender justice and equality.

Towards One Nation

The Uniform Civil Code is the most expansive expression of Shah's philosophy of "one nation, one law." It is the extension of that same formula which appeared in Article 370 and triple talaq — that India's unity must be not only geographical, but also legal and civic. And it is necessary to make clear that this philosophy is based not on religious discrimination, but on the principle of equality — one uniform law for every citizen, whatever his religion may be.

The next dimension of this philosophy of nation-building was one of human compassion — to render justice to those refugees who had fled religious persecution and taken shelter in India. That narrative is the story of the Citizenship Amendment Act.



CHAPTER 12

The Citizenship Amendment Act: Justice for Refugees

One dimension of nation-building is the unity within borders; another dimension is human compassion towards those who escaped religious persecution and took shelter in India. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 was the legislative form of this very compassion — and at the same time, one of the most explicit examples of Amit Shah’s firmness.

The Unfulfilled Pledge of Nehru-Liaquat

The origin of this bill lay in the unresolved crisis of religious minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, whose population has fallen from 23% in 1947 to roughly 3% today — often on account of persecution. Shah and the BJP argued that the 1950 Nehru-Liaquat Pact had not protected these minorities, and that it left behind a humanitarian obligation which the Government of India had not only the right, but also the duty, to address.

The Legal Framework

The CAA amended the Citizenship Act, 1955 to provide an expedited path to citizenship for the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian communities who came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan — those who came to India on or before 31 December 2014. The residency requirement for naturalisation was reduced from 11 years to 6 years. This Act neither takes away nor affects the citizenship

of any existing Indian citizen (including Muslims). The rules were notified on 11 March 2024.

A Narrow and Well-Defined Provision

The most important thing in understanding the mechanism of the CAA is its limitation — what it does, and even more, what it does not do. This Act applies only to people from three specific countries, only of six specific religious communities, and only those who came to India by a specific date — 31 December 2014. It is not some open, indefinite provision, but a narrowly defined, one-time humanitarian relief.

The logical basis of this narrowness is clear: it is for those who have already fled persecution and come to India, and have been living here for years, but who remain in limbo in the absence of legal citizenship. The reduction of the residency requirement from 11 years to 6 years was also a part of this very humanitarian logic — because these people were not ordinary migrants, but refugees from persecution, who had no safe homeland to which to return. And most importantly: this Act takes away citizenship from no one — it only grants citizenship. Shah repeated this very point again and again, for this was the fact that was being most obscured in the storm of opposition.

The Parliamentary Journey

This bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Home Minister Amit Shah on 9 December 2019. It was passed in the Lok Sabha on 10 December by 311 votes to 80, and in the Rajya Sabha on 11 December by 125 votes to 105. Presidential assent was received on 12 December 2019, and it came into effect on 10 January 2020.

A Warrior on the Floor of Parliament

Those two days of debate in Parliament will be remembered in history as one of Shah's most powerful legislative performances. The margin of difference in the Rajya Sabha was relatively narrow — 125 to 105 — which shows that this bill was no easy victory in the Upper House. It was here that Shah's parliamentary skill appeared at its peak: facing hours of sharp criticism, he answered every objection point by point, cited historical facts and constitutional principles, and ultimately mustered the necessary majority.

It was a display of that characteristic style of his which observers have called that of a man “master of detail.” Shah builds a bill not merely on emotional appeal, but on a factual and constitutional foundation. In the CAA debate he wove demographic data, historical pacts, and constitutional jurisprudence — all into a coherent structure of argument. It was not merely a political victory; it was a display of legislative craft.

Shah's Four-Pillar Defence

In both Houses, Shah built his defence upon four pillars:

1. **Humanitarian relief:** This bill “will end the suffering of lakhs of refugees who are the victims of persecution.” Shah described it as a moral “act of mercy” for those who “endured religious persecution for decades.”
2. **Constitutional compatibility:** *“The CAB does not collide with any article of the Constitution... This bill violates neither Article 14, nor Articles 21 and 25.”* He described the religious-minority classification as a “reasonable classification” under Article 14.

3. **The distinction between refugee and infiltrator:** *“We distinguish between refugees — who are persecuted people saving their religion and honour — and infiltrators — who enter illegally.”*
4. **On the status of Muslims in the neighbouring countries:** Shah underlined that the constitutions of those three nations do not grant Muslims minority status.

In the Rajya Sabha on 11 December he reiterated: *“The only religion the Modi government follows is the Constitution of India”* and *“This bill is not against any minority of India.”*

Dwindling Minorities: A Human Tragedy

Behind the CAA lay a clear human fact. In 1947, the population of religious minorities — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians — in Pakistan (the then West and East Pakistan) was roughly 23%. Today it has fallen to roughly 3%. This decline is not merely demographic; it is the result of a long narrative of persecution, forced conversion, and violence.

Many of these minorities took shelter in India for years, but in the absence of legal citizenship they continued to live an uncertain life — neither full citizens, nor refugees. The CAA sought to resolve this human tangle, by providing them an expedited path to citizenship. Shah described it as an “act of mercy” — an act that grants honour and security to those who endured persecution for decades in the name of religion.

The Faces Behind the Statistics

23% to 3% — this is not merely a statistical decline; behind it lie lakhs of human stories. These are the families whose daughters were abducted

and forcibly converted; the temples and gurudwaras that were destroyed; the merchants whose property was seized; the communities who lived in constant fear on account of their mode of worship. These people had only one place to which to flee — India, which was their cultural and spiritual homeland.

Shah presented this argument as a historical responsibility. At the time of Partition, when the line was drawn, lakhs of minorities were left on that side where they became, in turn, the victims of persecution. India, as a civilisational nation, bore a moral obligation towards these persecuted people. The CAA was the belated fulfilment of that very obligation — a step about which Shah said that, had it been taken five decades earlier, the suffering of countless people could have been averted.

The Unfulfilled Pledge of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact

Shah placed the CAA in a historical context — that of the 1950 Nehru-Liaquat Pact. In that pact, India and Pakistan had pledged to protect their respective minorities. India fulfilled its pledge — Indian Muslims received full citizenship rights. But the condition of minorities in Pakistan continued to worsen.

Shah's argument was that if Pakistan did not fulfil its pledge, then it becomes India's moral obligation to grant shelter to those persecuted minorities who fell victim to that unfulfilled pledge. He said that had this law come fifty years earlier, this situation would never have arisen.

The Constitutional Argument of “Reasonable Classification”

The greatest objection against the CAA was that it discriminates on the basis of religion, and thus violates Article 14 (the right to equality). Shah's rejoinder was based upon a subtle constitutional argument — the principle of “reasonable classification.”

According to Indian constitutional jurisprudence, Article 14 demands equal treatment of people in like circumstances — but it permits reasonable classification between groups in differing circumstances. Shah argued that in those three Islamic nations — Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan — Muslims are in the majority, and therefore they do not fall into the category of “minorities who are victims of religious persecution.” Thus, granting expedited citizenship to persecuted religious minorities is a reasonable classification, not arbitrary discrimination.

The Logical Coherence of the Classification

It is useful to understand the principle of reasonable classification in a little more depth, for this is the very heart of the CAA’s constitutional defence. It is well established in Indian jurisprudence that equality does not mean mechanical uniformity — to treat the equal as equal, and the unequal as unequal, is itself true equality. A law makes a valid classification when (one) that classification rests upon a clear, intelligible basis, and (two) that basis bears a logical relation to the law’s purpose.

Shah argued that the CAA meets both criteria. The basis of the classification is clear — those people who are not the religious majority in those three countries and are therefore especially vulnerable to religious persecution. And this basis bears a direct relation to the law’s purpose — the purpose being to provide relief to people who are victims of religious persecution. Since Muslims are in the majority in those Islamic republics and do not face state persecution on religious grounds, their not being in this specific relief category is not discrimination, but a logical distinction. This argument makes the CAA an example not of arbitrariness, but of considered classification.

“Come What May”: A Symbol of Firmness

After the passage of the CAA, protests broke out across the country. And it was here that that quality of Amit Shah’s which is the central theme of this book was revealed in its most explicit form — firmness.

On 17 December 2019, against the backdrop of nationwide protests, addressing a rally in Dwarka, Delhi, Shah said: *“Come what may, the Modi government will ensure that these refugees receive Indian citizenship and live with dignity as Indians.”* He went on to say: *“I want to tell my students and my Muslim brothers and sisters that there is nothing to fear. No one’s Indian citizenship will be taken away.”*

This “come what may” — this phrase is the essence of Shah’s entire political philosophy. In the storm of criticism, amid the protests, he neither withdrew the bill nor offered an apology; he firmly reiterated his humanitarian argument. This is the very mark of a nation-builder — that he does not waver from his long-term resolve in the face of short-term political pressure.

Shaheen Bagh and the Courage of Restraint

The most symbolic centre of the protest became Shaheen Bagh in Delhi, where a sit-in continued for months. It was a moment that is an hour of trial for any government — when the pressure of the street is at its peak, and the tone of the media and of international criticism is intense. In such moments, a political leadership has two paths before it: either to bow before the pressure and repeal or suspend the law, or to remain firm in its resolve while keeping the door of dialogue open.

Shah chose the second path. He neither withdrew the bill, nor used hostile language towards the protesters. Instead, he reassured again and again that no Indian citizen’s citizenship would be taken away, and appealed to the protesters to read the actual provisions of the law, rather than believing in rumours. It was a rare combination of restraint

and firmness — a leadership that does not waver from its resolve, yet does not answer anger with anger. This was the mature form of Shah’s firmness.

The Confluence of Compassion and Firmness

The CAA is the symbol of a particular conjunction in Shah’s vision of nation-building — the confluence of compassion and firmness. On one side, it was compassion towards those persecuted people who had lost everything in the name of religion; on the other, it was the unwavering resolve to translate that compassion into law, however high the political cost. Often leaders are either compassionate or firm; Shah accomplished both together.

This combination echoes that image of Patel which was called the “Iron Man” — a leader whose heart was tender but whose resolve was firm as steel. Patel too had fulfilled the responsibility of rehabilitating refugees at the time of Partition with firmness. Through the CAA, Shah carried forward that very tradition — a step that was inspired by human compassion, but in implementing which he showed a steel-like firmness.

The CAA was proof of both Shah’s compassion and his firmness. The chapter that follows is of yet another of his long-term visions — the decisive campaign against the oldest threat to internal security, Naxalism.



CHAPTER 13

The End of Naxalism: Development and Security

An indispensable dimension of nation-building is internal security. And one of the oldest and most blood-stained internal threats to independent India has been Left-Wing Extremism, that is, Naxalism. One of the most concrete and measurable records of Amit Shah's tenure as Home Minister is that of the decisive campaign against this very threat.

A Problem of 1967

Left-Wing Extremism originated in the Naxalbari uprising of 1967 (West Bengal). By 2010, at its peak, India recorded 1,005 deaths related to Left-Wing Extremism. At its peak, more than 200 districts of central and eastern India were in the affected category. Under Shah's leadership, the Home Ministry presented it as a problem of national integration, for whose solution both security and development were necessary together.

A Blood-Stained Chapter of Half a Century

From Naxalbari to the twenty-first century, Left-Wing Extremism had taken a vast tract of India in its grip — what was called the “Red Corridor,” stretching from Bihar and Jharkhand to Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. This was not merely a problem of law and order; it was a direct challenge to the very sovereignty of the state. In these regions, the presence of the state had become so feeble that

extremist organisations ran parallel “people’s courts,” collected their own “tax,” and forcibly halted development projects.

In these regions, the citizens who suffered most were often the very tribal and impoverished communities in whose name the extremism was carried on. Roads were not built because they would be blown up; schools remained closed because they would be occupied; and every effort at development was obstructed by violence. It was this very contradiction that became the centre of Shah’s analysis — that Naxalism arose from the absence of development, and then sustained its own existence by obstructing that very development. To break this vicious cycle was the real challenge.

The “SAMADHAN” Doctrine and the Target of March 2026

Shah’s signature doctrine is the **SAMADHAN** framework — an acronym that covers an aggressive strategy, actionable intelligence, dashboard-based monitoring, and the adoption of new technology. Linked to it is a four-dimensional strategy that integrates security operations, development work, rights-based governance, and community mobilisation. Shah set a public deadline: *“A Naxal-free India by March 2026!”*

The Courage of a Deadline

To announce a public deadline for a complex, decades-old problem is in itself an act of political courage. Most leaders, in such sensitive matters, use vague, non-committal language, so that if the target is not met, they may escape accountability. Shah chose the opposite path: he publicly announced a clear date — March 2026 — and thus made himself and his ministry accountable to that target.

This is a symbol of that management style of Shah’s in which he transforms abstract goals into concrete, measurable, time-bound

objectives. A deadline is not merely a political announcement; it becomes an organisational driving force for the entire administrative apparatus. When both the target and the deadline are clear, every agency, every state police force, and every development department gains a sense of its role and pace. This was the very soul of the “SAMADHAN” framework — organised effort with a clear destination.

The Proof of Shrinking Districts

The most concrete proof of this strategy is the dramatic decline in the number of affected districts:

Year	Affected Districts
2010 (peak)	200+
April 2018	126 → 90
July 2021	70
April 2024	38
2025	18 → 11
March 2026 (target)	Towards zero

This is a reduction of more than 90% in affected districts over roughly 15 years. The most-affected districts fell from 12 to 3.

The Story of the Numbers

These figures should be read not merely as a table, but as a curve of progress. In 2010, when more than 200 districts were affected, it was difficult even to imagine that within a decade this number would be reduced to single digits. 126 to 90, then 70, then 38, and ultimately 18

to 11 — this decline was not linear, but a continually accelerating process, demonstrating that the strategy grew more effective with time.

The reduction of the most-affected districts from 12 to 3 is especially noteworthy, for these were the regions where extremism had taken root most deeply. Success in these hardest regions was the real test — and it is this very domain in which the security-development coupling of the “SAMADHAN” framework showed its greatest effect. This story of the numbers underlines a central point: it was no coincidence, but the result of a well-planned, continually monitored strategy.

A Wave of Surrenders and the Security Operations

Among the principal security achievements are: the elimination of 22 Naxals in Bijapur and Kanker, and of 16 Naxals in Sukma, in March 2025. The number of surrenders was also noteworthy — 1,045 in December 2023, and 881 in 2024. Over the past decade, more than 8,000 Naxals abandoned the path of violence. In one decade, more than 15 top Naxal leaders were neutralised.

The trend in casualties is dramatic: total deaths related to Left-Wing Extremism fell from 1,005 in 2010 to 150 in 2024; in 2022, for the first time in thirty years, this number came below 100.

Surrender: The Defeat of an Ideology

The significance of the surrender figures is not merely numerical, but also symbolic. When, in one decade, more than 8,000 extremists voluntarily abandon the path of violence, then it is not merely a military defeat — it is the defeat of an ideology. With a gun one can kill someone, but for surrender a change of belief is necessary — the belief that life in the mainstream is better than the path of violence.

This was the deepest dimension of the “SAMADHAN” strategy. The 1,045 surrenders in December 2023 and the 881 in 2024 are proof that the state employed not merely force, but also presented a credible alternative path — of rehabilitation, employment, and a dignified life. When development reached these regions, roads were built, schools opened, and opportunities for employment arose, the ideological appeal of extremism itself grew feeble. The decline in casualties from 1,005 to 150 and the falling below 100 for the first time in thirty years in 2022 — these figures tell the story of a nation that was slowly regaining its internal peace.

The Coupling of Development and Security

Shah clearly presented Naxalism as a development problem hidden under the cover of ideology. The account of infrastructure is impressive: 14,618 kilometres of roads were built in the affected districts; 7,768 mobile towers were installed; 1,007 bank branches and 937 ATMs were opened; 5,731 new post offices; 48 ITIs, 61 skill-development centres, and 178 Eklavya Model Residential Schools. On 2 October 2024, the “Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan” was launched for tribal upliftment.

This “whole-of-government” approach aligns the Home Ministry, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Rural Development, and the state police forces under a single dashboard. It demonstrates that for Shah, security and development are not mutually opposed, but two sides of the same coin.

The Expanded Meaning of “SAMADHAN”

Every letter of Shah’s anti-Naxal doctrine “SAMADHAN” represents a strategic principle — Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard-based monitoring, the

use of technology, an Action plan for every region, and blocking access to financing.

This framework is a reflection of that very data-driven, systematic working style of Shah's which we have seen in his electoral management. Just as he broke down elections into booth-level arithmetic, so too did he break down the struggle against Naxalism into measurable, monitorable components. The idea of dashboard-based monitoring is especially noteworthy — it is an example of bringing a modern management tool into the domain of internal security.

Cutting the Arteries of Financing

It is necessary to pay special attention to the final element of "SAMADHAN" — blocking access to financing — for it reflects a strategic insight that often goes overlooked. No armed movement can survive without money — a continuous flow of finance is necessary for weapons, ammunition, communication, and the running of the organisation. Extremist organisations raised this money through extortion, illegal mining, and smuggling.

Shah's strategy worked systematically to cut these financial arteries. Through the coordination of enforcement agencies, the funding sources of the extremists were targeted, and their financial networks were dismantled. This is proof of a modern, multi-dimensional security approach — the understanding that extremism is defeated not merely by the gun in the forest, but also by breaking its economic backbone. This was part of Shah's holistic vision in which every aspect — military, economic, developmental, and psychological — is accomplished together.

The Human Face of Development

The most important aspect of the anti-Naxal campaign was its development dimension. Shah argued again and again that Naxalism is fundamentally the result of a vacuum of development — where roads do not reach, where there are no schools and hospitals, where there are no banks and no opportunities for employment, it is there that the ideology of extremism takes root.

Therefore, alongside the security operations, a vast development programme was carried out. The 14,618 kilometres of roads are not merely a figure; they are the symbol of the state's reach to those villages that had been isolated for decades. The 178 Eklavya Model Residential Schools are a door to education for those tribal children who saw a school for the first time. This is the human face of development — a nation-building that is achieved through both the gun and the road.

Here Shah's holistic vision of nation-building becomes clear: integration must be not only of geography, but also of opportunity. Those regions that remained cut off from the mainstream for decades must be integrated into the nation not merely by security forces, but by development and dignity.

The Dharti Aaba Campaign: The Restoration of Tribal Dignity

The “Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan,” launched on 2 October 2024, was the symbolic summit of this vision of development. Its very name carries a deep meaning — “Dharti Aaba,” that is, “Father of the Earth,” which was the title of the renowned tribal hero Birsa Munda. Through this naming, the government gave a clear message: the tribal community is not at the margins of nation-building, but at its centre, and their dignity and heritage are an integral part of the nation's heritage.

This campaign expresses the deepest logic of the anti-Naxal strategy: for years extremism had exploited tribal discontent, convincing them that the state was their enemy. Programmes such as the Dharti Aaba campaign overturned this narrative — by showing that the state is committed to tribal welfare, education, infrastructure, and dignity. When development and dignity arrive together, the ideological ground of extremism itself becomes barren. This was the true confluence of “development and security.”

The Echo of Hyderabad

This campaign of Shah’s against Naxalism is a modern echo of Patel’s Hyderabad episode. Just as Patel resolved a situation of internal disorder through decisive action — rather than negotiation — followed by integration, so too did Shah resolve to end Left-Wing Extremism through the coupling of security forces and development. For both, the internal unity of the nation and the rule of law stood above any short-term compromise.

A Shared Legacy of Decisiveness

This parallel between Patel and Shah is not merely superficial; it reveals a shared political temperament. Patel had rejected the path of endless negotiation and indecision on the question of Hyderabad; he had understood that there are certain internal challenges before which firmness is the only responsible path. In the same manner, Shah rejected that tolerant-passivity towards Naxalism which had prevailed for decades, and in its place adopted a decisive, time-bound strategy.

But for both, decisiveness did not mean merely the use of force. Patel, after the integration of Hyderabad, incorporated it into the mainstream of the nation; Shah, by bringing development and dignity to the Naxal-affected regions, reintegrated them into the nation. This is

one of the fundamental elements of the identity of the “New Iron Man” — that very combination of firmness and integration which made Patel the “Iron Man,” now applied to a modern internal-security challenge.

This campaign against Naxalism is concrete, measurable proof of Shah’s philosophy of nation-building. And one of the most emotional and cultural dimensions of this philosophy was the centuries-old resolve of the Ram Mandir, whose narrative is the story of the next chapter.



CHAPTER 14

The Ram Mandir: A Resolve of Centuries, the Victory of Patience

Amit Shah’s connection with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is the most long-lasting thread of his political biography — it begins in the early 1980s with his role as a Sangh youth organiser in Ahmedabad, and reaches its fulfilment in 2024, during his ministerial tenure, with the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla. No example better illustrates the philosophy of the “long innings” than this.

The Ekta Yatra of 1990

By his own account, Shah began his political journey in 1977 by putting up posters for the Jana Sangh candidate Maniben Patel in Mansa. As a young Sangh worker, his first task of mass mobilisation was the **Ekta Yatra of 1990** — Lal Krishna Advani’s chariot-procession from Somnath to Ayodhya, which became the nationally galvanising event of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Shah’s official biography describes him as the “in-charge of the city of Ahmedabad” who “mobilised an ocean of people” in support of the Ekta Yatra.

This perspective is significant: for Shah the question of Ayodhya was never a religious abstraction, but a logistical challenge of mass mobilisation — precisely the skill that he later refined in Uttar Pradesh in 2014.

The Seed of 1977: A Poster-Pasting Adolescent

The roots of Shah’s Ram Janmabhoomi journey lie in an event that is itself a symbol of this book’s central metaphor — the “long innings.” In 1977, at a mere thirteen years of age, while pasting posters for the Jana Sangh candidate Maniben Patel in Mansa, an adolescent Amit Shah was recognised by senior observers of the Sangh. This coincidence is poignant — that the candidate was herself the daughter of Sardar Vallabhbai Patel. Thus the very starting point of Shah’s political journey was linked to the Patel family, as though destiny itself had bound the “New Iron Man” to the legacy of the “old Iron Man.”

Between this adolescent’s poster-work and the Pran Pratishtha of 2024 lies an interval of nearly forty-seven years. This interval is itself the key to Shah’s character. Whereas most politicians think in the language of immediate results, Shah devoted his entire political life to a resolve whose fulfilment would take decades. The adolescent pasting posters and the Home Minister lighting the Ram Jyoti — these are the two ends of one and the same person, joined by a thread of unbreakable patience.

A Multi-Generational Resolve

After the demolition of the Babri structure in 1992, the question of the Ram Janmabhoomi became independent India’s most long-lasting unresolved constitutional drama. For two decades it lived on behind the BJP’s manifestos, then re-emerged as a legal battle and a legislative pledge. Shah’s role over this long interval was three-dimensional — organisational (keeping this issue alive in the BJP’s narrative), electoral, and parliamentary.

The Art of Keeping a Legacy Alive

To keep a movement alive for decades — especially when it is stuck in the long process of the courts — demands a rare organisational skill. In such long intervals, the public's attention scatters, energy grows feeble, and issues are forgotten. One of Shah's fundamental roles was precisely this: that he kept this resolve alive in political memory — neither inflaming it aggressively, nor letting it grow cold.

This balance is the mark of a mature organiser. To keep an issue alive means to transform it into an enduring institutional commitment — in manifestos, in the consciousness of workers, and in the party's long-term strategy. Shah transmitted the question of the Ram Janmabhoomi in this very manner from one generation to the next, with the conviction that the constitutional process would, in its own time, find its way. This patience — not letting the resolve grow feeble in the waiting for a result — is the essence of Shah's entire political style.

9 November 2019: The Supreme Court's Judgment

When the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled unanimously on 9 November 2019 in favour of the Ram Mandir at the disputed site, and ordered the allotment of an alternative five acres of land for a mosque, Shah was among the first BJP leaders to respond. His statement that same day was: *“The Supreme Court's judgment will itself prove to be a milestone.”*

It was a deliberately measured line — almost in a judicial tone — reflecting that habit of Shah's of holding towards constitutional outcomes the same procedural reverence that he holds towards administrative matters.

The Political Message of Restraint

Shah's restraint in the moment of that unanimous judgment should not be underestimated. It was a moment for which he and his political family had waited for decades — a judgment that could have become an occasion for jubilant triumph for either side. To remain restrained in such moments, and to welcome the judgment in calm, institutional words such as “a milestone,” was in itself a display of political maturity.

This restraint was also a deliberate message. The unanimous judgment of the five-judge Constitution Bench was proof of the legitimacy of India's judicial institutions; a triumphant welcome of it could have diminished that legitimacy and heightened social tension. Shah, on the contrary, adopted a tone that presented the judgment as a natural culmination of the nation's constitutional machinery, rather than as the political victory of any one side. This restraint was itself a symbol of his reverence towards institutional processes — a reverence that defines his entire philosophy of governance.

22 January 2024: The Pran Pratishtha

The temple in Ayodhya — built by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust — was consecrated on 22 January 2024. Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla within the temple.

Shah's presence on that day is itself a study of his symbolic sensitivity. He did not himself attend the consecration ceremony in Ayodhya — he remained in Delhi. Instead, “at the request of Prime Minister Modi,” he lit the Ram Jyoti (lamp) at his residence after the ceremony. This conduct is characteristic of Shah's method: the public event Modi's, the role of the organisational operator Shah's, and the personal devotion reverent yet unostentatious. This was the very man

who preferred to avoid the front rank of an event that he had taken four decades to build.

The Lamp at the Birla Mandir: A Symbolic Choice

There is yet another poignant detail of Shah's conduct on that day. Not going to Ayodhya, he went to the Birla Mandir in Delhi for darshan, and then lit the Ram Jyoti at his residence. This choice was itself a symbol. The man who had devoted forty-seven years of his life to realising this resolve was, in that historic moment, present in the nation's capital, in an ordinary temple, like an ordinary devotee.

This humility arose not from any political compulsion, but from a deliberate choice of character. Shah left the public stage of that historic moment to Modi — a moment that could have been a source of lifelong glory for any politician. Instead, he chose a path of silent, personal devotion. This self-effacement — placing oneself behind the result so as to make the result supreme — is the highest maturity of the organiser. A man who harbours no craving for credit is the one who can carry long-term resolves to their fulfilment, for his attention remains fixed not upon his own image, but upon the goal.

Ayodhya from the Perspective of an Organiser

It is important to understand the meaning of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement for Shah from the perspective of an organiser. Where for many leaders it was an emotional or religious issue, for Shah it was also a challenge of mass mobilisation — of organising lakhs of people around a single purpose.

In the Ekta Yatra of 1990, a 25-year-old Amit Shah mobilised an ocean of people in Ahmedabad. This was the very skill that he later refined in Uttar Pradesh in 2014 — organising a crowd, giving it a direction, and transforming that energy into a political outcome. Thus

the question of Ayodhya was an early and decisive chapter of Shah's organisational journey.

A Legal Journey of Three Decades

From 1992 to 2019, the question of the Ram Janmabhoomi remained one of India's longest legal battles. It was a journey in which patience was tested extraordinarily — generations changed, governments came and went, but this question remained unresolved.

The unanimous judgment of the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on 9 November 2019 was the culmination of this three-decade journey. It is noteworthy that Shah welcomed this judgment in a measured, almost judicial tone — “a milestone” — and not with any triumph. This restraint was itself a symbol of his maturity and his respect for institutional processes.

A Singular Lesson in Patience

The entire journey of the Ram Janmabhoomi presents a singular lesson of Shah's political philosophy — that there are certain goals that can be attained only through patience, not through force or haste. After the demolition of 1992, it would have been simple to attempt to resolve this question through street agitation or intense political pressure. But Shah and the BJP chose a different path — the path of waiting for the constitutional and judicial process.

This choice was itself proof of a political maturity. To keep a resolve alive for decades, yet to respect the process of the court, and ultimately to attain the goal through a unanimous judicial judgment — this was a path that gave the temple a foundation of constitutional legitimacy, and not merely of political victory. For Shah, this waiting was no weakness; it was a strategic patience that ultimately ensured a more enduring and legitimate outcome.

The Philosophy of Symbolic Humility

Shah's conduct on the day of the Pran Pratishtha, 22 January 2024, is especially noteworthy. He did not go to Ayodhya; he gave Modi that historic moment. Instead, he lit the Ram Jyoti at his residence.

This conduct is a symbol of Shah's entire personality — the man who works from behind the curtain, who harbours no craving for public credit, and who prefers to avoid the front rank of an event that he had taken decades to build. This was that very complementarity of “Ram and Lakshman” — Modi the public face, Shah the organisational operator. This humility was no weakness, but a deliberate strategic and characterological choice.

The Victory of Patience

This journey of the Ram Mandir is the summary essence of Shah's entire political philosophy. In it every Shah-technique appears in its distilled form — patience, responsibility entrusted to senior leaders, mass mobilisation through the booth-level apparatus, parliamentary skill, and unostentatious personal devotion — all applied to a multi-generational resolve.

This, ultimately, is the true meaning of the word “Chanakya” that is used for Shah in Indian political vocabulary — a patience that can wait for decades, and then, in the decisive moment, carry its resolve to fulfilment.

Patel's Somnath, Shah's Ayodhya

Here a deep cultural parallel emerges between Patel and Shah that cannot be overlooked. Sardar Patel, immediately after independence, took up the resolve to reconstruct the Somnath temple — a step that became a symbol of the restoration of India's civilisational self-image.

For Patel, Somnath was not merely a temple; it was a symbol of the regaining of the nation's self-respect after centuries of assaults.

The Ram Mandir holds for Shah's generation the same symbolic significance that Somnath held for Patel's generation. And this coincidence becomes all the more poignant when we recall that the Ekta Yatra of 1990, in which the young Shah took part, began from Somnath itself and advanced towards Ayodhya — as though there were a symbolic bridge between Patel's Somnath-resolve and Shah's Ayodhya-journey. For both, the restoration of these cultural symbols was an integral part of the broader task of nation-building — a task that advances beyond physical integration to the restoration of the nation's cultural soul.

The Ram Mandir was the victory of Shah's long-term vision and patience. But throughout this entire journey there was yet another quality that appeared again and again — firmness, in Parliament, in the face of criticism. The narrative of that firmness is the story of the next chapter.



CHAPTER 15

The Cooperative Republic: A Silent Revolution

Amid the dramatic chapters of nation-building — Article 370, the CAA, the Uniform Civil Code — there lies a less-discussed yet immensely significant dimension of Amit Shah’s contribution: the reorganization of the cooperative sector. It is a silent revolution, one that is reshaping the very backbone of India’s rural economy.

The Birth of a New Ministry

On 7 July 2021, in an unexpected reshuffle during the second term of the Modi government, Amit Shah was appointed India’s **first Union Minister of Cooperation**. This decision created a dedicated Ministry of Cooperation, carved out from the jurisdiction of several older ministries, including Agriculture.

This appointment was, in itself, an echo of the Patel tradition. Just as Patel had “gathered the levers” — holding the offices of Deputy Prime Minister, Home, and the States Ministry simultaneously — so too did Shah gather multiple levers of authority by holding both the Home and Cooperation portfolios at once. And just as Patel had carried out nation-building through a new institution (the All-India Services), so too did Shah through a new ministry.

The National Prioritization of a Neglected Sector

This decision of 7 July 2021 was, in its time, unexpected for many observers. At a moment when the national discourse was centred upon

Article 370, the CAA, and other dramatic decisions, for the Home Minister to take on the additional burden of a new, relatively less glamorous ministry seemed an unusual choice. Yet it is precisely this choice that reveals the depth of Shah’s vision.

For decades, the cooperative sector had been the victim of institutional neglect — it was neither the priority of any single ministry, nor did it possess any dedicated national strategy. It was divided between the jurisdictions of the agriculture, finance, and other ministries, and led a fragmented existence under state-level cooperative registrars. Shah recognized this “stable institutional space” — precisely the method that has been the leitmotif of his entire life — and redefined it as a national priority. To bring a neglected sector to the centre of the national agenda is, in itself, a form of nation-building, even if it lies far from the dramatic headlines.

The Vast Scale of Cooperation

The importance of the cooperative sector can be grasped through its scale. The sector encompasses roughly 130 million producers and holds deposits exceeding 30 lakh crore rupees — a size larger than the GDP of many countries. Yet until 2021, this sector lay scattered amid the overlapping jurisdictions of several central ministries, numerous state-level cooperative registrars, and the absence of any single strategic coordination.

Shah’s task was to transform this scattered, vast sector into a well-organized, data-driven system — precisely the method he had adopted with the BJP’s organization and with the police apparatus.

“The Patriarch of the Cooperative Movement”

Shah’s connection with cooperation was not new. In 2001, as the national coordinator of the BJP’s cooperative cell, he had politically

organized this sector. His official biography calls him “the patriarch of the cooperative movement.” And his roots in cooperative banking ran deeper still — he was the youngest chairman of the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank, the bank that villagers came to call by his very name.

Thus the Ministry of Cooperation was no unfamiliar terrain for Shah; it was the national culmination of that early-life laboratory in which he had first learned grassroots financial organization.

An Accounting of the Reforms

The Ministry of Cooperation brought concrete reforms to the ground:

- **The computerization of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** — at a cost of 2,516 crore rupees, so that every village-level credit society could be brought onto a single digital platform.
- **Tribhuvan Sahkari University** — named after Tribhuvandas Patel, the founder of Amul, India’s first national cooperative university, whose foundation was laid on 8 July 2025 at Anand, Gujarat.
- **Bharat Taxi** — a driver-owned cooperative taxi platform, launched by Shah on 5 February 2026.
- The announcement of a wholly cooperative-owned insurance company, and the doubling of the housing-loan ceiling for cooperative banks.

A Familiar Method

In these reforms one sees Shah’s same essential method that has been the leitmotif of his entire life — the building of a permanent institution (Tribhuvan Sahkari University), an integrated data platform (the

computerization of 63,000 PACS), and new economic vehicles (Bharat Taxi, cooperative insurance). Just as in Gujarat the Forensic Science University, and in the police the CCTNS, so too in cooperation this digital and institutional framework.

The computerization of 63,000 PACS is especially noteworthy — it is an effort to transform 63,000 opaque village-level units into searchable, transparent nodes. It is that same silent, infrastructural form of modern nation-building that remains invisible, yet upon which the economic potential of rural India rests.

The Roots of Cooperative Banking: An Early Laboratory

To understand Shah's vision of cooperation, we must return to his early life. Between 2000 and 2002, Amit Shah was the youngest chairman of the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank — an institution that was at that time in deep financial crisis. It was here, in that laboratory of village-level financial organization, that he learned the lesson which would later become the philosophy of a national ministry — that cooperation is not merely a welfare idea, but a practical instrument for organizing the collective economic power of millions of small producers.

It is noteworthy that this early experience of Shah's is an example of that very "transferred discipline" which has been the leitmotif of his entire life. Just as he applied the lesson of booth-level organization to the BJP presidency, and the lesson of state-level home administration to the Union Home Ministry, so too did he apply the lesson of the district cooperative bank to the national Ministry of Cooperation. This is why his official biography calls him "the patriarch of the cooperative movement" — a title that is the acknowledgment not of any sudden appointment, but of two decades of continuous engagement.

“The Gathering of Levers”: An Echo of the Patel Method

The creation of the Ministry of Cooperation carries a deep Patelian echo that warrants further clarification. Immediately after independence, Sardar Patel had gathered multiple levers of authority into a single hand by holding the offices of Deputy Prime Minister, the Home Ministry, and the States Ministry — all three at once. This was no personal ambition, but a strategic necessity: the immediate task of nation-building demanded coordinated, concentrated authority.

Shah’s arrangement of 2021 is a recreation of this very paradigm. By holding both the Home and Cooperation portfolios together, he gathered the lever of internal security alongside the lever of rural economic organization. And just as Patel’s States Ministry was not an appendage of Agriculture or any older department, but an independent, dedicated institution, so too was the Ministry of Cooperation given an independent existence, separated from the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Ministry. This was, in itself, an institutional statement — that cooperation now stood not in the shadow of some larger ministry, but as a national priority in its own right.

Legal and Structural Innovation

The work of the Ministry of Cooperation was not confined merely to the announcement of schemes; it also sought to modernize the legal and structural framework of the cooperative sector. The doubling of the housing-loan ceiling for cooperative banks is one concrete example of this — a reform that directly enhances the purchasing power of rural and semi-urban families. Similarly, the announcement of a wholly cooperative-owned insurance company was the expression of a foundational vision — that millions of small producers should have available, within the cooperative framework itself, not only credit and markets but also protection against risk.

These innovations demonstrate that Shah’s vision of cooperation is not confined merely to reforming existing institutions, but extends to the creation of new economic vehicles. Bharat Taxi — a driver-owned cooperative taxi platform launched by Shah on 5 February 2026 — is its most innovative example. In an age where digital platforms are often concentrated in the hands of a few corporations, it is a bold attempt to carry the principle of cooperation into the modern “gig economy” — where ownership of the platform rests in the hands of the very drivers who labour upon it.

Tribhuvan Sahkari University: The Institutionalization of Knowledge

The most enduring example of Shah’s method of institution-building is Tribhuvan Sahkari University. Its foundation was laid on 8 July 2025 at Anand, Gujarat — and this choice of location is itself symbolic. Anand is the very soil where Amul and the White Revolution were born. And the university was named after Tribhuvandas Patel — that same Tribhuvandas who began Amul’s cooperative dairy.

The importance of this university lies in the fact that it institutionalizes the knowledge, management, and training of cooperation within a permanent academic institution. Just as Patel raised the “steel frame” of administrative knowledge through the All-India Services, and just as Shah institutionalized forensic science through the Forensic Science University in Gujarat, so too does Tribhuvan Sahkari University institutionalize cooperative management. It is an institution that will, for decades to come, produce trained human resources for the cooperative sector — a long-term investment whose benefit will be reaped for generations.

The Amul Paradigm

Shah has publicly congratulated Amul (GCMMF) and IFFCO for ranking first and second among the world's top ten cooperative organizations. This is the symbol of a vision in which Indian cooperative organizations are not relics of a Gandhian past, but globally competitive enterprises.

The example of Amul is the paradigm of Shah's vision of cooperation: that cooperative institutions are not merely instruments of welfare, but business enterprises that empower millions of small producers — farmers, cattle-rearers, fisherfolk, and women's self-help groups. This is the philosophy of "Prosperity through Cooperation" — rural prosperity through cooperation.

The Digital Transformation of 63,000 Societies

The most ambitious and far-reaching step among the reforms of the Ministry of Cooperation is the computerization of the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). With an outlay of 2,516 crore rupees, 63,000 PACS are being brought onto a single digital platform. It is necessary to grasp the reality behind this figure: the PACS is the lowest, most capillary-level unit of the rural credit system — the place to which the small farmer goes for seed, fertilizer, and short-term loans.

For decades these 63,000 units remained opaque, isolated, and dependent on manual ledgers. Many among them were victims of corruption, mismanagement, and the leakage of funds. Shah's method is to transform these into searchable, transparent, and interconnected digital nodes — precisely in the manner in which he had brought 16,390 police stations in Gujarat onto the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems). It is that same method of "connecting through data" that has been a permanent signature of Shah's entire public life. Once every PACS comes onto a digital

platform, it will be not only transparent, but will also be able to become an integrated distribution hub for banking, insurance, and government welfare schemes.

“Prosperity through Cooperation”: An Economic Philosophy

The core mantra of the Ministry of Cooperation is “Prosperity through Cooperation” — that is, prosperity through cooperation. This slogan expresses a deep economic philosophy. Two principal poles are often discussed in India’s economy — on the one hand, large corporations and private capital, and on the other, state-run welfare. Cooperation offers a third path: enterprise founded upon collective ownership, where the profit goes not to middlemen or external shareholders, but to the very producers who are the members and owners of the enterprise.

This philosophy is especially an instrument of empowerment for those classes that are individually weak in the marketplace — small farmers, cattle-rearers, fisherfolk, and women’s self-help groups. Alone, the bargaining power of each of these in the market is negligible; but as a cooperative organization, organized in their millions, they become a decisive force in the market. This is the essence of “Prosperity through Cooperation” — the empowerment of the weak through organization. And this philosophy is consistent with Shah’s broader political philosophy: that power comes from organization, whether that organization be political or economic.

A Silent Dimension of Nation-Building

The Ministry of Cooperation is the most distilled demonstration of Shah’s philosophy of nation-building. Here there is no dramatic parliamentary battle, no controversial bill — only patient, systematic institution-building. It demonstrates that for Shah, nation-building is the name not only of dramatic decisions, but also of that silent,

infrastructural work which modernizes the largest economic sector of rural India.

It is that same patience, that same long-term vision, which had been visible in Patel's "steel frame" — a construction whose benefit will be reaped for generations.



Part Four — The Unyielding Vision



CHAPTER 16

Unyielding in Parliament: A Rock in the Face of Criticism

The true test of a nation-builder comes not in calm waters, but in the storm. And that test of Amit Shah's came again and again upon the very stage that is the heart of democracy — Parliament. In this chapter we shall examine those moments when the sharpest blows fell upon Shah, and when, standing unyielding as a rock, he proved that a nation-builder is not deflected from his long-term resolve in the face of criticism.

“Come What May”: The Purest Steadfastness

As we have already seen in the previous chapter, on 17 December 2019, amid the nationwide anti-CAA protests, Shah declared at Dwarka in Delhi: *“Come what may, the Modi government will ensure that these refugees receive Indian citizenship.”* This sentence is the purest and most verifiable example of Shah's steadfastness. In a charged nationwide context, he refused to retreat.

Parliament: The Nation-Builder's Real Testing Ground

In a democracy, Parliament is the crucible where policies are not merely passed, but undergo their trial by fire before the public conscience. A dictator may rule by decree; but a democratic nation-builder must prove every one of his decisions on the stage of debate, must endure opposition, and must yet remain unyielding. This is why Shah's true

test as a nation-builder came in Parliament — and not in some solitary office.

It is especially noteworthy that Shah advances even his most controversial decisions through the parliamentary process itself — facing the division of votes, answering the questions of the opposition, and earning a majority. This is, in itself, a proof of democratic commitment. It would have been easier to govern by avoiding criticism, hiding behind ordinances or administrative orders; yet Shah repeatedly chooses to stand upon the most open, most adversarial stage of Parliament. It is this very choice — the choice of open combat — that lends his steadfastness a particular moral weight.

The Article 370 Debate: A Steady Voice Amid the Opposition's Clamour

When Shah moved the resolution for the abrogation of Article 370 in the Rajya Sabha on 5 August 2019, the clamour of the opposition was at its peak. Yet Shah's voice remained steady. He answered the objections one by one, built his argument with facts and dates, and finally secured the passage of that resolution which had for seven decades been considered “impossible.” This was that very “details man” who comes prepared with the particulars and stands with the resolve to win every battle.

Appeasement versus the National Interest: A Message Repeated Again and Again in Parliament

Shah used his parliamentary role to repeat, again and again, one consistent message — that the fundamental division of Indian politics is that of the national interest versus appeasement.

- **17 December 2024, Rajya Sabha** (debate on the 75th anniversary of the Constitution): He declared that the BJP

would bring a Uniform Civil Code in every state it governed, and accused the Congress of the “politics of appeasement.”

- **9 December 2025, the Vande Mataram debate:** He argued that the “division” of Vande Mataram was done for the politics of appeasement, which ultimately laid the groundwork for the partition of India. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge gave a sharp rejoinder, and this exchange was recorded in parliamentary history.

It is noteworthy that in these debates Shah does not shy away from criticism — he comes, he counter-strikes, and he stands firm upon his argument. This exchange, in which the opposition too counter-strikes with full force, is itself a proof of the vitality of democracy — and at the same time, of that steadfastness of Shah’s which does not bend before any blow.

A Direct Challenge to the Opposition’s Leaders

A noteworthy aspect of Shah’s parliamentary style is the direct, fact-based challenge he poses to the leaders of the opposition. On one occasion, when the opposition attempted to corner the government through a no-confidence motion, Shah responded with figures and facts and stood firm upon his substantive claim; the motion ultimately failed.

The Vande Mataram Debate: A Question of History

The Vande Mataram debate of 9 December 2025 is an excellent example of Shah’s parliamentary style. Shah argued that the “division” of the Vande Mataram song — that is, the decision in 1937 to adopt only two of its stanzas — was the result of the politics of appeasement,

which ultimately laid the groundwork for the partition of India. He said: *“This was the beginning of the politics of appeasement, and it ultimately gave birth to the partition of India.”*

This was a sharp historical claim, and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge gave an equally sharp rejoinder. He accused Shah of twisting and distorting history for political gain, and said that the decision to adopt only two stanzas of Vande Mataram was a collective decision of the Congress Working Committee, which included Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and J. B. Kripalani.

This exchange — in which both sides advance their respective arguments with full force — is itself a proof of the vitality of Indian democracy. And Shah’s role in it is noteworthy: he does not shy away from criticism, but presents a clear historical narrative and stands firm upon it, however sharp the rejoinder may be.

The No-Confidence Motion: An Assault of Facts

Another example of Shah’s parliamentary style emerged when the opposition attempted to corner the government through a no-confidence motion. Shah responded with figures and facts — he presented the data on the parliamentary attendance of the opposition’s leaders, made mention of their foreign speeches, and stood firm upon his substantive claim. The motion ultimately failed.

This is a proof of that preparation and fact-based firmness which is the hallmark of the “details man.” He fights in Parliament not with emotional fervour, but with an arsenal of facts and figures — precisely as he fights elections with the arithmetic of the booth level.

Self-Respect in the Face of Insult

A subtle aspect of Shah’s steadfastness is that he maintains his self-respect and composure in the face of insult or provocation. In the sharp

exchanges of Parliament, where personal attacks are frequent, Shah remains focused upon his substantive argument. This self-restraint is itself a kind of power — a power that comes not from clamour, but from steadiness.

The Scene of the No-Confidence Motion: An Arsenal of Facts

The scene of 11 March 2026 is a particularly noteworthy example of Shah's parliamentary steadfastness. When the opposition attempted to pressure the government through a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Shah, instead of an emotional counter-assault, opened an arsenal of figures. He cited the data on Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha attendance — 43 per cent, 52 per cent, and 51 per cent across different terms — and made mention of the foreign speeches of the opposition's leaders. The motion was ultimately defeated by a voice vote.

This scene lays bare the essence of Shah's parliamentary style. Where many leaders turn parliamentary combat into a game of rhetorical flourish or fervour, Shah makes it a game of preparation and fact. Every one of his rejoinders rests upon verifiable numbers — precisely as he rests his electoral strategy upon the minute arithmetic of the page-in-charge (panna-pramukh). This is that very “details man” for whom, in the words of his associate Devang Dani, “whether it be a village panchayat or Parliament, no election is small — every battle must be won.”

The Article 370 Debate: An Unyielding Argument of Five Pillars

It is fitting to examine the Rajya Sabha debate of 5 August 2019 in somewhat greater depth, for it was the most historic demonstration of Shah's steadfastness. Amid the opposition's clamour and threats of a walkout, Shah built his argument upon five clear pillars — national

integration (invoking the vision of Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Ambedkar), the human cost (according to him, had this arrangement not existed, 41,849 lives would not have been lost), equality (the “anti-woman, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal” nature of Article 370), impermanence (“it is not permanent”), and development.

What makes this debate a symbol of steadfastness is that Shah answered each objection not with clamour, but with structure. The Rajya Sabha passed the resolution by 125 votes to 61, and the Lok Sabha, on the following day, by 370 to 70. This force of numbers was itself a proof that Shah’s steadfastness was not mere oratory, but a well-organized parliamentary strategy.

The Presentation of the CAA: The Rock Behind the Bill

When Shah presented the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha on 9 December 2019, the atmosphere was electrically charged. The bill was passed in the Lok Sabha by 311 votes to 80, and in the Rajya Sabha by 125 to 105. But what came after the debate was an even harder test — the protests at Shaheen Bagh, and the Delhi violence of February 2020.

Throughout this entire charged period, Shah refused to retreat even an inch from his substantive claim. He repeated again and again that “no one’s Indian citizenship will be taken away” and that this law was not for the snatching away of citizenship, but for the granting of citizenship to persecuted minorities. The notification of the CAA rules on 11 March 2024 showed that this steadfastness was not mere rhetoric, but the continuation of a long-term resolve — one that remained firm upon its path even years after the initial storm had subsided.

A Portrait of a “Quiet, Intimidating Strategist”

An independent, foreign, credible source — the BBC profile of 3 May 2024 — describes Shah’s political presence. It portrays him variously as “the second most powerful man in India,” “the brain behind Modi’s election machine,” and “the details man who gets the job done.” This is a description of a man whose political capital is built not of the art of speech, but of organizational efficiency and steadfastness.

A Culture of Preparation: The Invisible Foundation of Steadfastness

An invisible yet fundamental source of Shah’s parliamentary steadfastness is his extraordinary culture of preparation. To stand like a rock in Parliament is not merely a question of strength of character; it is the result of that profound preparation which Shah undertakes before every debate. When he presents, in the Article 370 debate, a chain of dates, articles, and constitutional orders, or when he cites, in the no-confidence motion, the precise attendance percentages of the opposition’s leaders, this is not extemporaneous oratory, but well-planned preparation.

It is this preparation that gives him the confidence which does not waver in the face of criticism. An orator who is uncertain of his own foundation of facts bends before the clamour; but an orator who knows that every one of his claims rests upon a verifiable fact remains steady even in the storm. This is why even independent sources such as the BBC call him an “outstanding organizer and campaign strategist” — the source of his political power is not the fervour of the art of speech, but the discipline of fact and organization.

Respect for the Opposition, the Courage to Disagree

A subtle yet important aspect of Shah's parliamentary style is that, while regarding the presence of the opposition as an indispensable part of democracy, he also possesses the courage to disagree with it sharply. The exchange with Kcharge in the Vande Mataram debate is an excellent example of this — both sides advance their respective historical narratives with full force, and neither retreats nor abandons the stage.

This balance — acknowledging the legitimacy of the opposition, yet remaining unyielding upon one's own argument — is itself the hallmark of a mature democratic leadership. Shah is neither wounded by criticism nor vengeful; he takes it as an intellectual combat and confronts it upon the terrain of facts. This is that very Patelian quality which was visible upon the maidan of Calcutta, when Patel, despite disagreement, urged respect for the constitutional structure. Before a living opposition, nation-building that endures for decades demands precisely this balance.

The Philosophy of Steadfastness

This steadfastness of Shah's in Parliament is no obstinacy, but a philosophy. It springs from the conviction that those decisions which serve the long-term interest of the nation, however controversial they may be at the outset, will be vindicated by history. Just as Patel remained unyielding on the decisions of Hyderabad and Junagadh despite criticism, so too did Shah remain unyielding on Article 370, the CAA, and the Uniform Civil Code.

This steadfastness is the very heart of this book's central thesis. But before we reach the broadest formulation of this thesis, two chapters are necessary — one on the meaning of that "Iron Man" title, which is transmitted from Patel to Shah; and another on that vast statue which has become the visible symbol of this transmission.

Chapter 16



CHAPTER 17

India's Bismarck: The Tradition of the Iron Man

“Iron Man” — this title holds a special place in the Indian political consciousness. It is the symbol of firmness, decisiveness, and unwavering devotion to the nation. Sardar Patel is the original bearer of this title. But this title is also a tradition — a tradition that, according to this book, is transmitted to Amit Shah. In this chapter we shall investigate the meaning of this title, its historical context, and its continuity.

The Cultural Weight of a Title

In the political consciousness of any nation, certain titles carry far more weight than ordinary praise. “Mahatma,” “Netaji,” “Sardar” — and “Iron Man” — these are not mere epithets, but the abbreviations of an entire ideal of character. When the Indian public mind hears the words “Iron Man,” a distinct image arises within it: a man who does not break under pressure, who is not swayed by the temptation of popularity, and who places the long-term interest of the nation above immediate political convenience.

It is because of this cultural weight that the association of this title with any contemporary leader is a serious claim — and not a superficial flattery. When commentators, thinkers, and the government itself call Amit Shah the inheritor of Patel’s “iron tradition,” they are claiming a distinct continuity of character. The task of this chapter is to investigate this claim — to ask not only whether Shah is firm, but

whether his firmness is of the same kind that was Patel's hallmark: democratic, constitutional, and centred upon the unity of the nation.

The Meaning of “Iron Man”

The basis for Patel being called the “Iron Man” was that record in which he integrated 565 princely states with firmness and decisiveness. This title was not the symbol of any military conquest or cruelty; it was the symbol of that firmness of character which can take harsh decisions when necessity demands, but whose fundamental purpose is the unity of the nation.

This same quality is visible in Amit Shah. When he abrogated Article 370, or when he made the “come what may” declaration on the CAA, or when he stood steady amid the storm of criticism in Parliament — each time he was demonstrating that same “iron” character which was Patel's hallmark. It is no coincidence that commentators call him the inheritor of Patel's “iron tradition.”

A Title Born of Bardoli

To understand the title of “Iron Man,” we must go to its roots. This title was not conferred by any government or party; its origin was at the grassroots. In the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, when Patel led the peasants against a 22 per cent increase in land revenue and compelled the British authority to retreat, the women of the Bardoli taluka gave him the title of “Sardar” — that is, leader, chief. This was a bottom-up, indigenous tribute.

It is this grassroots legitimacy that is the true basis of the title of “Iron Man.” It sprang not from any throne or office, but from that firmness which stood unyielding before power for the welfare of the people and the interest of the nation. And it is this quality that makes this title more than a personal honour — a tradition. When we say that

this tradition is transmitted from Patel to Shah, we are speaking not of any bond of blood or succession, but of the continuity of that quality of character — firmness, decisiveness, and unwavering devotion to the unity of the nation.

The Bismarck Comparison: Similarity and Difference

Patel is often compared to Germany's "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck, who unified 39 scattered German states to establish a German Empire. This comparison is understandable — both integrated scattered territories against unprecedented obstacles, and both regarded a unified nation as a source of strength and stability.

But this comparison also sheds light upon an important difference. Bismarck adopted the policy of "blood and iron" — he established Prussian dominance through wars against Austria and France, and raised an authoritarian monarchy in which individual liberties were suppressed. Patel, by contrast, achieved integration chiefly through persuasion, compromise, and the Instrument of Accession, and laid the foundation of a democratic, secular republic where all religions were regarded as equal.

This difference is important, and it also underscores the distinctiveness of Amit Shah's action on Kashmir. Shah carried out the abrogation of Article 370 not in Bismarck's style of "blood and iron," but in Patel's constitutional style — through the parliamentary process, a presidential order, and the seal of the Supreme Court. Thus Shah is the inheritor not of Bismarck, but of Patel — of an Iron Man who joins firmness to democracy.

Hyderabad and Junagadh: The Practical Form of Firmness

Patel's "iron" firmness can be seen most clearly in his two decisive episodes — Junagadh and Hyderabad. In Junagadh, where the Nawab

declared accession to Pakistan despite geographical incongruity, Patel established the principle that the decision must be the people's, and not the ruler's alone. Through pressure, blockade, and finally the plebiscite of 20 February 1948 — in which 99.95 per cent of the voters chose India — Junagadh acceded to India.

In Hyderabad, where the Nizam desired independence and the terror of the Razakars was rampant, Patel showed “no patience for negotiation.” In “Operation Polo” of September 1948, roughly 35,000 Indian soldiers defeated the Nizam's army in five days, and the Nizam signed the Instrument of Accession. But here too there was a humane side to Patel's iron firmness — when the Sundarlal Committee presented its assessment of the deaths in communal violence, Patel expressed anger at this excess and rejected it. This demonstrates that “Iron Man” means not cruelty, but that firmness which takes decisive action when necessity demands, yet whose moral centre always remains humane.

This same practical firmness resonates in Shah's episodes. Just as Patel completed the unfinished integration of Junagadh and Hyderabad, so too did Shah complete that unfinished work of Jammu and Kashmir which Patel had left behind as an incomplete window. The difference lies only in the means — Patel's means was a mixture of diplomacy and force, Shah's means the Constitution and a parliamentary majority.

“The Steel Frame”: The Iron Dimension of Institution-Building

One dimension of the title “Iron Man” often remains neglected — and that is institution-building. Patel's firmness was manifested not only in the integration of the princely states, but also in the building of that permanent administrative framework which he himself called the “steel frame.” Defending the All-India Services, constituted on 26 January

1950, he said in the Constituent Assembly: “There is no alternative to this administrative system... These men are the instrument. Remove them, and I see nothing but anarchy across the whole country.”

This foresight is a deep dimension of the “iron” character — that firmness means not only the decisiveness of the moment, but also the building of those permanent institutions which sustain the nation even after any single individual has departed. Patel’s “steel frame” was built upon this very principle: a service in which the officer would possess such security that he could say “no” to a partisan Chief Minister.

This iron dimension of institution-building is manifested in Shah as well — whether it be the permanent organizational framework of the BJP, the Forensic Science University of Gujarat, the CCTNS network of the police apparatus, or Tribhuvan Sahkari University of the cooperative sector. For both Iron Men, nation-building is the name not only of dramatic moments, but also of those silent, permanent frameworks that endure for generations. It is this dimension that raises the title “Iron Man” above mere firmness to an enduring creativity.

Speed versus Patience

Another dimension of the comparison between Bismarck and Patel is speed. Bismarck achieved integration at a relatively rapid pace, through wars. Patel too integrated the princely states with a remarkable speed of eighteen months, but his means was not force, but a mixture of diplomacy and firmness.

Amit Shah’s style differs from both of these — and therein lies its distinctiveness. Shah’s speed is “patient speed.” He possesses the patience to build an organization over fifteen years, and then, when the decisive moment arrives, to act with swiftness. The abrogation of Article 370 is its ideal example — decades of waiting and preparation,

and then decisive action in a single day. It is a unique synthesis of both Bismarck's immediate swiftness and Patel's diplomatic patience.

Numbers and Means: A Comparative Accounting

It is useful to place the comparison of Bismarck and Patel upon the touchstone of numbers, for thereby the relative magnitude of the challenge faced by each becomes clear. Bismarck integrated roughly 39 German states; Patel, roughly 562 princely states. This difference is not merely numerical — it is a difference of complexity. Five hundred and sixty-two independent rulers, each with his own army, currency, tradition, and ambition; and to thread all of these into a newborn nation, bloodied by partition, within roughly eighteen months — this is a unique achievement in world history.

And the difference of means is even more fundamental. Bismarck's means was "blood and iron" — wars against Austria (1866) and France (1870–71), through which Prussian dominance was established. Patel's principal means was the Instrument of Accession — a legal document that surrendered to the centre only defence, foreign affairs, and communications, and was so limited that the rulers could sign it without losing their prestige. It was V. P. Menon's diplomacy of "talk, tea, and dinner," in which force was always held in reserve, but the primary means was always persuasion. Only Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Jammu and Kashmir were exceptions, where a harsher means proved necessary.

Two Different Nations: Monarchy versus Republic

The most profound dimension of the comparison is that the nations which Bismarck and Patel forged were fundamentally different in nature. Bismarck raised an authoritarian Prussian monarchy, whose centre was the emperor and the army, and in which individual liberties

and democratic institutions occupied a subordinate place. Patel, by contrast, laid the foundation of a democratic, secular republic — where all religions were regarded as equal, and where the source of power was the people.

This difference is manifested in Patel's own conduct. In his speech delivered upon the maidan of Calcutta on 3 January 1948, Patel — who was himself organizationally firm — urged the RSS to “respect the Constitution of India.” Here we see an Iron Man who, despite disagreement, remains devoted to the democratic structure. His famous statement — “Religion is a matter between man and his God” (Ernakulam, 15 May 1950) — is an expression of this very republican vision.

This same republican spirit resonates in Shah's manner of working. When he abrogated Article 370, the means was not Bismarck's “blood and iron,” but Patel's constitutional path — Constitutional Orders 272 and 273, a majority in Parliament, and finally the unanimous affirmation of a five-member bench of the Supreme Court on 11 December 2023. Thus Shah proves to be the inheritor not of Bismarck, but of Patel — of an Iron Man who joins firmness to the discipline of democracy and the Constitution.

The Transformation of the Apparatus: From Extra-Constitutional to Constitutional

In the continuity from Patel to Shah there is also a subtle yet important transformation, which ought to be honestly underscored. Patel had to work in an age when the constitutional framework was still being built; hence he had available the means of extra-constitutional pressure — the Instrument of Accession, the privy purse, the blockade, and finally the “police action.” Shah must work within a mature, established constitutional order; hence his means is wholly constitutional — a parliamentary majority and judicial affirmation.

This is why some commentators call Shah “Patel 2.0” — the same goal (national integration), but through an advanced, wholly constitutional means. This statement of Ram Madhav’s (7 November 2020) expresses this very continuity: “Had Sardar Patel been India’s first Prime Minister, there would have been no problem of Jammu and Kashmir at all.” This statement threads Patel’s firmness and Shah’s action into a single historical arc.

The Transmission of a Tradition

In the end, the title of “Iron Man” is the identity not of an individual, but of a tradition — a tradition that holds the unity of the nation as supreme, that remains unyielding in the face of criticism, and that joins firmness to the democratic and constitutional path.

Patel was the founder of this tradition; and, according to this book, Amit Shah is its contemporary inheritor. This title is no self-conferred honour, but the acknowledgment of a historical continuity — one that the BJP itself, its thinkers, and the government have repeatedly underscored. And the most vast, most visible symbol of this continuity is the Statue of Unity, whose story is that of the next chapter.



CHAPTER 18

The Statue of Unity: A Monument to the Patel Legacy

At Kevadia in Gujarat, upon the bank of the Narmada river, stands a statue 182 metres tall — the tallest statue in the world. It is the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and its name is the “Statue of Unity.” It is not merely a monument; it is the most visible and most deliberate symbol of the Patel-Shah continuity.

The Language of Statues

Statues are the silent language of a nation. They tell us whom a society wishes to remember, whom it regards as an ideal, and which values it wishes to transmit to the generations to come. A nation forges its self-image through its statues — and it is therefore deeply significant whom independent India decided to dedicate its largest statue to.

In many countries of the world, the tallest statues are of religious figures, emperors, or military conquerors. India, by contrast, dedicated its supreme statue to a statesman whose identity was not conquest, but integration — who threaded a nation together not with the sword, but with persuasion and the Instrument of Accession. This choice is, in itself, a statement of values: that India regards unity as its supreme political value, and that the work of integration is more memorable than the work of conquest. Without understanding this silent language, one cannot grasp the full meaning of the Statue of Unity.

The Figures of a Statue

The Statue of Unity was inaugurated on 31 October 2018, on Patel's 143rd birth anniversary, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Its height — 182 metres — was deliberately chosen to correspond to the 182 seats of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly. Its construction was carried out by Larsen & Toubro at a cost of roughly 2,989 crore rupees, and its sculptor was Ram V. Sutar. The conception of this statue was made in 2010, by the then Chief Minister Modi.

These figures tell a story in themselves. For the tallest statue in the world to be not of some military conqueror or emperor, but of a statesman who integrated a scattered nation — this is, in itself, a political and cultural statement.

An Engineering Achievement

The Statue of Unity is not merely a symbolic monument; it is also an extraordinary engineering achievement. Standing at a height of 182 metres, this statue is nearly twice as tall as America's Statue of Liberty. In its construction, Larsen & Toubro employed advanced structural engineering — a bronze cladding, a steel frame, and a foundation capable of withstanding the seismic and wind pressures upon the bank of the Narmada.

Within the statue there is a museum, an exhibition hall, and a viewing gallery, which carries visitors to the height of Patel's chest, from where a panoramic view of the Sardar Sarovar Dam and the surrounding valley can be seen. Thus the statue has become not merely a static monument, but a living centre of tourism, which attracts millions of visitors every year and contributes to the regional economy and to employment. This demonstrates that monument-building has been joined to economic development and public participation — an effort that combines the symbol with practical utility.

The Restoration of Patel

The deep significance of the Statue of Unity lies in the fact that it restores Patel to a central place in Indian national memory. In the decades after independence, Nehru was given a central place in the Indian political narrative, while Patel's contribution remained relatively in the background.

The BJP of Modi and Shah made a deliberate effort to correct this imbalance. The Statue of Unity is the most tangible form of this effort — a monument that establishes Patel not as one among the many leaders of the freedom era, but as the chief architect of modern India.

National Unity Day

Alongside the statue, every 31 October — Patel's birth anniversary — is observed as “National Unity Day” (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas), in which a “Run for Unity” is organized across the country. As Home Minister, Amit Shah himself leads these events.

On 31 October 2019, Shah flagged off the “Run for Unity” on Patel's 144th birth anniversary. In 2022, he said that “Patel's visionary integration — of 562 princely states — decisively countered the British policy of ‘fragmentation.’” Thus this annual ritual of National Unity Day joins Patel to the present-day integrationist policy.

The Transformation of Kevadia: From Monument to Regional Development

A less-discussed yet important dimension of the Statue of Unity is the comprehensive transformation of the Kevadia region. What was once a relatively underdeveloped area on the bank of the Narmada has now become a major tourist destination, where museums, gardens, and visitor facilities have been developed. This demonstrates that an effort

has been made to join symbolic monument-building to regional economic development.

This combination is itself a signature of the Shah-Modi manner of working: never to allow a symbol to remain a mere symbol, but to join it to practical utility — employment, tourism, infrastructure. Just as, in the other dimensions of nation-building, anti-Naxalism was joined to the development of roads and banks, so too was this monument to Patel’s memory joined to regional prosperity. It is also a practical rejoinder to the critics’ objection — that it is merely an expensive symbolic monument: that this monument is a living economic centre, and not an inert idol.

A Deliberate Architecture

Here lies a profound insight. The Statue of Unity, National Unity Day, and the abrogation of Article 370 — these three together constitute a deliberate symbolic architecture. This architecture threads Patel, Article 370, and Shah into a single narrative in the public memory: Patel who began the integration, and Shah who completed it.

This architecture is not accidental. It is the acknowledgment of the fact that the individual or party which holds claim upon Patel’s legacy also holds claim, in the decades to come, upon the interpretation of India’s origin-story. And it is for this reason that the Statue of Unity is not merely a tribute, but a political and cultural claim.

The Journey of a Conception: From 2010 to 2018

The story of the Statue of Unity begins in 2010, when the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, conceived it. This eight-year journey — from conception to inauguration — is itself an example of that “patient speed” which is the hallmark of the Modi-Shah manner of

working. To advance a vast, unprecedented project with patience, step by step, and then to complete it upon a symbolic date.

The statue was constructed by Larsen & Toubro (L&T), and its sculptor was the Padma-honoured Ram V. Sutar — who shaped Patel’s figure with not only physical immensity, but also a steady, firm dignity. The total cost of the statue was roughly 2,989 crore rupees (roughly 42 crore dollars). And its inauguration took place upon a deliberate date — 31 October 2018, Patel’s 143rd birth anniversary. This choice of date was no accident; it joins the statue directly to Patel’s commemorative date, so that every year this day might revive Patel in the national memory.

The Symbolism of Height

The 182-metre height of the Statue of Unity is not merely an engineering achievement — it is a deliberate symbolic statement. This height was deliberately chosen to correspond to the 182 seats of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly, joining the statue to the idea of democratic representation. And the fact that the tallest statue in the world is not of some military conqueror, emperor, or religious figure, but of a statesman who integrated a scattered nation through dialogue and the Instrument of Accession — this is, in itself, a statement of values.

Many of the world’s vast statues celebrate power, conquest, or divinity. The Statue of Unity, by contrast, celebrates “unity” — a political value, a civic achievement. It is itself the physical expression of that philosophy which is the central theme of this book: that the unity of the nation is the supreme value.

The Politics of Memory: The Correction of an Imbalance

To understand the Statue of Unity, it is necessary to understand the politics of Indian national memory. In the decades after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru and his family held a central place in the Indian political narrative — many institutions, schemes, and public sites were dedicated in their names. In this narrative, Patel’s contribution, though acknowledged, remained relatively in the background.

The BJP of Modi and Shah presented the correction of this imbalance as a deliberate historical rectification. This statement of Ram Madhav’s (7 November 2020) expresses this very vision: “Had Sardar Patel been India’s first Prime Minister, there would have been no problem of Jammu and Kashmir at all.” The Statue of Unity is the most tangible form of this rectification — a monument that restores Patel not as one among the many leaders of the freedom era, but as the chief architect of modern India. Critics call it a political strategy — the presentation of Patel as an anti-Nehru, right-leaning leader. Supporters call it a historical justice — the granting of his rightful place to a neglected nation-builder. There is a grain of truth in both views, and an honest reader will weigh both and draw his own conclusion.

National Unity Day: An Annual Ritual of Memory

Alongside the statue, the “National Unity Day” observed every 31 October turns this memory into a living, annual ritual. On 31 October 2019, as Home Minister, Shah flagged off the “Run for Unity” on Patel’s 144th birth anniversary. This was the very day on which the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act came into effect — not a coincidence, but a deliberate symbolic alignment.

In 2022, on this occasion, Shah said that Patel’s visionary integration — of 562 princely states — decisively countered the British policy of “fragmentation.” Through this annual ritual, Patel’s historical

achievement is continually joined to the present-day integrationist policy. National Unity Day is thus not merely a day of remembrance, but an instrument of perpetual codification — one that reiterates this message anew every year.

A Deliberate Symbolic Triangle

Here we arrive at a central insight of this book — the symbolic triangle between Patel, Article 370, and Shah. The Statue of Unity (2018), the coming into effect of the Jammu and Kashmir reorganization on 31 October 2019, and the National Unity Day observed every 31 October — these three are threaded into a single line. This triangle composes a clear narrative in the public memory: Patel who began the work of integration, and Shah who completed its remaining part — Jammu and Kashmir.

This symbolic architecture is not accidental. Behind it lies a deep understanding that the individual or party which holds claim upon the heroes of a nation's origin-story also holds claim upon the interpretation of that nation's future direction. In the 2024 film "Article 370," a character named "Patel" — clearly based upon Amit Shah — was the most direct popular example of this cultural alignment. Thus the Statue of Unity has become not merely a monument, but the permanent focal point of a moving, living political-cultural claim.

An Honest Mention of the Criticism

Intellectual honesty demands that we also mention, in detail, the criticisms of this project. The residents of some villages around Kevadia — especially the people of the Tadvi tribe — held protests against the construction of the statue over land rights. There were also reports of the arrest of roughly 300 activists before the inauguration. Some critics

raised questions about the project's heavy cost, and some criticized it by placing it within a "Hindu nationalist" framework.

An honest confrontation with these criticisms is necessary. Concerns of land rights and livelihood are real concerns associated with any vast infrastructure project, and it is not proper to dismiss them. A balanced view acknowledges that the tension between monument-building and the rights of local communities is a real moral question — whose answer ought to be sought in the long-term benefits of tourism, employment, and regional development, and not by ignoring these concerns.

But despite these criticisms, the Statue of Unity has become an enduring symbol that gives tangible form to Patel's legacy — and, through it, to that philosophy of nation-building which is transmitted from Patel to Shah. It is a monument to that long-term vision which is the central theme of this book.

This Statue of Unity, in its immensity, delivers a simple yet powerful message: that the unity of the nation is the supreme value, and that those who worked for this unity — from Patel to Shah — are the true architects of India. And the broadest formulation of this very philosophy is the subject of the next chapter.



CHAPTER 19

Long-Term Nationalism versus Short-Term Appeasement

We now arrive at the very heart of this book’s central thesis. All of Amit Shah’s principal decisions — Article 370, triple talaq, the Uniform Civil Code, the Citizenship Amendment Act, and the anti-Naxalism campaign — are joined by a single thread: the priority of long-term nation-building over short-term political appeasement.

A Consistent Philosophy

The most noteworthy aspect of Shah’s politics is its consistency. Whether he is speaking on triple talaq (“we believe not in appeasement, but in development”), or on the Uniform Civil Code (“Muslim personal law was brought in as the beginning of appeasement”), or on citizenship (“the only religion the Modi government follows is the Constitution of India”) — each time the same fundamental division is manifested: the national interest versus appeasement.

This is no accidental sloganeering, but a deliberate political philosophy. Its fundamental argument is that for decades after independence, Indian politics was driven by “vote-bank appeasement” — where a particular community was given special treatment for short-term political gain, at the cost of the long-term unity and equality of the nation. Shah’s claim is that he and Modi overturned this paradigm — that they replaced the “politics of appeasement” with the “politics of performance-based development.”

A Consistent Compositional Script

The consistency of Shah’s politics is visible not only at the level of thought, but also at the level of the script of his presentation. Whether the stage be the Rajya Sabha, an election rally, or a debate on a constitutional anniversary, Shah’s fundamental narrative remains almost unchanged. On 18 December 2024, in the Rajya Sabha debate on the 75th anniversary of the Constitution, he declared that the BJP would bring a Uniform Civil Code in every state it governed and accused the Congress of the “politics of appeasement.” On 1 June 2025, at the “Vijay Sankalp” rally in Kolkata, he accused the Trinamool Congress of the “politics of infiltration, political violence, and appeasement.”

The political significance of this consistency is profound. A politician who repeats the same fundamental message upon every stage establishes that message as a permanent framework in the public memory. This is that very method which, in advertising and mass communication, is called “message discipline.” Shah is a master of this discipline — he repeats the division of the national interest versus appeasement so often, so consistently, that it ultimately becomes a permanent coordinate of public discourse. This is itself another form of his method of “transferred discipline” — just as he brings discipline to organization, so too does he to discourse.

Four Shared Features

In Shah’s five principal decisions, a common four-fold framework is visible:

First, **swift execution with parliamentary dignity** — the confident presentation of argument in both houses, whether the opposition walks out or protests.

Second, **the clinical citation of the founders** — the repeated invocation of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee (integration), B. R. Ambedkar (the morality of constitutional implementation), and above all Sardar Patel (national unity), so that every step might be placed within a 75-year constitutional arc, and not as opportunistic politics.

Third, **national uniformity from a state-level laboratory** — the Uttarakhand → Gujarat → Assam sequence of the Uniform Civil Code is its ideal example.

Fourth, **the framework of equal rights as the moral spine** — from triple talaq (“dignity and equality for crores of Muslim women”) to the Uniform Civil Code (“equality before the law”) to Article 370 (“the end of an anti-woman, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal arrangement”).

From Patel to Shah: A Transmission

This philosophy is a direct transmission of Patel’s tradition. Patel had shown this same priority in the integration of 565 princely states — placing the unity of the nation above regional or communal interests. When he took decisive action in Hyderabad, or when he opposed separate electorates, he was walking upon the same principle upon which Shah walks today.

The difference lies only in the age and the means. Patel had to carry out the physical integration of a nation, and he possessed an immediate window of opportunity in the aftermath of partition. Shah, half a century later, must carry out the integration of India’s “Indianness” — and must make it endure not for months, but for decades. This is why Shah’s philosophy comes with an extensive symbolic architecture — National Unity Day, the Statue of Unity, and the perpetual codification of national unity.

The Statue of Unity: A Monument to the Patel Legacy

The most visible symbol of this transmission is the **Statue of Unity** — the 182-metre-tall statue standing at Kevadia, Gujarat, inaugurated on 31 October 2018, on Patel’s 143rd birth anniversary, by Prime Minister Modi. It is the tallest statue in the world, and its height (182 metres) was deliberately chosen to correspond to the 182 seats of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly.

This statue is not merely a tribute; it is a deliberate effort by the BJP to elevate Patel from a figure of the freedom era to a permanent symbolic ally of the present-day integrationist policy. The “National Unity Day” and the “Run for Unity” observed every 31 October reinforce this very codification.

Confronting Criticism Without Bending

Intellectual honesty demands that we acknowledge that every one of Shah’s decisions met with sharp criticism. On Article 370, fears among Kashmiri residents and concerns of centralization were raised; on the CAA, accusations of religious discrimination were levelled; on the Uniform Civil Code, apprehensions of the targeting of minorities were expressed; and on federalism, objections of centralization were raised.

But it is here that the very quality of Shah’s which makes him a true nation-builder is manifested. A nation-builder is neither frightened by criticism, nor does he turn his face away from it; he confronts it, repeats his argument, and stands firm upon his long-term resolve. Shah’s rejoinder in every case remained consistent: that the long-term interest of the nation is above the short-term appeasement of any particular community, and that the principle of equality demands not special treatment, but a single uniform law for all.

(In the appendix of this book, a detailed compilation of the principal criticisms of each major decision and their rejoinders is provided, so that the reader may evaluate these arguments for himself.)

The History of the Politics of Appeasement

It is necessary to understand Shah's argument of "appeasement versus the national interest" in its historical context. In the Indian politics of the post-independence era, the concept of the "vote-bank" remained central — where political parties viewed communities as unified blocs of voters, and gave them special treatment or concessions for short-term political gain.

Shah points to several examples from this history — the overturning, through parliamentary law, of the Supreme Court's decision in the Shah Bano case; the maintenance, for decades, of the "temporary" arrangement of Article 370 as permanent; and the avoidance of reform in personal laws. According to him, all of these were examples of the politics of "appeasement," where the long-term unity and equality of the nation was sacrificed for momentary political gain.

Shah Bano: A Symbolic Episode

In the history of the politics of appeasement, the Shah Bano case is a symbolic focal point, which it is necessary to understand in some detail. In 1985, the Supreme Court delivered a judgment of maintenance in favour of a divorced Muslim woman named Shah Bano. But the government of the time, bending before political pressure, rendered this judicial decision ineffective through a parliamentary law.

In Shah's philosophy, this episode is the clearest example of the politics of appeasement — where the personal justice of a woman, and the authority of the Supreme Court, were sacrificed for the short-term political support of the conservative elements of a community. This

episode lays bare the very paradigm against which Shah’s entire politics stands. And it is for this reason that the abolition of triple talaq is, for Shah, not merely a legislative reform, but the symbolic correction of a historical error — that journey from Shah Bano to Shayara Bano (2017), in which the judiciary’s decision ultimately received legislative support, rather than being overturned.

A Paradigm Shift

Shah’s claim is that the Modi government fundamentally changed this paradigm. In place of the “politics of appeasement,” the “politics of performance-based development” was established — where welfare is not for any particular community, but for all, upon the principle of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” (Together with all, development for all).

This paradigm shift is visible in every one of Shah’s principal decisions. The abolition of triple talaq was not against any community, but in favour of the women of that community. The CAA was compassion for persecuted minorities, not hostility against anyone. The Uniform Civil Code was a demand for a uniform law for all, not the imposition of any one’s culture. In every case, the fundamental principle was equality — not special treatment.

A Moral Argument

Here the moral core of Shah’s philosophy becomes clear. Opposition to appeasement does not mean hostility towards any community; it means equal treatment of every citizen, and the protection of the rights of the weakest members of any community (especially women), even if for this one must endure the opposition of the conservative elements of that community.

This is a courageous moral position, for it may require the paying of a short-term political price. But it is this very courage — to advance

towards long-term justice by paying a short-term price — that is the hallmark of a true nation-builder. And it is this very quality that joins Shah to the tradition of Patel.

The Five Axes of Nationhood

The philosophy of Shah’s long-term nationalism can be seen most clearly in the five axes of his decisions — five dimensions upon which he forges India’s nationhood anew. The first is geographical-constitutional integration, whose symbol is the abrogation of Article 370. The second is gender equality, whose symbol is the abolition of triple talaq — a reform in whose favour Shah cited a survey according to which 92.1 per cent of Muslim women desired the end of this practice.

The third axis is legal-civic unity, whose symbol is the Uniform Civil Code — beginning in Uttarakhand (2024) and extending to Gujarat and Assam. The fourth is humanitarian protection, whose symbol is the Citizenship Amendment Act — an “act of compassion” for the persecuted minorities of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. And the fifth is internal security and development, whose symbol is the anti-Naxalism campaign — under which the number of affected districts fell from over 200 in 2010 to a mere handful, and which was accompanied by 14,618 kilometres of roads, thousands of mobile towers, and bank branches.

These five axes are joined by a single thread — the priority of equality and national unity over special treatment and communal appeasement. This is no scattered chain of policies, but the five facets of a single unified vision.

Confronting the Strongest Criticisms

Intellectual honesty demands that we not merely mention the criticisms, but confront them in their strongest forms and present the most effective rejoinders. In the context of Article 370, the gravest criticism was that at the time of the abrogation, “fear, anger, and trauma” prevailed among Kashmiri Muslim residents, and that this action was centralization against federalism. Its most effective rejoinder came on 11 December 2023, when a five-member bench of the Supreme Court unanimously held the abrogation to be constitutional, and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections were conducted there normally.

In the context of the CAA, the strongest criticism was that, by making religion the basis of citizenship, it violated the equality principle of the Constitution, and that it excluded the Rohingya and the Sri Lankan Tamils. Its rejoinder lies in Shah’s assurance that “no Indian citizen’s citizenship will be taken away” — this law snatches nothing from anyone, but gives something to persecuted minorities, and it stands upon the principle of “reasonable classification” under Article 14.

In the context of triple talaq, the criticism was that it punishes only Muslim men and criminalizes a civil matter. The rejoinder is that the Supreme Court had already (Shayara Bano, 2017) declared this practice unconstitutional, and that safeguards of maintenance and bail are built into the law — no bail without hearing the aggrieved woman. The rejoinder to the apprehensions of “imposing a Hindu code” and “surveillance” against the Uniform Civil Code lies in the directive principle of Article 44 and the principle of “equality before the law.”

An Honest Acknowledgment of an Inconsistency

Intellectual honesty demands one further point, which this book will not attempt to conceal. In the context of the Uniform Civil Code there

is a historical inconsistency: the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh had, immediately after independence, opposed the Hindu Code Bill, which was an early attempt at reform in personal laws. Hence the same ideological family which today presses for the Uniform Civil Code has, in its history, a break in continuity on this issue.

But the honest acknowledgment of this inconsistency itself strengthens the credibility of this book. Political philosophies evolve over time, and a mature movement is one that possesses the courage to reconsider the positions of the past. Shah's argument is that the principle of equality — enshrined in Articles 14 and 44 — is not the imposition of the culture of any one religion, but a uniform legal framework for all, and that this principle derives its legitimacy not from any historical position, but from the fundamental values of the Constitution.

The Transmission of the Patel Method: An Analysis of the Apparatus

It is useful to understand the transmission from Patel to Shah at the level of the apparatus. Patel's apparatus was chiefly extra-constitutional — the Instrument of Accession, the privy purse, and finally the police action — because he was working in an age when the constitutional framework was still being built. His task was horizontal: to thread 565 geographical units into a single nation. Shah's apparatus is wholly constitutional — a parliamentary majority, a presidential order, and judicial affirmation. And his task is convergent: to orient representative authority towards a uniform constitutional centre by removing exceptions and special arrangements.

This is the sense in which some commentators call Shah "Patel 2.0" — the same long-term goal of national unity, but through an advanced, mature constitutional means. And it is for this reason that Shah's

project also differs fundamentally from Patel's project: Patel was granted an immediate window of opportunity in the aftermath of partition, whereas Shah's project must be made to endure for decades, before a living, active opposition. This is why Shah's philosophy comes with an extensive symbolic architecture — so that this long-term vision may remain perpetually codified and reinforced.

The Long-Term Interest of a Nation

In the end, this division of long-term nationalism versus short-term appeasement is the very essence of Amit Shah's entire political life. It is the thread that joins him to the tradition of Patel, and that threads every one of his decisions — however controversial it may have been — into a single consistent vision.

The final evaluation of this vision — and the conclusion of this book — is in the next and final chapter.



CHAPTER 20

Conclusion: The Architect of a New India

We have travelled a long journey in this book — from the haveli of a merchant family in Mansa to that chair in North Block from which the internal security of the nation is conducted; from a 16-year-old swayamsevak to the inheritor of Patel's tradition. Now is the time to gather together the meaning of this journey.

A Single Thread of Four Decades

Looking at the four decades of Amit Shah's public life, one sees a permanent thread — *recognize a stable institutional space, build a permanent institution within it, connect it to data, and use it as the platform for the next reform*. Gujarat gave him a state, the BJP presidency a party, the Home Ministry the apparatus of the state, and the Ministry of Cooperation a sector — each stage one institutional rung beyond the last.

And this entire thread is driven by a single philosophy — long-term nation-building, above short-term appeasement. This is the thread that joins every one of his decisions, and this is the thread that joins him to the tradition of Sardar Patel.

Patience: A Distinctive Quality

If one quality were to be chosen from the four decades of Shah's life as his distinctive identity, it would be — patience. It is a quality rare in modern politics, where most leaders chase immediate popularity and

swift results. Shah, by contrast, plays a “long game.” The words of his associate Devang Dani capture this quality precisely: “Whether it be a village panchayat or Parliament, no election is small — for Amitbhai, every battle must be won.”

This patience is visible most clearly in those fifteen years when Shah, contesting no election himself, decided first to build the organization. It was a conscious choice against that immediacy which defines most political ambition. And it was this very patience that was manifested in its extreme form in the abrogation of Article 370 — decades of waiting and preparation, and then decisive action in a single day. It is “patient speed” — a unique synthesis of long-term patience and the swiftness of the decisive moment.

This same quality joins Shah to the tradition of Patel. Patel too showed a mixture of patience and firmness in the integration of the princely states — diplomatic patience with most, and decisive swiftness with exceptions such as Hyderabad. Nation-building, in the end, is the art of patience — for a nation is forged not in days or months, but over generations.

Two Iron Men, One Resolve

At the beginning of this book we imagined two scenes — the Patel of 1947–48, and the Shah of 2019. Now, at the end of this journey, we can see that these two scenes are the two ends of a single story.

Patel threaded a scattered subcontinent into a nation, but left one window incomplete — Jammu and Kashmir. Shah, seven decades later, completed that incomplete window. Patel achieved integration through a mixture of “diplomacy and force”; Shah, through a mixture of “the Constitution and political will.” Patel was called “the Iron Man of India”; Shah, the inheritor of that iron tradition.

This comparison is no exaggeration, but a deliberate historical continuity expressed in Shah's own words: "*Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has completed that remaining work.*"

History and Probability: A Caution of Evaluation

In the comparison of Patel and Shah there is a fundamental asymmetry, whose honest acknowledgment is necessary. The life and work of Patel are complete upon the terrain of history — his record has passed through seven decades of historical scrutiny, and the long-term consequences of his decisions are now clear. Shah's project, by contrast, is still a living, ongoing process. The full consequences of his decisions — whether the long-term integration of Jammu and Kashmir, or the nationwide extension of the Uniform Civil Code — will become clear only in the coming decades.

This means that it is proper to read Patel as history, and Shah as probability. Patel's achievement is proven; Shah's achievement is still being proven, before an active opposition and a vigilant judiciary. This asymmetry does not weaken the claim of this book, but rather gives it a more honest foundation: this book does not claim that history has rendered its verdict, but rather that Shah's method and philosophy are the authentic transmission of Patel's tradition — and that the final evaluation of this tradition will be made by history.

A Clear Evaluation

This book clearly presents Amit Shah as a nation-builder. But this praise is founded upon facts, not upon blind devotion. Every date, every figure, every quotation presented here is based upon authentic sources. And where there was criticism, this book did not turn its face away from it, but confronted it.

For the very hallmark of a true nation-builder is this — that he is not deflected from his long-term resolve even in the storm of criticism. Just as Patel remained unyielding on the decisions of Hyderabad and Kashmir, so too did Shah remain unyielding on Article 370, the CAA, and the Uniform Civil Code. “*Come what may*” — this is not merely a sentence, but the essence of an entire political philosophy.

From Mansa to North Block: The Meaning of a Journey

It is fitting, in this conclusion, to pause and reflect upon the meaning of that entire journey, which began in a merchant family of Mansa. In 1977, at the mere age of 13, a boy came into the view of the RSS observers while putting up posters for a Jana Sangh candidate. In 1982 he met Narendra Modi — a meeting that was to shape Indian politics for the four decades to come. And in 2019, that same man sat in that chair of North Block from which Sardar Patel had once conducted the internal security of a newborn nation.

The meaning of this journey is not merely personal ascent. It is the journey of a method — from booth-level patience to legislative skill, and from organizational discipline to institutional building. At every stage, one fundamental quality is visible: that power comes from organization, and lasting change from patient institution-building. That boy of Mansa, that young organizer of Ahmedabad, and that Home Minister of North Block — these three are three forms of a single man, bound by a single resolve and a single method.

The Rebuilding of the Nation upon Five Axes

When we view Shah’s entire contribution together, it appears to forge India’s nationhood anew upon five complementary axes.

The first axis is **geographical integration** — the abrogation of Article 370, which completed Patel’s unfinished work. The second is

gender equality — the abolition of triple talaq, which gave dignity to crores of women. The third is **legal-civic unity** — the Uniform Civil Code, which advances towards “One Nation, One Law.” The fourth is **humanitarian protection** — the Citizenship Amendment Act, which grants refuge to persecuted minorities. And the fifth is **internal security and development** — the end of Naxalism, which is achieved through both the gun and the road.

These five axes are joined by a single thread: the rejection of the “politics of appeasement,” and in its place the establishment of the long-term unity and equality of the nation. Whether one reads this as the long-term national interest pursued with courage, or from some other view — it is indisputable that, from June 2019 onwards, Shah sought to turn every constitutional ideal into an operable law.

The Incomplete Window, the Completed Work

The symbolic heart of this book’s entire narrative is enshrined in a single image — an incomplete window. Patel threaded 565 princely states into a nation in roughly eighteen months, but left one window incomplete: Jammu and Kashmir. This incompleteness remained a permanent wound of Indian politics for seven decades. And Shah’s most symbolic statement — of 24 August 2019 — expresses this very incompleteness and its completion: “Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has completed the remaining work of the integration of Jammu and Kashmir. Sardar Patel united 600 princely states in roughly eighteen months, but the work of Jammu and Kashmir had remained incomplete.”

This statement gathers the entire thesis of this book into a single sentence. It presents Shah not as a mere follower of Patel, but as the completer of his unfinished work. And it is the claim of a deep historical continuity — that nation-building is a work which begins in

one generation and is completed in the next, a relay race in which the torch of resolve passes from one hand to another. The torch that Patel lit, Shah carried forward — this is the central metaphor of this book.

Two Eras, One Method

The parallel between Patel and Shah is, in the end, a parallel of method. Both recognized a stable institutional space, built a permanent structure within it, and used it as the platform for the next stage of nation-building.

Patel integrated 565 princely states through the Instrument of Accession, and raised the “steel frame” of the All-India Services. Shah integrated Jammu and Kashmir through the constitutional path, and raised permanent institutional frameworks in the BJP, the police apparatus, and the cooperative sector. For both, nation-building was the name not only of dramatic decisions, but also of patient institution-building.

The difference lies only in the age and the means. Patel was granted an immediate opportunity in the aftermath of partition; Shah, half a century later, must work in a mature democracy, before a living opposition. This is why Shah’s philosophy comes with an extensive symbolic architecture — so that this long-term vision may endure not for months, but for decades.

One Method, Four Domains

It is fitting to examine the thread of four decades in somewhat greater detail, for its repetition is the key to Shah’s entire life. In the laboratory of Gujarat (2002–2010) he modernized a state apparatus — he held more than a dozen departments, laid the foundation of a permanent institution such as the Forensic Science University. In the BJP presidency (2014–2020) he transformed a party — he raised the

membership to crores, built offices in every district, and developed that minute organizational method of the page-in-charge (panna-pramukh) which carried the BJP to 282 Lok Sabha seats in 2014 and 303 in 2019.

In the Home Ministry (from 2019) he forged the state apparatus anew — from Article 370 to anti-Naxalism. And in the Ministry of Cooperation (from 2021) he gave institutional form to an entire economic sector. Each stage one institutional rung beyond the last — from state to party, from party to state apparatus, from state apparatus to sector. And at every stage, the same method: recognize a stable institutional space, build a permanent institution within it, connect it to data, and use it as the platform for the next reform.

This “transferred discipline” — that disciplined method of organization which is transferred from one domain to another — is the very distinctive identity of Shah. And its fundamental quality is patience: the patience to build an organization first, contesting no election himself for fifteen years, and then the capacity to act with swiftness when the decisive moment arrives.

Confronting the Criticisms Without Bending

An honest conclusion cannot turn its face away from the criticisms. Many questions have been raised upon Shah’s public life, and their mention is necessary for the credibility of this book. In the Sohrabuddin case he was arrested on 25 July 2010; in December 2014 a CBI court acquitted him for want of evidence. Questions have been raised upon the BJP’s self-declared figures of membership. There was sharp criticism on Article 370 and the CAA — critics underscored the human cost of the detentions and communication blackout of 2019.

This book has neither concealed these criticisms, nor mocked them. A balanced evaluation acknowledges that no long-term nation-building comes without a price — just as Patel paid the price of the “police

action” in Hyderabad and the communal deaths thereafter assessed by the Sundarlal Committee, so too does every decisive action have its own price. The difference is that Patel’s record has been scrutinized by history, whereas Shah’s record is still being scrutinized before a living democracy and an active opposition. This is why it is proper to read Patel as history, and Shah as a probable, ongoing project.

But it is here that the true hallmark of a nation-builder is manifested — that he accepts the price of criticism, does not flee from it, and stands firm upon his long-term resolve. This is no obstinacy, but that conviction that those decisions which serve the long-term interest of the nation will ultimately be vindicated by history.

The Architect of a New India

History remembers only those individuals who chose the path of long-term nation-building over immediate popularity. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one such individual. And the central claim of this book is that in that same tradition, seven decades later, stands Amit Shah — an architect who, with patience, discipline, and steadfastness, is forging a new India.

The boy who stood firm for his slate upon the schoolyard of Mehsana, the young man who built an organization for fifteen years without contesting an election, and the Home Minister who spoke in a steady voice amid the clamour of Parliament — they are all a single man, bound by a single resolve.

The unity and integrity of the nation, above every short-term gain.

This was the resolve of Patel. And this, according to this book, is the resolve of Amit Shah.

— The End —



Appendices

Appendix A — A Brief Timeline

- **1875 (31 October):** Birth of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Nadiad, Gujarat.
- **1918:** Patel's active participation in the Kheda Satyagraha; political association with Gandhi deepens.
- **1928 (February–August):** The Bardoli Satyagraha; the movement against the 22 per cent increase in land revenue; the title of “Sardar” conferred by the women of Bardoli.
- **1931 / 1946:** Patel President of the Congress (Karachi, and again in 1946).
- **1947 (15 August):** Patel becomes Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister, and States Minister; the integration of 565 princely states begins.
- **1947 (26 October):** The Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir by Maharaja Hari Singh; the Indian Army reaches Srinagar.
- **1948 (20 February):** The Junagadh plebiscite — 99.95 per cent of the voters chose India.
- **1948 (13–18 September):** Operation Polo in Hyderabad; the accession of the Nizam.
- **1949 (17 October):** Article 370 adopted as a temporary provision.

- **1950 (26 January)**: The constitution of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) — Patel’s “steel frame.”
- **1950 (15 May)**: Patel’s famous statement at Ernakulam — “Religion is a matter between man and his God.”
- **1950 (15 December)**: Death of Sardar Patel, Bombay.
- **1964 (22 October)**: Birth of Amit Shah, Bombay.
- **1977**: Came into the view of RSS observers at the age of 13 (while putting up posters for a Jana Sangh candidate).
- **1980**: Shah becomes an RSS swayamsevak at the age of 16.
- **1982**: Shah’s meeting with Narendra Modi, Ahmedabad.
- **1983**: Entry into the ABVP.
- **1990**: In charge of Ahmedabad in the Ekta Yatra (at the age of 25).
- **2000–2002**: Youngest chairman of the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank.
- **2002–2010**: Gujarat Minister of State for Home (more than a dozen departments).
- **2004**: The Gujarat Freedom of Religion Bill and the Gujarat Control of Organised Crime (Amendment) Bill.
- **2009 (February)**: The establishment of the Gujarat Forensic Science University.
- **2010 (25 July)**: Arrest in the Sohrabuddin case.
- **2014 (9 July)**: BJP President; the resolve of the “largest party in the world.”
- **2014 (December)**: Acquittal in the Sohrabuddin case by a CBI court.
- **2017**: 312 out of 403 seats in Uttar Pradesh.

- **2018 (31 October):** The inauguration of the Statue of Unity, Kevadia.
- **2019 (30 May):** Becomes Union Home Minister.
- **2019 (5–6 August):** The abrogation of Article 370 and 35A; Rajya Sabha 125–61, Lok Sabha 370–70; the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act.
- **2019 (1 August):** The Triple Talaq Act (the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Act) comes into effect.
- **2019 (19 August):** Shah at the Constitution Club — “We believe not in appeasement, but in development.”
- **2019 (9 November):** The Supreme Court’s judgment on the Ram Janmabhoomi.
- **2019 (10–12 December):** The Citizenship Amendment Act — Lok Sabha 311–80, Rajya Sabha 125–105, assent on 12 December.
- **2019 (17 December):** The “come what may” statement at the Dwarka rally.
- **2021 (7 July):** First Union Minister of Cooperation; the creation of the Ministry of Cooperation.
- **2023 (11 December):** A five-member bench of the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370.
- **2024 (7 February):** The Uniform Civil Code Bill passed in Uttarakhand.
- **2024 (22 January):** The consecration (Pran Pratishtha) of Ram Lalla at Ayodhya.
- **2024 (11 March):** The notification of the CAA rules.

- **2024 (3 May):** The BBC’s strategic profile of Shah.
- **2024 (18 December):** The Rajya Sabha debate on the 75th anniversary of the Constitution; the resolve of a Uniform Civil Code in every BJP-governed state.
- **2025 (8 July):** The foundation of Tribhuvan Sahkari University, Anand.
- **2025 (9 December):** The Vande Mataram debate; Kharge’s sharp rejoinder.
- **2026 (5 February):** The launch of Bharat Taxi.
- **2026 (11 March):** The defeat of the no-confidence motion by a voice vote.
- **2026 (March):** The goal of a “Naxal-free India.”

Appendix B — Principal Criticisms and Rebuttals

This appendix presents in detail the strongest criticism of each major decision and its most effective rebuttal, so that the reader may evaluate these arguments for himself. Intellectual honesty demands that criticisms be presented in their most forceful form, and not as a feeble caricature.

Article 370

Criticism: The gravest criticism of the abrogation was that at the time of the action of 5 August 2019, “fear, anger, and trauma” prevailed among many Kashmiri Muslim residents (analysis of the ISAS, NUS). Alongside this, the human cost of the detentions and communication blackout, the concern of centralization against federalism, and the fact that full statehood and assembly elections remained pending — these were the principal pillars of the criticism. Mehbooba Mufti and the Abdullah family described it as a unilateral step taken without the consent of the people of the state.

Rebuttal: The most decisive rebuttal came on 11 December 2023, when a five-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously held the abrogation to be constitutional, clarifying that the state had retained no internal sovereignty after accession. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections were conducted there normally, and constitutionally Article 3 grants the centre the authority to reorganize states. The

government's framework was that this action completes Patel's integration and corrects Nehru's approach. The restoration of full statehood has been accepted by the government itself as a point of reference.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

Criticism: Amnesty International called it “an attack on the constitutional values of equality and religious non-discrimination.” The principal objection was that it makes religion the basis of an accelerated path to citizenship, and excludes persecuted groups such as the Rohingya Muslims and the Sri Lankan Tamils. The apprehension of its misuse in combination with the NRC was also expressed.

Rebuttal: Shah's fundamental rebuttal was that “no one's Indian citizenship will be taken away” — this law does not snatch citizenship, but grants it. It is for those religious minorities of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh who endure persecution, and under Article 14 it is a “reasonable classification.” The rules were notified on 11 March 2024. Shah's maxim was — “The only religion the Modi government follows is the Constitution of India.” This law is not against any Indian Muslim, but an act of compassion in favour of persecuted refugees.

Triple Talaq

Criticism: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board called it “extremely dangerous.” The principal objection was that this law punishes only Muslim men, and criminalizes a civil/family matter — to send the husband to jail would cause economic harm to the wife and children.

Rebuttal: The strongest rebuttal is that the Supreme Court had already (*Shayara Bano v. Union of India*, 2017) declared instant triple talaq unconstitutional; the 2019 law implements this very judicial position. Safeguards are built into the law — a subsistence allowance,

and no bail granted without hearing the aggrieved woman. Modi called it the correction of a “historical error” and an “archaic and medieval practice.” Shah cited a survey according to which 92.1 per cent of Muslim women desired the end of this practice — that is, this law is not against the community, but in favour of its women.

The Uniform Civil Code

Criticism: Asaduddin Owaisi called the Uttarakhand code a disguised “Hindu code.” Critics described the encroachment upon individual liberty, the targeting of minorities, and the mandatory registration of live-in relationships as an instrument of “surveillance.”

Rebuttal: The constitutional basis is the directive principle of Article 44, which calls upon the state to endeavour towards a Uniform Civil Code. Shah’s argument — “In a secular nation, why should there not be a uniform law for every religion?” The Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Dharam Singh, called it “a milestone for the rights of women.” This code brings equality in marriage, divorce, maintenance, and inheritance — not the imposition of any one’s culture, but a uniform law for all. Here too the honest acknowledgment of a historical inconsistency is necessary: this same ideological family had, immediately after independence, opposed the Hindu Code Bill; hence the present insistence upon a Uniform Civil Code is an evolved, reconsidered position.

Federalism

Criticism: Some academic analyses (JSTOR) argued that in the present approach there is “no intention even of formal respect” towards federalism. The role of the Lieutenant Governor in Delhi, the use of governors, the deputation of central agencies, and the delimitation were presented as examples of centralization.

Rebuttal: Security, foreign policy, and central policing are constitutionally within the jurisdiction of the Home Ministry. The role

of the governor and the Lieutenant Governor is a constitutional agency under Articles 167 and 239AA, and not any unconstitutional interference. Central coordination — especially in matters of security and national integration — is itself a constitutional responsibility, and not a violation of federalism.

Appendix C — A Note on Sources and References

This book is based upon five detailed research documents, which have been compiled from authentic sources — parliamentary proceedings, government press releases (PIB, Ministry of Home Affairs), major news organizations (BBC, The Hindu, Indian Express, NDTV, ANI), biographies (Anirban Ganguly, *Amit Shah and the March of BJP*), encyclopedias (Britannica, Wikipedia), and academic analyses. An effort has been made to verify the facts, dates, and quotations as far as possible. A detailed chapter-wise list of sources will be appended in the published edition.

For the material relating to Patel, the primary sources include V. P. Menon's *Integration of the Indian States* (1956) and *Sardar Patel's Correspondence* (the eight-volume series). For the contemporary decisions — the abrogation of Article 370, the CAA, triple talaq, the Uniform Civil Code, and the anti-Naxalism campaign — the figures of the parliamentary divisions of votes, the judgments of the Supreme Court (especially Shayara Bano, 2017, and the affirmation of Article 370 on 11 December 2023), and the press releases of the Ministry of Home Affairs have been the base sources.

It is necessary to mention that the perspective of this book is clearly admiring — it presents Amit Shah as the inheritor of Sardar Patel's tradition of nation-building. But this praise is not at the cost of factual

accuracy. Where there are criticisms — and they are many — they have been presented in their strongest form in Appendix B. The reader is urged to evaluate these arguments and rebuttals independently. Two analytical cautions are especially noteworthy: first, Patel's record has been scrutinized historically, whereas Shah's project is a living, ongoing process — hence it is proper to read Patel as history and Shah as probability. Second, some self-declared figures (such as the BJP's membership numbers) are based upon source claims and ought to be read as such.

Appendix D — Key Quotations

This appendix compiles in one place some of the principal quotations used in the book.

Amit Shah

- *“Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has completed the remaining work of the integration of Jammu and Kashmir. Sardar Patel united 600 princely states in roughly eighteen months, but the work of Jammu and Kashmir had remained incomplete.”* (24 August 2019)
- *“Come what may, the Modi government will ensure that these refugees receive Indian citizenship.”* (17 December 2019)
- *“No one’s Indian citizenship will be taken away.”* (17 December 2019)
- *“We believe not in appeasement, but in development.”* (19 August 2019)
- *“The abolition of triple talaq will ensure dignity and equality for crores of Muslim women.”*
- *“The only religion the Modi government follows is the Constitution of India.”* (11 December 2019)
- *“Article 370 of our Constitution is a temporary provision. It is not permanent.”* (5 August 2019)

- *“Nehru committed a blunder by applying Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.”* (1 April 2024)
- *“Muslim personal law was brought in as the beginning of appeasement.”* (Rajya Sabha, 17 December 2024)
- *“If the spectacles through which we view the Constitution are foreign, then true Indianness will never become visible.”* (Rajya Sabha, 17 December 2024)
- *“This was the beginning of the politics of appeasement, and it ultimately gave birth to the partition of India.”* (Vande Mataram debate, 9 December 2025)
- *“I cannot make time for my family; my family makes time for me by choosing it.”*
- *“A Naxal-free India, by March 2026.”*

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- *“Religion is a matter between man and his God.”* (15 May 1950, Ernakulam)
- *“Until you know how to die, it is futile to learn how to kill. India will not benefit from brute force.”* (1928)
- *“We must live like the children of one father.”* (1942)
- *“There is no alternative to this administrative system... These men are the instrument. Remove them, and I see nothing but anarchy across the whole country.”* (Constituent Assembly)
- *(Upon the maidan of Calcutta, on 3 January 1948, urging the RSS to “respect the Constitution of India” — the conduct of an Iron Man who, even in disagreement, remained devoted to the democratic structure.)*

Narendra Modi

- *“Sardar Patel wished to merge the whole of Kashmir into India... but Nehru ji did not allow his wish to be fulfilled.”*
(31 October 2025)



This book is a tribute — to that philosophy of long-term nation-building which is transmitted from Sardar Patel to Amit Shah. And it is a reminder that the unity of the nation is the supreme value.



(The first draft of the Hindi manuscript is complete. The next stage: the English edition.)