

Sardar Vallabhai Patel

Vallabhai Patel, popularly known as 'Sardar', was a lawyer by profession and political leader by choice. He served as the first Deputy Prime Minister of India and Home Minister of India from 1947 to 1950.

He undertook the laborious task of unification of the Princely states, thus forming the bedrock of the nation. A visionary, his relentless efforts were fruitful in the integration and formation of the modern state of India. He is also known as the "Iron Man of India" for his uncompromising and invincible attitude towards national integration. He has also established the All India Services system in India.

Biographies of prominent personalities are important for [IAS Exam](#) preparation.

These notes will be useful for competitive exams like Bank PO, SSC, state civil services exams, and so on. In this article, you can read about the life and contributions of the "Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhai Patel.

Early Life of Sardar Vallabhai Patel

- Vallabhai Javerbhai Patel was born in the city of Nadiad in Gujarat. His parents, Jhaverbai Patel and Ladba were followers of Vaishnavism. Sardar Patel belonged to a community under Patidars, known as the Leva Patel community. Patel completed his elementary education at different schools in Nadiad, Petlad, and Borsad. He developed a stoic personality and was considered a representative of unambitious youth by the people around him.
- But, his iron will and ambition were inexorable. He decided to pursue the profession of law, save funds, migrate to London and become a barrister. After earning a law degree within two years, he started appearing for another party before the court of law. It took him a couple of years to obtain a reputation as a skilled, able lawyer and reach a stable financial position. By then, he married Jhaverben, and the couple had a daughter named Maniben and a son, Dahyabhai.
- Sardar Vallabhai Patel continued his practice as a lawyer in Godhra, Borsad, and Anand, along with looking after his family. Meanwhile, he founded "Edward Memorial High School" in Borsad, later renamed Jhaverbhai Dajibhai Patel High School. He was convinced to let his elder brother move to England in the name of family honour.
- After the demise of his wife, he raised children and decided to resume his studies. He was enrolled in Middle Temple Inn in London and passed the course as the topper of the batch. Returning to India, he settled in Ahmedabad as a successful barrister. He had hoped to expand his horizons, financially and socially. He wanted to establish himself with professional betterment and provide modern education to his children.

Mahatma Gandhi and Kheda Satyagraha

- His life took a new turn in the political realm after he met Mahatma Gandhi for the Gujarat Political Conference in Godhra. On Mahatma Gandhi's request, he took up the role of secretary of the Gujarat Sabha, an arm of the Indian National Congress. He vehemently opposed the system of forced labour, known as Veth, practiced by the Indians on demand of the British. He also actively took part in the relief operations during the plague and famine in Kheda.
- However, the trajectory of his life took deviation when he became the commandant of the Kheda Satyagraha in 1918. Patel agreed to volunteer for the protests after a lot of contemplation. However, he had to leave behind his ambitions and material comforts and transpose them with a bigger aim of public service.
- With the support of Congress leaders, Patel started documenting the grievances of villagers and sought their support for the protest through non-payment of taxes. He emphasized the importance of unity and non-violence in the face of the revolt. With the onset of protests, the Government sent the police to arrest the farmers and seize their belongings and valuables, including farms, animals, etc.
- Patel took the initiative to aid farmers in hiding their valuables and assets. Following the revolt, thousands of farmers got arrested by the police, but fortunately, not Patel. The revolt was instrumental in evoking nationalist sentiments and sympathy across India. After negotiations, the government agreed to withhold the tax collection for a year and curtail tax rates. This incident increased the popularity and acceptance of Patel as a national leader, primarily in Gujarat. In 1920, he was elected the President of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee.
- Following the success of the Kheda rebellion, Patel became an active part of the [Non-cooperation movement](#) in Ahmedabad and Gujarat. He recruited around 300000 members and collected 1.5 million funds through the campaign. He organised bonfires to burn British goods and abandoned English clothes. He switched to indigenous cloth produced in India, Khadi, and prompted his children to do the same.
- However, he extended support to Mahatma Gandhi's decision to suspend non-cooperation on account of the Chauri Chaura incident on [February 4, 1922](#). In Gujarat, he was active in social circles, fighting alcoholism, caste discrimination, untouchability and working for the empowerment of women.
- In 1924, Vallabhai Patel was elected to the Ahmedabad Municipal Board as the President. He took efforts to recondition the drainage system, water distribution system, sanitation, and improve cleanliness in the Municipality of Ahmedabad. The people of Ahmedabad witnessed the evolution of a hero who took the broom and cleaned parts of the Harijan quarter of the city.

- He undertook serious efforts to improve the infrastructure, and electric supply, and brought reforms to the education system. Following the torrential rainfall and floods in the Kheda district, he arranged refugee camps, assembled volunteers, organised relief packages including food, water, medicines, and collected emergency funds from people and the government.

Nagpur Satyagraha

- Sardar Vallabhai Patel had the natural ability to keep people together amidst social and cultural differences. That was evident in every revolt or protest he became a part of. Members of the Congress party initiated a satyagraha in Nagpur against the illegitimate law by the Government, banning the raising of the National Flag. He organised protests across the nation, assembling volunteers and supporters, thereby openly violating the law.
- Sardar Patel demanded the release of the prisoners and the rights of nationalists to hoist the Indian flag. They later found that the Government had a tie-up with a local gang to levy huge taxes on people in order to save them from the criminals. He convinced the villagers of the immorality and vagueness of the tax. Many people openly resisted paying taxes and the seizure of their properties. Finally, the Government was forced to withdraw the tax and ban the National flag. The trust and solidarity that people had in him were commendable.

Bardoli Revolt

- He earned the popular epithet for his active role in the Bardoli Satyagraha. He stood along with the people of Bardoli, enfeebled by the hardships of famine and tax hikes. The people of Gujarat suffered hugely following the dual crisis of famine and tax hikes. After discussions with representatives of the village, Patel initiated the revolt with a complete tax denial. The intensity of the revolt was much greater than that of Kheda.
- The revolt was followed by arrests and seizure of land, property, and valuables. The augmented crisis came to an end with the role of the intermediaries. The government obliterated the taxes, reinstated the village representatives, and returned the properties, which were forcefully seized from the village men.
- This struggle was the epitome of Sardar Patel's organisational efficiency and determination for tireless action. The success of this peasant movement elevated his position in regional and national spheres. The women involved in the revolt at Bardoli referred to him as "Sardar", which later became his recognition.

Independence Movement

- Sardar Vallabhai Patel became one of the principal pillars of the nationalist struggle. Gandhi and Patel were arrested following the [Dandi March](#). Patel was put on a trial, illegally. The situation of Salt Satyagraha intensified in Gujarat, and people launched an anti-tax rebellion, demanding the

release of Mahatma Gandhi and Patel. Patel was released and rearrested for leading a procession to Bombay. During the time of the ruckus following the execution of Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev, and Raj guru, he delivered a speech reflecting the sentiments of the people.

- In 1931, following the [Gandhi-Irwin Pact](#), Sardar Vallabhai Patel was elected the President of the Indian National Congress at the Karachi session. During this period, he took an initiative to return the confiscated land to the farmers of Gujarat. Immediately following the failure of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi and Patel were arrested and sent to Yervada jail in Gujarat. Both of them developed a bond of trust and affection and shared a camaraderie in jail. Patel adored the leadership qualities and instincts of Gandhi. Patel was later shifted to a jail in Nasik and was released in July 1934.
- In 1934, he was elevated to a greater role within the Congress party. He worked as a fundraiser and Chairman of the Central Parliamentary Board. He took part in the selection and financing of candidates to contest in the Provincial elections of 1936 and the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in New Delhi. He conveyed the stance of Congress on issues to opponents. Patel took a great effort to maintain party discipline as he hinted at chances for the creation of a rift within the party by the British. However, he vehemently opposed the declaration of socialism by Jawaharlal Nehru at the 1936 Congress session.
- Patel favoured Gandhi's principles of non-violence and pacifism and opposed the revolutionary and socialist ideas of Subhash Chandra Bose and Nehru. He protested against Bose, the then Congress President, which culminated in his resignation. But, there was strong criticism against Patel for his overt allegiance to Gandhi and authority over the party.

Quit India Movement

- Sardar Patel, an ardent supporter of Mahatma Gandhi, actively took part in the Civil Disobedience movement. He sided with Gandhi for individual disobedience, was arrested, and sent to jail for about nine months. He also opposed the [Cripps Mission](#), which aimed to garner support from India for Britain's World War efforts. His health deteriorated during his stay in jail.
- Sardar Patel believed that Mass Civil Disobedience on a large scale would force the British to leave India, like in Burma and Singapore. He stood with Gandhi amidst criticism from Nehru, Rajagopalachari, and Maulana Azad. Though Patel had the gut feeling that the British won't abandon the nation, he believed that Civil Disobedience on a massive scale could help invigorate the sentiments of people who were divided, in their response to World War. He indeed believed that such a rebellion would help the British come to terms with the fact that they no longer enjoy a support base in India, and the continuation of British rule is no longer appreciated by Indians.
- With a strong recommendation from Mahatma Gandhi and compulsion from Patel, the All India Congress Committee approved the Civil Disobedience campaign on August 7, 1942. Patel

delivered electrifying speeches across India, appealing to people for mass protests, participating in civil disobedience, refusing to pay taxes, and shutting down civil services. He took precautions against the arrest of national leaders and raised funds through campaigns.

- Those factions of people, including leaders who were susceptible to the outcomes of such a mass movement were proved wrong. Patel was so organised and thoughtful of the rebellion, and nothing short of success was the aftereffect. Following the rebellion, Patel, along with all the members of the Congress Working Committee was arrested and imprisoned in Ahmednagar fort from 1942 to 1945.
- The Quit India Movement turned out to be one of the most significant rebellions against the British since the First War of Independence in 1857. There was serious opposition from political parties at the beginning, and most of the Congress leaders were arrested by the Government during the protest. However, by the time the leaders and Patel were released in 1945, the British were no longer in a position to continue the rule and had already initiated proposals for the transfer of power.

Partition of India

- The British mission proposed a plan for the division of India on religious lines on May 16, 1946. The Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was in demand of a separate nation, Pakistan, on religious lines. At the time of Independence, India included British India and Princely states. There were 17 British Indian Provinces, whereas the Princely states covered about two-fifths of the geographical area of the country, and were 560 in number. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 ended British rule in India, and the Princely states were accorded the discretion to accede to India or Pakistan, or neither.
- The Muslim league approved the plan, but there was strict opposition from the Congress leaders and Mahatma Gandhi, who accused the plan of being extremely divisive for the Indian population. Sardar Patel, understanding the importance of practicality over conscience, convinced Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, and Rajagopalachari to accept the plan. Patel had already secured an assurance from British envoys that the “grouping” clause would not be practical. When the League withdrew from the plan, Lord Wavell invited Nehru to form the government. Patel managed the home affairs and Information and Broadcasting in the first cabinet.
- Vallabhai Patel was one of the first leaders of Congress to come to terms with the fact that partition was a solution to Muhammad Ali Jinnah's separatist movement. He was infuriated with Jinnah's Direct Action campaign, which chalked out a plan for the creation of Pakistan and culminated in communal riots and massive killings across the country.
- He used the powers of the Home department to stop the riots and criticised the decision of the viceroy to include ministers from the league in the government. It was not acceptable for him

that they joined the government without the approval of the plan. However, he did not want to openly disagree with the nationalists. He foresaw the probability of a Hindu-Muslim war that would eventually shake the foundations of India and the disintegration of Princely states.

- Sardar Patel was convinced of the necessity of partition following the communal violence in Bengal and Punjab. He worked with a civil servant, V.P Menon, for the creation of a dominion of Pakistan from Muslim majority provinces. The League engaged in baseless demands for the inclusion of Hindu-majority areas of Bengal and Punjab in newly formed Pakistan.
- Sardar Patel's decisiveness and prompt action culminated in the partition of these provinces, thereby blocking any chances of inclusion in Pakistan. Patel's 'right action' at the 'right time' gained him admirers and supporters from different circles. He received criticism from Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, secular Muslims, and others for his sudden move.
- On June 3, 1947, [Lord Mountbatten](#) officially proposed the partition plan. Sardar Patel succeeded in making Nehru and other Congress leaders accept the plan. Mahatma Gandhi, who had angst and disapprobation of the idea of partition, was also convinced by Patel. He made Gandhi understand the open disaccord between Congress and the League, rising violence and bloodshed demanding partition, and the chance of a civil war. However, Gandhi did not approve of the plan.
- After getting support from Congress, Patel represented India in the Partition council, where they undertook the task of the division of public assets. However, Patel failed to foresee the nature of violence and unrest that would follow the large-scale population transfer. Realizing the intensity of the situation, Patel got engaged in organising relief and emergency supplies and paid constant visits to the border to propagate peace and maintain tranquillity. Despite his efforts, the death toll crossed 1 million, and the number of refugees was around 15 million. With no alternate options, Patel sought help from the Indian Army, thereby imposing a strict curfew and issuing shoot-on-sight orders to restore peace in the region.
- Patel struggled to reinforce peace and communal harmony in the country by coordinating with different religions. He coordinated relief efforts for refugees in the capital through the establishment of the Delhi Emergency Committee and engaged with people, police, and community leaders to steer clear of any chances of violence, or attack. He put restrictions on the press to evade retaliatory violence. He condemned the attack on fellowmen based on religion and met with leaders of Sikh and Muslim communities. He also warned Pakistan to desist from any provocative actions and violence that can turn out into violence.
- He was able to contain the refugee crisis and unrest caused by migration to an extent. His efforts to safeguard Muslim refugees were also successful. But, he received criticism from popular leaders of Congress and secular Muslims for having paved the way for Muslims in India to depart. Though Patel denied those allegations, he was accused by leaders of the Sikh and Hindu community of the attacks faced by their community people in Pakistan.

- He received criticism from Muslim leaders in India for neglecting the needs of Muslims leaving for Pakistan. There were rifts between Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Maulana Azad regarding the allocation of houses left by Muslims in Delhi, Patel was backed by Gandhi and was widely appreciated for his stands on secularism, impartiality, and decisive acts to stamp out the riots.

Political Integration of Princely States

- Patel envisaged a dream of a secular and united India. His primary task as the first Home minister of India was the [Integration of Princely states](#) into the Union of India. This monumental task undertaken by Patel increased his popularity in the post-independence period. On 25 June 1947, the States Department was formed with Patel as the Chairman and V.P Menon as the secretary. Armed with tact and diplomacy, V.P Menon and Patel worked hand in hand for the integration of Princely states.
- There were around 565 Princely states, and they were given an option to join India, Pakistan, or independence. The major concern among Nationalists and the Public were that if the Princely states do not accede, most of them would be fragmented territories. It was through plenty of difficulties, surprises, and twists that finally the accession of princely states unfolded. The Congress, British, and Gandhi unanimously referred to Patel as the apt person to take up the challenge of accession. Patel was a true statesman and visionary who brought success to whatever tasks he accomplished.
- On August 6, 1947, he initiated his attempts to lobby the princes and unveil the reality of potential conflicts and come to terms with the government. He tried to instil the spirit of Nationalism in the minds of monarchs and convinced them that all is well between Congress and the princely order. He requested each of them to be a part of the Independence of the Nation and rule the state according to the will of their subjects.
- He also put forward favourable terms for the accession, including the creation of Privy Purses, a payment made to the ruling families that join with India. Rather than force, he used patriotism as a tool to facilitate the annexation. Patel set a deadline on August 15, 1947, for the accession of Princely states to India. All the princely states except Jammu and Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad joined the Union of India.

Annexation of Junagadh

- The Nawab of Junagadh wished to accede with Pakistan, against the will of the people who vehemently opposed this decision. Junagadh was important to Patel as it was in his home state of Gujarat and had the prosperous Somnath temple. The Nawab of Junagadh acceded to Pakistan under the pressure of Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto.

- Junagadh was far away from Pakistan and 80 percent of the population were Hindus. Sardar Patel's resolute efforts involved sending Army troops to occupy three principalities of Junagadh. Following the widespread protest, the Nawab and Bhutto fled to Karachi. By that time, Indian Army troops entered the state. In February 1948, a plebiscite was organised and the majority of the people cast their votes to stay in India.

Annexation of Hyderabad

- Hyderabad was one of the wealthiest principalities, ruled by Nizam Osman Ali Khan. He was a Muslim, whereas 80 percent of the population were Hindus. Nizam wanted independence or accede to Pakistan. In 1947, Hyderabad signed a standstill agreement with India, continuing all previous agreements except the stationing of Indian Troops in the state.
- A Muslim paramilitary Volunteer force known as Razakars supported Nizam and asked him not to accede with India. They also unleashed violence in the state. Nizam deviated from his previous position and changed his stance. Communal tensions and violence in the state prompted Patel to take action.
- In September 1948, Patel, along with the support of Nehru and R. Rajagopalachari, sent forces to invade Hyderabad. This military operation was known as "Operation Polo". On 17 September 1948, a ceasefire was announced in the state, and Hyderabad became a part of the Indian Union.

Kashmir

- Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Kashmir had not decided to join India or Pakistan. He offered a standstill agreement to India and Pakistan. However, in October 1947, Raja sought immediate assistance from India as Pakistan was about to attack Kashmir. India extended help and Raja signed the Instrument of Accession, a legal document where a ruler of a princely state could accede his kingdom to the Union of India.
- According to that, Jammu became a part of India on three subjects, namely communications, defence, and external affairs. The terms of accession were implemented during the drafting of the Indian Constitution, between 1947 and 1949. The terms under which Kashmir agreed to join India as specified in [Article 370](#) of the Indian Constitution. Jammu and Kashmir were given a special status and enacted their constitution.

Other responsibilities

- Patel was a part of the Constituent Assembly of India, which played a major role in drafting the Constitution of India. Patel headed the Provincial Constitution Committee, Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, and Tribal and Excluded Areas.

- He worked with Muslim leaders to end the separate electorates and demanded reservations for minority communities.
- He played a major role in founding the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service. He also worked to shield civil servants from political influence. He wanted All India Services to be free of corruption, partiality, and political attack. He was instrumental in the formation of Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers Union Limited, which preceded the Amul brand in Gujarat.
- He initiated the reconstruction of the Somnath temple in Gujarat.

Final Years

- Sardar Patel passed away on 15 December 1950 at the Birla house in Bombay due to a heart attack.

Legacy

- Sardar Vallabhai Patel was awarded Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour of the country, posthumously in 1991.
- Rashtriya Ekta Divas or [National Unity Day](#) was inaugurated in 2014 to commemorate the contributions of the “Iron Man of India”, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, a staunch nationalist behind the formation of the Republic of India. He was instrumental in the unification of around 550 princely states to the Union of India.
- The Statue of Unity was inaugurated on October 31, 2018, on the 143rd birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhai Patel. It is the tallest statue in the world, with a height of 597 feet.
- India Post released commemorative stamps for Sardar Vallabhai Patel in 1965, 1975, 1997, 2008, and 2016.
- The Sardar Vallabhai Patel National Museum in Ahmedabad, established in 1980, is a repository of various books, documents, and aspects of his political and personal life.
- Sardar Sarovar Dam is a gravity dam built across the Narmada river in Gujarat to supply water for agricultural activities of four states, including
- The Indian National Police Training Academy in Hyderabad is named Sardar Vallabhai Patel National Police Academy.
- Sardar Vallabhai Patel National Institute of Technology (Surat) and Sardar Patel University (Meerut) are also named after him.

- The International airport of Hyderabad, known as Sardar Vallabhai Patel international airport, is named after him.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sardar Vallabhai Patel

Who gave the title ‘Sardar’ to Vallabhai Patel?

The women of Bardoli, where Patel made concerted efforts to fight the tax hike and famine, started addressing him as ‘Sardar’ following the victory of the Indian National Congress in the struggle.

What are the contributions of Sardar Vallabhai Patel to India?

Sardar Vallabhai Patel was the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India. He undertook collaborative efforts to unite the Princely States to form the modern nation-state of India. His stance on [secularism](#), unity, and the multiple roles that he played as a member of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, and Provincial Constitution Committee strengthened the edifice of the nation.

Who is known as the Iron Man of India?

Sardar Vallabhai Patel is known as the Iron Man of India for his unwavering stature and commitment to the integration of Princely states into the Union of India. His ideologies and perspective on multiple issues were resolute.

Why is Sardar Vallabhai Patel known as the Bismarck of India?

Sardar Patel is known as the Bismarck of India for his relentless efforts for the Unification of India. [Otto Von Bismark](#) was a German statesman who played a major role in the unification of Germany.

Why is Sardar Patel known as the “Father of All India Services”?

Sardar Vallabhai Patel played a pivotal role in the creation of All India Services, including the Indian Administrative Service and [Indian Police Service \(IPS\)](#). He realized the requirement of a stable administrative structure, free of corruption and political influence, that could act as the backbone of the administration.

What is the Statue of Unity?

It is the tallest statue in the world, located in Gujarat, and was constructed as a tribute to Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the Iron Man of India. The monument was inaugurated on October 31, 2018, on 143 rd birth anniversary of Patel.