CHAPTER - VIII

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL'S ROLE IN INDIAN POLITICS:

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The role of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Indian politics for over three decades was unique and multidimensional. He was at the centre of Indian politics and national movement from 1919 to 1950. This period may very well be called the 'Patel Era' in Indian politics. In the thick and turmoil of every important issue, Patel was the guiding force in deciding the great problems of the day. The Patel era in Indian politics symbolised great patriotic urges and aspirations. This period witnessed a total dedication to the preachings and principles of Mahatma Gandhi and a firm determination to fight for freeing enslaved India from the yoke of the British, consolidating the freedom, enforcing strict discipline in the Congress party, organising election campaigns for the party, improving the administrative machinery and playing a decisive role in making the Constitution. In this chapter, an attempt is made to assess Patel's role in Indian politics.
in a comprehensive and objective manner. This naturally involves the assessment of his role in the great Satyagrahas like Kaira and Bardoli, the Indian freedom movement and in solving the enigmatic problem of the princely states. Besides, reference has been made to the different traits of his great personality such as realism, patriotism, humanism, discipline, organising and administrative skill, farsightedness, strong will and effective leadership.

From the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the British Government and the Indian political leaders held negotiations to bring about a Constitutional arrangement which would facilitate increasing participation for Indians in politics and administration. The British pursued the policy of gradual devolution of power to the Indians. The introduction of a form of Self-government in states was the key-note of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. The Indian nationalists opposed tooth and nail the 'gradualist approach' of the British. This was clearly indicated in the series of major developments leading finally to the transfer
of power in 1947. This period 1919 to 1947 could rightly be considered as the last phase of the British rule and the most memorable chapter in the Indian freedom struggle. Galaxy of great personalities and institutions played a significant role in Indian politics of this period; many colourful and great persons like the liberal and moderate Pherozsha Mehta; the quiet and the gracious Gopalakrishna Gokhale, the forceful and fiery Tilak, the heroic Savarkar, the deeply religious and non-violent Mahatma Gandhi, the volcanic Subhaschandra Bose and Charismatic Nehru were among many who gave a definite turn at some stage or the other to Indian politics. The other personalities like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Lala Lajpath Roy, Bhagat Singh and a host of others played their significant roles and left behind their indelible mark on Indian politics. It was also during this period that a great freedom fighter, a rare realist, an unique builder and unifier, a great statesman and administrator and a remarkable architect of modern India, Sardar Patel emerged on the Indian political scene.
Patel entered the portals of politics neither for personal benefits nor to achieve his careerist desire, but with the lofty purpose of emancipating his fellow countrymen from the yoke of political bondage and servitude. It was Gandhiji's mystic and hypnotic spell which was responsible for Sardar's entry into politics. Gandhiji's hypnotic spell over his disciple brought an amazing metamorphosis in his life and outlook.

Sardar Patel entered the freedom struggle and made it the mission of his life. He treated the troubles of his people as his personal humiliation and set about the task with earnestness and dedication. His crucial role in the Satyagrahas, freedom struggle, integration of states, provincial elections, maintenance of discipline in the Congress party and a host of other activities had a philosophical justification in the inherent right of his people for liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, solidarity and strength.

Sardar Patel was one of the most distinguishing personalities of the twentieth century. This age has been known for many remarkable changes and Patel to a
large extent symbolised some of these forces of change. When Sardar Patel was young, India had not awakened from her deep lethargy, slumber and sloth. The British had lost no faith in the principle of 'White Man's burden'. They were swollen with a superiority complex that the 'sun never sets in the west'. West had dominated the east. History was still the privilege of the west. The rest of the world lay in deliberate darkness.

Patel's education in the West may be interpreted, in a sense as a desire to probe into the secret which had enabled them to keep India and other eastern countries under servitude for such a long time and build an empire. Once Sardar expressed his 'Early Ambition', "I was anxious to go to overseas to see the people of England who, living 7,000 miles away, were able to rule us so long." In his outlook, he was essentially national rather than international. He was essentially interested in solving first national problems rather than international. He was essentially concerned with national freedom rather than international freedom. He

was essentially guided by a down to earth realism than idealism. He was essentially a doer. He was no doubt a thinker but not a visionary like Nehru. He was guided by his wisdom rather than sentiments. He placed the logic of facts above the logic of words.

Vallabhbhai Patel rose from an humble small town lawyer to a great national leader. He played an historic role in the tumultuous days of re-organisation of the newly liberated princely states. Every page of his life from the time he gave up his lucrative practice at the Bar in 1917 and joined the band of patriots led by the Mahatma is studded with instances of rare qualities of head and heart.

He was a man with few words, averse to writing and long public speeches. He was least interested in publicity of any kind. It was one of the reasons as to why he was much less known to other countries than Nehru and others. He wrote very little unlike Nehru and he had the least intention of becoming popular through his writings. His writings were confined mostly to letters and speeches.
He championed the cause of the poor peasantry of India and realised that their lot could be improved only by implementing the Gandhian ideology. As a devoted follower of Gandhian doctrine, he stressed the need of raising the living standard of the peasants and villagers since the soul of India lay in the peasants and villages. The Sardar proved himself to be a realist in the economic field also as he gave top priority to agricultural development. According to him, sustained hard work and increased production of wealth was the panacea to all our economic ills. 'Produce or Perish' was his cry. He had no faith in socialism. He was convinced that the country should produce more wealth and then think of what to do with it. What the country needed was not the parrot cry of socialism, but unity and strength. He suggested the cooperation of labour, capital and government for producing more wealth.

He set about to channelise the nationalist aspirations of the people by inculcating in them patriotism, discipline, unity, hard work, frankness and fearlessness. "From early youth, the Sardar, developed the qualities
of leadership and discipline. These were some of the guiding principles which inspired him and gave vitality to his activities during the period of Satyagraha and struggle for India’s freedom and on the eve of solving the problem of princely states and a host of other problems. Indeed, he proved to be a veritable nationalist and his love of the country and the people is seldom surpassed by any one.

He was essentially guided by realism, pragmatism and humanism instead of any ideological doctrines. He drew nothing from the west but everything from his Motherland. He was the son of the soil. He was influenced most by the Gandhian philosophy along with other philosophies of India. Marx and Lenin had no influence on him. The 'Communist Manifesto' did not stimulate his power of cerebration. He liked evolutionary means for the unfolding of the evolutionary process of life. Revolutionary means and revolutionary ideas

did not impress him. Still he had the greatest detestation for slavery, servitude, exploitation, regimentation, ruthlessness, indiscipline and disunity. He was a democrat, yet he opposed democracy if it were without discipline and unity.

Patel's participation in a series of Satyagrasas taught him that success was never built on failure. Dexterous plans implemented by a wise, selfless and disciplined man would pave the way for success. It was his habit to be free and frank and 'to tell the people the barest truth'. He was bestowed with a mind that worked with great precision and clarity within its orbit. He was shrewd and intelligent. He had a rare quality of judging men with only little observation. "The Sardar was a shrewd judge of character. When he met a person for the first time he looked him up and down and the assessment he made in that process rarely went wrong."3 This was the secret of his administrative success. With this quality, Patel could easily select right persons for right positions. He was cautious in trusting people and entrusting responsibilities. But when once he trusted, nothing could change

3. Ibid., p.XLVII.
him. He would give them full freedom. He knew that man was a bundle of virtues and vices and he tried to utilise both for the service of the country. He did not believe in total destruction of traditions and old values. He wanted to preserve the better and living aspects of history. Conservation, unity and construction formed the central policy of his thinking. Due to this he was misunderstood and distrusted by many. The Congress Left Wing considered him as an opponent of radical and structural changes. Socialists denigrated him as a linch-pin of the vested interests. The Muslim-League criticised him as anti-Muslim. For those who have the deeper knowledge of the Sardar's life, works and achievements, these assessments prove to be baseless. Again, it was pointed out that he had a soft-corner for the princes, capitalists and other vested interests to gain cheap popularity. As it is pointed out in earlier chapters, the Sardar had least interest in gaining cheap popularity. He seldom addressed to the gallery and rarely appealed to the heart. He tackled the human mind and invoked the rationality of man. Knowing full well that the Indian Constitution was based on the strong
foundations of liberty, equality, justice and fairplay, he pointed out that the Government should act as trustee of the people irrespective of caste, creed, colour or religion. He did not want any discriminatory treatment to Muslims of India on par with the Hindus of Pakistan; he wanted them to be treated as equals. He knew that Hindus and Muslims had to sink or swim together. He strongly criticised the divided loyalty and the idea of 'riding on two horses' which would lead to internal weakness and endanger our home front. Split personality and shared allegiance to him were the enemies of national loyalty.

As a first rank statesman he fulfilled three great ends - security to possessors, facility to acquirers and hope to the people. His weapons were simple and within the reach of everybody. Robust commonsense, honesty of purpose, frugality, humility, clarity of aim, determination, perseverance, farsightedness, fearlessness, pragmatism and humanism - all combined to raise him from

the obscurity of the son of a peasant to the rank of a National Leader. He rendered great service to the nation, not by self-repression but by self-expression. He was not sorry for the division of India. He said: 'We have won our freedom to make our country great'. He agreed to partition to avoid civil war. By this he recognised the right of the Muslims to secede. This was another significant achievement of Sardar Patel. To restore health and vitality to the country, the amputation of a diseased limb was inevitable.

In agreeing to the partition, he acted as a great statesman with a view to concentrating all his energies on consolidation of what remained. "He was ready even to modify his nationalist sentiments, keeping a steady eye on the ultimate objective of building a strong state - a shrewd realistic peasant leader rather than a sentimental nationalist politician."\(^5\)

The Sardar won many Satyagrahas and struggles not by his physical power but by his will-power. He was

\(^5\) G.D. Parikh, *op.cit.*
physically infirm throughout the struggle. He was not afraid of death but his great worry was that he had not born ten years earlier to solve the problems that remained unsolved when his health finally failed.

As a true statesman, the Sardar knew that freedom from foreign rule was a means to an end and not the end in itself. He said, "what we have is not Swaraj, but only freedom from foreign rule. The people have still to win internal Swaraj, abolish distinctions of caste and creed, banish untouchability, improve the lot of the hungry masses, and live as one joint family, in short to create a new way of life and bring about a change of heart and a change of outlook."  

Sardar Patel was above communalism. He wanted to treat Muslims of India on par with Hindus. He did not want that Muslims should be driven out of India. He pleaded that a strong, progressive and a self-reliant India could be built on the broad foundations of a secular philosophy of life. But he wanted that the

6. Times of India, (Bombay), April 7, 1947.
Muslims of India should remain loyal to the country.

Since no Muslim leader except Rafi Ahmed Kidwai condemned the Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir in 1947, Patel doubted the sincerity of a large number of Indian Muslims. Therefore, he was not a communal Hindu. His attitude towards Pakistan was one of good-will and cooperation. He wanted to 'help the new state'. But he expected reciprocity. The Sardar could not be frightened by the frequent threats of 'Jehad' from Pakistan. He knew that Pakistan was no match to India in strength and power. He, therefore, ignored her.

As a political leader, Sardar Patel placed himself entirely at the disposal of his master, Gandhiji. He considered that it was his duty to carry out the wishes of Gandhiji. It was their burning patriotism and nationalism - a common ideal and purpose - that welded them together and made them to work together in the National movement, Satyagrahas etc. Patel's loyalty and devotion to his guru, during the freedom struggle were unmistakable and unquestionable. "Such devotion
and loyalty have hardly any parallel in the history of the world."  

But Sardar Patel did not like to be a blind follower of Gandhiji. On many occasions, he kept away Gandhiji. Once, the Sardar made this point clear. He said, "Many call me a blind devotee of Gandhiji! I wish that in fact I had the strength to become his blind devotee but that alas, is not the case... I keep him away from my work. We are not likely to regain our capacity for initiative and independent action, if we merely look to him for leadership and wait for his guidance." During flood-relief work in Gujarat, he requested Gandhiji not to come to the help of the people, even though many had sent him telegrams to come to their help. Similarly, he told Gandhiji to go to Bardoli when he was arrested. Even though Gandhiji had said that India was to be divided only on his dead body, the Sardar, being a realist agreed to the partition of India. It was much against the will of the Mahatma. The Sardar could find

no way to get freedom except by agreeing to the partition. Partition or perish was the question. Similarly he was the first to oppose the release of 55 Crores of rupees to Pakistan, committed to by Gandhiji and the Cabinet. But the Sardar had to yield as Gandhiji started fasting and he was on the verge of death.

**Patriotism and Nationalism:**

It was from Mahatma Gandhi that the Sardar learnt the first lessons of nationalism and patriotism. It was he who was responsible to inspire Patel to step out of his cosy and lucrative practice at the Ahmedabad Bar and enter into the service of the people and participate in the national struggle. When he gave up his practice at Bar, he was very keen on serving the people, save them from exploitation and oppressive measures of the bureaucracy.

He found the first element of patriotism in the service of the people. According to Patel, patriotism
was useless if it did not achieve the benefits to the largest section of people. Arm-chair leadership, mere crying or writing about the doctrine of nationalism did not satisfy him. Right from the time of his joining the national movement, his philosophy of life as has been rightly summed up by him was 'why not create history rather than waste time in writing it?'

As a great disciplinarian, he could not tolerate any indiscipline in the party. He watched with vigilance the activities of the Indian National Congress. He played a remarkable role in shaping the policies and guiding its activities. He had a strong hold on the party. As long as he was alive, he kept the party highly disciplined and well organised. He did not hesitate to take strict disciplinary action against Nariman, Dr. Khare and Subhaschandra Bose, who violated the party discipline. The Sardar considered party discipline as essential for the development of patriotism and nationalism. He held party and nation above everybody and everything. Therefore, he was completely loyal to them and also expected others to be loyal. Rest of the things were secondary to his sense of
patriotism. He held that discipline was a pre-requisite for national struggle. "The action he initiated against Nariman and Dr. Khare was the outcome of his nationalism, the result of his firm belief that a patriot could not be blind to the faults of his colleagues, the personal bonds of love found no place in the hearts of a patriot, that a patriot should not hesitate to carry out even unpleasant tasks as long as they served the cause of the nation."

He knew that he had acted rightly and it was consistent with the principle of non-violence and the spirit of patriotism.

When India attained independence, Sardar's patriotism reached its climax. He realised that princely states would endanger the national unity. He had remembered the past history of India when she was thrown into slavery as a result of disunity and non-cooperation among her own people. He did not wish history to be repeated. He realised the danger of allowing independent princely states to exist. Therefore, he acted quickly,

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appealed to the patriotism of the princes, assured them of the privy purse and other privileges and brought about the unification of India. Never before in the history of India such a united India was built.

His sense of patriotism and nationalism were at their best when he desired, with no vengence and prejudices, to utilise the services of the eminent administrators and skilled officials who had served the native states. He wanted to harness all skills, abilities and talents for the building up of a strong, stable and united India. In view of this, he strongly suggested Nehru to utilise the services of a brilliant man like Sir C.P. Ramaswamy, eventhough the latter had seriously struggled to retain the independence of Travancore after the lapse of Paramountcy. Patel had recommended him to the post of an Ambassador of India in the U.S.A. Nehru, however, did not heed to his suggestion. But Sardar Patel did not want to loose the services of Sir C.P. He, therefore appointed him as the Chairman of a National Commission.

The Sardar attempted to solve the problems from the
nations' point of view. He, therefore did not agree with the suggestion for Linguistic States. He was a personification of patriotism and nationalism and strove hard to develop the cult of Indian nationalism. He stood for national integration, unity and loyalty to India. He hated communalism. Thus, he strongly pleaded for the development of patriotism and nationalism among Indians.

It was this potent force of patriotism and nationalism which welded together, the Sardar, the Mahatma and Nehru. Even at times of serious differences among this triumvirate, it was the bond and feeling of patriotism and nationalism which made them to sink all those differences and work together. It was the feeling of patriotism and nationalism which acted as a great unifying force between the Sardar and Nehru after the demise of the Mahatma.

Patel's patriotism and nationalism could be seen in many of his activities like his heroic struggle in the national movement, integration of the states, special treatment extended to the Civil Service and the brilliant
men who served the native states, his opposition to the formation of linguistic states, etc.

Indeed, he achieved greatness by his passionate patriotism and abundant nationalism.

**A Superb Statesman and Administrator:**

It is no exaggeration if we say that Sardar Patel was the greatest statesman and administrator that India had ever produced. A galaxy of statesmen like Harsha, Ashoka, Akbar, Nehru and others twinkled on the horizon of India, but no one could reach the height of Patel. It was Ashoka and Akbar who dreamt of geographical, political and economic unification of India, but failed to accomplish it. It was, perhaps, possible for the British Government, but it did not attempt it for it believed in 'divide and rule' policy. They believed not only in geographical and political division and disunity but also in the emotional division and disunity. United India would have sounded the death-knell of the British regime in India. The internal differences, disputes and
wars among the Indian rulers had weakened the fabric of the nation.

Realising the past history of India and her weakness, Sardar Patel soon set all his wisdom, energy and skill for national integration. It was terrible to think of the plight of India with the revocation of British paramountcy. On the day of India’s independence India would have been shattered into pieces. 600 princely states would have proclaimed their independence by refusing to join either the Indian Union or Pakistan and would have formed independent nations. Sardar Patel, with his uncommon commonsense, farsightedness, tact and wisdom appealed to their sentiments, patriotism and nationalism of the princes and was successful in winning over. They dispelled their greed for power and parochialism and joined the Indian union. The greatness of the Sardar lies in the fact that he did not use any force in consolidating and integrating the princely states except Junagadh and Hyderabad. Never in the history of the world such a miracle of bloodless revolution in such a short duration was performed.
The Sardar did not reduce the position and honour of the princes to a low web. He recognised their rights and privileges. He granted the privy purse and allowed them to live honourably. Some did not like the rapid success of the Sardar, and criticised him regarding the grant of privy purse which was moved in the Cabinet swiftly. To such criticism, Sardar Patel replied, "The charge is sometimes hurled against the States Ministry that it has moved too quickly. But the world today is different from the world of yesterday. Things could move slowly and steadily in the old world where there was more leisure and less speed. Today one day is equal to a century. See how overnight States have fallen and empires have disappeared. Who can say then that time does not fly and that we can afford to wait? In integration and democratization, therefore, there must be quick progress if the country is to avoid disasters and threats to its existence and unity."  

The integration was carried out with consummate skill, vision, and firmness. He did first things first

with remarkable speed. The Sardar said, "First things
should be done first and the first job is to get the
states to accede to, and thereby consolidate, the
union."11 "One of the secrets of Sardar's success
was the speed which he generated in the movements
sponsored by him. They were like fast rolling battalions
of tanks."12

Junagadh, ignoring the geographic, economic and
population factors acceded to Pakistan. The Sardar
warned the Nawab that it would be suicidal to ignore
the factors. Travancore, Bhopal and Hyderabad desired
to remain as independent states. However, it was Patel's
diplomacy which made it impossible for Bhopal and
Travancore states to remain as independent states. In
case of Junagadh, he manovered for a popular uprising
and made it to accede to India. Only in case of
Hyderabad, force had to be used. Before using force,
Sardar Patel exhausted all peaceful and persuasive means.
He was, therefore forced to order police action.

11. Ibid., p.125, in a speech at a public meeting in
connection with the Independence Week Celebrations,
New Delhi, August 11, 1947.

12. K.L.Punjabi, The Indomitable Sardar, (Bombay,
Some criticise that Sardar Patel violated the principle of 'lapse of paramountcy' and was unscrupulous in case of Hyderabad. But a thorough study of the further developments after Attlee's Announcement proves that Sardar Patel did not violate any principle and was not unscrupulous. Lord Mountbatten, in an official capacity declared that though the rulers were technically at liberty to link with either of the Dominions, there were certain geographical compulsions which could not be ignored. When Hyderabad ignored the principle of 'geographical compulsions' without realising the future consequences, Sardar had no way except to use force and it was therefore fully justified.

The critics seem to have conveniently forgotten that the fact, the Hyderabad, being situated in a strategic place, would have become a 'cancer in the belly of India' and it would have been a dangerous Demaclus sword for both India and Pakistan from geographic, political, economic and administrative point of view.

"When the transfer of power took place in 1947,"
there were many critics who thought that the country would be disintegrated and it would not be possible to maintain stable administration in the country. The action of Sardar Patel confounded all such critics. Though the Indian states occupies nearly two fifths of the area of the country, included 20 million people, the Sardar welded this country into a united whole without leaving much bitterness behind by virtue of his skill, tact and diplomacy.\(^{13}\)

Some critics point out that the integration of states is not a great achievement of the Sardar. For instance, M.N.Roy writes, "The integration of the states is the least of Sardar's achievements, although it is rated so very high. After the departure of the British, the Princes were like orphans. They had no option but to bow to their fate and the Sardar certainly made it easier for them by his generosity at the cost of the Indian people."\(^{14}\) This assessment of


the writer is not correct. He has underestimated the achievement of the Sardar. The greatness of the achievement can be understood clearly if a negative question is put. What would have been the fate of India even if 25% of the states including Hyderabad and Junagadh had not been acceded to Indian Union? The answer is dis-integration, disunity and disruption. The princes after the departure of the British had not become orphans. They had the choice of remaining as independent states. In fact many states like Travancore, Bhopal, Indore, Meher and a host of others declared that they would remain independent. Junagadh and Hyderabad were ready to wage war. Hyderabad did not yield till force was used. Therefore, the integration of States was undoubtedly a great achievement of the Sardar. "It was lucky that in her crucial hour of freedom, India found the right man. In leaving behind a motley crowd of six hundred states and princes to go whichever way they liked, the British had let hell loose. The Sardar's achievement was an assertion of tact and will power."15

Sardar Patel was generally called the 'Iron Man of India' because 'he was hard and firm in doing and maintaining what was right.' His appearance, demeanour, paucity of words, frankness and straightforwardness in putting the facts, sternness and stubbornness in taking action, plain speaking, non-wishful thinking, ruthlessness in imposing discipline irrespective of persons and a host of other traits of his character earned him this nick-name. This was partially true. The men who were his close associates knew him, and his nature well. Therefore, it is worth quoting here some of their opinions:

G.M. Mavalankar says: "... the nick-name 'The Iron Man of India'... was only partially true. So far as the interests of the country, the self respect of the nation, loyalty to Bapu and the Congress were concerned, he was on iron man; he would not compromise these with anybody or allow the opponent any quarters. But essentially in his outlook and relation with humanity, he was soft as butter all through his life." 17


Dr. Rajendra Prasad says, "Those who do not know him well call him the man of iron. But in reality he is as soft and tender as a flower, and those who have been fortunate to taste his love know how sweet it is."\(^{18}\)

These observations prove that, Sardar Patel, though having rough exterior had a soft heart. Though he was stern and ruthless in some of his public actions, he proved to be most generous in some other public actions and the private too. For instance, he granted 'privy purse' and other privileges to the princes. In fact some critics have gone to the extent of considering him, in this act, as over-magnanimous to the princes. In it, he proved himself not only magnanimous but also humane and fair-minded. Twice he was tipped for the Presidentship of the Congress Party and twice he declined the honour at the instance of Gandhiji.\(^{19}\) Twelve out of fifteen provincial Congress Committees voted for Patel when the issue of choosing the Prime minister came


19. Sardar Patel was tipped as the President of the Congress Party at Lahore Congress session in 1930, "but Motilal Nehru wrote to Gandhiji asking that Jawaharlal should succeed him. Motilal wanted to see his son Congress Chief before he died. My father agreed with Bapu (Gandhiji) that Motilalji's wish be fulfilled" Says Manibehn Patel in Durga Das (Ed.), op.cit., Vol.I, p.11. The Sardar was tipped for Congress Party Presidentship at Haripura Congress Session in 1936, for the second time.
before the country, again he stepped down in favour of Nehru at the instance of Gandhiji. He was most reluctant to release Rs.55/- Crores to Pakistan which Gandhiji had committed. Again, he yielded at the instance of Gandhiji.

Even in his private life, he proved to be most magnanimous. Though he had the greatest ambition to go to England for his Bar-at-Law early, and prepared everything for the journey, he had to give the first opportunity to his elder brother Vithalbhai on his request. Sardar Patel sacrificed not only the first opportunity but also the huge money he had kept for his journey. In the absence of his brother, he maintained his family also. The greatest sacrifice that the Sardar made was that he gave up the lucrative practice at Bar and turned himself the great devotee of Mahatma Gandhiji. Many of his relatives brought pressure on him for remarriage after the demise of his wife, he declined flatly and remained a widower till the end of his life. He was hardly 34 when he had lost his wife. The Sardar and the Mahatma were together in Yarvada jail in 1932
for 16 months. Gandhi was overwhelmed by the parental treatment of the Sardar and said that he was reminded of his mother.

All these instances prove that the Sardar was kind, generous, harmless, humane, sacrificing and self-restrained not only in his private life but also in his public life.

But one thing was certain. As far as the maintenance of discipline in the party and national unity were concerned, he was ruthless. He found that party-discipline was most essential to achieve independence and national unity. He proved himself really an 'Iron Man' concerning with party-discipline and the national unity. Thus, the sobriquet given to the Sardar as the 'Iron Man of India' is partially true.

Sardar Patel has been compared with an historic personality Prince Bismarck of Germany. It is a wrong comparison. Of course, there was some similarity in some of their attributes. Both were men of action guided by realism and pragmatism. But there were some
differences between them. Sardar was the son of the soil belonging to a peasant stock of a village. Bismarck was the son of an aristocrat belonging to the ruling aristocracy of Prussia. There is a wrong impression among many that Bismarck achieved the Unity of Germany. But "what Bismarck achieved was not the unity of Germany but the extension of Prussian hegemony all over Germany", under the suzerainty of William I, Kaiser of Germany. On the other hand, what Sardar Patel achieved was the unity of his country. He never thought in terms of linguistic division, and provinces nor even his own Gujarat province. Bismarck thought in terms of his birth-province Prussia and the Emperor of Prussia. There were also differences in the methods they employed. Bismarck employed military force, trickery and crookedness. He adopted 'blood and iron' policy. "Sardar Patel... used the clean and democratic methods of argument and persuasion and only wielded the big bulldozer, when the gentler methods failed as in the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad... And a very important

feature of even his coercion was the greatest contribution of the Sardar to the history of post-independence India.\textsuperscript{21} Bismarck took much time for accomplishing his work. "...it was a much smaller country and there were a few states and only one community. His work was far more easy."\textsuperscript{22} But Sardar Patel achieved the unity in a big country with a number of religions and languages. There was not much of patriotism in the people. "He did it in less than two years utilising all his skill of persuasion, negotiation and tact."\textsuperscript{23}

The integration achieved by the Sardar was most enduring and permanent as it was achieved through non-violence, whereas the so called unification of Germany was short lived. Now Germany is divided into two and the possibility of their reunification seems remote.

In view of this, it is not correct to compare the Sardar with Bismarck. Sardar Patel's greatness and

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  \item \textsuperscript{21} A.V.Barve, 'I am only a Farmer', in \textit{Harijan}, \textit{op.cit.}, January 6, 1951.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Morarji Desai, \textit{The Story of My Life}, (New Delhi, S.Chand & Company, Ltd., 1978), Vol.I, p.276.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Morarji Desai, 'Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel - As I Knew him', in G.M.Nandurkar and Manibehn V.Patel (Eds.), \textit{op.cit.}, p.409
\end{itemize}
image will be lessend if he is compared with Bismarck or "to compare Sardar with Bismarck would be to raise Bismarck to a higher pedestal than he deserves." 24

Sardar Patel is also compared with other historic personalities like Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka and Akbar. But they are not suitable personalities to compare with the Sardar. According to historians, the Mauryan empire was extended as far as Mysore at the time of the death of Chandragupta. His empire was not a consolidated one. "It was a unity of distance which our ancestors used to secure by performing Ashvamedha Yagna. It was the symbolic unity that he achieved." 25

History records that Ashokan empire was extended as far as Afghanistan. But there was no real political and administrative integration. "...it was a superficial unity imposed by the then Government under the

25. Ibid., p.71.
principle that whatever be the religion of the kind was the religion of the people." The Ashokan empire was shattered into pieces after his demise since there was no political and administrative unity.

Akbar, an illiterate king who succeeded only to Delhi and Agra, was able to extend his sovereignty over the whole of Northern India within 50 years. In fact Akbar had brought a good system of administration, justice and communication, but he failed to achieve the unity of the country as a whole. It may be noted here that Akbar was a military conqueror who had no problem of dealing with democratic systems and practices.

The Sardar surpassed Chandragupta, Ashoka and Akbar in many respects. He achieved not only political unity but also administrative unity. For the first time in history, India was brought under one Government and one administration. Like Akbar, the Sardar was not a military conqueror. He was to work under a democratic

26. Ibid.
"Sardar conquered the various states not with the support of the army but with the support of the people."

As such, his greatest achievement united India is still surviving unlike Mourgian and Ashakan empire, eventhough thirty years have been lapsed after his demise.

Sardar Patel was an administrator par-excellance. He had rich administrative experience as he had worked in different capacities in Ahmedabad Municipality. He had sufficient experience as the Congress Party organiser.

Sardar Patel, realising that proper administration was imperative for reaping the fruits of freedom and for the protection of independence of the nation, and without an effective and efficient Civil Service the best of plans and policies would founder, he introduced a scheme of reorganisation of the All India and Central Secretariat Services. In place of Indian Civil Service, he introduced Indian Administrative Service along with

27. Ibid.
Indian Police Service and thus became the pioneer of Indian Administrative Service. Recruitment was to be made by open competitive examinations conducted by an independent statutory Public Service Commission. Officers could be exchanged between the centre and the states. The security of services was guaranteed by the Constitution.

He reinstated the Civil Servants working under British Government in India. Many people doubted their loyalty to the Indian Government when they were reinstated by the Sardar. But they failed to understand the commonsense and logic behind the Sardar's action. It was his realism and farsightedness which guided him to take this action. He strongly desired to utilise the brilliance, varied administrative experience and ability of the Civil Servants. He realised that the Civil Servants were right in serving loyally their previous masters. He knew they would serve their own Government with renewed loyalty and devotion. With this hope, he convened a meeting of 50 Senior Civil servants and told them that they were entrusted with the work of the greatest importance to our country and
that was to be accomplished with fairness and thoroughness. He, further told them that he regarded them as patriotic Indians and would expect them to give their best. The result was that he was able to infuse into the Civil Servants a remarkable spirit of service and dedication. He gained their confidence by assuring them that they would be treated with fairness and justice. He guaranteed them all their benefits and facilities they had enjoyed under the British Government.

On every important policy matter he consulted them. He put complete confidence in them. The success of the Sardar's administration depended mostly on his selection of right persons for right places and the mutual confidence they had. The Civil Servants pledged themselves to extend their full co-operation to the Government and live up to the expectations of Patel.

He treated the Civil Service machine and its components as partners in business, maybe junior partners. He wanted them to be above party politics. He advised them to work without fear or favour. He realised that it was the only organisation which was
permanent and which would maintain the continuity of administration. Therefore, he wanted that it should be impartial, judicious and free from political influence. For the civil servants who were put in key posts, he delegated power to them. Dishonest civil servants were removed. He was against the interference of non-officials in the administration. He said 'the most dangerous thing in democracy was to interfere with the services.'²⁸ He advised the Ministers and others to give them freedom to speak and act. In a ringing speech on the floor of the House on 10th October 1949, the Sardar said, "If you want an efficient all-India Service. I advise you to allow the service to open their mouths freely... You will not have a united India if you do not have a good all-India Service which has the independence to speak out its mind."²⁹

Some of the leaders of the Cabinet had no good opinion about the Services. But Sardar Patel did not

heed to them unless they were tested and proved. He appreciated their traditions of impartiality and equality. He had tested them of their integrity and fidelity in the critical days of 1946-47 and he was satisfied about their loyalty. He had realised that their contribution to the stability of India was great. It was due to this reason that he threatened the Constituent Assembly on 10th October 1949, that he would resign when Members like Ananthasayanan Ayyanger, Deputy Speaker of the Assembly criticised the Services and when many other members were reluctant to give Constitutional guarantee to the Service. Ultimately his threat had the desired effect and Article 311 of the Constitution was accepted by the Assembly. He became thereby, the leader and the champion of the Services.

Thus, Sardar Patel became the pioneer of the Indian Administrative Service. He reorganised the all-India and Central Secretariat Services. He stood solidly by the Services. No one could so touch the

30. Ibid., pp.122-130, for a brilliant and thought provoking full text of the Sardar's defence of Services and Article 311 on the floor of the Assembly.
hearts of the Civil Servants and apply them to the formidable tasks of those times as the Sardar could. It was due to these reasons, the Sardar was considered as a great and remarkable administrator.

Some critics have levelled against Sardar Patel charges of being an anti-Muslim, a communalist and chauvinist. Some go to the extent of calling him a die-hard reactionary. No such charge can possibly be sustained in the whole career of the Sardar. Moulana Azad has made an allegation against the Sardar that he had an anti-Muslim bias. All these charges are unfair and unjustifiable. All the activities of the Sardar prove beyond doubts that he was secular and progressive in outlook. The Sardar was tolerant of all faiths. Being born and brought up in a highly religious Hindu family, he was devoted to God and he had an implicit faith in the power of divinity or providence. But he did not display or parade his religious faith. When he was imprisoned for the first

time, he asked the authorities of the jail only three books— all religious, - The Bhagavadgita, Tulsidas Ramayana and "Ashram Bhajanavali. But he believed that religion was a personal matter and it had no place in politics. He opposed all fanatics, whether he was an Hindu or Muslim. He was a realist. Secularism meant not being pro-Muslim. For him, secularism meant equal treatment to every one irrespective of caste or creed.

It was Sardar Patel who opposed the claim of Azad, the President of the Congress in August 1945, for a separate existence of Muslims as minority community in the Interim Government. It was Patel who tactfully avoided the demand of the Muslims for reservation of seats at the time of making the constitution. Azad strongly favoured the inclusion of this provision in the constitution.

Regarding the question of a secular and a Hindu State Sardar Patel said "As regards the controversy of a secular versus Hindu State, there can be no serious talk of a Hindu state." 32 Therefore it was clear that

32. Ibid., p.140, made at a meeting, Calcutta, January 3, 1948.
he stood for secularism, and not for communalism.

His belief in secularism was evident in another speech at Madras on 23 February 1949. Sardar Patel said, "For unity, we must forget differences of castes and creeds and remember that we are all Indians, and all equal. There can be no distinction between man and man in a free country. All must have equal opportunities, equal rights and equal responsibilities."  

All these observations prove that the Sardar was neither anti-Muslim nor pro-Hindu. Undoubtedly, he was out and out secular and not a communal Hindu.

Some socialists criticise that the Sardar was a friend of capitalists. Sardar Patel told such critics that they had no clear and sufficient knowledge of the doctrine of socialism. Their ideology was vague and out of joint with reality. It was not suitable to the conditions of India.

33. Ibid., p.145.
Patel undoubtedly was in favour of socialism. Once he said, "In Gandhiji's Ashram the first principle is non-possession of property. That is socialism - is it not a practical socialism?"\(^{34}\)

For the critics who branded him as the friend of capitalists, he gave a befitting reply in his speech at the gathering of citizens, Shillong, on January 2, 1948. He said, "It is no use merely crying 'we are socialists'. You cannot comprehend socialism by reading text books or listening to learned speeches. You must first understand what it means in practice and how the ground has to be prepared for it... They say I am a friend of the Rulers and the capitalists, but I am a friend of the Harijans, the poor and the tribals. I am also a friend of the socialists. Unlike many who indulge in the parrot cry of socialism, I have no property of my own. Before you talk of socialism, you must ask yourselves how much wealth you have created by your own labour. If you have created

\(^{34}\) Illustrated Weekly of India., op.cit., October 8, 1939.
nothing, the parrot would have flown and the cage would be empty. By experience, I am convinced that what is necessary is for us to learn how to produce wealth and then to produce and there after to think what to do with it. What the province wants most is not this parrot cry of socialism, but unity and strength."

As a true follower of Gandhiji, he believed that Gandhism was a panacea for many ills of India. According to Patel, the society was to be reformed by non-violent means without creating class conflict or war. He believed that Marxist theory of socialism would create violence and class war which were opposed to the accepted ideals of the Congress. He wanted a fair deal not only for workers but also for peasants and landlords.

He was against the wholesale liquidation of landlords and capitalists. Ambitious landlords should be controlled by laws. He said: "you cannot build the prosperity of the tenants on the misery of the landlords."

35. Speeches of Sardar Patel, op.cit., p.133.
He was opposed to the drastic changes in the Industrial policy and pursuing thoughtless and vague ideologies. He did not like wholesale nationalisation except in a few key industries. He felt that drastic changes in the system in a transitional stage would destroy the economy. He advocated a policy of gradualism by strengthening the grassroots rather than introducing catastrophic changes from above. He said, 'we should learn to walk before we attempt to run'.

According to him more wealth was to be created before levelling it and no property should be confiscated without giving due compensation.

To the critics who alleged that the Sardar was the friend of capitalists, landlords and princes, in another speech made at a public meeting, Calcutta on January 3, 1948, he said, "I have been blamed that I am a friend of Rajas, Capitalists and Zamindars, but I claim to be a friend of labour and the poor as well since, I have followed Gandhiji, I have resolved not to own any property and I have none. But like Gandhiji, I want to make the capitalists also understand which

37. Ibid.
way their true duty lies. I cannot succumb to the prevalent fashion to pose as leader or to attempt to gain leadership by abusing princes, capitalists, etc., without rhyme or reason." 38

Sardar Patel remembered with gratefulness the solid financial help rendered by the capitalists in critical times when the Congress party was running short of funds for launching Satyagrahas, and to spend on elections. The capitalists came forward with magnanimous donations every time. He considered it as their patriotic service. But, never he became a 'tool of the capitalists'. After coming under the spell of Gandhiji, he led almost an austere life. He had a friendly and human approach to the capitalists and discussed their problems with an open mind and rational outlook. He never treated them as suspects.

All these prove that Sardar Patel was not a reactionary opposed to socialism; but he did not support the capitalists unreasonably. He believed in no 'ism'. He had no bias. To him, only whatever could be

demonstrably proved to be in the country's interest, was acceptable. All his policies were based on realism and nationalism supported by Gandhism.

Sardar Patel's Role in the Constituent Assembly:

Sardar Patel played a significant role in the Constituent Assembly of India. He was invited to act as the Chairman of the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee, the States Constitutions Sub-Committee and the Minorities Sub-Committee which were sub-Committees of the Advisory Committee.

He vehemently fought for the inclusion of fundamental rights. He pleaded for a strong centre, protection of property rights, right to compensation, power for courts to review the rate of compensation, abolition of separate electorates for minorities and abolition of separate electorates for Muslims including reservation of seats. Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly accepted the Joint-electorates with reservation of seats for minorities. He
had a tough job to persuade and convince the leaders of Indian Christians, Parsis, Anglo-Indians and Muslims to agree for the discontinuance of their claims for reservation of seats. He persuaded the Assembly for the continuance of reservation of seats in the case of Scheduled Castes for another ten years.

He strongly advocated for the removal of economic and social handicaps of the Scheduled Castes. He endeavoured hard to remove untouchability and moved in the Assembly the historic resolution for its abolition and making its practice a penal offence.

Sardar Patel had a tough job in convincing the minorities that demanded reservation of seats in the Cabinet and Constitutional guarantee for the representation of the minorities in the Public Service Commission in proportion to their numbers. Ultimately, the Committee recommended that a convention should be made that the members of important minority communities should be included in the Cabinets and the claims of minorities should be considered in making public
appointments only to Central and Provincial Governments. The Anglo-Indians were an exception to this.

The Sardar successfully introduced many provisions to check the provincial autonomy and making the Centre strong. Similarly, many provisions were introduced to make the Judiciary strong, independent and impartial.

What was Sardar Patel's Mission in life? The Sardar's only desire in life was to build a strong, stable, united and prosperous India. Probably, he had a premonition that he might not live for a long time as he was already struck with heart-attack two or three times. He therefore, wanted to utilise all his energy to accomplish his 'Mission' during his life-time. In a speech at Bombay, on the occasion of his 75th Birthday, he said, "I have reached an age when it is my right to take rest, but the heart is yearning to utilise the time that is still left to me in the service of my country, in these critical days. It is my earnest wish to see India stable, strong, prosperous and free from danger, and I wish to dedicate the rest of my life to that sacred task."39

The Sardar realised that if this 'Mission' was to be fulfilled during his life time, India was to be free from bondage and slavery. Otherwise, India would perish. As a realist and pragmatist, he found the only way to win freedom, under the existing conditions was to agree for partition. He agreed to it though it was bitter. He said, "When I accepted partition, in a sense, I was unwilling and was full of sorrow... We could not have secured India's freedom by any other means."  

After independence, the Sardar concentrated all his time, energy and tact in consolidating the states to make India united. He hammered out a nation and brought it under one flag, one state and one government. He changed the very political map of India.

Patel knew what he had achieved was only a political unity and the real unity was yet to be achieved. It would be achieved only when the minds of people were united. He referred to social unity. He knew that lack of love and affection among men was coming in the way of building stability and unity. He, therefore

40. Ibid., p.83.
sincerely appealed to the masses to develop these qualities. He said, "Mutual love and affection alone would make India united and strong." 41

It is appropriate to mention here that Sardar Patel believed that 'opposition would harm the strength and stability of the nation.' He said, "people say we should have an opposition. I say in all-humility that this is not time for opposition, but - for co-operation. Let India be strong and be able to assume the leadership of Asia, which is its right, then you can indulge in mutual quarrels and differences. If you do not heed my advice, I can see nothing but ruin facing us." 42 When Sardar Patel has said so, it does not mean that he was undemocratic. But it may be noted that he said that opposition would be counter-productive at a time when India was in a transitory period; because opposition would lead to non-cooperation, quarrels, hatred and other evils which were detrimental to accomplish his 'Mission'.

41. Ibid., p.85.
42. Ibid., p.86.
Patel realised that the problems like inadequate production and resources, inflation, profiteering and a host of other problems were to be solved if his 'Mission' was to be accomplished fully and he hoped to solve these problems with the political unity he had achieved.

It is true that the Sardar, built a united India by consolidating all the states except Kashmir. The problem of Kashmir is still burning. Indeed, the Sardar would have solved Kashmir problem like Hyderabad, had it been fully entrusted to him. Nehru interfered in this and took it entirely in to his hands. Nehru probably committed a mistake in referring the issue to the United Nations. Patel seriously opposed referring it to the United Nations. But Nehru did not heed to it.

However, it may be said that the Sardar was able to accomplish the main purpose or the main part of his 'Mission' - the united India, though political, which formed the foundation for achieving other goals.
Therefore, it was not a small accomplishment. If the Sardar were alive for some more years, he would have solved the remaining problems also and accomplished his 'Mission' fully. In fact, once Sardar Patel expressed that had he born ten years earlier, he would have solved all the problems of India. Regarding food problem he once said that if India had won Swaraj ten years earlier, he would have solved the food problem in the manner he had solved the problem of the states. He added, "But I have not the strength to do so now."  

Sardar Patel was no systematic thinker as he was not a Philosopher who would develop a logical and rational system of thought. All his thoughts and actions were essentially based on realism and pragmatism. He viewed the relevance of the ideas in the context of the social setting. He did not believe in any 'ism', even though he was not against socialism. But his socialism was based on Gandhism. He had an antipathy for the Marxist brand of socialism which was based on violent and revolutionary means. His thinking was not a Philosopher who would develop a logical and rational system of thought. All his thoughts and actions were essentially based on realism and pragmatism. He viewed the relevance of the ideas in the context of the social setting. He did not believe in any 'ism', even though he was not against socialism. But his socialism was based on Gandhism. He had an antipathy for the Marxist brand of socialism which was based on violent and revolutionary means. His thinking was

deeply based on Gandhism and democracy. His thinking sprang from the soil as he was the child of the soil. He learnt much from life and men rather than from books, schools and universities. His western education did not influence any of his ideas and thinking. His village peasant's hard life developed him a sense of realism, robust commonsense, pragmatism, compassion and uncanny knowledge of men. His intense patriotism and nationalism which he learnt in the Gandhian school were overwhelmingly evident in his vital role in the freedom fight.

The Sardar was an ardent fighter for freedom and democracy, and Gandhiji was always the source of inspiration for him. He was a disciplinarian to the core and therefore naturally wanted to impose discipline on every indisciplined member. He was a great organiser who built the party strong and stable. He was a unique consolidator. He was a superb statesman and administrator who brought all the states under one government and one administration through bloodless revolution. He brought remarkable reforms in the Services and played a vital role in framing the Constitution of India.
Indeed, he became an architect of India's unity.

The Sardar was a unique personality with rare and stirling qualities. He was rustic blunt, frank and unpolished in whatever he said. Therefore he had to incur the ravages of many. He was not a sweet-tongued hypocrite as he had no axe to grind. He lacked the soft touch in his relations with the opposite camp. He was straight forward because he was selfless and honest to the core. He had a strong and determined will with indomitable courage yielding to none, except, probably, to his great guru Mahatma Gandhiji. Yet he never followed him blindly. Writing about the character of the Sardar, Morarji Desai Says: "...true that Sardar would not surrender to any tactics of any body whether in majority or minority. When, therefore, Mr. Jinnah threatened to be violent, Sardar said that the sword would be met by the sword... It was courage and insistence upon equality of treatment for all."44 H.M. Patel refers to three outstanding characteristics of the Sardar's outlook and attitude. He writes:

"He was a man of his word and would not countenance dishonouring a word given or a pledge freely made. He believed in strict discipline. He was loyal to the core and expected similar loyalty from others."  

It may be said that many of the Sardar's qualities or characteristics can be traced to the characteristics, which he possessed during his childhood. The Sardar in a message in 1949 for children's special number of Shankar's Weekly writes, "... many qualities or defects of character which I might exhibit today can probably be traced to the characteristics which I displayed when I was child... in the main, I am what I was or tried to be 70 years ago." During his last days, the Sardar became more and more prophetic. Much indiscipline was developed in the Congress and the members had become disloyal. Being a disciplined man, he could not tolerate it. Therefore, at the opening session of the Congress at Nasik on September 19, 1950 he said, "The goal of Purna Swaraj must claim our


46. Sardar Patel, 'When I was a Child' in G.M. Nandurkar and Manibehn V. Patel, (Eds.), op.cit., p.168.
constant attention. The question with every Congress-
man, is whether we have met this claim or demand. If 
we are honest with ourselves... the reply must be in 
the negative. The greatest danger to the Congress 
come from within rather than without." Today, the 
prophetic words of the Sardar have come true. The 
Congress had met the danger from within rather than 
without. As a result, it is disrupted.M.N. Roy, who 
was no admirer of Patel writes : "...nationalist India, 
without Patel presents such a depressing perspective 
that, well might he have exclaimed on his death bed, 
"apres moi le deluge" - After me, deluge." The words 
of Sardar Patel have almost come true when we look to 
the present condition of India.

With regard to China also, the Sardar's prophecy 
came true. Addressing a gathering convened by the 
Central Aryan Association at Delhi to commemorate the 
67th Death Anniversary of Swami Dayanand, the Sardar 
referred to the Chinese policy towards Tibet and Nepal 
and its threat to the Northern border of India. Patel

warned Nehru against the Chinese danger and wrote him a letter which was so prophetic and it was a veritable testimony for his farsightedness and statesmanship. China started its aggression against India in October 1962 and Patel's warning came true. India suffered military defeat and there by lost prestige.

As Deputy Prime Minister in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Nehru, Patel's relation with Nehru was not always smooth-sailing. Occasionally there were volcansos, yet they were pulling on together in the interest of the nation because both were great patriots and nationalists. They placed national interests above personal interests. The services of both were essential for the nation. Once, the Sardar had decided to resign from the Nehru's Ministry and wrote to Mahatma Gandhi to release him. "Bapu had decided to release the Sardar from the Ministry at the latter's instance, but Mountbatten strongly opposed this because he felt that

the Sardar 'had his feet on the ground while Nehru had his in the clouds.' He told Gandhiji that he could not release the Sardar. Gandhiji agreed and withdrew his decision.50

It is appropriate to mention here that even though Patel was elder than Nehru in age and was the Kingpin of the organisation of the party, selection of party candidates, collection of funds and financing the elections both in 1937 and 1945 elections, he was not made the Prime Minister. It may be noted that out of 15 Provincial Committees, 13 supported the Sardar. Nehru's role was negligent in these elections. Still Gandhiji supported Nehru, probably because of his sweet-tongue, pleasing manners and he was better known to the external world. The Sardar was blunt and straightforward. He did not want to please anybody, not even Gandhiji for his selfishness. Had the Sardar pleased Gandhiji with sweet-words, probably, he would have been the Prime Minister. Manibehn writes, "Gandhiji supported Nehru's choice as Prime Minister because he was well-known outside India. He compared the Sardar and Nehru

to bullocks yoked to a cart. He felt that if Nehru was made Prime Minister he would be prevented from 'making mischief' in the country."  

In conclusion, it may be said that the life and work of this great man created an epoch-making period in the history of India. His public career, for all practical purposes started in the year 1919, continued with unabated vigour and reached its culmination with the consolidation of modern India. He dominated, the Indian politics for over 30 years (1919-1950) and played a predominant role in organising many Satyagrahas and the party and participated in the national movement as a great freedom fighter. As a superb statesman and administrator, he influenced many important policies and decisions, played a decisive role in the making of new constitution and laid the foundation for an ideal administrative set up. As a man of action and realist, his achievements are by no means small. As Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for States, they are still greater. M.S.Aney, describing Patel's statesmanship

51. Ibid., p.111.
and administrative quality, writes: "A Statesman and Administrator handling with great astuteness and ability most complicated problems of high state policy, the success he achieved in bringing under the National flag of the Indian Union all the six hundred states is unprecedented. That is enough to secure for him a place among the immortal heroes of Hind."

Assessing the great personality of the Sardar, Nehru in a broadcast speech on December 31, 1950, said. "His name will always be remembered not only as that of great leader in the fight for freedom but as a great builder, unifier and a consolidator of New India." Even that blatant critic of Patel, M.N. Roy called him, "The master builder of the destiny of Nationalist India."

It was Sardar Patel's great qualities and capacities which made India what it is today. Indeed, his role in Indian politics was manifold, decisive, vital and invaluable. He can rightly be called the architect

52. M.S. Aney, 'ARare Personality' in Harijan, op.cit., January 26, 1951.
of India's unity, the unique consolidator of its freedom and the edifier of the state's structure.

In view of all the remarkable services rendered by Sardar Vallabhbhai to the Nation, he adorns a place of pride in the history of modern India.