

INTRODUCTION

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The intellectually and spiritually ever-fertile soil of India has produced many great men in the fields of polity, culture, economy, religion, philosophy, and beliefs. Standing tall amongst the luminaries of India's struggle for freedom was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The book *Sardar Patel: Builder of Aspirational India* is a tribute to the iron man of Indian politics, Sardar Patel. We all know that he was the pivot of integration of several hundreds of princely states strewn around the length and breadth of the country and an able initiator of the process of India becoming- a nation state. Sardar's contribution in redesigning and aligning the central civil services around the notion of unity and integrity, drafting of the constitution, and of course, as the leading light of the freedom struggle on the lines of the Gandhian principles has certainly been well documented, acknowledged, and celebrated. However, his contribution and the values he stood for and devoted his life for, signifies, all the more, importance in today's circumstances of heightened geopolitics and nationalistic sentiment that has gained currency in all parts of the world.

The book focuses on the various aspects of Sardar's life and thoughts which still inspire popular imagination and academic research. Therefore, the ideas, praxis, and Sardar Patel's vision of India form the framework of this book. This framework provides a guiding light to the indebted nation in its 75th year since attaining freedom from the foreign yolk. The administrators and academicians inspired by the life and thoughts of Sardar Patel have all along wittingly or unwittingly put that on the canvas of their life and work. The collection of papers incorporates Sardar's contribution, including his role in the freedom movement as one of the most ardent followers of Gandhiji, integration of India into a single political entity, framing of the Constitution, and last but not least, his contribution as the first Home Minister cum Deputy Prime Minister of India. Having gone through the papers that form the book, the scholarly writings converge on Sardar Patel's efforts in uniting people which created a framework for the people to live together in the newly emerging nation. As we go along this book, and the contribution and sacrifices Sardar Patel made, at

least four aspects of Sardar's life begin to connect with us, namely i) Sardar, the great leader, ii) Sardar, the strategic thinker, iii) Sardar, the nation builder, and iv) Sardar, the humanist.

Sardar, the great leader- Sardar Patel came back to India in 1913 after completing his studies in England. In the beginning days of the freedom struggle, he was neither very keen on active politics nor about the principles of Mahatma Gandhi's politics as he had heard of. However, his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi in 1917 transformed his orientation. Inspired and motivated by Gandhian Ideologies, he became one of his ardent followers. As a result, in 1917, he was elected as the sanitation commissioner of Ahmedabad. The association with Mahatma Gandhi became closer during the Kheda Satyagraha in 1918, launched to secure exemption from payment of the land revenue assessment since the crops had failed. It took three months of intense campaigning that was marked by arrests, seizures of goods, chattels, livestock and much official brutality before relief was secured from an unwilling Colonial Government. Gandhiji expressed that success was achieved due to the cooperation and support extended by Sardar Patel. When, Gandhiji decided on non-cooperation, Vallabhbhai left his practice for good and gave himself up completely to the political and social issues related works.

In the Bardoli Satyagraha, under the able leadership of Sardar Patel, the farmers decided not to pay the draconian land revenue ranging from 50 per cent to 60 per cent. Though the protest against the system was tough, the strategic role played by Sardar Patel enabled the administration to come to grips with just eight per cent. The Satyagraha was not only the triumph of peasants of Bardoli but also recognised 'Vallabhbhai' as "Sardar". As such, the Bardoli Satyagraha happens to be a landmark in India's struggle for independence, particularly in the context of mass mobilisation. In one of his speeches delivered at Bardoli on the exploitative British Administration, Sardar Patel said: "The Government is like a wild elephant run amok. But the gnat need not fear the elephant. The elephant can never trample it to death, but the gnat can certainly prove formidable to the elephant". The effective leadership of Sardar Patel was recognised by Gandhiji and he said "Vallabhbhai found his Vallabh (God) in leaders visited Bardoli". On the soaring success of Bardoli, many leaders came to Bardoli to purify themselves at the sacred flame, lit by the villagers. That sparked the name of Vallabhbhai Patel in every nook and corner of India. His experiment with truth showed the qualities of leadership and organising skills that spurred him to take a more instrumental role as one of the architects of aspirational India.

Looking at his comprehensive approach and nationalistic commitments, Gandhiji expressed: "A leader's skill is judged by the competence in selecting his assistants for the execution of his plans. Many people were prepared to follow my advice, but I could not make up my mind as to who should be my

deputy commander. I then thought of Vallabhbhai. I must admit when I met Vallabhbhai first, I could not help wondering who this stiff-looking person was and whether he would be able to do what I wanted. But the more I come to know him, the more I realised that I must secure his help. Vallabhbhai too has concluded that although he has a flourishing practice today and is doing very important work in the Municipality, he must become a whole-time public leader. So he has taken the plunge. If it were not for his assistance, I must admit that this campaign would not have been carried through so successfully”.¹ Once Gandhiji also said that he had tested Sardar Patel on fire and he found him 100 percent gold. When the Quit India movement was to be launched in 1942 to force the British to leave, to begin with, most of the leaders did not agree with the campaign. Sardar Patel firmly expressed that the movement would galvanise the masses and compel the British to discontinue their regime. Addressing over 100000 people at the Gowalia Tank, Bombay, he called for a mass protest and a shutdown of the services. For this speech, he was arrested and sent to jail. He lost his weight considerably in jail and was later released.

Sardar Patel shared a deep emotional bond with Gandhiji that trespassed the mundane spheres of politics, power and positions. Gandhiji regarded Patel as his true and devoted disciple. The relationship between Gandhiji and Patel was not blind or unqualified. Some ideological differences arose between them during the national movement and even after the attainment of freedom. Some of the moments that created differences were non-violence in statecraft, acceptance of Government of India Act of 1935, council entry, formation of Ministries during 1936-1938, Cabinet Mission, Muslim League and the relationship with Jinnah. Socialists, Hindu Mahasabha, Communalism, and finally blunt and seemingly strong speeches made by Sardar Patel during the 1940s. Vallabhbhai has been variously perceived by scholars as a superman, and a leader with a superlative brain. He was a statesman gifted with the rare quality of astuteness. He enjoyed a generous heart, but in the pursuit of larger objectives, he never allowed emotions to erode his resolve.

Sardar, the strategic thinker- Sardar Patel wanted India to be self-reliant and that should strengthen relationships with the neighboring countries. After a meeting with the Ambassador of Nepal, he recorded in his note dated December 1, 1950: “I told them that they had to come to important decisions in the light of delicate international situations prevailing in the world today. The situation was such that neither they nor we could afford to have instability and insecurity in Nepal. There was no doubt that in Nepal’s difficulties, it was India and no other power which could assist it. Britain’s role in Asia or South-East Asia is no longer decisive. None of us desired to encroach on Nepal’s independence; indeed, it was everybody’s concern here to preserve it. It was, therefore, in our mutual interests to see that the present difficulties were settled to our mutual satisfaction and advantage”.² He further noted “the world today is passing

through a crisis. There is now the fear of a third world war. We have seen two world wars. The fear of a third world war is growing. India has been partitioned and you have suffered the most. A fierce war is going on in Korea. On the other side, a peaceful country like Tibet has been invaded. It may not survive but we did not think that it would happen. We are maintaining friendly relations with China. But China did not accept our advice. We do not know what will be its outcome. Tibet is a religious-minded country. There has been no aggression from its side. But, when one is affected by the vanity of one's power, one does not realise what one is doing. Tibet was following the advice of India. In Nepal, the people are quarreling amongst themselves. The ruler himself went to take shelter in the Indian Embassy. How can we refuse asylum to him? The borders of Assam, Pakistan, Kashmir and Burma are just adjacent to Nepal. That makes our border exposed to danger. We should, therefore, be vigilant"³. Sardar Patel advised the governance system to be vigilant on security-related issues. At the same time, if somebody wants to be accommodated due to duress and distress, the support may be extended. Sardar Patel stitched together 565 disparate princely states along with the British Indian territories, thereby preventing the balkanisation of India. The British, while granting India's independence, had also left it to the sweet will of hundreds of princely states to decide for themselves as to whether they wished to remain an independent state or would accede to India. It was Sardar Patel who, through his painstaking, nuanced diplomacy and strong action, ensured that a new India emerged effortlessly within the framework of constitutional democracy.

Sardar, the nation builder- Sardar Patel's personality is defined as Bismarck's ability for the organisation, a true replica of Gandhian soul, Caesar of Indian Politics, Kautilya's diplomatic wisdom and Lincoln's faith in unity. The mass mobilisation exerted pressure on the British administration. To develop India of his aspirations, Patel felt the need for an efficient and effective Civil Service. Sardar Patel recognised the civil service as an invaluable agent in the task of governance in independent India. He exhorted the civil servants to function professionally and in an unbiased manner. 'He did not want to have any interference of Ministers in the jobs of civil servants. Side by side, he also warned the ministers not to choose time-seeking civil servants who anticipated the wishes of their ministers and tailored their advice merely to please them. He never encouraged politicians to interfere in the administration and put pressure on civil servants. He clearly stated that unless they were quite clear as to where the politics began and the administration ended and vice versa, they would not likely to achieve that administration between Government servants and politicians which was necessary for the smooth working of a democratic Government'.⁴ Sardar Patel stood for the constitutional safeguards and guarantees for the unbiased civil service. That is the reason why Sardar Patel is considered to be the true architect of the all-India service. Sardar Patel, the Iron

man of India has given in and stood by his original proposal most tenaciously. He summed up the discussion on an all India Service by emphasising a general feeling in favour of the formation of a united India. The ICS under British Raj had achieved a benchmark in terms of effective administrative regulations. After independence followed by the partition of India, nearly 700 European and Muslim ICS officers had left the country. The burden of administration confronted many challenges. To cater to the requirements, Patel constituted the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service in place. However, many state chief ministers opposed the idea. He vehemently discouraged the divisive ideas and emphasised the need for interchange of officers to foster unity, integrity, independence, impartiality and objectivity. This is the rare of the rarest system integrated with the Indian system of governance.

After India achieved independence from the British Raj, Sardar Patel became the first Home Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and the Information and Broadcasting Minister. After partition, Sardar was committed to safeguarding the country from further damage and division. In September 1947, when Pakistan attempted to encroach upon Kashmir, Sardar Patel diplomatically handled the matter and protected Kashmir from the scourge of invasion. Looking at his commitment and unflinching dedication to the nation, he was tasked to integrate 565 princely states. He strategically integrated all the princely states in the fixed timeline. In the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad, he forced the princely states to align with independent India in not more than 5 days. He did not look backward in sending the army to both the princely states. It shows his strong will, diplomacy, and risk-taking abilities. The integration of princely states by the astonishing process of bloodless revolution stood out as one of the outstanding achievements of Sardar Patel, entitling him to a place among the great statesmen of the world.

At no time during the post-mutiny period of the British rule had the abolition of the Princely States been regarded as either necessary or possible. ‘When Britain undoubtedly needed them to consolidate her position in India, even nationalist opinion had not made any categorical demand for the elimination. Moreover, a man of his caliber and persuasive abilities could have accomplished the task of unifying five hundred and sixty-two odd mutually exclusive and fiercely self-regarding principalities into India’s fathomless unity’⁵. He strongly believed that only a strong political party can lay the sound foundation of democracy. The political party must derive legal-rational power from the masses. The representation of all sections of society, particularly the vulnerable lot, must be ensured in any decision. The political party should spell out its agenda and translate it into practice for the larger mass. The political values for Sardar Patel took into account rights and liberty on the one hand and equality and justice on the other. He was always interested in leaving a legacy behind. To improve the conditions of the nation, Sardar Patel did not necessarily vouch

for taking non-violent measures but ensured a logical means-end relationship. His realism rested on the sound principle that the cause is always greater than the effect. Sardar Patel laid the foundation of political democracy by being a key member in the drafting of the Indian Constitution. He played an active role as the Chairman of the Committees for Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Provincial Constitution and provisions like the Right to Private Property, Privy purses for Princes and Constitutional guarantees for the Civil Services. Patel was perpetually a member of informal groups that met to solve obdurate problems.

The dexterity, astuteness and precision with which he handled the work of the Advisory Committee were most commendable. His concluding remarks in the constituent assembly were considered to be acceptable. He was firm like a rock in his convictions, selfless and patriotic while any major concluding remark was to be made. He was also conscious of the apprehensions and fears of minority representation. He was there for all the legitimate demands of minorities. He vehemently said, “Nobody can be more interested than us in India in the protection of our minorities. Our mission is to satisfy every one of them”. However, he also asserted that in the long run, it would be in the interest of all to forget that there is anything like a majority or a minority in this country and that in India there is only one community. While drafting the different provisions under fundamental rights, the incorporation of articles 19 and 31 was Patel’s handiwork. Patel was for the abolition of zamindari but he was against the acquisition of land without adequate compensation being paid. He said acquisition without compensation was theft and dacoity. Patel could prohibit any move that seemed to him to be unjust and violative of the citizen’s right to property. It is different that after his demise, successive Constitution Amendment Acts went on diluting the right to property on and on until it was abolished from the part of the fundamental rights of the constitution. His constitutionalism was more inclined to mainstream the tribal lot. He wanted the views of all the sections of society including women, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, etc. to be represented in the charter of public guiding principles i.e. our constitution.

Also, Sardar Patel developed the balancing of fundamental rights with the maintenance of law and order in the state and the reservation of citizens’ rights as non-justiciable directives of the state. He was also fond of a strong centre. He also dispensed with separate electorates and seat reservations for the minorities with the unanimous consent of their leaders. He outlined the concept of people’s polity to replace the rulers’ polity in states acceding to the Indian Union.

Sardar, the humanist- In 1909, Patel’s wife became sick. She underwent an operation at a hospital in Mumbai. Unfortunately, she did not recover and finally died. When the information about her demise was shared with Sardar

Patel, he was arguing a matter in a court in Anand. Having known it, he did not show any indication till the end of his argument. He continued arguing the matter without being able to be recognised with an iota of grief on his face. It shows his unflinching trust and unconditional commitment to the work that he undertook. He never married again after the death of his wife. He lived his entire life for the betterment of the people. At the same time, he was never impacted by other externalities while working. He always completed the work undertaken without any delay depicting his visionary character and realistic mental frame to the core. Once he came into conflict with a British Magistrate who had the strange habit of insisting that the witness must look at a mirror instead of the court or the Lawyer. Sardar Patel objected to it as it did not have any legal sanction. The Magistrate refused to yield. He took the matter to the higher Magistrate as a witness. The Magistrate got panicky and agreed to give up his practice'.⁶ Sardar Patel admitted, "No doubt, my practice is flourishing today. I am also doing something big in the Municipality. But, my practice may or may not be there tomorrow. My money will be blown tomorrow, those who inherit my money will blow it. Let me leave them a better legacy than money".

Sardar Patel learned the lesson of non-violence, spirituality, discipline, and moral strength with Gandhiji and practiced in the movements against the British exploitative policies. As a fiery champion of fundamental rights and liberty, he believed that these values were indispensable pre-requisites for the development of the individual, community, nation and society. He always raised his voice against exploitation and criticised the high-handedness of authority and absolutism of power. Like Gandhiji, he was interested to ensure people's participation in politics. He fiercely criticised the exploitative revenue policy of the Government and maladministration in the princely states. He not only strongly opposed the arbitrary policies of confiscation of movable and immovable properties but also wanted to have guarded regulations on land reforms and the nationalisation of key industries. He insisted for the elected authority to bring stipulations through various legislative strides to freedom for all. As such, his political value system was a balanced blend of liberalism, conservatism, welfarism and people centricity. His idea of State was in line with the pattern of his political value-based orientations. To Patel, the true foundation and nurturing of the state were based on a profuse sense of nationalism and patriotism. Individual liberty was to be in tune with constitutional provisions. For the creation of an effective nation-state, he emphasised the emancipation of backward communities and women coupled with Hindu-Muslim unity. He wanted the higher caste to play an instrumental role in social integration and political mobilisation. He vouched for the plural base of the nation-state by bringing electoral participation as an effective tool for political mobilisation. He envisaged the nation as being democratic in structure, nationalistic in the foundation, human in nature and welfarist in spirit and function. He expressed

respect for all sects and religions. He did give importance to Indian tradition and culture to the extent that it could improve the connectedness amongst all. Needless to mention that Indian culture and traditions are sharply marked for their assimilative and accommodative features. Sardar Patel always encouraged the idea of accommodation and assimilation to be present on Indian soil.

As such, he always encouraged unity, accommodation, and assimilation. However, if one looks at the organising skills of Sardar Patel, one finds that the innovative and modern practices were camouflaged with him. If the merits of a superhuman being are neither documented nor narrated, the image would be obliterated in public memory. At the same time, his ideas would not be practiced that could provide an intensified incentive in the nation-building process. His profundity of thoughts, his robust sense of realism, his firmness in decision and iron-will not be easily left out if India has to ensure inclusive social growth and development.

Sardar Patel with his versatile vision attempted to differentiate the gap between myths and realities, agencies and structures, and nature and culture. He dived deeper into the problems of humanity and wanted to empower the destitute and deprived people through an effective system of administration. The time has witnessed, Sardar Patel started his experiment with truth by the fight for the farmers' rights. He wanted to devise a strategy to bring them back from the tenacious circles of impoverishment. It shows that a true human soul was motivating him always throughout his life span. Staunch in conviction, modest in approach and firm in the decision, Sardar Patel drove the future of India most effectively and constructively through the inclusion of the marginalised masses. He was sympathetic to the interest of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. He believed that there should be reservation for them, as they lagged due to not exploiting the opportunities available. He took a keen interest in the tribal problems of Assam. He was engrossed with the problems of tribes. On this account, he appreciated the strides taken by Missionaries. He encouraged tribal autonomy and made required provisions in the constitution. He wanted to mainstream tribal people and tribal place through integrating them with development processes. His empathy, intuition and intentionality to the tribal world show how concerned he was for the people in duress and distress.

Sardar Patel also insisted on keeping a clean, green and sustainable environment. He stressed upon the preservation of forest wealth of the country and cautioned that the neglect of national treasure would be a national disservice and failure on our part to discharge an effective duty of administration and citizenship. In the struggle for existence or in competition with nature, human beings are apt to follow the path of least resistance and taking a narrow short-term view of their needs and the resources available for their fulfilment. They lay their hands on the available resource without any forethought of their replacement for future requirements.

He wanted the representation of all Indians in the trajectory of development and decision-making. He was a true democrat in taking the views of the masses. He insisted to ensure that cost involved should be viewed in relation to the purpose achieved. He emphasised education for poor and economically backward people. Women empowerment and care for the children were also imbued in his vision. To Sardar Patel, women and children are important to the growth of society and nation. Their inclusion, empowerment and security should never be compromised. He clearly stated that the interest of India lies in protecting and empowering its women and children. Most significantly, he wanted the spontaneous participation of people in the trajectory of development. He believed that only *Atmanirbhar Bharat* can assure the happiness of the masses. He wanted industrialisation to take place in India to do away with the financial stringencies. He wanted every hand to get work in order to improve the economic conditions of households. He wanted workers not to go on strike for their demands. At the same time, he was also not of the view that industrialists should not listen to the grievances of their workers. He wanted the judicious allocations of resources across the sections. He did not like the conflict between workers and capitalists. He said: "I am convinced that any promotion of conflict between labour and capital at this stage would deal a disastrous blow to India's industrial future. But that does not mean that Government would submit to the exploitation of labour". It will ensure for the labour its just share by the only civilised method of doing so, namely arbitration".⁷ Sardar Patel found that strikes intended more to provide cheap publicity to the aspiring labor leaders. He, therefore, expressed the production and its equitable distribution between capitalists and labourers. He wanted the problems of the working-class to be solved from a non-political angle. Only concerted action can solve the problems of the working class. He wrote to RS Ruikar in his letter dated October 13, 1947: "I am definitely of the view that the welfare of the working classes lies in their problems being approached from a non-political angle, namely the interest of the working classes themselves. The communists have a different philosophy. Some others have sympathies with how they have handled the labour problem to the ultimate detriment of the working classes".⁸ Sardar Patel, on the occasions of conflict between labourers and capitalists, emphasised amicably and mutually agreed with resolutions to avoid confrontation led work and productivity loss.

He wanted the consumer goods' prices under the normal reach of the customers. He was not happy that the Government did not set up an effective machinery for supervision over the implementation of its economic policies. 'After his work for the unification of the country, maximum production and maximum economy in non-development expenditure were the targets he set before to tide over the scarcity of consumer goods as well as to keep prices within the reach of the common man. It was the misfortune of the country that he lived for only two years and a half after independence and little heed was

paid to his legacy after his demise'.⁹ Sardar Patel also insisted on scientific research, 'as it was the long expedition of man into the innermost recesses of natural forces and phenomena and the utilitarian advantages have come to him through the urge for harnessing these forces in the service of mankind'.¹⁰ Indeed, development through research ensures the direction of growth. Without direction, development becomes rootless and fruitless. Sardar Patel well-articulated the idea into his vision.

Sardar Patel's health started falling. Gandhiji was also equally concerned over Patel's failing health. In every letter to Patel, Gandhiji invariably began and ended with either enquiring or advising about his health. In 1937, Gandhiji wrote, 'I knew you were going to fall ill. You may be Sardar to others, but you do not seem to be any better than your own slave. If you are punctual in everything and regulate your daily life, you will live long. Do not dismiss this only as the pot calling the kettle black. Gandhiji also wrote: do I not realise how great has been God's kindness to me in giving me the companionship of such an extraordinary man as Vallabhbhai?

After the assassination of Gandhiji, Sardar Patel was shocked to lose such a friend, philosopher and guide. He had a heart attack immediately after the death of Gandhiji in 1948. The heart attack completely wrecked his body and his condition deteriorated. 'He suffered from the acutest heart pain and the brave Sardar who had never given vent to his grief by word of mouth, suppressed his sufferings at that time'.¹¹ Later, his health further declined. He was sent to Mumbai, soon after. He succumbed to another massive heart attack on December 15, 1950, and he passed away at 9.37 am on Friday. As the news of his demise spread over, a fathomless pause was noticed. From Kailash to Kanya Kumari and from Kamrup to Kathiawad, in all cities and towns, business firms, educational institutions, courts, government offices remained closed. Lord Mountbatten and Sir Roy Bucher were of the firm view that Patel had died from overwork. Thousands of people were weeping while others were too grief-stricken to shed tears. His body was clothed in a simple fashion i.e. *dhoti* and *Kurta*.

Sardar Patel remains immortal for the contributions he made for New India. On the demise of Sardar Patel, Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan said, "After the death of Bapu, the demise of Sardar Patel is the greatest loss for India". Dr. B.R. Ambedkar opined, "Sardar Patel certainly supplied an element of strength and stability which this country needs very badly today". Dr. Rajendra Prasad pointed out, "The earthly body of Sardar Patel has gone. But in the form of services he has rendered to this county, he would live for all time". Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru expressed "Our nation has seen many catastrophes. But nothing more distressing and gloomy as the death of Sardar, who stood behind all of us like a rock of strength, patience and courage". K. Santhanam said, 'Along with Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar will forever be remembered as one of the founding fathers of India'. Many great leaders and scholars paid tribute and admiration to

Sardar Patel looking at his contributions. Indeed, the heavenly abode of Sardar Patel ended with an era. His teachings and preaching would always provide strengths and encouragements in building aspirational India. ‘He not only left his mark on the map of India but also on the minds of the people’.¹² Indeed, in days to come, people would realise that Sardar Patel was the cosmic soul who amazingly unleashed humanity from all sorts of tyranny.

Our objective in presenting this edited book on *Sardar Patel: Builder of Aspirational India* is to pay a tribute to Sardar Patel on his 146th birth anniversary for his exemplary role in the building of modern India. One of the overarching objectives of the book is to bring to the knowledge of the new generation about the comprehensive picture of the great man, his life and thoughts. The attempts dive deeper with scholarly papers to cover his meticulous contributions to new India. Soft in articulation, lucid in language, coherent in contents, and erudite in approach, the book recapitulates Sardar Patel’s efforts in transforming India’s orientation into a more inclusive and socially developed nation. In 1991, the Republic of India honoured him with the prestigious *Bharat Ratna Award*, posthumous—the highest Civilian Award for his achievement in shaping India. To commemorate the contributions of Sardar Patel, a 182-meter world’s tallest statue of unity was built in Kevadia in Narmada district, Gujarat. The statute was prepared in 33 months and unveiled on October 31, 2018. The 153-meter long gallery has been created for the audience close to the statute of unity which can hold 200 visitors. The Statue of Unity was constructed under the supervision of popular artist and sculptor Shri Ram V. Sutar who is also the recipient of Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan. It reminds us of Sardar Patel’s towering personality. It attracts all those who are interested in Sardar Patel’s teaching and preaching. Tourists also come to see the statue of unity across the countries. More needs to be done to highlight his life and works. This is the broad context within which the life and works of Sardar Patel have been interpreted and objectively placed in the book.

The underwritten constitute the birds’ eye view of the contributions made. The authors have covered the relevance of Sardar Patel’s thoughts in relation to various aspects of aspirational India. The authors have not only collected the relevant information in making their paper factually accurate but also interpreted the relevance of Patel’s work in the larger ambit of administrative effectiveness and social development- one of the promotional pillars of aspirational India.

Shri T N Chaturvedi’s paper on “Sardar Patel’s Administrative Vision: Some Reflections” traces the contributions of Sardar Patel in the annals of the Indian national movement. Due to his versatile personality, Sardar Patel made many-sided contributions to the national cause during the struggle for independence and subsequently after the attainment of independence, for the consolidation of our hard-won freedom. He opines that Sardar Patel’s administrative vision was conditioned by the prevalent situation and its requirements, as well as the

way he wanted to build society and the country in the future. He had a robust handle on the political, social and economic reality as well as the possibilities of the future and the path to take in proceeding towards it. According to him, to have a more balanced view of his contribution to administration, we need to take into account his social ideals, as also his thoughts on socio-economic issues since they directly impinge on the approach that has to be given to both the policy as well as programmes by the apparatus of administration. He affirms that during the freedom struggle, he developed into a statesman administration. Therefore, after the attainment of freedom, he was the guardian not only of administrative requirements and properties but also administrative effectiveness. In such a broad socio-economic and politico-administrative perspective of pre-Independence India, Chaturvedi analyses Patel's early life as municipal councillor, as the leader of the Bardoli movement, as the president of the Indian National Congress, the framer of the constitution and as an integrator of the princely states into the Indian union.

While squaring off, he states that Sardar Patel was not a system builder. He was a man of action. His teachings were the facts of life, not books or doctrines. According to circumstances, his approach to the administration of public affairs could be manipulative, preventive, regulatory, anticipatory, or creative. However, it was invariably suffused with the popular touch. It is in this light of this background that some of the highlights of his achievement as a member of government for a few but momentous years have been recorded.

Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari in his paper "Sardar Patel: A Visionary Administrator" emphasises that Sardar Patel played a pivotal role. Sardar Patel laid down the institutional foundation of the modern India state with pragmatic statecraft and political deftness. He throws more light on Sardar Patel's role in building the civil services in the nascent Democratic Republic of India. The major issues that he has highlighted in his paper are: role of Sardar Patel in building India, Sardar Patel an out-and out doer, Sardar Patel's early days and his personality, Sardar Patel's vision of Civil Services, Conference of provincial Premiers, 1946, debate in the constituent assembly on 10th October 1949, Sardar Patel in action as the deputy prime minister and home minister, Nehru and Patel: Parliamentary Democracy at work, Sardar Patel's relations with civil service, and taking on leaders to protect the civil services.

He finds that Sardar Patel furnished realism which enabled India to retain the middle course in politics. In so far as the civil services are concerned, Sardar Patel was clear as to where the politics begins and the administration ends and vice-versa; that democracy is an interplay between the citizen and the government that keeps the extremism of all kinds at bay. Patel was devoted to a united, strong and aspirational India, combining faith with work. With undiminished faith in Mahatma Gandhi and incessant work for the country, he

bequeathed us an India where democracy is not an everyday plebiscite but a continuous process when as a nation we work for a brighter future.

Existence of Indian Administrative Services, Minister-Administrator relations, values and ethics, Patel and leadership lessons, Patel and real meaning of freedom, Patel as a foresighted economist, and Patel and future administrators are some of the key ideas that have been covered under the contribution made by Dr. Abhishek Jain through his paper “Sardar Patel for Administrators: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”. Dr. Jain conceptualises that Patel’s ideas are completely and precisely relevant and implementable in modern-day administration. Whenever in need, the administrators should read some of Sardar Patel’s literature, statements, or speeches; and they would get a solution for their administrative problems at hand. Sardar Patel’s prescriptions and ideas should be on the table of every administrator and civil servant, and more so in their hearts.

Dr. Jain equates Sardar Patel with the visionaries of nation building in India. Patel is as relevant for administrators today as he was in the past. Even in future, Patel’s vision and ideologies would be relevant and completely implementable for handling any issue of public administration, policy formulation and implementation. There is no one else whom the modern day administrator should look for resolving any kind of public policy issue.

Dr. Saumitra Mohan in his paper “Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Builder of India’s Steel Frame” brings out important aspects of Sardar Patel’s contribution to nation-building viz. the role of Sardar Patel in consolidating the Indian State, Sardar’s socio-economic outlook, Patel in post-independence India, Sardar’s association and engagement with Indian civil service, undertaking the importance of efficient civil service, overcoming the initial distrusts of civil servants, building the foundation of Indian administrative structure, the rationale for the civil services, role and mission of civil services in independent India, consolidating Indian unity and nation-building, delineating the contours of all India services, creating constitutional safeguards for the civil services, roles and responsibilities of civil services, and Sardar Patel and modern Indian civil services. Dr. Mohan concludes that Sardar Patel is relevant even today is proved by the fact of his being remembered every time, when the nation is faced with a constitutional or an acute political crisis. His name immediately springs to our mind as one who could have rid us of the problems before us. Patel’s legend and legacy continue to grow and with every passing year, as it glows brighter and radiant.

Patel was a selfless leader, who placed the country’s interests above everything else and shaped India’s destiny with single-minded devotion. The invaluable contribution of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in building a modern and unified India, needs to be remembered by every Indian as the country marches

ahead as one of the largest democracies in the world. The Indian State remains beholden to the legacies of Sardar Patel. It is hoped that the Indian civil services, as visualised by him, shall continue to contribute tirelessly to the socio-economic development of its countrymen.

Dr. Neerja Singh in her paper “Patel on Nation, Nationalism and Nation Building” has brought out a comprehensive description of Sardar Patel’s personality by explaining the role of Sardar Patel in terms of the nation, partition and communalism. The philosophical foundation of Patel’s thought emerges out of the same moral and ethical value system which Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhi and Nehru arose from. Sardar Patel criticised narrow expositions on the concept of nation and nationalism and placed the tenet of citizenship above religious, ethnic and caste identities. He strongly reacted to any views which encouraged a particularistic variety of nationalism based on ideology, community, or cultural groups. The nationalism which he subscribed to was a product of composite phenomenon which evolved over a period of time by a deft intermeshing of several traditions. Central to Patel’s nationalism, was the attainment of independence from colonial rule, followed by engineering a robust process of an all-inclusive national reconstruction.

For Sardar Patel, *swaraj* did not mean removal of white sahibs and placing black sahibs, but it meant the establishment of Raj of farmers and *majur*, reviving spinning wheel and village home productions, to help the starving millions. Democracy, according to Sardar Patel, should be decentralised and it should percolate down to the economic and social sphere, without jeopardising the nation’s security and encourage production and the cultural progress of the subjects and the nation as a whole. He supported the management of corporate life of villages by means of popularly elected Panchayats and attaining economic self-sufficiency in the essentials of life.

Patel not only regarded civil liberties as the cornerstone of democracy but considered the freedom of press as the life and blood of civil liberty. The freedom of Press is an ideal that we cherish as it is concomitant to democracy. If we want a democratic rule, we must have freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and the freedom of association.

The egalitarian societies are set up through establishing a free democratic state, in which equal opportunities are to be provided for every member for self-fulfillment, and self-expression. Also, a democracy should be democratised and it should percolate down to the social and economic sphere, without jeopardising the nation’s security. It should encourage the production and cultural progress of the subjects and the nation as a whole. Patel realised that for the construction and projection of the idea of a strong nation, it was essential for a relatively less developed nation such as India to muster its resources effectively. The notion of a nation was strongly linked with the augmentation of productive forces and

effective distribution. Therefore, Sardar Patel supported the management of the corporate life of villages by means of a popularly elected panchayat and attaining economic self-sufficiency in the essentials of life. He not only stood for the raj of farmers, village industries and agriculture but also supported a symbiotic relationship between industry and agriculture.

Dr. Amita Singh in her paper ‘Gleaning Iron in the Caricature of Sardar’ finds Sardar Patel as a leader of few words. Sardar Patel succeeded in steamrolling many intransigent, self-serving and avaricious micro-kingdoms into one politically integrated republic. He provided an impermeable administrative-legal framework which most decolonized peers in the subcontinent had failed in. A subtle designer of Indian Administrative Services (IAS & IPS), a strategic planner and a mastermind in raising a disciplined yet parliamentary controlled army at a time when military coup d’état of civilian governments had become a norm amongst nascent Afro-Asian republics. She finds him, on one hand, Sardar Patel limited Pakistan’s expansionist ambitions over Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh while on the other, ensured stringent enforcement of the Rule of Law to prevent anarchy or entropy of newly constituted organizations of governance. Sardar Patel was aware of rising greed or lust for power in first time political masters subsequently increasing politicization and corruption in political life.

Our post-independence generation still regrets his premature loss in December 1950 when the embryonic Republic had not even stretched out its limbs enough. The paper highlights Sardar’s iron will and determination which despite repeated jolts of being pushed to a peripheral role gleamed through his personality intimidatingly to make him work like Bismarck and Montesquieu through the craft of the British and farcicalities of the Muslim League.

Shri B B Mishra in his paper “Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: The Tallest Man” brings out the journey of Sardar Patel from the Barrister to being the Deputy Prime Minister of the nation. The central thrust of his paper is to discover the life of Sardar in simplicity. Shri Mishra finds that Sardar Patel’s contribution to the formation and development of Civil Services was immense. After independence, there was an outcry against the Indian Civil Service and the Imperial Police Service. Instead of ridiculing ICS as neither Indian nor Civil nor a Service, he explained their necessity. He thought of creating parallel services such as IAS and IPS and saw to it that they were mentioned in the constitution. So the IAS and IPS are constitutional posts. Sardar Patel selected the right person for the right job and once he selected, he allowed them freedom.

Sardar Patel spoke less and spent his time in working. He could anticipate problems unlike others and was ready with the solution. Not a single decision of his can be faulted. He was not a brilliant speaker like Pt. Nehru neither was he a crowd puller like him, but he could feel the pulse of the people. He knew the problems faced by the lower and middle class and came up with solutions.

Dr. Sunil Shukla and Dr. Amit Kumar Dwivedi in their paper “Sardar Patel: An Architect of Unified India” find the entrepreneurial ecosystem inbuilt with the vision of Sardar Patel. They find the find Sardar Patel as the architect of unified India with 565 integrated princely states. 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’.

Dr. Kishan Pratap in his paper “Unity, Cultural Diversity and Nation Building: Sardar Patel’s Vision of Modern India” conceptualises the pattern based interpretative underrating of the consequence of Sardar Patel’s life and works on Indian Society. The three key parts of his paper are to discuss the contours and dynamics of cultural diversity and territorial integration of India, highlighting the contribution of Sardar Patel in embedding structural unity, and the implication and significance of unity in laying down the foundations of modern India as a cohesive unit, reflecting a fine balance between the forces of continuity and change.

He finds Sardar Patel’s views enabling modern thoughts & realising the vitality of securing justice, equality and liberty to the citizens and addressing issues of cultural diversity in India right from the inception of independent India. The basic aim of the adoption of these values was to promote the idea of fraternity while ensuring unity and integrity of the nation along with individual dignity. The structural unity of India resulted in the integration of cultural diversity, economic integration and ideational unity steadily. Sardar Patel’s pursuit was remarkable in achieving national integration in an otherwise highly diverse society. The unity amidst cultural diversity was achieved through the Constitution, which created space and respect for diversity. The Constitution did not impose uniformity but acknowledged and accepted vast diversity and differences among people, operating within the framework of the union of India. The ideational unity was achieved by implanting the idea of nationhood and ‘Indianness’ among people irrespective of their background, caste, culture, region, or religious affiliations.

Dr. Subhash C. Kashyap in his paper “Sardar Patel Constituent Assembly and Framing of the Constitution” expressed that Sardar Patel played a very significant role in the constituent assembly and in the framing of the constitution. Dr. Kashyap has presented his views on the official and public image of Sardar

Patel. Subsequently, he discusses the birth and childhood of Sardar Patel and treats him as the Lenin of Bardoli. According to him, Patel was a consolidator and builder of new India, the greatest statesman and the most remarkable son of the soil. Patel was not only the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Home Minister but also the most influential leader in the Congress' Party organisation.

He suggests that it is important to remember that in the matter of laying down the fundamental principles of the Constitution and basic structure of the polity, the most substantial work was done away from public view, behind close-doors, in committees and sub-committees or informal group meetings of senior leaders. In these conclaves, Sardar Patel's contribution was often the most remarkable and his voice the most decisive. The dexterity, astuteness and precision with which Patel handled the work of the Advisory Committee were ever-expanding and precise. What Sardar Patel suggested about the official language, was the formula which was finally adopted.

Dr. Rumki Basu in her paper "The Constitutional Foundation, Sardar Patel and the Role of the Civil Service in India" finds that Constitutional foundations of the civil services in India owes a great deal to the vision of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and his perception of what a future public servant's mandate should look like in democratic India after independence. As the fundamental law of the land, the Constitution has now been transformed to 448 articles grouped into 25 parts, with 12 schedules and five appendices. The transformed Constitution is the point of reference and should be every civil servant's point of reference as they take the oath to serve the nation and its people. Dr. Basu has taken overarching values as stated in the Constitution and then revisited the civil service rules which are constitutionally embedded largely due to the efforts of Sardar Patel. The constitutional values, namely liberty, equality, fraternity and justice should be adhered to while discharging the duties by civil service. It should also be aligned with Sardar Patel's four cardinal requirements of the civil service, namely empathy, efficiency, impartiality and incorruptibility.

Dr. Yoginder K. Alagh in his synoptic paper on "The Sardar and Higher Education in Gujarat" captures the role played by educational and social institutions in the state of Gujarat. He has delved inside his memory of visiting Sardar's village and goes on to explain the importance of an internet-linked Patel's diaspora. He finds Sardar's memory living in secular liberal institutions of Gujarat.

Shri Sourabh Ratnu in his paper "Sardar Patel- A Hero for all Ages" brings out the image of Sardar Patel through ten specific stages, namely birth of a hero, moral dilemma, the cycle of life and death, the turning point, the final plunge, learning the ropes, Vallabhbhai as Sardar, clash of ideas and faiths, loosing a battle, and winning the war. Sardar Patel was the man who had put his brother's ambition before his own. He was the man who fought for his classmates'

rights. He was the man who worked tirelessly for the freedom of his country and upliftment of his fellow countrymen giving up the prospects of amassing a great material fortune. He was the hero of the moment. It was his moment of reckoning. Destiny and his *karma* had given him a unique opportunity to literally draw the map of India through his negotiation powers.

Patel used social meetings and unofficial surroundings to engage most of the monarchs, inviting them to lunch and tea at his home in Delhi. Patel explained that there was no inherent conflict between the Congress and the princely order. From invoking the patriotism of the princes to reminding them of the possibility of anarchy on event of their refusal to join, he kept trying to convince them to join India. He also introduced the concept of “privy purses” — a payment to be made to royal families for their agreement to merge with India. Governed by the goodness of his heart, an irrepressible spirit and unwavering moral commitment our hero Vallabhbhai had achieved what no one could even fathom. He had scaled the walls of his humble origins and faced every difficulty in the face, coming out a winner. He used the moral and physical challenge that came in his path as a ladder to rise higher time and again. His contribution to national integration in the newly independent country and the way he achieved it earned him the befitting sobriquet-Iron Man of India.

Dr. Anil Dutta Mishra in his contribution “Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Life and Legacy” examines at length the various facets of his personality. Dr. Mishra in his analysis presents a lucid and coherent picture of the life and works of Patel right from his childhood till his death. While concluding, he says: there were a few nationalist leaders who possessed such a rare quality of head and heart that Sardar Patel possessed and that was one of the reasons why he was called the “Iron Man of India”.

Shri Himanshu Sekhar Mishra in his paper “Sardar Patel’s Tryst with Disaster Governance” discovers Sardar Patel’s roles in disaster mitigation. He describes the unprecedented floods in Ahmedabad in the last week of July, 1927 which was the first acid test of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s politico-administrative skills to deal with climate-related disaster. To supplement the views of Sardar Patel, Shri Mishra has explained the graphic description of Narhari B. Parikh who found the scale of devastation unleashed by heavy rainfall and consequent floods, were huge in Ahmedabad on July 24, 1927. Vallabhbhai Patel walked out of his home late in the night with just an umbrella to take stock of the worsening situation. The absence of disaster management institutions or emergency management machinery further complicated the situation. There was no trained disaster relief force to rescue people and shift them to safer places. Nor did any official agency exist to distribute relief materials in flood-affected parts of the city and nearby flood-affected villages. Further, the floods had made the road network, rail services, postal traffic and telegraphic services dysfunctional for several days, incapacitating the movement of both goods and

people. As the municipal authorities tried to reach out to the flood-affected parts of Ahmedabad, the exact quantum of the devastation unleashed by nature's fury was almost impossible to ascertain. Sardar Patel mobilised villagers who became the first responders. He also ensured the resettlement and rehabilitation as an aftermath of the floods. He also set up a flood relief fund. Sardar Patel's efficient stewardship of the administration during one of the worst climate-related disasters earned him the goodwill of people and established him as a successful political leader. It was perhaps the first structured and organised effort in Gujarat to create a financial architecture to provide loans to flood victims, to help them reconstruct livelihood opportunities and rebuild lives from scratch. Sardar Patel as a disaster expert knew how to ensure 'build-back-better'.

Dr. C. Sheela Reddy in her paper "Legacy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel" illustrates the features of Sardar Patel's personality. She has explained the legacy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in terms of the indomitable Sardar, his role in the making of the constitution, a true leader, Patel-an advocate of strong civil service, self-reliance-Going Atmanirbhar, and the dictum of *Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat*. She underlines that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was a statesman gifted with the rare quality of astuteness and pertinacity in his approach to problems. Despite his stern exterior, he possessed a generous heart in the pursuit of larger objectives. He never allowed emotions or sentiments to weaken his resolve. Patel's realism rested on the sound principle that the cause is greater than the individual. He was essentially a man of action and there was no place for vacillation, selfishness and cowardice in his scheme of things. He was a visionary and unifier of modern India. The spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas' (together, for everyone's growth, with everyone's trust' and with everyone's efforts) resonates with the vision of Sardar Patel. The best way to honor the memory of Sardar Patel is by working with the same singleness of purpose as he did for a strong, united India. India remembers him with gratitude and respect. His legacy inspires and sustains us.

Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak in his article "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: A Caesar of Indian Politics" explains that Sardar Patel first made his mark in 1918, when he planned a mass campaign of peasants, farmers, and landowners of Kaira District of Gujarat against the decision of the Bombay government to collect the full revenue taxes despite crop failures caused by heavy rains. The Bardoli resistance made him an established leader of the Congress Party. In Dr. Pathak's analysis, Vallabhbhai Patel was the top Congress politician who ran the machinery of the Party with a firm and ruthless hand. He asserts that Patel's nationalism has come from his father who fought the British in 1857.

According to Dr. Pathak, Patel was a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi, but never compromised with his fundamental thinking and principles. He cites the example that during the war, Patel rejected Gandhi's non-violence in the face of the then-expected Japanese invasion of India. On the transfer of power,

Patel differed with Gandhiji in realising that the partition of the subcontinent into Hindu India and Muslims Pakistan was inevitable, and he asserted that it was in India's interest to part with Pakistan.

Fathomless intellectual depth and profundity of the contributors emerges as one turns pages through the book. The book *Sardar Patel: Builder of Aspirational India* should be of special interest and use to the followers of politics as much as for the general reader, as the book is entertaining, inspirational, and even enlightening. The influence of Sardar Patel continues to be the key guiding principle in citizen-centric public administration. The jewel of Gujarat, the prince of the working class, the architect of modern India, is no more with us but his vision and mission cast an indelible impression on our minds and soul. No wonder his birthday is celebrated as National Unity Day or *Rashtriya Ekta Diwas*.

ENDNOTES

1. Das, D. (ed.) (1972) Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-1950, Ahmedabad: Navajivan.
2. *Ibid.* p. 209.
3. *Ibid.* p. 210.
4. Chopra, P N (1995). The Sardar of INDIA, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited. p. 8.
5. Singh, RNP (2018) Sardar Patel: Unifier of Modern India, New Delhi: Vitasta Publishing Private Ltd. p. 239-40.
6. Chopra, P N (1995). The Sardar of INDIA, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited. p.8
7. *Ibid.* p. 300.
8. *Ibid.* p. 301.
9. *Ibid.* p. 301.
10. *Ibid.* p. 302.
11. *Ibid.* p. 305.
12. Singh, RNP (2018). Sardar Patel: Unifier of Modern India, New Delhi: Vitasta Publishing Private Ltd.