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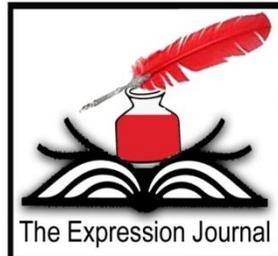
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PORTRAYING PATEL'S PERSONA AS 'SARDAR': IN CONTEXT TO THE GANDHIAN APPROACH OF SATYAGRAHA

Dr. Meghna Sharma
Faculty in History
Maharaja Ganga Singh University
Bikaner-334004, Rajasthan

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were those people from Gujarat who are best known for their remarkable contribution in the Indian freedom struggle and 'the dream of one India' respectively. Gandhi used his weapons of the truth and non-violence while Patel was the real 'leader' who worked for the Indian unity and integrity. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's contribution is so tremendous that his name can never be forgotten in the Indian history. We owe to Sardar Patel for his remarkable contribution for India unity. Mahatma Gandhi was his role model and Gandhi's struggle for the Champaran peasants was a significant event in his life. Gandhi not only helped the poor peasants through his legal knowledge but he worked for their education and to uproot their utter poverty conditions also. Patel was highly influenced by Gandhi and his Satyagrah. That's why Sardar Patel has also done so remarkable for the Indians for which we will always be grateful to him.

Key-Words

Patel, Unity, Integrity, Gandhi, Champaran Episode, Satyagrah. Abstract Patel, Unity, Integrity, Gandhi, Champaran Episode, Satyagrah.

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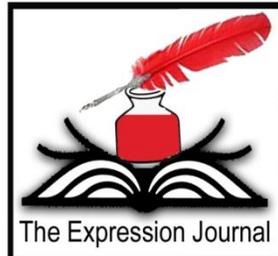
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**Dr. Meghna Sharma
Faculty in History**

Maharaja Ganga Singh University Bikaner-334004, Rajasthan

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The impact of Gandhiji's personality on Vallabhbhai was tremendous. It gave him a new mission in life. The Champaran struggle waged by Gandhiji had a sweeping effect on Patel's mind. In Gandhiji's Champaran victory Patel saw the beginning of a new agrarian revolution. His interest in politics had been kindled, as became abundantly clear in the Provincial Political Conference organised by the Gujarat Sabha and presided by Gandhiji at Godhara. The conference appointed a permanent committee with Gandhiji as the President and Patel as one of the secretaries. He became a staunch follower of Gandhiji. From then on there was no looking back. Blessed with rare qualities of fortitude, integrity and an iron determination, Patel played an important role in the freedom movement.

If Mahatma Gandhi could rouse an entire nation with the power of Satyagraha, it was Sardar Patel whose organizational genius made that Satyagraha practical. If the British Empire was thwarted in its designs to balkanize India, it was because of the single-handed acumen of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. If Indians today live in a united and democratic India, they have Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to thank more than any other person.

Sardar Patel's Ideology as Gandhi's Disciple and Youth Icon for Masses:

The impact of Gandhiji's personality on Vallabhbhai was tremendous. It gave him a new mission in life. The Champaran struggle waged by Gandhiji had a sweeping effect on Patel's mind. In Gandhiji's Champaran victory Patel saw the beginning of a new agrarian revolution. His interest in politics had been kindled, as became abundantly clear in the Provincial Political Conference organised by the Gujarat Sabha and presided by Gandhiji at Godhara. The conference appointed a permanent committee with Gandhiji as the President and Patel as one of the secretaries. He became a staunch follower of Gandhiji. From then on

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there was no looking back. Blessed with rare qualities of fortitude, integrity and an iron determination, Patel played an important role in the freedom movement.

It was due to his sterling leadership and practical vision that the peasant movement in Gujarat became a success. It was in this struggle that the organisational capacity for which Sardar Patel was famous in the whole country became visible. He took over as the nascent nation's Home Minister at a very crucial juncture in history and devoted himself whole heartedly to ensure that the country which was already partitioned remained intact and united.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel always raised his voice on several issues against exploitation and criticized the high-handedness of authority, the exploitative revenue policy of the Government and maladministration in the Princely states. He not only criticized the arbitrary policies of confiscation of movable and immovable properties, but also insisted on guarded regulations on land reforms and nationalization of key industries. His efforts to reform the Hindu religion and protect the people of other faiths reflected his longing for the right to religion. He encouraged the duly elected authority to bring restrictions through various legislative measures to freedom for all. Thus, his political value system was a fine synthesis of liberalism, conservatism and welfarism. His vision of State was in tune with the pattern of his political values. In his concept, the State was founded and held together by a high sense of nationalism and patriotism.¹

Individual liberty was to be in conformity with the provisions of the Constitution, to create a Nation-State, he pressed for the emancipation of backward communities and women and bring about Hindu- Muslim unity through the Gandhian constructive programme and skillfully utilised the higher castes for social integration and political mobilisation. Thus, he strengthened the plural basis of the nation-state by bringing electoral participation as effective political mobilisation. He saw a nation as „democratic in structure, nationalistic in foundation and welfarist in spirit and function“.

The backbone of Gandhiji's Satyagraha would pour his blood into a newly independent India to breathe life into a nation gasping from the treacherous and repeated back-stabbings by a departing colonial power. For the Sardar to succeed, at each step he had to fight not only a scheming Lord Mountbatten, but also a vacillating Prime Minister in Pandit Nehru. When Lord Mountbatten wanted India to refer every single dispute with the princely states to the United Nations, appealing to Pandit Nehru's egoistical want to get appreciation from the west, it was Sardar Patel who put his foot down and ensured that these disputes were resolved internally, and quickly.²

When we think of commencing a column on Role Models from the ethics perception, sacrificing ones opportunities to be on the top and serving the society, there are three names that come to the top of modern Indians' mind first and Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhai Patel. Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru are better known

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because of their communicative style with the mass and the voluminous writings that they have left behind. Sardar Patel was a man of few words. Called as the Iron Man of India, he was looked with awe and was always serious in public eye. October happens to be the month when he was born (31.10.1875) and we are devoting this column in this October/December issue of our journal to tell the youth of not only India but also of the whole world, how one can be a successful achiever in career and profession through personal sacrifices and spirit of magnanimity at the same time.

Indomitable Sardar as he used to be called with awe, was more than an Iron Man as political pundits describes him. Or rather the element of that strength of mind came to him, because of the spirit of sacrifice. This can be discovered from the traits of his early days. His full name was Vallabhai Jhaverbhai Patel. The visible story or history of his spirit of sacrifice begins when he was a youth. The year was 1905. Vallabhai was a 30 year old pleader in one of Gujarat's small towns, Borsad. 3

For modern professionals and corporate managers, these words of Vallabhai Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter he wrote after Gandhiji's assassination, should be a guide to take them through conflicts to achieve the common good of the organization. Patel wrote 3 to Nehru in this letter, "We both have been life long comrades in a common cause. The paramount interest of our country and our mutual love and regard, transcending such differences of outlook and temperaments existed, have held us together." The strength of this iron man of India should be understood from the spirit of sacrifice for the unity of the team and success of the organisation's goal, that inspires every true professional. 4

Patel returned to India in 1913 and started his practice in Ahmedabad. Soon he became popular. At the urging of his friends, Patel contested and won elections to become the sanitation commissioner of Ahmedabad in 1917. Patel was deeply impressed by Gandhiji's success in Champaran Satyagraha. In 1918 there was a drought in the Kheda division of Gujarat. Peasants asked for relief from the high rate of taxes but the British government refused. Gandhiji took up peasants cause but could not devote his full time in Kheda. He was looking for someone who could lead the struggle in his absence. At this point Vallabhai Patel volunteered to come forward and lead the struggle. Kheda Satyagraha turned Vallabhbhai Patel into a national hero.

Vallabhbhai supported Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement, and as President of the Gujarat Congress, helped in organizing bonfires of British goods in Ahmedabad. 5 After the signing of Gandhi-Irwin pact in 1931, Sardar Patel was elected Congress President for its 1931 session in Karachi. Upon the failure of the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhiji and Sardar Patel were arrested in January 1932 and imprisoned in the Yeravada Central Jail. During this term of imprisonment, Sardar Patel and Mahatma Gandhi grew close to one another, and the two developed a close bond of affection, trust, and frankness without reserve. Sardar Patel was finally released in July 1934. In August 1942, the

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Congress launched the Quit India Movement. The government jailed all the important leaders of the Congress, including Vallabhai Patel. All the leaders were released after three years. 6

Sardar Patel the Satyagrahi: His Role in Different Satyagraha Movements of Contemporary India:

Balraj Krishna's short book⁷ on Sardar Patel gets down to describing Sardar Patel's scintillating and tireless work in the pivotal satyagrahas at Bardoli, Kheda, Borsad, and Nagpur, that led Yusuf Meherally to say this about the Sardar: "The Mahatma has found a lieutenant that those Emperors (Ashoka and Akbar) would have given a kingdom to get."

Sardar Patel had initially been openly "skeptical and critical about Gandhi's ideas and plans". However, once he came under the "magnetism" of Gandhiji, gone was his "lucrative legal practice" (unlike Pandit Nehru, whose legal practice had floundered from the start, and the failure of which historians would labour to attribute to Panditji's distraction with the freedom struggle), and "western dress and lifestyle".

Once he had plunged into the freedom struggle, Sardar Patel proved his mettle in the satyagraha of Kheda in 1918 – over the issue of land revenue. An excessive monsoon had "completely destroyed" kharif crop, "while an epidemic of rats and other pests had heavily 4 damaged the rabi crop." Gandhiji wanted a postponement of the revenue due. The British summarily rejected the petition submitted to the Bombay government to intercede in this matter. F.G. Pratt, Commissioner of the government of Bombay (the state of Bombay encompassed the present day states of Maharashtra and Gujarat) described the agitation over the issue of land revenue thus, "In India, to defy the law of land revenue is to take a step which would destroy all administration. To break this law, therefore, is different from breaking all other laws. ... If you fight about land revenue today, the whole country will fight about it tomorrow." The British first responded with threats, followed those up by confiscating the cattle of the peasants, and then by "confiscation and auctioning of their lands." Commissioner Pratt then tried the age-old trick of flattery, deception, and threats, playing the role of good cop. and bad cop all by himself. He called Gandhiji "Mahatma", said that "Mahatma Gandhi is my friend", but also condescended in the same breath that..."in matters of administration and land revenue assessment, his knowledge is limited", and then held out the threat in his speech to the 2000 odd peasants who had been called for a meeting that [M]y words are final orders. They are not my personal orders, but they are the orders of his Excellency Lord Willingdon.... "Sardar Patel, who had been at the meeting as an observer, sent by Gandhiji, took the invitation by Pratt to share his opinion to hoist the Commissioner on his own petard ... Mr. Pratt who said on that occasion that the mill hands should always follow Gandhiji's advice and, if they do, they would not fail to get justice. I also say likewise that if you follow Gandhiji's advice in this matter, you are sure to get justice at Mr. Pratt's hands." Three months later, the government announced its decision to

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“suspend assessment till the next year”, after which Gandhiji and Patel “announced termination of the satyagraha from 6 June.” While Gandhiji had to face the disappointment of the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920, Sardar Patel alone ... kept alive Gandhi’s spirit through three of his satyagrahas: Nagpur, Borsad, and Bardoli. The Nagpur satyagraha was over the issue of the –honour of the national flag “the Tricolour”. The Borsad satyagraha was over a punitive tax of over Rs 2.40 lakh imposed on the villages to pay for additional police forces to protect against two dacoits of that area – Babar Deva and Ali. In reality, the officials were in collusion with the two dacoits” and the police got a share of the booty! The Government declared that it would crush the revolt. Along with tax inspectors, bands of Pathans were gathered from northwest India to forcibly seize the property of the villagers and terrorize them. The Pathans and the men of the collectors forced themselves into the houses and took all property, including cattle (resisters had begun keeping their cattle inside their locked homes when the collectors were about, in order to prevent them from seizing the animals from the fields) 8 The Bardoli satyagraha was the most prominent one of these, where Sardar Patel led close to one lakh peasants in a completely non-violent, peaceful struggle against the ruinous enhancement of land revenue by 30% in 1926. It is here that Sardar Patel’s organizational prowess was in full display. 9 5 “The battlefield covered 92 villages. He had horse-riders to bring him messages from the remotest ones.” He had a “personal secretary to conduct his correspondence, as also to look after the dissemination of war information; ... an editor of publications, patrikapati. There was an ambassador, who toured India to brief opinion-builders... A war bulletin, *Larat-ni-Patrika*, carrying Patel’s speeches and satyagraha news, was published daily... Outside Bardoli, every important Gujarat town and village received the war bulletin.” Patel had appointed volunteers in every village to keep watch. As soon as he sighted the officials who were coming to auction the property, the volunteer would sound his bugle. The farmers would leave the village and hide in the jungles. The officials would find the entire village empty.10 They could never find out who owned a particular house. Such was the Sardar’s oratory that Madhav Desai, Gandhiji’s principal secretary, said that he had never before –heard such brilliance in his language, or seen such indignation in his eyes. ... The villagers were moved by the extraordinary eloquence of his speeches and by his astonishingly simple yet effective popular similes and analogies.”11 Social boycott was enforced against landowners who broke with the tax strike or purchased seized land were to refuse to rent their fields or to work as laborers for them.12 Members of the legislative councils of Bombay and across India were angered by the terrible treatment of the protesting farmers. Indian members resigned their offices, and expressed open support of the farmers. 13 In the end, the British government agreed to appoint an inquiry committee, reduced to 5.7%, from 22%, the recommended increase in the settlement rates, restored all confiscated lands, ordered the release of all prisoners, and reinstatement of the patels and talatis who

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had resigned. Praise from all quarters was forthcoming, including from Subhash Chandra Bose "forejudged the Bardoli satyagraha as the precursor of the larger fight that [Gandhi] was to wage in 1930 the Dandi March"¹⁴ Bipan Chandra observes : Peasants were asked to take oaths in the name of Prabhu (the Hindu name for God) and Khuda (the Muslim name for God) that they would not pay the land revenue. The resolution was followed by the recitation of sacred texts would not pay the land revenue. The resolution was followed by the recitation of sacred texts from the Gita and the Koran and the songs from Kabir, who symbolized Hindu-Muslim unity. The Satyagraha had begun. In this connection it may be said that Patel was in-charge of the whole agitation. His capacity as an organizer, speaker, indefatigable campaigner and inspirer of ordinary men and women was already known. But these were the women of Bardoli who gave him the title of "Sardar". Gandhi broke the salt laws at 6:30 am on April 6, 1930, it sparked large scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians.¹⁵ The campaign had a significant effect on changing world and British attitudes toward Indian independence ^{16, 17} and caused large numbers of Indians to join the fight for the first time. Initially, Gandhi's choice of the salt tax was met with incredulity by the Working Committee of the Congress, ¹⁸ 6 Jawaharlal Nehru and Dibyalochoan Sahoo were ambivalent; Sardar Patel suggested a land revenue boycott instead. ^{19, 20} The Statesman, a prominent newspaper, wrote about the choice: "It is difficult not to laugh, and we imagine that will be the mood of most thinking Indians."²¹ The Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928 was much more successful. It succeeded in paralysing the British government and winning significant concessions. More importantly, due to extensive press coverage, it scored a propaganda victory out of all proportion to its size.²² Gandhi later claimed that success at Bardoli confirmed his belief in Satyagraha and Swaraj: "It is only gradually that we shall come to know the importance of the victory gained at Bardoli...Bardoli has shown the way and cleared it. Swaraj lies on that route, and that alone is the cure..." ²³ Gandhi recruited heavily from the Bardoli Satyagraha participants for the Dandi march, which passed through many of the same villages that took part in the Bardoli protests.²⁴

The Dandi satyagraha, better known as the Dandi Salt March, would shake the British Empire to its roots – a simple act of making salt from seawater, in defiance of colonial law. Mahatma Gandhi would walk "241 miles" from Ahmedabad to Dandi. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel went in advance to the villages on that path to lay the groundwork for the satyagraha. Such was the British government's fear of Sardar Patel, that he was arrested at Ras and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

But before his imprisonment, Sardar Patel had made several speeches, including Broach (Bharuch), where he took apart every single canard spread by the British. He was particularly caustic when he took on the British's claim that they were trustees in India. To that Sardar Patel asked, But whose trustees? Who had gone to England to crown them and

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invite them here?

The momentum from the Bardoli victory aided in the resurrection of the freedom struggle nationwide.²⁵

After his arrest, he was taken to Borsad, where, according to Sardar Patel, "The Magistrate did not know under which section he was to convict me. He took about an hour and a half to write out a judgment of eight lines" ²⁶

The Dharasana Satyagraha went ahead as planned, with Abbas Tyabji, a seventy-six year old retired judge, leading the march with Gandhi's wife Kasturba at his side. Both were arrested before reaching Dharasana and sentenced to three months in prison. After their arrests, the march continued under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu, a woman poet and freedom fighter, who warned the satyagrahis, "You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten, but you must not resist: you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows." Soldiers began clubbing the satyagrahis with steel tipped lathis in an incident that attracted international attention.²⁷

United Press correspondent Webb Miller reported that: Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like tenpins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down....Finally the police became enraged by the nonresistance....They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles. The injured men writhed and squealed in agony, which seemed to inflame the fury of the police....The police then began dragging the sitting men by the arms or feet, sometimes for a hundred yards, and throwing them into ditches. ²⁸ Vithalbai Patel, speaker of the Assembly, watched the beatings and remarked, "All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost forever." ²⁹ Miller's first attempts at telegraphing the story to his publisher in England were censored by the British telegraph operators in India. Only after threatening to expose British censorship was his story allowed to pass. The story appeared in 1,350 newspapers throughout the world and was read into the official record of the United States Senate by Senator John J. Blaine.³⁰ Salt Satyagraha succeeded in drawing the attention of the world. Millions saw the newsreels showing the march. Time magazine declared Gandhi its 1930 Man of the Year, comparing Gandhi's march to the sea "to defy Britain's salt tax as some New Englanders once defied a British tea tax." ³¹

Sardar Patel: Viewpoints and Analysis of his Actions as a National Hero:

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel always remained bound to constitutional and democratic values. History has borne witness to his commitment to these principles. Vallabhbhai Patel was a

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born Satyagraha-a seeker of Truth. It was in his nature to launch Satyagraha-the pursuit for Truth-to ensure justice would be served. In his childhood, youth and even in the declining phase of his life, we see his struggling nature. Even so, he was a true follower of Gandhian principles. Gandhiji was his ideal.³²

A Marathi friend of Dr. Ravindra Kumar³³, who was known to be an intellectual politician of the country once said, "Sardar Patel merged the princely states into the Union of India by applying Kautilya's policy of peace, cost, punishment and dividing policy. He adopted every method, whether anyone liked it or not. He neither compromised nor thought of any other thing at the cost of the unity of the country."

The Sardar was a saviour of the unity of the country. But he never ignored the wish of the people. ³⁴ All through this life he remained a Satyagrahi and a true Satyagrahi never thinks ill of anyone.³⁵

Wearing a toga-like dress, bald with a forehead that was furrowed and puckered with concentration, Vallabhbhai Patel was an arresting personality of almost Roman grandeur. He was reminiscent of that last of the great Romans — Marcus Brutus. For generations to come, a man of such a sterling character, who gives all he has for the sheer love of the country, will rarely be found. This unassuming man of simple and austere habits was made of iron and flint. He feared none but God. He would rather break than bend! He never flinched from the principles he devotedly cherished — no matter how mighty the adversary and how difficult the situation. Patel possessed the genius of weighing the most complex political issues dispassionately, and he would size up men in no time. He utilised the services of those he thought fit. But, as far as those who never came up to his high standards of conduct were concerned, he would give them up in no time without any qualms of conscience. Though he was neither an intellectual like Nehru nor a scholar like Maulana Azad, Patel was endowed with extraordinary common sense which he used adroitly for the solution of India's multiple problems.³⁶

Maniben Patel's diary tells us the inside story of the Congress which was torn by ideological conflicts and personal rivalries among the top-ranking leaders, who were fighting each other and thereby jeopardising national interests. Time was the essence of the matter, but these squabbles delayed prompt action. It was Gandhi who by his powerful influence and tactical skills resolved those contentious issues. In 1936, there was a crisis in the Congress Party when Nehru, as the Congress President, zealously propagated the gospel of socialism and attacked the princely order and the zamindari system. Patel, Rajendra Prasad, G.B. Pant, C. Rajagopalachari and Bhulabhai Desai thought that Nehru's virulent campaign against these potentially powerful elements would be injurious to their interests in the forthcoming elections. They resigned in protest from the Congress Working Committee. Ultimately, Gandhi had to reconcile these differences.

The diary discloses that in 1940, once again, the Congress leadership was divided.

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Gandhi was completely isolated, while other leaders such as Patel, Nehru, C.R. and Sarojini Naidu were willing to support the British war effort, provided the British conceded to India the right to self-government. Gandhi was uncompromising on the principle of non-violence and was determined to keep the country out of the war. Any participation in war violated his commitment to the principle of non-violence. The diary reveals, I think, for that first time, that Gandhi's threat to fast unto death at this juncture compelled the Congress to toe his line and accept his leadership. The Congress, therefore, refused to aid the British war effort.

This writer thinks that Gandhi's prescription of keeping India out of war and launching the Quit India Movement was a blunder of great magnitude for which the country had to pay a big price because it gave a free hand to the Muslim League to consolidate itself. It made Jinnah the sole spokesman of the Muslims and a power to reckon with.³⁷

There are certain gaps in the diary which are inevitable, such as from August 31, 1939, to January 9, 1940, and from August 9, 1942 to June 13, 1945 when the Congress leaders languished in prison due to the individual Satyagraha Movement first, and the Quit India Movement later. The diary records that the Congress President Azad was negotiating a settlement with the Cabinet Mission in 1946, without the knowledge of his colleagues in the Congress Working Committee. This infuriated Gandhi. For this unseemly conduct, Azad was forced to make way for Nehru as Congress President. Later, Gandhi was to oppose even Azad's appointment as education minister in the Interim-Government.

It is evident from the diary that V.P. Menon, the Constitutional Advisor to the British Government, came closer to Patel by early 1947. He kept him fully informed about the British attitude and policy on political matters. Menon was Patel's confidant and became his devoted follower. Patel was not the man to miss any opportunity. He regarded politics a game of chess to be played with skill. He sought his opportunity from the present and drew inspiration, from his vision of the future. That is why Patel's influence in guiding the Congress policy from 1946 to 1947 was decisive. The Gandhian leadership was over! 9

It is not often realised that despite Gandhi's opposition, Patel accepted the Cabinet Mission statement of May 16, 1946 which enabled the Congress to join the Viceroy Lord Wavell's Executive Council and assume power within the framework of the 1935 Constitution. I think that this move by Patel proved atour de force and stalled Jinnah's designs of keeping the Congress out of power. It is also evident from the diary that Patel shattered Jinnah's scheme of appropriating the entire Punjab and Bengal, and making them a part of Pakistan. Jinnah had launched his Direct Action Movement to topple the Punjab and North-Western Frontier Province ministries and Bengal was already ruled by the Muslim League under the controlling authority of Jinnah.

Against Gandhi's wishes again, the Congress Working Committee on March 8, 1947 passed a resolution for the Partition of Punjab. It is clear from the diary that Patel made a

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deal with Lord Mountbatten to transfer power to India at the earliest on the basis of Dominion Status with Mountbatten as its Governor-General, provided Bengal and Punjab were partitioned. The British Cabinet in England accepted this plan. Thus, by saving the parts of Punjab and Bengal, Patel demonstrated the highest qualities of statesmanship, for which this country should remain grateful to him for all times to come!

The diary gives a cryptic account of Patel's meeting with Gandhi on January 31, 1948 from 4.10 to 5.10 pm. The diary notes, 'Bapuji (Gandhi) took fruits and vegetables while talking to Patel.' Later Gandhi went for the prayer meeting. It is evident that because of his differences with Gandhi on the communal question, Patel at this meeting tendered his resignation from the Cabinet. Patel was the last person to meet Gandhi before the Mahatma was shot dead at the prayer meeting.

The diary further notes that Patel was reading the newspaper at his residence when the news reached him about Gandhi's death. It adds that Patel rushed to Birla House and sat down on a marble seat... Panditji (Nehru) rushed a little....wept like a child near Babuji's body....It was Bapu's (Patel's) lot to console visitors.' Gandhi's death shook Patel and he did not sleep sufficiently on account of this horrible event, remained uneasy all night'38 . Gandhi's assassination brought both Nehru and Patel closer to each other, and they began to work harmoniously for the governance of the country.

But alas! that phase of mutual trust and understanding was to end shortly due to fundamental differences that existed between them on the national questions facing the country. Both of them were great men by any standard, resolutely patriotic, doggedly brave, tenaciously incorruptible, self-sacrificing through thick and thin, and fired by the pure love of their country.

This greatest Indian had fire of Lenin and the sagacity of Bismarck. In his personal affection and devotion to Gandhi, he was second to none. An agitator in the grandest style, he possessed an unprecedented hitting power and fighting zeal. What Shakespeare wrote of Marcus Brutus, is most appropriate for him.³⁹ His life was gentle and the elements so mix'd in him that Nature Might stand up. And say to all-the-world, "This was a man." Patel desired nothing more than that the Indian nation-state should persevere and flourish. Nehru's biographer, S. Gopal, admitted that Patel's "major concern was national unity." Patel is still remembered as one of principal architects of Indian independence and one of the shapers of modern India. His devotion to the idea of the nation-state also points to the limitations of his thinking; unlike Gandhi, Patel could not think beyond the nation-state, and he was incapable of offering the critique of modernity that Gandhi pioneered. Nor did Patel have the kind of farreaching and complex views of science, industrial civilization, masculinity, or a whole host of other subjects on which Gandhi pondered for a considerable portion of his life. The characterization that has sometimes been used of Gandhi, namely that he was a doer rather than thinker, is in fact far more apposite of Patel.⁴⁰

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