

SARDAR PATEL: AN ARCHITECT OF UNIFIED INDIA

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Relevance of Sardar Patel

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, ‘the Iron Man of India’, has been a prominent name that gave us the delineation of today’s India. His role in uniting for more than 500 princely states into one ‘Bharat’ can never be forgotten. He has been a firm personality, renowned barrister, great freedom fighter and a leader, par excellence. Patel, who later became the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, showed India the path of self-sufficiency and economic development. His visions and actions always led the country towards a better future. Sardar Patel, in several ways laid the foundation of entrepreneurial India. Many of his Satyagraha brought out the entrepreneurial qualities in people, especially the peasants of Gujarat. After becoming the Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, his major focus was on the development of the country as a self-sufficient and entrepreneurial nation. Many times, he laid focus on the import imbalance of country and encouraged the countrymen in a way that led them to be great entrepreneurs. A befitting tribute to him, the magnanimous Statue of Unity, in Kevadia (Gujarat) stands as a testimony to the honour and acknowledgment that Sardar Patel and his contributions warrant. The paper focuses on the major steps of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel that helped our country to lead a way of self-sufficiency and develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Today, India is one of the most desirable entrepreneurial ecosystems for budding entrepreneurs. This has been made possible only because Sardar Patel initiated steps to build a strong and united nation.

Sardar Patel- The Growth of an Iron Man

Born on 31 October 1875, Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel belonged to a family of peasants at Nadiad (a city in the state of Gujarat). His father, Jhaverbhai Galabhai Patel, was a farmer with 10-12 acres of land in Karamsad (village in Anand, Gujarat). Jhaverbhai was sturdy, upright and a straightforward man.

Several villagers visited him for advice and succour in times of distress. He was also a part of the Great Revolt of 1857 under the Rani of Jhansi. Vallabhbhai Patel inherited many traits from his father that made him the 'Iron Man of India'. (P.N. Chopra, 2017). He started his career as a pleader in Godhra (village in Panchmahal district, Gujarat). In the next two years, he started his practice in Borsad as a criminal lawyer. However, his ultimate goal was to become a Barrister. After the hardship of nearly a decade, in 1910, Vallabhbhai got his chance to study abroad at Middle Temple Inn. (England).

In 1913, Vallabhbhai Patel returned to India as a qualified barrister and practiced in the city of his dreams, Ahmedabad. At Ahmedabad Bar, he was a smart young man who always dressed in well-cut clothes with a felt hat worn slightly at an angle. However, a great deal of change came in the life of Vallabhbhai Patel in 1917. His mind had a sweeping effect after Gandhi's victory at Champaran in Bihar against the British Indigo planters. Through this victory, Vallabhbhai Patel was able to envision the beginning of a new agrarian revolution. This realization irresistibly drew Patel towards Gandhi. History narrates Vallabhbhai Patel as a changed personality when he attended a meeting at Godhra. Now he was a man with a dhoti, a long loose shirt, alpaca coat, and a black Indian cap instead of the English felt cap. He was also appointed as a secretary in a permanent committee, with Gandhi as the President. (Narhari D. Parikh, 1956)

After this, the life of Vallabhbhai changed from Barrister Patel to Sardar Patel. From here he started his journey as a leader of India. He participated as well as led many Satyagraha. His most successful Satyagraha was launched at Bardoli. This Satyagraha was against the hike of land revenues and taxes on the peasants. That year, Gujarat had faced an unprecedented flood due to which farmers had to bear losses and were not in a position to bear the burden of taxes. On the other hand, British officers had increased the land revenues and taxes. However, the Satyagraha against these taxes was a huge success (P.N. Chopra, 2017). This victory can be measured with the fear that was embedded with British officers, as they tagged Vallabhbhai Patel as 'Lenin'. Motilal Nehru in a letter to Gandhi described Patel as "the hero of the hour" (Jawaharlal Nehru, 1958). Mrs. Annie Besant declared: "Let us Bardolise the country". Subsequent to this Satyagraha, Vallabhbhai Patel earned the title of 'Sardar'. He was also appointed as the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister after the Independence of India.

Sardar Patel's incredible journey testifies every step of his was directed towards a developed and independent India. His vision was to build a strong united nation as 'Bharat' which is self-sufficient and economically advanced. The overarching objective of the paper is to focus on the entrepreneurial leadership of Sardar Patel. His ingenious initiatives have given us the India of

today, which is leading as an entrepreneurial ecosystem. He laid the foundation of an entrepreneurial India much before the country got independence. He was always in favour of empowering the entrepreneurial capabilities of his countrymen. The paper discusses at length the major steps of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel that led to 'Enterprising India'.

Satyagraha: Beginning of Cooperative Movement

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was well aware of the significance of education for the youth of India. A long battle is registered in history between Patel and Pratt for ensuring education for the youth of the country. Patel wanted to rescue the education of Indian youth from British control and influence. Under the leadership of Sardar Patel, the majority of the councillors decided to end the control of government by refusing their grants. Patel was a visionary and aware of the role of education in leading India towards self-sufficiency. This was a major step that contributed towards an India which could turn entrepreneurial in the future with accrued momentum. After the success of a long fight with Pratt, Patel organised the People's Education Board which became the foundation of 43 schools, including 13 for girls. The schools had professionally qualified teachers. He even raised funds for these schools through public subscriptions (Narhari D. Parikh, 1956).

Being from a peasant family, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel always stood for the rights of farmers. He was a pillar for the farmers and fought for any injustice perpetrated against them. The first such revolt that took place was in Bardoli. Being a Gandhian, he encouraged peasants for a non-violent Satyagraha. This came out as a soaring success for the farmers (Mahadev Desai, 1929). Sardar Patel said, "Non-violence has to be observed in thought, word and deed. The measure of our non-violence will be the measure of our success".

Though this Satyagraha gave a new image to Vallabhbhai Patel, another great accomplishment came in the form of his another contribution to the milk farmers, which gave the biggest co-operative to the world. In the 1940s the condition of farmers was not favourable, be it agrarian farmers or milk farmers. Milk farmers got very less returns and even sold their produce of milk at throwaway prices. Major profits were enjoyed by the middlemen and contractors. In 1945, the Government of Bombay started a scheme – Bombay Milk Scheme. For this, the milk had to be transported 427 kilometres, from Anand (Gujarat) to Bombay. This was only possible if the milk was pasteurized in Anand. For the continuance of this supply, the Government of Bombay entered into an agreement with Polson Limited. This arrangement was profitable for all, except the farmers. No one was concerned about the price that producers got. Gradually, the discontentment of farmers got escalated. That was the time when Tribhuvandas Kishibhai Patel visited Sardar Patel and

asked for the solution. Sardar Patel, thinking of the long-term future of milk farmers, suggested Tribhuvandas to remove Polson Ltd. Sardar Patel told the farmers that dairy should belong to you rather than the contractors or Polson Ltd. That turned out to be the only way through which farmers could ensure profits. However, Patel warned them about the losses that the Satyagraha could bring to them. He assured the farmers of his support if they were ready to bear the consequences. Sardar expressed, “My only desire is that India should be a good producer.”

Sardar Patel sent his deputy, Morarjibhai Desai, to Kaira district to organise the milk co-operation. Tribhuvandas Patel worked under the guidance of Sardar Patel and formed a union. They decided that every village would have a cooperative society to collect milk from all the farmers. The milk societies would be federated into a Union. The farmers put their demand for cooperative society in front of the Government, but, the Government refused their proposal. Farmers were determined and as per the guidance of Sardar Patel, they refused to sell milk to any milk contractor. This called for a “milk strike” in Gujarat. Because of this, no milk reached Bombay and as a result, Bombay Milk Scheme started to collapse. After a tuff fight of 15 days, the British Government had to accept farmers’ requests. Tribhuvandas Patel took constant guidance from Vallabhbhai Patel and worked for setting up the Union. However, the challenges did not end with this. Gradually, many farmers joined the co-operative because of which the supply of milk was much more than the demand. Bombay Milk Scheme could not absorb this excess quantity of milk. Again, farmers had to sell excess milk at throw-away prices. According to Vallabhbhai Patel, the only solution to this was to process excess milk by setting up a plant. This gave birth to Amul. Later, Verghese Kurien joined Amul and further revolutionized milk farming in India.

Gradually, this model of milk co-operative was implemented across the country and emerged as highly successful. This led towards a self-sufficient India. A country which was the importer of milk became the largest producer of milk and exported it to many countries, later. Today, Amul is the world’s largest milk cooperative. The vision of Sardar Patel was always that of an entrepreneur. Amul has not only helped the farmers of Gujarat but has also revolutionised milk farming in India. This vision of Sardar Patel was further taken forward by Tribhuvandas Patel. White Revolution was the extension of Sardar Patel’s idea to revolutionise milk production in India. Amul has also contributed to the empowerment of women. The women of rural India got empowered and earned the identity of being an entrepreneur. Sardar Patel’s Idea not only helped the farmers but also helped in uplifting the rural population of India. This also helped the women to stand up and work with dignity. Amul celebrates its 75 years by enriching the lives of 36 lakh women in India (History, Amul).

Economic Empowerment of United India

After independence, Sardar Patel united 565 princely states. According to Mahatma Gandhi, there was only one person who could unite these princely states as a country, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Sardar Patel and told him to work for the unification of princely states as 'Bharat'. On the other hand, history narrates some incidents where Britishers were encouraging the states to break away. Patel created a special department to take care of the amalgamation of the princely states. "History has taught us a lesson that our country was divided into small states and we could not unite and repulse foreign attacks and foreigners consolidated their rule here. Sardar Patel said, "Our internal quarrels, envy and enmity have contributed to our defeats at the time of the foreign invasion. Let us not repeat the mistake and get caught in the net of slavery".

It was not easy for Patel to unite the country, but, he succeeded in doing that without any bloodshed. Hyderabad, however, was the only princely state whose unification posed difficulties. It was very difficult to unite the princely state of Hyderabad. On the whole, Patel did the impossible and made one 'Bharat'. After this victory, he received a letter from Mountbatten on 19 June 1948, "There's no doubt that by far the most important achievement of the present Government is the unification of the States into the Dominion India. Had you failed in this, the results would have been disastrous." These words from the British Viceroy speak of the achievements of Sardar Patel. This was the first foundation of a developing India as a nation (P.N. Chopra, 2017).

Sardar Patel was appointed as Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India. Adhering to his duties, he had been very focused on the development of the country. Today the 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' is the reflection of Patel's vision. Not only did he unite the country but also showed the right path of development and progress. He was well aware of the importance of industrialisation and increased production in India. In many of his speeches, we see how he encouraged the people of India to work hard and make India a self-sufficient nation. His words ignited an entrepreneurial spark among Indians. – Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel expressed, "Free India is only a child of a year and a half. It has yet to learn to walk; it has to grow, to be strong, and its future depends upon how we build today. Therefore, we have to nurse it carefully; we have to feed, clothe and strengthen it properly".

One of the biggest entrepreneurs of that time worked with Patel towards making India independent and later a developing nation. The entrepreneur was none other than Ghanshyam Das Birla. Sardar Patel and G.D. Birla had a strong association with each other and worked together for a better India. G.D Birla not only funded the freedom struggles but, also wholeheartedly supported Patel in all his initiatives and at every step. Their association can be noted from the fact that Patel had taken his last breath at Birla Mansion. Both G.D. Birla and

Patel joined hands and directed the nation towards entrepreneurial development. Patel's idea for India at that time can be observed in the vision of current India. G.D. Birla once said, "Sardar Patel was not a revolutionary. He was essentially a man of constructive ideas". It is worth mentioning, as Sardar Patel placed succinctly "We must remember that socialism in England came after England had advanced considerably on the road to industrialization." Sardar Patel has time and again emphasised on the industrialisation of the country. He was also very proactive and direct in providing consistent assistance to the Indian business community which thrived after independence. Sardar Patel expressed, "The need of the hour is to increase the wealth of the country and this can be done only by putting in more and more work and thus increasing production".

Sardar Patel was not in favour of nationalisation or a closed economy. His visions were very strong regarding an open economy. However, he supported the ideas of the closed economy of the then government and worked towards uplifting the industrial and business community. Some of his letters to G.D. Birla about the role of Gulf petrol on the Indian economy, show his holistic understanding of national and international economic affairs. He also stressed on the import imbalance of the country. This was one of the reasons he was in favour of self-sufficiency and increased production within India. For many years, India was under huge debts because of increased imports. (He was well aware of the solutions to this problem and repeatedly addressed the people of India to become more entrepreneurial). Sardar Patel said, "I have been constantly laying stress on the need for self-sufficiency in food and cloth, our basic wants. I have no doubt that, despite the economic situation of today, we can produce enough to feed ourselves".

In addition to G.D. Birla, Sardar Patel was also in constant association with Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoi Tata. Patel constantly took their help when it came to initiating steps for the development of India. Many of their communications show how they discussed about implementing innovative measures for India's development. This association of Patel with top entrepreneurs of the time showcases his visionary mind harbouring ideas about shaping the country entrepreneurially. JRD Tata once said in his interview, "If Sardar Patel was a younger man ... [] we could have been in a better economy than we have today". Such a statement from one of the most prominent entrepreneurs of those times describes the entrepreneurial perception of Sardar Patel (Hindol Sengupta). His affirmation to industrial set-ups may be found as he said "My next appeal is to the industrialists, businessmen, traders and labour. I need not stress here the importance which increasing production has in our plants".

Tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

31st October 2018, marked the inauguration of the World's tallest statue – The Statue of Unity. The vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi,

this statue, at 182 metres, stands as a testimony to Sardar Patel's ideologies. The Statue salutes the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India, and the invincible spirit of the 'Iron Man of India'. The Statue on the banks of river Narmada attracts a great number of tourists every year due to its associated attractions, viz. Valley of flowers, Sardar Sarovar dam, Ekta Mall and several other destinations. With support from several tourism sector players and departments, the daily average tourist footfall at SOU during November 2019 had reached 15,036¹ and the destination was listed in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's '8 Wonders of SCO' list². As per the Government of Gujarat, about 50 lakh tourists have visited the SOU by March 15th 2021 since its inauguration. The socio-economic growth of the region is unparalleled.

India has given itself today, a towering inspiration for the future. The Statue of Unity will continue to remind future generations of the courage, capability and resolve of Sardar Patel. The integration of India by Sardar Patel has resulted in today in India's march towards becoming a big economic and strategic power".

Conclusion

A strong and influential personality, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is a figure that has helped India in writing a glorious history. He, 'the Iron Man of India', has not only stood for the nation but also united it as a 'whole' and paved the path for development. History gloriously speaks of the devotion and contributions of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in making India, and always standing as a pillar of support for the people of India. His Satyagraha shows his concern for rural India, farmers and the empowerment of women. His ideas like milk co-operative were such that helped not only farmers but also in the upliftment of rural and backward areas as well as women. Today, the idea has evolved into a giant cooperative called Amul, which is one of the largest milk cooperatives in the world.

He was well aware of the role of education for the youth of the country which is very prominent from the incident of his involvement against the British official, Pratt. He worked hard towards granting the right to education to the youth of the country. He has always worked towards the entrepreneurial upliftment of the nation. And, this was not after he was declared the Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister but right from the point when he started his practice as a pleader. He stood for the rights of his people and encouraged them to fight for their rights. Being a Gandhian, he also took the path of non-violence.

The major change in his life has been witnessed after he met Mahatma Gandhi. This association changed the lifestyle of Patel and, he devoted his life to the freedom struggle of India. He gave such inventive solutions to the people of India that they could build entrepreneurial structures on them. His visions clearly

reflect in our current policies of 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. These schemes have been especially developed to support the entrepreneurial initiatives of the Government of India. Sardar Patel was associated with the biggest entrepreneurial minds of that time and worked with them even after the independence of India. He constantly encouraged the people of India towards industrialisation, self-sufficiency and a larger productions base. Many of his speeches focused on supporting the business community, as he believed this to be the best way to develop and uplift the economy of India.

Today, India stands as an emerging entrepreneurial economy and a major contribution of this goes to the Iron Man of India. He inspired entrepreneurial ingenuity in the people of India and prepared them to uphold the baton of growth and prosperity after the country got independence. The role of Sardar Patel in nation-building will always be remembered with pride and accomplishments.

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ENDNOTES

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