CHAPTER - I

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The freedom struggle in India produced a galaxy of great national patriots, leaders, politicians and statesmen like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and a few others. It is an indisputable fact that only three great men - Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel - dominated the Indian political scene in the last phase of her struggle for emancipation. Among these three great men, Sardar Patel is the least known outside India. Not much is written on or by Patel nor is he quoted often, for he was not a writer or a thinker in the generally accepted sense. He was poor in maintaining personal diaries and correspondence systematically. In fact, he believed in creating history rather than writing it. As B.K.Ahuwalia writes, "It may appear strange... that while sizeable literature has accumulated concerning the first two leaders (Gandhi and Nehru), while they are quoted and discussed at every turn, so little has been written concerning
Vallabhbhai Patel and so sparingly is he quoted in political dialogue. To some extent, it is unfortunately, inevitable, because Patel with all the many virtues he possessed was not a man given to literary pursuits. He propounded no philosophy, wrote no political tracts, indulged in no autographical refraction. He was a doer rather than a thinker.¹

It may not be an exaggeration to say that it was Sardar Patel who guided the destiny of today's united India in the early difficult days of her independence immediately after the transfer of power. In fact the predominant role played by him as a national leader, statesman, politician, realist and a consolidator cannot be forgotten by the present and future generations of India. Admiral of the Fleet of Burma and the last Governor General of India Lord Mountbatten pays his glowing tributes to Sardar Patel in the following words, "India owes him a very great debt for all that he did to bring about her independence and to help guide her

in those early difficult days of independence."²

Free India has never faced the scarcity of political leaders and statesmen. But only a few of them are remembered, for most of them were, probably arm-chair politicians without vision and interested in amassing wealth or to occupy high positions of profit or to have cheap popularity or to achieve some selfish ends. Undoubtedly, Sardar Patel was above all these. He was a class by himself. He was a front-rank, shrewd and courageous politician with sterling character and determination. Being a seasoned statesman, he had a wide vision and robust common sense. He became an unquestionable, dauntless leader of India in general and of peasants in particular. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, Patel was not an idealist. Though he had some idealism, it was blended with realism. He was out and out a realist and a practical man with a clear vision of the future of India.

Sardar Patel played a vital role in Indian politics from early 1919 to 1950 in the struggle for

national emancipation in general and the integration of states in particular. It was Sardar Patel, and not Gandhi or Nehru, who played a decisive role in solving the vexing problem that confronted India immediately after her independence - the future of princely states. The lapse of paramountoy technically meant that princely states could continue to be in existence, which would mean the creation of 600 entirely independent sovereign states within the borders of India. This would create innumerable troubles which would ultimately lead to shattering of India into 600 pieces. This would create not a strong and united India but a weak and divided India. It was Vallabhbhai's vision, courage, tact, dexterity, prudence and statesmanship which was responsible for integrating all the princely states with the Union of India and tie them under one banner. This was an uphill and herculean task carried out by the indomitable Sardar. Though this was an uphill and unpleasant task; he could carry it out smoothly and successfully without using force and by incurring the least displeasure of the princes except in case of Hyderabad. His friendly and business-like attitude in handling the problem of Indian states is the most outstanding contribution
of Vallabhbhai to the cause of nationalist India. As B.K.Ahluwalia describes, "It is here that his genius is seen in its full flowering, his wisdom and statesmanship in their full play. In the face of tremendous odds, the states ministry was able, under his inspired guidance, to provide content to India's territorial being. The work that Patel did in this respect rightly earned for him the sobriquet of the Bismark of India." His method to win the princes was most humanitarian in the sense that he thought that the people who sacrifice their entire state, pomp and pleasures should not have any difficulty in leading a dignified, decent and comfortable life. He, therefore, provided for a Privy purse to the princes. This miraculous achievement was a feat of statesmanship of Sardar Patel and a veritable testimony to the humanist qualities in him.

The work of Patel in the states ministry, represented only one phase in his long and varied political role and career. Patel's leadership was highlighted in the long and arduous Bardoli campaign. It was here, Patel proved to be the true lieutenant of Gandhi.

3. op.cit., p.XII.
It was Patel who played a decisive role in the crucial negotiations with the British Government and the Muslim League which culminated in the partition of India. He was the only man in the Congress who could call a spade a spade. He was not a sweet-tongued hypocrat. He was forthright both in his thinking and talking. Ambiguity or sentimentality had no meaning for him. In the negotiations with the British government and the Muslim League, he was the only leader who could darely suggest the partition of India as there was no alternative to it.

Birth and Early Influence:

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was always in the forefront in fighting injustice. His unexplainable courage, laudable tact and dexterity, firm determination, envious organising capacity and iron will were not taught to him by any teacher but largely inherited by his family and the community, the 'leva patidar' in which he was born on 31st October 1875 at Nadiad in Gujarat. This was the probable and not the exact date
of birth of Vallabhbhai. This was the date as mentioned in his examination certificate. He gave this date as a fancy as he himself was not knowing it exactly. Narahari D. Parikh writes, "He himself did not know the date of his birth... It has been customary to regard 31st October 1875 as Vallabhbhai's birth day and that is based on his matriculation examination certificate. Vallabhbhai used to say that in the examination hall, he filled in his date of birth according to his own fancy."^4

The elders of the 'leva' community held that the 'levas' migrated to Gujarat from Ayodhya and Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, perhaps in the fifth century. The Bombay Gazeteer notes that "the patidar - Patels are of the kehatriya caste descended from the great conquering Huna tribe which in the second half of the sixth century migrated from the Punjab into Malwa in Madhya Pradesh and later to Gujarat."^5

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The Sardar's father Jhaverabhai was a freedom-fighter and had an adventurous career. Before he married Ladbai and settled down in Karmasad, the ancestral family village, he disappeared from home and joined the army of the Rane of Jhansi who waged the first war of Independence against the British in 1857. He proved himself a very loyal soldier and served her for three years. He left her only when she was killed in the battle of Gwalior in 1857.

It is noteworthy at this juncture that the war of Independence which was started by his father was completed by his son Sardar Vallabhbhai after sixty years in 1947. Jhaverabhai who took part in the war of Independence was arrested by Malhar Rao Holkar, but he was freed soon as Holkar was much impressed by his expert knowledge in Chess. This explains as to why Sardar Patel was always in the forefront as a great fighter. Fighting quality was flowing in the very blood of the Sardar.

The 'Leva Patidars' were dauntless in fighting and vehement in opposing the conquest of Gujarat by the Moghuls. The Patels could not be captured very easily
by the Moghuls, even though many generals endeavoured hard. As D.V. Tahamankar writes, "They (Leva Patidars) were always in the forefront of militant opposition to the conquest of Gujarat by the Moghuls. General after general was sent by the Emperor from Delhi to pacify the Patels who would not easily capitulate. When they had to accept defeat to an enemy superior in arms and numbers, they would lie low for a time, only to rise again and regain freedom." This explains the true nature of the Patels. They were not only known for their dauntless courage and tact but also for their love of freedom. Sardar Patel inherited all these qualities of his community.

Joining hands with the Marathas, the patidars made a common cause to attack the Moghul power in Gujarat. The Baroda State Gazette states that but for the timely help rendered by patidars, the Baroda state would not have been established by Pilajirao Gaikwad. It is historically proved that the patidars and the Marathas worked together to defeat the Muslim

rulers in India. They also co-operated with the Marathas in extending the Maratha power beyond Surat and to defend the Hindu culture. The political, social and economic progress of contemporary Gujarat was greatly influenced by the generous material help extended by the patidars. In recognition of their help, the Maratha rulers conferred 'jagirs' (Royal gift of lands) on several prominent families.

Patel inherited great qualities like self-control, will-power, sacrifice and religious earnestness from his father.

Two instances from Sardar's student career may be quoted here to substantiate his strong will and self-control. While studying for law, he stayed in his friend's village for two months. There he had a bubble under his arm. He learnt that a barber would cure it by applying hot-iron rod to it. Sardar approached him. The barber who was holding the hot-iron rod refused to apply since he considered Sardar Patel too young to bear the pain. The Sardar immediately took the hot-iron
rod and applied to the bubble himself. It amazed all the witnesses. When he was studying for Bar-at-law in England, he fell ill with a tropical disease unknown to the country. Doctors wanted to amputate his leg, but a German doctor came forward to cure it with operation. 

Doctor told the Sardar that the disease would be cured soon if it was operated without chloroform. The Sardar agreed to it and he was operated without chloroform. He never showed any sign of pain during the operation. Throughout, he was calm and quiet. The doctor was amazed as he had never come across any patient with so much of courage, will-power and self-control.

Both the father and mother of Sardar Patel were highly religious. They embraced Swamy Narayan Sect of 'Vaishnavism' revived by Swamy Sahjanand of Ayodhya. This was a cult of 'bhakti' or devotion. His father combined the spirit of 'vairagya' (renunciation) or detachment while fulfilling one's duties. Jhavirabhai became so much a keen devotee that he spent all his time in the temple when his sons grew up to work in the field. He was coming to home only to have his mid-day meal. He was a man with profound commonsense and
was blunt in his speech. Being highly religious, he did not have any interest in his material education, but he was very much interested in building up the character of his children by his religious teachings. He preached his sons to be honest, upright and fearless. As D.V. Tahamankar observes, "It is on record that he never goaded his children (as modern parents seem to do) to get on with school studies and win scholastic distinction. To him sterling qualities of character were more important than scholarships and prizes." 7

How true is it in the case of Sardar Patel also who developed in him all the qualities like honesty, uprightness, fearlessness, commonsense, sterling character and blunt speech that his father was possessing? Sardar Patel did not become intensely religious like his father because, probably he had not much time to spare for religion. Besides this, the circumstances under which he was working did not allow him to become religious. But it does not mean in any way that he was irreligious or anti-religious. It means only that he could not spend much time in religious activities since he was busy with various national, political and administrative activities. But undoubtedly, the Sardar had

7. Ibid., p.28.
an immense faith in God and Providence. Kewal L. Punjabi writes, "from his parents Vallabhbhai got a heritage of deep religious earnestness. There was more of piety and faith in it than show and ritual. He was always conscious of providence ruling the destiny of men for their good, though at times its plan might not be clear to mortal eyes. But he never paraded his religious faith which influenced all his action."

Vallabhbhai's mother Ladbai was the second wife to his father. She gave birth to five male - Sonabhai, Narasimhabhai, Vithalbhai, Vallabhbhai and Kashibhai - and one female - Dahibha. Ladbai was also religious. Every evening she would gather all his children in the open courtyard and sing devotional songs. She was telling them stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata, which had an indelible impression on the young mind of Vallabhbhai. He even used to quote the epic similies and metaphors in his conversations and speeches.

Sardar Patel's mother was noted for her quiet

performance of domestic duties. She was known as a woman of few words. She could keep her house always clean and tidy. The Sardar inherited all these qualities from his mother. He was known for his quiet work. He was called a man of few words. He could keep his rooms very clean and tidy wherever he lived. While he was in Yarvada Jail, Poona in January 1941, he kept the kitchen very clean and tidy and K.M. Munshi who was a co-prisoner writes: "Sardar has taken complete charge of our welfare. In one spare room, he keeps all the edibles; it is his unquestioned realm. No one is allowed even to look in without permission. There, in different cupboards, he keeps in neat rows ... everything that is needed to meet our appetite and taste."9

If Sardar Patel's qualities are carefully examined, it appears that he inherited most of them both from his father and mother.

Vallabhbhai, being the fourth son to his parents was denied of the care and affection usually lavished either on the first or the last child. He was thrown

more or less to his own resources. Due to this atmosphere of his family, he became a seasoned man and developed in him traits like self-reliance without being dependant on others. Sardar Patel himself says, "As a child it always pays to be either the eldest or the youngest. As the eldest, a child is the centre of paternal hopes; as the youngest, he is the object of paternal affection. It is the privilege of the eldest to order about all his younger brothers and sisters. As the youngest, one has to bear the brunt of accumulated orders, but at the same time, unless one is particularly unfortunate, one gets accumulated blessings as well as showers of affection. Having been born between these two extremes, I naturally had the usual independence, initiative and resources of meddling." 10

His life in the Yarvada Jail, Poona in January 1941 illustrates how Sardar Patel was reluctant to be under the care of anybody even for his food. Though, his co-prisoners K.W. Munshi, Bhaulabhai, Kher, Mangalbhai, Pakvasa, Gilder, Nurie, L.M. Patil and others were willing

to take care of Patel's welfare, he refused it and he alone took the entire responsibility of looking to their welfare. He was preparing tea and food for them every­day. K.M. Munshi writes, "Sardar has taken complete charge of our welfare... The first thing that Sardar does is to get the milk; he then puts the stove on a table, lights it and prepares tea for himself. He remains standing behind the table preparing tea or milk for the rest of us... By 11 a.m. Sardar is busy preparing our meal. None of us can share the mysteries of the chamber..."\(^ {11}\)

Another trait which was inherited by the Sardar from his family was aggressiveness. His three elder brothers tried to dominate him and demanded his obedience, but he always opposed it and in sheer self­defence, he developed a habit of aggressiveness. They called him a 'mad bull'. The Sardar always insisted on his freedom to do as he liked and fought for it.

\(^ {11}\) op.cit., pp.17-20.
As his father was a farmer, Vallabhbhai always took pride in telling that he was a 'cultivator' or a 'peasant' throughout his life, even when he became a famous and successful Barrister and a national leader afterwards. Perhaps, this was the reason why he was very much interested in the upliftment and welfare of the Indian peasantry. In fact, he organised a peaceful revolt of the peasants of the Kheda District of Gujarat which brought him overnight to the frontrank leadership of India.

Other traits of Vallabhbhai's character found in him throughout his life were reserved, cool, calculating and frugal nature and simple living. His poverty and agricultural atmosphere of the family was largely responsible to infuse these traits in him. Usually, the agriculturists are by nature reserved, cool, calculating and frugal and their living is simple. By nature, he was self-reliant because his father had not amassed wealth to support him nor had he earned any material influence for his family.
Educational Career:

The educational career of Vallabhbhai starting at the age of six was in two stages - education in Gujarati and education in English. He was admitted to the local school at Karamsad where he had his early schooling in Gujarati before starting his education in English. One of his teachers used to say, "I will teach you as much as I know. Don't ask me any question; learn by yourself." This memorable advice of his teacher became as it were, a key to Vallabhbhai's life. Whatever, he learnt, he learnt through his own efforts. Vallabhbhai was not interested in learning by a study of books nor hearing to his teachers with concentration as an obedient and disciplined student. He did not adhere to the discipline of the school, but made fun of his teachers.

When Vallabhbhai passed the seventh standard in Gujarati, he was strongly advised by his Headmaster to join the Teachers' Training College at Nadiad and to serve as a teacher. But this young boy was not destined

to become a teacher but a great man who could decide the destiny of a nation. N.D. Parikh writes, "...right from his childhood even though he received scarcely any encouragement or assistance, Vallabhbhai wanted to be a great man." Whether Vallabhbhai had any clear plan for becoming a 'great man' was not clear, but it was true that he realised that most of the leaders of those days were from the legal profession and therefore he decided to learn English and became a lawyer. Sardar Patel could pass the final examination at the age of thirteen and joined the Anglo-Vernacular School which had classes upto third standard in English in Karamsad only.

From Karamsad, he went on foot to Petlad which had classes upto fifth standard in English. In Petlad, he had a hard life. He and his six friends lived together in a rented room, brought rations from Karamsad every Sunday and fixed their own food in turns. Here, he learnt punctuality, hard work and doing things according to schedule. Sardar Patel's daughter Manibehn revealing some of the qualities of her father to Trevor Drieberg and Durga Das says, "The Sardar learnt punctuality in his youth when he had to do everything..."

13. op.cit., p.9.
for himself. This experience taught him to save time by doing things according to schedule. This gave him self-reliance and at the same time an appreciation of the difficulties other people encountered. He walked on business errands rather than use transport. This habit served him well in London when he was attending the Inns of court. He used to walk from his lodgings to the law library, a distance of several miles daily. He could not afford to buy books for study and was at the library when the librarian opened it and left at closing time every evening."

Vallabhbhai learnt his culinary art also during this period and he was very much proud of this art. As it is discussed earlier in the same chapter, the Sardar took great pride in fixing the food for his friends in the Yaravada Jail.

Joining the High School at Nadiad, at the age of 18, Vallabhbhai passed his matriculation in 1897 at the

late age of 22. His school life at Nadiad was a formative period of his life. During these school days he developed qualities like leadership, discipline, organising capacity, skill in commanding respect even from rowdy boys and a rare knack of winning over confidence of others etc. According to D.V. Tahamankar "Early in life Vallabhbhai showed two main traits of character leadership and stubbornness. In his school he acted as a born leader and fought with his teachers for the right of his fellow students."¹⁵ These qualities were immensely helpful in organising people for action in his later years. Sardar Patel's daughter Manibehn revealing the rare traits of character of her father to Trevor Drieberg and Durga Das says, "From early youth, the Sardar developed the qualities of leadership and discipline. In later life, these qualities were to help him in organising large groups of people for action."¹⁶

Two incidents, in his school career bear testimony for his leadership and stubbornness. One day, an
eccentric teacher punished a boy for having not brought the fine. Vallabhb considered this unjust and decided to teach him a good lesson. He organised a boycott of the school very successfully. He prevented all the students from going to school till the Headmaster apologised for his assistant's action.

On another occasion, when a teacher who was running a private business forced the students to buy writing papers, pencils, exercise books, etc., at higher prices than those at the local shop, Vallabhb organised a boycott till the teacher agreed to charge reasonable prices.

Another incident occurred outside the school also bears a testimony to his unchallenging quality of leadership. Chinoobhai, a popular teacher contested the election to the local municipality. His opponent Babobhai was rich and influential and he boasted that he would shave off his moustache if he was defeated. Vallabbh took it as a challenge and decided to support his teacher. He organised an army of students and
began a hurricane campaign and won the election. Vallabh, as the Head of fifty boys, took a barbar in procession to the house of the defeated bania who was hiding behind locked doors and pulled him out and shaved off his moustaches according to the terms. D.V.Tahamankar writes, "The election of Chinobhai was a triumph for Vallabh's organising ability and leadership, two qualities which; above all marked his career when he joined the national Congress." 17

Another incident may be quoted here to illustrate Vallabhbhai's indomitable audacity. He was studying in the school at Petlad. A mathematics teacher could not solve a problem in geometry correctly. Young Vallabh immediately got up and pointed out the mistake of the teacher. The teacher got angry and told him that he could occupy the teacher's chair if he could solve the problem correctly. Accordingly, young Vallabh solved it correctly and sat on the chair of the teacher.

These incidents bear a veritable testimony to Vallabhbhai's main traits of character-leadership,

17. op.cit., p.33.
stubbornness, firm will, amazing organising capacity, strong determination and indomitable courage. All these qualities helped him to acquire a sense of self-reliance and confidence and to become a popular national leader and statesman in his later life.

Vallabhbhai was active in organising debates and making speeches in English. He did not like the western games like cricket and football. He liked the Indian games Wrestling most. According to Patel Wrestling developed body and mind together. Sardar Patel was developed into a fine athlete with a robust physique and abounding self-confidence by the time he completed his studies. Although, Patel was interested in English, he made little effort to develop it. He learnt that much of English language which was necessary for practical purposes. His fellow students regarded him as their leader.

Patel was not benefitted much with the education at his village school. But he got his real education in the company of his father. When he was in school, he was helping his father in the fields. Patel evinced
a lot of interest in agriculture throughout his life. In fact, he preferred to call himself an agriculturist, even though he was practicing as a lawyer. K.L. Punjabi says, "His habit of paying attention to detail made him a good farmer and a useful assistant to his father." In some respects, Vallabhbhai can be compared with the American President Abraham Lincoln. "Like Abraham Lincoln, Vallabh was a self-taught man; and like him, Vallabh worked with his father in the fields for many years."  

The habit of early morning walks which clung to Patel throughout his life was learnt in the company of his father who was taking him to his fields early in the morning which was four miles away from his house. His father, on his way to fields taught him simple arithmetic. While tilling the fields, he narrated his adventurous past history as to how he fought against the foreigners and failed to drive them out because of disunity and lack of national spirit among the Indian princes. The young Vallabh started thinking of the

18. op.cit., p.8.
19. op.cit., p.29.
ways of reviving the old fighting spirit of the people. The Indians had been disarmed by the foreign rulers and kept securely under their heel.\textsuperscript{20}

As a school boy, Vallabhbhai was more interested in games rather than books. He treated men as the best books with whom he moved very intimately and freely and learnt their customs, tradition, culture and many other things. He studied the impact of foreign influence on their way of living. He was particularly impressed by the phenomenal strength and capacity of the English people who had become the masters of the world. Soon, young Vallabhbhai decided to unearth the secret of their capacity by visiting England and meeting them personally. The strong desire of Vallabhbhai to visit England made him to earn more and more and save for the future.

In the year 1893, when Vallabhbhai was hardly 18, he married Jhaverbai of Gana, a small village three miles from Karamsad. She was from a highly respectable and rich family and enjoyed good health. It was a custom

\textsuperscript{20} op.cit., p.8.
in Patidar's community to marry at an early age. Sardar Patel's elder brother Vithalbhai was hardly nine when he was married. Therefore, it was not a surprise when Vallabhbhai married at the age of 18. He enjoyed a happy married life. Jhaverbai gave birth to a daughter Manibhen and a son Dahyabhai after twelve and thirteen years of her marriage respectively.

Unfortunately, Vallabhbhai lost his wife when he was only thirtythree. He did not marry again even though his parents and friends forced him. Then onwards, he lost the attraction for fair sex. He remained a widower till the end of his life. This illustrates Vallabhbhai's strong will and determination and an excellent moral character. L.N. Sarin writes, "He remained a widower for the rest of his life and never succumbed to feminine charm even for gallivanting with fairer sex. His rough feature were indicative of an intellect that mastered emotional instincts."21

Vallabhbhai had a remarkable stoic sense of duty and a tremendous capacity to withstand any serious,

shocking news while performing duty. This was the reason as to why he became a popular lawyer. He was cross-examining a key witness in the murder trial when he received his brother's telegram regarding the death of his wife. Narshari D.Parikh writes, "To Vallabhbhai this was a moment of very great pain and sorrow but the trial had reached a critical stage... If the cross-examination was not continued and completed that day, the case might well go against the accused. He controlled his grief, therefore, he went on with his cross-examination. Not until the court adjourned did he gave out the news of his bereavement." Sardar thereby showed a strong and unperturbed mind even when his own dear wife expired. In this respect, he proved himself a 'stitapragma'.

Legal Career:

Sardar Patel was always reluctant to serve under anybody. By nature, he was independent, and therefore wanted to become a lawyer like his elder brother Vithalbhai Patel, whose earning was handsome and who

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22. op.cit., p.16.
was enjoying maximum freedom. Like his brother, he could not afford to pursue his education of law as a regular student for six years at Bombay. Besides this, he did not want to be a burden to his family. Sardar Patel was most practical and painstaking from the beginning. He decided to learn while earning. He took up a job in a local Lawyer's office who was kind enough to give him full liberty to use his law books. In order to have practical knowledge regarding cases, he attended the criminal courts. It was amazing for Vallabhbhai to see the power of the police as prosecutors and the ignorance of the magistrates. Most of the police-witnesses were tutored. No Lawyer had the capacity and courage to bring such injustice to light and punish them. Vallabhbhai studied all these tactics and secrets to win a case and made use of such tactics later as a lawyer. He became the most daring, efficient and successful lawyer. His audacity was blended with practical knowledge of winning a case. He was a terror to the police and the judges. They could not win the case by hook or crook because Vallabhbhai could block all the secret ways of winning the case. As per his desire, he passed the District Pleader's Examination and set up an independent legal
practice at Godhra, headquarters of Panchmahal's District, Gujarat.

In London for Bar-at-Law:

Vallabhbhai, since his youth had a strong desire to visit England to have first hand information about their political institutions and people. He wanted to probe into the secret of their political strength which had enabled them to enslave India for such a long time and build an empire in which the 'Sun never set'.

His father had not left any means to enable him to go to England. He could save Rs.10,000 from his legal practice within three years. The money was sufficient to meet his expenses in London.

Apart from having first hand experience of the people of England, he wanted to improve his legal qualifications. He considered this a necessary means to widen the scope of his activities by becoming a Barrister. Being a Barrister, one could attend any court in British
India. Another chief reason to improve his legal status was that the Barristers, at that time were respected most and many clients were attracted by their higher qualifications.

Even though, Vallabhbhai's journey to London was booked by Thos. Cook & Sons, Bombay on his name, he had to postpone it by another four years due to a strange incident in which his qualities of magnanimity and sacrifice were exhibited. The passage agents from Bombay, after reserving Vallabhbhai's passage wrote a letter addressing it to V.J.Patel. Unfortunately, it was delivered to his brother Vithalbhai whose initials were also the same. Vallabhbhai's ambition to visit England and his correspondence to book his journey was not known to Vithalbhai Patel as Vallabhbhai had kept this as a secret. The secret was out when Vallabhbhai's letter was wrongly delivered to Vithalbhai. Vithalbhai claimed that the opportunity should be provided first to the elder brother. Since Vallabhbhai had a great affection and respect to his elder brother, he had to allow him to go first. Vallabhbhai, not only agreed
to give up the passage but also gave the money that he had saved for his own journey. Such was the great sacrifice Vallabhbhai made for the sake of his brother. The ship which had to carry Vallabhbhai carried Vithalbhai. Thus the saying 'man proposes and God disposes' came true in this case. It indicates not only the sacrifice of Vallabhbhai but also his generosity, for he gave away to his brother's journey his hard-earned money.

Even after the return of his brother from London in 1908, Vallabhbhai had to postpone his journey for some more time due to the sad demise of his beloved wife. At this juncture one felt that Vallabhbhai might give up once for all the idea of visiting London due to the loss of his beloved wife. But his reason, strong will and determination overruled his emotions. With a great grief on one side of his heart and strong determination on the other, he sailed from Bombay to London in August 1910.

His natural qualities like hard work, sincerity, painstaking and punctuality helped him in completing
his education in London earlier than schedule. Vallabh started studying the Roman Law on the boat itself. Without stopping at any place, he travelled to Calais and to Dover and then to London and joined the Middle Temple. To avoid distractions in the middle of his studies, he finished sight-seeing in the first week itself and took up his studies very seriously. Though he was leading a simple life, London was found to be very expensive. He, therefore wanted to shorten his stay. To complete the Barrister course, it was a general rule that a student should keep 12 terms spread over three years. As an exceptional case, an exemption of two terms was allowed to those who could get first class in the final examination. The Sardar who had a strong determination and will-power passed the Roman Law paper with honours. In the preliminary examination, he distinguished himself in the paper on Equity, sharing a prize of £5 with another student. In the final examination, he passed in First Class and won a prize of £50.

Vallabhbhai could achieve this success because of his hard work and painstaking nature. For instance, everyday, he was walking the distance from Bayswater to
Temple Bar and back. He was so punctual in attending the library, that he could arrive at 8 a.m., in the morning and study until 6 p.m., with an occasional break for tea, lunch and walk in the gardens.

In the last year of his course, Vallabhbhai wanted to have first-hand knowledge of how law was actually administered in England. He therefore attended the Inns Court and was deeply impressed by the unwritten guarantee of fundamental rights protecting the liberty of the individual. He realized that the British people were lovers of democratic institutions. They were very particular about their fundamental rights and would not tolerate any danger to them. Their rights were well-guarded by a strong public opinion.

However, Vallabhbhai was greatly benefitted by his stay in England and L.N.Sarin writes his "stay in England was a great education. It mellowed his character and chiselled his intellect. His vision enlarged. He came in contact with the better side of the British mind that worked with dignity and grace to preserve their democratic institutions. Almost every Indian who went
abroad and did not waste his opportunities in idle pursuits gained considerable knowledge by contact with England literature and history and learnt his first lessons of patriotism from the example of the British people for their love of country. Patel was much impressed by the deep respects of the people of England for law of the land and trust in their parliamentary institutions."23

Vallabhbhai visited Scotland and Ireland to study farming methods when he had some leisure during the last six months of the last term. As soon as he returned to London, he was called to the Bar and he returned to India in February 1913 without wasting any time. When he arrived in Bombay, Sir Basil Scott, the Chief Justice of Bombay offered him two posts, Judge in Bombay Judiciary and Lecturer in the Government Law School, Bombay. Though the posts were lucrative, it was natural that Patel was not attracted by these as he was not a man to serve under anybody. He always liked to be independent and free so that he would have

wider field to make his career and develop his personality. He therefore decided to resume legal practice and settle down in Ahmedabad.

A Successful Barrister:

A peep into Sardar Patel's legal career before and after he became Barrister brings to light certain laudable traits of his personality. Patel proved himself to be the most successful lawyer throughout his career. He was unbeaten and unchallenging in his legal profession. The secret of his success was that he had a profound legal knowledge, a sound understanding of human nature, a strong commonsense, mastery over essential facts and a dexterous way of cross-examining the accused and the prosecution witnesses. He was sharp and sound in drawing inferences. D.V. Tahamankar writes, "... his (Sardar Patel) strong point was a sound understanding of human nature and...., 'his own uncommon common sense', as one of his colleagues put it. His alert mind enabled him to sift and analyse evidence quickly and to marshal essential facts with extraordinary skill..."24

It is quite amazing that Vallabh bhai was a man of few words even as a lawyer, even though lawyers, by nature speak more. He never argued at length but always stuck to essential points. Using of sweet, flowery and sentimental language to please and impress the Judges was not known to the Sardar. He was frank, fearless, bold and straight in his arguments. His colleagues called him by a nickname 'Brasstacks Patel' as he was always sticking to essential points. He earned a great name as an expert in criminal law. He was always at his best as a defence counsel.

Vallabh bhai, after passing the District Pleader's Examination, had started independent practice at Godhra in 1900. But after two years, he shifted his office to Borsad where his brother Vithalbhai was practicing. Patel, as an independent lawyer established soon his name and he was in much demand due to his remarkable way of winning the cases. K.L. Punjabi has this to say: "The people were soon attracted to this young man of grave countenance who rarely smiled; who spoke little, listened thoughtfully and went through all the papers until he had complete mastery of the details. He had
an uncanny instinct for spotting the weaknesses of the opponents' side and played upon these with such skill and persistence as to smash their cases."  

Some instances which reveal Patel's amazing courage, robust commonsense, deep legal knowledge and fierce and skillful way of cross-examining the opponents and merciless attack of the officials are worth quoting here.

Patel had a rare knack of finding out the weak points and the secrets of Police Officers and the prosecution witnesses. He was merciless and ruthless in attacking their unorthodox methods and their failure in discharging public duties; but he was never unjust and unfair. His fearless and skilful cross-examinations would make them breakdown. Therefore, the acquittal of the accused was almost certain. As long as Vallabhbhai was practicing at Borsad, not even one case was won by the police and therefore, the Magistrate's court was transferred to Anand. The Government gave a silly and absurd reason that Anand was a Railway junction and

25. op.cit., p.12.
therefore it is easily accessible to all parties concerned.
Since, history was repeated due to the shifting of Vallabhbhai's residence and office, the court was re-
transferred to Borsad.

In the same court, a British Magistrate had kept a mirror to study the faces of witnesses. Naturally, this was making the witnesses nervous and the magistrate was drawing conclusions from their behaviour about the truth of their statement. Vallabhbhai had taken up the case of the murder of a woman. As usual, when the Magistrate called the witness before the mirror, Patel immediately asked the Magistrate to record that the witness was asked by him to stand before a mirror and give the statement. The Magistrate refused to record it. Patel told the Magistrate that mirror also would be included as one of the witnesses and it should be produced when the case goes to higher court. Vallabhbhai presented the Magistrate a sealed cover. On opening it, the Magistrate, to his surprise found his name in the list as the first witness for defence. Still more surprising thing was that the murdered woman was also made one of the witnesses. It was an enigma for the
Magistrate. The Magistrate could not believe the Police witnesses and therefore acquitted the accused and stopped using mirror from that day onwards. Revealing the audacity of her father Manibehn says, "This incident illustrates a facet of my father's character. He had no fear of the British magistracy or administrators." 26

A businessman Mr. Champaklal was involved in a case of adultery and Vallabhbhai was his Lawyer. On the day of the 'hearing', the Magistrate arrived late to the court as he could not get up in time from his sleep for he was under an overdose of brandy. After his late arrival, the Magistrate asked the 'Shirastedar' (clerk of the court) to start the proceedings. Vallabhbhai stood up to submit his case, but the 'Shirastedar' interrupted him for clarification of a certain point. Vallabhbhai was angry and asked the Magistrate whether he or the 'Shirastedar' were in charge of the court. He also complained 'I did not come here to conduct the case before the 'Shirastedar'. The hearing can easily be adjourned if his Honour is not in a fit condition - I mean not well enough to hear the case this morning.'

26. op. cit., p. XLIX.
The Magistrate understood the point Vallabhbhai was hinting at. The Magistrate realised his mistake and he himself started the proceedings.

In another case at Ahmedabad, two brothers from Kaira district were on trial for murder. Vallabhbhai asked for their release on bail. The police prosecutor opposed his request on the ground that the people of Kheda district were criminal by nature. Vallabhbhai told the court bluntly, 'I regret very much to note that no accused from Kheda gets a fair trial in this court... Since the district is considered to be criminal; whether there is evidence or no, it is thought that the accused must be convicted. That appears to be the reasoning of this court. If this were not the case, I do not see why bail should not have been granted in a case like this where there is not even prima facie evidence of the guilt of the accused."27 The Judge suspected the injudicious partiality of the prosecution and granted the bail.

Such was the courage, dexterity, prudence and

wisdom of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel shown in his legal career. Describing the power of the Sardar's cross-examination, K.L. Punjabi writes, "Few witnesses could survive the blast of his cross-examination for he knew the ways of the police and the witnesses produced by them." 28

Even though, there were six or seven Barristers at the Ahmedabad Bar, Vallabhbhai, within six months became the acknowledged leader on the criminal side because of his superb originality, independent thinking, uncanny skill in reading the minds of the witnesses, penetrating gaze and ruthless cross-examination of witness and his fighting nature against injustice, partiality and superiority complex of British Judges. Here is a description of Sardar Patel by G.V. Mavalankar, a close friend who was himself a lawyer, and in 1947 became the first Speaker of the lower House of the Indian Parliament: "A smart young man, dressed in well-cut clothes, with felt-hat worn slightly at an angle, stern and reserved, his eyes piercing and bright, not given to many words, receiving visitors with just a simple greeting but not

entering into any conversation, and of a firm and pensive expression, almost as if he looked down upon the world with a sort of superiority complex, talking with an air of confidence and superiority whenever he opened his lips. Such was the new barrister who had come to Ahmedabad to practice."^{29}

Such was the influence of Western education and the English society on Sardar Patel.

Regarding his methods of conducting cases, a friend writes: 'His cross examination of witnesses was brief and pointed; he had such a quick judgement of men that by a mere glance at the witness he knew what type of person he was and led his attack accordingly.'^{30}

Due to these rare qualities in Sardar Patel, winning any kind of case was not very difficult for him. That made him a very popular lawyer within a short time, though his fees was high. But, he was not entertaining many cases and had not become a slave of his clients.

30. *Ibid.*,.
Thus the legal career of Vallabhbhai Patel illustrates his remarkable rare qualities like deep knowledge in law, quick judgement of men, original and independent thinking, firm determination to fight injustice, indomitable courage, and able organising capacity.

Besides these, all the leadership qualities which were shown during his student days bloomed during his legal career. The leadership qualities were glaring in him as a student and a lawyer. As a student, he was an unquestionable and unchallenging leader of the students and similarly as a lawyer, he was an acknowledged leader of the Bar. Thus all these rare qualities in him were in the nature of a solid foundation for a potential national leader.