



## **SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL: NATION - BUILDER WITH UNCOMPROMISING GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

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### **Abstract**

*Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is hailed as the greatest visionary administrator of India. His contributions towards building up the civil services in post-independence India and his vision and ideas about administration can be considered as the 'gold standard' of public administration, governance and public policy. Vallabhbhai Patel was born on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1875 in Nadiad, Gujarat. A successful lawyer by profession, his life encountered a turning point when Mahatma Gandhi chose him as his deputy commander to lead the Kheda Satyagraha in 1918. Thus, as the leader of a peasant's protest Vallabhbhai Patel found the trajectory of his life turning towards a path of public service. Sardar Patel went on to become one of the foremost pillars of the national struggle for freedom. In 1931, he was elected President of the Indian National Congress at its Karachi Session. At a time when the nation was in tumult over the execution of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, he made a sombre speech that reflected the sentiment of the hour. Patel's vision went beyond administrative efficiency. He saw the All-India Services as a means to foster national integration in a land marked by linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity. Through this cadre, he aimed to bridge the gap between different regions, languages, and communities, promoting a sense of unity among the people of India. The All India Services became the backbone of Patel's efforts to consolidate the nation by integrating over 562 princely states into the Indian Union. Patel played a key role in the selection of the drafting committee. He also founded Modern All India Services and fathered All India Services. Patel is the Protector of Kashmir as well as The Nizam Hyderabad State. Officers of these services played pivotal roles in negotiating with princely states and ensuring a smooth transition to a united India. Sardar Patel gave a lot of emphasis on values and ethics in administrators. He knew that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Hence, he called for effective use of power and not an abuse of state power. According to Patel, the power which the administrators wield can bring the nation great dividends if rightly used, but can bring harm and disrepute if abused. He was the strongest advocate of Secular India. Patel banned the RSS after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. And stated a strong voice for communal harmony against violence. His devotion to work for the farmers' rights gave Patel the title "sardar". His heart-touching contribution is savior of refugees, weak and marginalized people.*

**Key Words :** *Gujarat, Sardar, All India Services, National Integration, 565 Princely states, Union of India, Protection of Kashmir and Hyderabad States, Mahatma Gandhi influence, Iron man of India.*

### **Introduction**

India is a land of diversities linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious as well as many others. This has led to the formation of a large number of small states. As observed by Gurmukh Nihal Singh: "Nature has made India a more or less self-sufficient unit, but historical accidents have divided her into a large number of separate political entities". Sardar Patel's life and career is a lesson in grit, sagacity



and decisive leadership. He earned the reputation of ‘Iron Man’ because of the manner in which he brought about and maintained internal stability as Home Minister in the wake of the partition of the country. Another illustrious contribution made by Sardar Patel was the creation of All India Services. He had envisioned these services as the ‘Steel frame of India’ that would further safeguard the country’s unity and integrity. He considered the officers of the Services as partners in administration and expected them to maintain the highest standards of integrity and honesty. On 15 December 1950, the Iron Man of India breathed his last. He had successfully accomplished the task of integrating 565 Princely States into the Union of India within a remarkably short span of time- a feat unprecedented in history. Sardar Patel was a mass leader, politician, administrator and astute diplomat. A man of sharp intellect and character, a patriot to the core, imbued with practical sagacity, Sardar Patel ranks among the greatest statement of his times.

### Primary Objectives

1. **Examine Sardar Patel’s Leadership Qualities:** Analyze his governance style, decision-making processes, and leadership principles that contributed to his success as a nation-builder.
2. **Assess His Role In Indian Nation-Building:** Evaluate Patel’s contributions to India’s integration, unity, and development, highlighting his impact on the country's political, social, and economic landscape.
3. **Identify Key Governance Lessons:** Extract valuable lessons from Patel’s leadership experiences, highlighting his commitment to transparency, accountability, and public service.

### Secondary Objectives

1. **Analyze Patel’s Integration of Princely States:** Study the strategies and negotiations employed by Patel to integrate over 565 princely states into the Indian Union.
2. **Evaluate His Impact On India’s Constitutional Framework:** Examine Patel’s role in shaping India’s Constitution, particularly his contributions to the federal structure and fundamental rights.
3. **Explore His Legacy In Modern Indian Governance:** Discuss the relevance of Patel’s leadership principles and governance style in contemporary Indian politics and administration.

By exploring these objectives and the paper can provide a comprehensive understanding of Sardar Patel’s leadership qualities, governance style, and contributions to Indian national integration.

**Methodology:** Comprehensive potential methodology is followed in the research paper using historical records and information and Broadcasting videos of Government of India.

1. **Qualitative Research:** This study will employ a qualitative research approach, focusing on analyzing historical records, biographies, and scholarly works on Sardar Patel’s life and leadership.
2. **Case Study:** The research will use a case study approach, examining Patel’s leadership experiences and governance style in various contexts, such as the integration of princely states and his role in the Constituent Assembly.

**Data Collection: Primary Sources:** The study will draw on primary sources, including:

1. Patel’s speeches, letters, and writings.
2. Official documents, such as government reports and constitutional assembly debates.
3. Contemporary newspaper articles and editorials.



**Secondary Sources:** The research will also utilize secondary sources, including:

1. Biographies and scholarly works on Sardar Patel's life and leadership.
2. Historical accounts of India's independence movement and nation-building efforts.
3. Academic articles and books on governance, leadership, and public administration.

**Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis:** The study will employ thematic analysis to identify and examine key themes and patterns in Patel's leadership style, governance principles, and nation- building efforts.

**Content Analysis:** The research will use content analysis to examine the language, tone, and rhetoric used by Patel in his speeches and writings, providing insights into his leadership approach and governance philosophy.

### Research Tools

1. **Literature Review:** A comprehensive literature review will be conducted to synthesize existing research on Sardar Patel's life, leadership, and governance style.
2. **Historical Analysis:** The study will employ historical analysis to contextualize Patel's experiences and contributions within the broader narrative of India's independence movement and nation-building efforts.

By using these methodologies, the research paper can provide a nuanced understanding of Sardar Patel's leadership qualities, governance style, and contributions to Indian nation- building.

**Review of Literature:** one of the important books "The Man Who Saved India" by **Hindol Sengupta (2018)** is a biography of Sardar Patel that presents facts and plays an important part in presenting Sardar as a one – man army in India's push towards attainment of self - governance. BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA: **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** written by **IJ Patel** is wonderful book on how Patel life contributed to nation- building and Integration of community Published by the Additional Director General, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Another landmark publisher. **R.P. Chaturvedi's** work "Nation Building and Sardar Patel" (1991) delves into the remarkable contributions of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a prominent figure in India's struggle for independence and the nation's first Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs. The book explores Patel's pivotal role in uniting the diverse princely states into a unified India, highlighting his visionary leadership and diplomatic skills. Chaturvedi's research underscores how Sardar Patel's iron will and unwavering commitment to national integration were instrumental in overcoming the challenges posed by partition and princely states' resistance. The book's core theme of nation – building through the lens of Sardar Patel's astute political acumen and tireless efforts, shedding light on his enduring legacy in shaping modern India.

### Vallabhbhai Patel Birth and Education – Barister In Britain

An extraordinary leader, freedom fighter and architect of the integration of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, better known as "Iron Man of India," remains an enduring icon of patriotism, nationalism and the spirit of public service. In a fitting tribute to this giant, Indian government Sardar Patel's birth anniversary on October 31, which has been aptly designated as Rashtriya Ekta Divas or National Unity Day? A quintessential self-made man, Patel's life story exemplifies the sheer power of will, hard work and sincerity as he scripted a new life for himself first as a lawyer, and then as a



freedom fighter and nation-builder amid trying circumstances. Born on October 31, 1875 in the influential Patidar Community, he did his early schooling in Gujarat and decided to study law in London. But the untimely death of his father plunged the family into a financial crisis. Fired by his steely determination, which was to remain his defining trait till the end, the young Patel “studied very earnestly for the law examination and resolved firmly to save sufficient money for a visit to England.” He finished his LL.B from the Middle Temple, England in June 1912 in a record two-and-a-half years and returned to India. His formidable legal acumen earned him a dedicated clientele, and he became a sought-after lawyer earning thousands of rupees every month. All this success and money, however, did not go to his head; on the contrary, it only kindled his thirst to do something for society and leave a lasting legacy. “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,” Patel wrote later about this key moment which was to drive him to dedicate his life to the nation.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was primarily a man of action and supreme realist. His realism has been attributed to the principle that “the cause is always greater than the man “. To achieve this cause Patel learned, followed, practiced, young aged with different types of Governance mechanisms and quality features in his life. The following are Patel’s governance and good governance practices and principles to reach country people individual and institutional integration.

**Governance Leadership Feature One - Leadership initiation through Kheda Satyagraha:** A successful lawyer by **profession**, his life encountered a turning point when Mahatma Gandhi chose him as his deputy **commander** to lead the Kheda Satyagraha in 1918. Thus, as the leader of a peasants’ protest, Vallabhbhai Patel found the trajectory of his life turning towards a path of public service.

#### **Governance Leadership Feature Two - Patel Training in the hands of Gandhiji**

Vallabhbhai expressed at the function: it is customary in India that deities and Mahatmas do not accept the offerings given to them but distribute the same among their followers. Similarly Mahatmaji has offered everything to me. As a matter of fact I have not done anything.” Thus Vallabhbhai learnt the lessons of leadership under the direction of Gandhiji during the Kheda struggle and Gandhiji also realised the metal of which Sardar was made. Thus between the two a lifetime association of love and service came to be forged.

#### **Governance Leadership Feature Three - Patel Participated in Bardoli Satyagraha with People**

The Bardoli Taluka, Formerly a part of the District is known for its fertile lands and progressive farmers. It became famous in 1928 because of the Bardoli Satyagraha. The resoluteness of its farmers, their endurance, their preparedness for total self-sacrifice and the collective conception of silent opposition forced the mighty British to change its unreasonable decision. The man who inspired confidence in these docile farmers was none other than their revered leader the Sardar, the Sardar of the Nation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

#### **Governance Leadership Feature Five - Accountability and Responsibility in municipal**

**Administration** In the fight for self-rule Sardar Patel’s contributions began when he became the sanitation Commissioner of Ahmedabad in 1917. He then became the Municipal President in 1922, 1924, 1927. He ensured electricity supply and educational reforms came to Ahmedabad, with the limited resources and power at his disposal. During his tenure, he implemented several key reforms and initiatives that significantly improved urban living conditions.



## Key Achievements

**Sanitation and Public Health:** Patel launched extensive sanitation drives, ensuring regular cleaning of streets, drains, and public spaces, which helped control the spread of diseases and improve public health standards.

**Infrastructure Development :** He oversaw the construction of vital infrastructure, including roads, public buildings, and an efficient water supply system, laying the foundation for Ahmedabad's growth as a major urban center.

**Educational Reforms:** Patel worked to enhance municipal schools, providing better facilities and ensuring access for underprivileged children.

**Transparency and Accountability:** He prioritized transparency and accountability in municipal governance, setting a high standard for ethical administration. Patel's leadership and vision for urban development had a lasting impact on Ahmedabad, demonstrating his commitment to public service and nation-building.

## Governance Leadership Feature Four- Consensus Orientation By Patel For Social Reforms

An appraisal of Patel's legacy would be incomplete without his role as a social reformer and thinker. His efforts to reform the Hindu religion went side by side with his unstinting commitment to religious freedom. In the economic realm, Sardar Patel tirelessly championed self-sufficiency and promoting the growth of domestic industries by harnessing indigenous resources, talent and expertise. The idea of the state as an enabler of national development and resurgence animated Patel's thinking. His vision of the State was in tune with the political values he propagated. Nationalism and patriotism were not only the foundation stones of a state, but were the core elements holding it together. In Patel's thinking, individual liberty had to be in consonance with the provisions of the Constitution. To create a modern nation, he promoted the emancipation of backward communities and women through the Gandhian programmes and expertly utilized the higher castes for social integration and political mobilization.

**Governance Leadership Feature Five - Protecting Son of Kashmir and Hyderabad States:** On 15 August 1947, Sardar Patel took oath as the first Deputy Prime Minister, as well as the First Home Minister of independent India. He also took charge of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. The saga of accession unfolded with its own challenges and landmark achievements. In June 1947, Jodhpur, after having attempted negotiations for better terms with Pakistan, had acceded to India following several meetings and negotiations. Subsequently, in July 1947, Travancore had announced that it would assert its right to remain independent. Patel's diplomacy and Statesmanship eventually brought the Raja of Travancore on board. This decision had a significant impact on the rulers of other states who had hitherto vacillated on the issue of accession. The Nawab of Junagadh decided to accede to Pakistan, even as the people of the state remained staunchly opposed to it. Junagadh was finally integrated into India with Sardar Patel's resolute efforts. In February 1948, in a landmark plebiscite, an overwhelming majority of people in Junagadh cast their votes in favour of remaining in India. Raja Hari Singh of Kashmir had been undecided about accession. However, with Kashmir coming under attack from Pakistan in October 1947, the Raja sought urgent assistance from India. Help was extended, and the Raja signed the Instrument of Accession in return. The terms of Kashmir's accession were worked out in the period between October 1947 and 26 November 1949, when the Constituent Assembly was drafting the Constitution of India. Article 370 was introduced in the Constitution in Part XXI (Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions) to preserve the specific





terms under which Kashmir had agreed to accede to India. Under Article 370, the President could, with the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 1954, decide provisions of the Indian Constitution which were to be applied to Jammu and Kashmir with or without modification. Jammu and Kashmir thus retained a Special Status and enacted own Constitution. Nizam Mir Usman Ali Khan Bahadur of Hyderabad had signed a Standstill Agreement with the Government of India to maintain a temporary status quo.

However, communal tensions and violence in the State prompted Patel to take action. The Indian Army moved into Hyderabad under Operation Polo. On 17 September 1948, the Nizam announced a ceasefire and Hyderabad was absorbed into the Indian union. Sardar Patel's life and career is a lesson in grit, sagacity and decisive leadership. He earned the reputation of 'Iron Man' because of the manner in which he brought about and maintained internal stability as Home Minister in the wake of the partition of the country.

**Governance Leadership Feature Six: Patel Participative Contribution to Constitution** Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a pivotal role in the Constituent Assembly of India, contributing significantly to the country's constitutional framework. Here are some key aspects of his contributions.

**Leadership Roles:** Patel was part of crucial committees, including the Provincial Constitution Committee and the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, and Tribal and Excluded Areas.

**Constitutional Framework:** Patel's emphasis on a strong central authority balanced with state autonomy played a crucial role in designing India's federal structure.

**Appointment of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's:** Patel was instrumental in appointing Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, which was responsible for drafting India's Constitution.

**Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles:** Patel presented the Advisory Committee's recommendations on political safeguards for minorities and introduced the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Assembly. Patel's contributions to the Constituent Assembly were marked by his pragmatic approach, diplomatic skills, and commitment to national unity. His interventions in the debates were often forceful and influential, shaping the Constitution's contours. Overall, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's role in the Constituent Assembly was instrumental in laying the foundation for a united, democratic, and prosperous India.

**Governance Leadership Feature Seven - Architectural Father of All India Services:** He Sardar would not remain content until he achieved something more. He succeeded in incorporating Article 312 in the constitution thus endowing the all India service with a Constitutional berth. Sardar Patel not only ensured the survival of the civil services in India, but he cautioned the powers in the government and Parliament that the civil services should be above the party. He stated that the government should have no or minimum role in the recruitment, discipline, or control of civil services. "You are the pioneers in the Indian Service, and the future of this Service will depend much upon the foundation and the traditions that will be laid down by you, by your character and abilities and by your spirit of service", said Patel to the First Batch IAS probationers. He described civil services as the 'steel frame' of India. He can be considered the 'Father of Modern All India Services'.

**Governance Leadership Feature Eight - Patel Views On Future Administrators:** Patel gives plenty of ideas and ideals which should be adopted by present and future administrators. In a democracy,



people expect that the administration should facilitate the realisation of their legitimate claims and entitlements. This enhances the importance of integrity, responsiveness, accountability, efficiency and impartiality in administration. As emphasised by Sardar Patel, the administrators should have discipline, esprit de corps, integrity, incorruptibility, impartiality, etc. The administrators should make a common person feel that he is one of them. “The lowliest of the people should have access to you, and they should be able to open their hearts before you

**Governance Leadership Feature Nine - Rule of Law for all and action Right Decision in Drastic Situation** Sardar Patel banned the RSS after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. In a letter to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee written on 18 July, 1948, Sardar Patel said “as [a] result of the activities of these two bodies [the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha], particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible. There is no doubt in my mind the extreme section of Hindu Mahasabha was involved in this conspiracy. The activities of the RSS constituted a clear threat to the existence of the Government and the State.

**Good Governance Leadership Practice Ten:** Patel is Strongest advocate of Secularism in India – Valid still today Sardar Patel’s views on secularism in India were rooted in his commitment to creating a united and inclusive nation.

**Secular Democracy:** Patel advocated for a secular democracy where all citizens enjoy equal rights, regardless of their faith. He emphasized that India’s secularism is about coexistence of all faiths and treating all Indians as citizens without reducing citizenship to religious identities.

**Equality and Justice:** Patel’s vision of secularism was centered on ensuring equality and justice for all citizens. He worked towards creating a society where everyone has an equal chance and opportunity, irrespective of their creed.

**Rejection of Communalism:** Patel was a staunch opponent of communalism and believed that religion should not be used to define India or the Indian state. He took strong stands against communal riots and worked to protect vulnerable communities.

**Practical Secularism:** Patel’s secularism was pragmatic and focused on nation- building. He integrated princely states into the Indian Union, ensuring that the country’s unity and integrity were maintained.

**Not- Anti-Muslim:** Patel’s attitude towards Muslims was not driven by animosity but rather by a commitment to Gandhi’s principles. He worked to protect Muslims during communal violence and ensured their safety during the partition.

**Governance Leadership Inclusiveness Feature Eleven - A Strong Voice against Untouchability, Caste Discrimination and a Voice for Emancipation of Women**

In 1922 a session of the Indian National Congress, when Sardar Patel a separate enclosure for the Dalits, instead of occupying a seat earmarked for him in the main enclosure, he straightway proceeded to the enclosure meant for Dalits and sat there and delivered his speech from that enclosure. During the Bardoli Satyagraha, Sardar Patel consulted with large number of women to prepare the strategy of the Satyagraha and brought them into the lexicon of politics. Sardar Patel’s support to the Hindu Code Bill brought out his commitment to the rights of women and their empowerment, by ensuring every citizen was treated equal.



**Governance Leadership Feature Twelve -The Saviour of Refugees, Weak and Marginalized:** In the intense violence that ensued as a consequence of partition of India in 1947 Sardar Patel led organizing of relief camps, providing emergency supplies, and visited border areas to encourage peace.

### **World Governance Leadership Feature Thirteen -Vallabhbhai Patel Globalist Approach**

A pragmatist and realist to the core, Patel was a sharp observer of the international scene and advocated a realistic foreign policy in place of a symbolic idealism. When the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is throwing up newer and newer challenges of disease, disarray, disempowerment, disdain; and the common citizen is looking towards the administrators and policymakers to provide healing touch in different domains of governance, no one other than Sardar Patel comes to our mind for showing us the right path to handle these challenges. When we go through the mind and speeches of Sardar Patel both before and after the independence of India, we feel that the pearls of wisdom showered by him, and the governance instrumentalities highlighted and practiced by him, make Sardar Patel absolutely relevant for all administrators – of yesterday, today and tomorrow. There would hardly be any other towering personality of the era of our independence than Sardar Patel as he is considered the ‘light house’ showing the path to hundreds of civil servants and administrators in their journey towards socio-economic, cultural, political, technological and scientific development of our country. Any writing, literature, debate, or statement of Sardar Patel almost three-quarters of a century ago looks like a lecture delivered by a visionary world-class administrative personality today.

**Unique Indian Iconic Personality Exit cum End of Life in Mumbai:** After Independence, he played a prominent role in the Integration of India. He persuaded the rulers of princely states to be united and be part of One India – One Nation, by traveling to far-flung areas and border areas. Initially, after Independence, he was appointed as 1<sup>st</sup> Home Minister of India and simultaneously the Commander in Chief of Indian Armed Forces. Later he also became the 1st Deputy Prime Minister of India He is among one of the three leaders who led India from 1947 to 1950. Sardar Patel started keeping unwell rapidly since the summer of 1950 and Patel died on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1950 after suffering a massive heart attack at Birla House in Bombay, now Mumbai in Maharashtra, India.

### **Conclusion**

Sardar Patel is for all generations of administrators – yesterday, today and tomorrow. Every word he spoke, every thought he carried and every action he implemented are lessons in public policy formulation, implementation, governance and public administration. In this paper, a few aspects and ideas of Sardar Patel have been highlighted how they are completely and precisely relevant and implementable in modern-day administration. The philosophy and ideas of Sardar Patel ought to be emulated by modern-day administrators. 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 problem at hand.

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