



Invaluable contribution of Sardar Patel in building a modern and unified India needs to be remembered by every Indian:

Vice President

Inaugurates National Conference on 'Making of a Gandhian Nationalist-A Study of the Life and Times of Sardar Patel'

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that the invaluable contribution of Sardar Patel in building a modern and unified India needs to be remembered by every Indian as the country marches ahead as one of the largest economies in the world. He was addressing the two-day National Conference on 'Making of a Gandhian Nationalist-A Study of the Life and Times of Sardar Patel', here today. The Minister of State for Culture (I/C) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Mahesh Sharma and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that Sardar Patel was a selfless leader, who placed the country's interests above everything else and shaped India's destiny with single-minded devotion. He further said that in a truly masterful display of statesmanship, Sardar Patel ensured a smooth integration of the troubled domains by not allowing the situation to deteriorate into civil unrest. There was neither bloodshed nor any kind of rebellion as he went about the task of building a strong India with a missionary zeal, he added.

The Vice President said that acknowledging the monumental contribution of Patel in nation building, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said, 'History will call him the builder and consolidator of new India'. He further quoted Mahatma Gandhi as saying, 'Many were prepared to follow me, but I could not make up my mind as to who should be my deputy commander. Then I thought of Vallabhbhai'. Sardar Patel was not only an organizer par excellence but also turned out to be a people's leader, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely pleased to address this National Conference on 'Making of Gandhian Nationalist: Life & Times of Sardar Patel'.

Sardar Patel, the architect and unifier of modern India, was not only a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi but also his ardent follower. Patel was a selfless leader, who placed the country's interests above everything else and shaped India's destiny with single-minded devotion.

He fashioned the country's political integration with the swiftness of a military commander and deftness of a visionary leader.

Displaying the vision of a statesman, tact, diplomacy and pragmatic approach, he prevented the balkanization of the country and ensured the merger of more than 560 princely States with the Union of India at a critical and most turbulent period in the history of the country. What makes this stupendous integration most remarkable is that it was achieved without any bloodshed.

It indeed was a herculean task to bring the rulers of different princely States on board. Adopting different approaches as warranted by the situation, he gave friendly advice in some cases, persuaded the rulers to see reason in others and even used force as in the case of Hyderabad. What is most remarkable is the fact that Sardar Patel achieved a unified India when the rulers of the princely States were given the option of joining either India or Pakistan or remaining independent.

After securing the accession of Junagarh, he ensured the liberation and integration of Hyderabad State with rest of India in a deft and swift action codenamed 'Operation Polo'. The police action ended in just four days on September 18, 1948. Every year, September 17 is being celebrated as 'Hyderabad Liberation Day' in Telangana and parts Maharashtra and Karnataka.

In a truly masterful display of statesmanship, Sardar Patel ensured a smooth integration of the troubled domains by not allowing the situation to deteriorate into civil unrest. There was neither bloodshed nor any kind of rebellion as he went about the task of building a strong India with a missionary zeal.

Undoubtedly, there is no parallel in modern history to what was achieved by him. Acknowledging the monumental contribution of Patel in nation building, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had this to say: 'History will call him the builder and consolidator of new India'.

After he came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, he became his lieutenant and was chosen to lead Kheda satyagraha. He switched over to Indian attire and later embraced khadi. His biggest asset was his down-to-earth disposition.

'Many were prepared to follow me, but I could not make up my mind as to who should be my deputy commander. Then I thought of Vallabhbhai' said Gandhiji. Sardar Patel was not only an organizer par excellence but also turned out to be a people's leader. He earned the title of 'Sardar' after he spearheaded peasant's no-tax campaign at Bardoli in Gujarat.

He also led the relief and rehabilitation operations from the front when Gujarat was ravaged by floods and worked tirelessly during plague outbreak in Ahmedabad.

While he became immensely popular and had earned the title of Sardar after Bardoli campaign, Patel played a major role Salt Satyagraha and was imprisoned with other leaders. During Quit India Movement also, he went around the country giving stirring speeches and was again jailed.

Although, Sardar Patel differed with Gandhiji on certain issues, he always remained loyal to him. Following Gandhiji's assassination, he said: "I claim to be nothing more than an obedient soldier of him like the millions who obeyed his call. There was a time when everyone used to call me his blind follower. But, both he and I knew that I followed him because our convictions tallied".

His vision for a unified India also saw the creation of All India Administrative Services which he described as the 'Steel Frame'. His exhortation to the probationers to maintain utmost impartiality and incorruptibility of administration is as relevant today as it was then.

"We have to shed mutual bickering, shed the difference of being high or low, develop a sense of equality and banish untouchability. We have to restore the conditions of Swaraj prevalent prior to British rule. We have to live like children of the same father, these words of Sardar Patel during the Quit India Movement continue to inspire us.

Following his death, 'The Manchester Guardian' wrote: "Patel was not only the organiser of the fight for freedom but also the architect of the new State when the fight was over. The same man is seldom successful as a rebel and a statesman. Sardar Patel was the exception".

It is unfortunate that there has been no proper recognition of the monumental contribution made by Sardar Patel and his legacy in unifying the country at its most critical juncture in the history.

Finally, I would like to conclude by stressing that the invaluable contribution of Sardar Patel in building a modern and unified India needs to be remembered by every Indian as the country marches ahead as one of the largest economies in the world.

Thank you. Jai Hind!

KSD/BK

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