

THE SARDAR AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN GUJARAT

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I was asked to write on the Sardar as a political leader. I thought it would repeat other pieces in the volume by Netajis; more competent than me since I was only a temporary politico. But I am a teacher and planner and have chosen Gujarat as my *Karma Bhumi*. So I volunteered to write on the educational and social institutions in the State, commemorating his memory. Most of them were created and led by those who knew him.

The most important is Vallabh Vidyanagar, by now a suburb of Anand, but even in my lifetime was a separate educational town. So much so that food was available in its hostels or in the homes of friends only, as there were no restaurants like in Tagores Santi Niketan. It was an educational complex built for the future of an agricultural society. Its builder was the visionary educator Bhai Kaka Patel. By the time I arrived on the scene in the late Sixties of the last Century, the Charotur Vidya Mandal was in the firm hands of H M Patel, ICS (Retd) and was expanding. My friend Vijay Vyas was the resident economist and we helped each other in building our Institutions, with the umbrella of HMP to protect us when the stones started flying; and of course in meeting days there one partook of the famed Patel hospitality. On the road to Vidya Nagar one passed by the lovely hamlet, then of Karamsad (now town) where the Sardar was born and I still prefer that scenic route with the great Vad trees rather than the toll roads. I always get down to enter the country roads and visit the houses there. Vidya Nagar grew and Kurien was a part of that story. I always felt that IRMA should be affiliated with Vidya Nagar, but now egos are too big for agreeing to the likes of me. When I was Minister we supported Vidya Nagar and they now have a complex to give institutional support to entrepreneurs to productionising an idea. They can through internet get advice from the Patel Diaspora. HMPs last project was the Charotar Arogya Mandal Hospitals and Medical Educational facilities setup now ably run by his daughter Amrita Patel.

Then there is my mother Institute the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research at Ahmedabad, also nurtured by HMP. I don't want to brag

about it since its tables, chairs, buildings library were originally designed by me and 5000 trees planted and seen through a water short 50 acre campus, now a lush jungle. But factually nationally Economists like Rakkam Radhakrishna, Atul Sarma, GVSN Murthy who died young and S.P. Kashyap and many others spread their early wings there.

The story can go along. But I will stop since I think I have shown that the Sardar's memory lives in secular liberal Institutions in Gujarat.