

A Role Model – an epitome of sacrifice of modern India

When we talk about Role Model, what comes to the mind of us, particularly the young, is a successful person who reaches the top of his/her chosen profession or career. But when we look at the world with coloured glass (read it as our perception), as Rajaji C. Rajagopalachari, the conscious keeper of Gandhiji (as Gandhiji himself described), the great freedom fighter and the first Governor General of India - once said, we find things in the shade of that colour. Now when we think of commencing a column on Role Models from the ethics perception, sacrificing ones opportunities to be on the top and serving the society, there are three names that come to the top of modern Indians' mind first – Mahatmagandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhai Patel.

Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru are better known because of their communicative style with the mass and the voluminous writings that they have left behind. Sardar Patel was a man of few words. Called as the “Iron Man of India,” he was looked with awe and was always serious in public eye. October happens to be the month when he was born (31.10.1875) and



we are devoting this column in this October/December issue of our journal to tell the youth of not only India but also of the whole world, how one can be a successful achiever in career and profession through personal sacrifices and spirit of magnanimity at the same time.

Editor

Indomitable Sardar, as he used to be called with awe, was more than an “Iron Man” as political pundits describes him. Or rather the element of that strength of mind came to him, because of the spirit of sacrifice. This can be discovered from the traits of his early days.

His full name was Vallabhai Jhaverbhai Patel. The visible story or history of his spirit of sacrifice begins when he was a youth. The year was 1905. Vallabhai was a 30 year old pleader in one of Gujarat's small towns, Borsad. He

had an ambition to take a barrister's course for which he had to go to England. Through hard work he had saved enough money for the voyage and the course. A passport and a ticket for the voyage were duly issued to him. The name was spelled with his initials V.J.Patel. The postman delivered the passport and ticket to his elder brother *Vithalbhai* Patel whose initial like his younger brother too was V.J. *Vithalbhai* told Vallabhai "I am older to you, let me go first, you can go later." Without any hesitation Vallabhai let *Vithalbhai* take the ticket and the passport. He did not stop there. He sent money for *Vithalbhai*'s stay in England. Later in 1935 Vallabhai went to England, completed his study for Barrister and brilliantly cleared his Bar examination.

Vallabhai Patel later played a very important role in the freedom struggle of India and the unification of the country. He became to be known as the 'Iron Man of India.' His biographers say "the steel that others saw in Vallabhai Patel was forged in the fires of sacrifice." That spirit of sacrifice was the real secret of keeping leadership and direction of India's freedom struggle in the right trajectory.

This ability gave Vallabhai Patel a force that ensured honouring of Vallabhai's own independent role and views. History tells that this psychic approach of sacrifice and political ethics to keep the freedom movement unified, helped him gain hold over the party without any group parleys of modern days and kept him always at par with the superior mass appeal and communicative ability of

Jawaharlal Nehru. This spirit of sacrifice also ensured that Patel and Nehru served India as a leadership duo, despite several sharp differences.

Vallabhai Patel who was given the title 'Sardar' by the common people during the Bardoli satyagraha, was always a unifying force. Apart from his iron determination, the hallow of sacrifice of his psyche that glowed at his conversations, had a great influence in the greatest post-Independence accomplishment of India – the integration of 500 and odd princely states to the Union of India. The Princes decided to sacrifice their kingdom or princely States and willing to make way for democracy under the persuasion of a strong man. Though he was talking at that time from a strong position, Patel always treated the Kings and Princes with dignity.

For modern professionals and corporate managers, these words of Vallabhai Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter he wrote after Gandhiji's assassination, should be a guide to take them through conflicts to achieve the common good of the organization. Patel wrote to Nehru in this letter "*We both have been life long comrades in a common cause. The paramount interest of our country and our mutual love and regard, transcending such differences of outlook and temperaments existed, have held us together.*"

The strength of this iron man of India should be understood from the spirit of sacrifice for the unity of the team and success of the organisation's goal, that inspires every true

professional. Like a jewel that adds charm to the beauty of the beautiful, the spirit of sacrifice held with strong willpower will make the students, professionals and managers shine

like a jewel throughout their career and wherever they go, adding value to their reputation all along. A short biography of the Role Model

Balaji

A short biography of Sardar Vallabhai Patel

Vallabhbhai Patel was born on October 31, 1875 in Nadiad, a small village in Gujarat. His father Jhaverbhai was a farmer and mother Laad Bai was a simple lady. Vallabhai's early education took place in Karamsad. Then he joined a school in Petlad. After two years he joined a high school in a town called Nadiad. He passed his high school examination in 1896. Vallabhbhai Patel was a brilliant student throughout his schooling.

Vallabhbhai wanted to become a barrister. To realize this ambition he had to go to England. But he did not have the financial means to even join a college India. In those days a candidate could study in private and sit for an examination in Law. Vallabh Bhai Patel borrowed books from a lawyer of his acquaintance and studied at home. Occasionally he attended courts of law and listened attentively to the arguments of lawyer. Vallabhbhai passed the Law examination with flying colours.

Vallabhbhai Patel started his Law practice in Godhra. Soon his practice flourished. He got married to Jhaberaba. In 1904, he got a baby daughter Maniben, and in 1905 his son Dahyabhai was born. Vallabhbhai sent his elder brother Vitthalbhai, who himself was a lawyer, to England for higher studies in Law. Patel was only thirty-three years old when his wife died. He did not wish to marry again. After his

brother's return, Vallabhbhai went to England. He studied with single-minded devotion and stood first in the Barrister-at-Law Examination.

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

Vallabhbhai successfully led peasants revolt in Kheda and the revolt ended in 1919 when the British government agreed to suspend collection of revenue and roll back the rates. Kheda Satyagraha turned Vallabhbhai Patel into a national hero. Vallabhbhai supported Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement, and as President of the Gujarat Congress, helped in organizing bonfires of British goods in Ahmedabad. He

gave up his English clothes and started wearing Khadi. He was elected as Ahmedabad's Municipal President in 1922, 1924 and 1927. During his terms, Ahmedabad was extended a major supply of electricity and underwent major education reforms. Drainage and sanitation systems were extended over all the city.

In 1928, Bardoli Taluka in Gujarat suffered from floods and famine. In this hour of distress the British government raised the revenue taxes by thirty percent. Sardar Patel took up cudgels on behalf of the farmers and appealed to the Governor to reduce the taxes. The Governor refused and the government even announced the date of the collection of the taxes. Sardar Patel organized the farmers and told them not to pay even a single pie of tax. The government tried to repress the revolt but ultimately bowed before Vallabhbhai Patel. It was during the struggle and after the victory in Bardoli that caused intense excitement across India, that Patel was increasingly addressed by his colleagues and followers as Sardar.

Disobedience Movement in 1930. After the signing of Gandhi-Irwin pact in 1931, Sardar Patel was released and he was elected Congress President for its 1931 session in Karachi. Upon the failure of the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhiji and Sardar Patel were arrested in January 1932 and imprisoned in the Yeravada Central Jail. During this term of imprisonment, Sardar Patel and Mahatma Gandhi grew close to one another, and the two developed a close bond of affection, trust, and frankness without reserve. Sardar Patel was finally released in July 1934.

In August 1942, the Congress launched the Quit India Movement. The government jailed all the important leaders of the Congress, including

Vallabhai Patel. All the leaders were released after three years. After achieving independence on 15th of August 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of independent India and Sardar Patel became the Deputy Prime Minister. He was in charge of Home Affairs, Information and Broadcasting and the Ministry of States.

There were 565 princely States in India at that time. Some of the Maharajas and Nawabs who ruled over these were sensible and patriotic. But most of them were drunk with wealth and power. They were dreaming of becoming independent rulers once the British quit India. They argued that the government of free India should treat them as equals. Some of them went to the extent of planning to send their representatives to the United Nations Organization. Patel invoked the patriotism of India's monarchs, asking them to join in the freedom of their nation and act as responsible rulers who cared about the future of their people. He persuaded the princes of 565 states of the impossibility of independence from the Indian republic, especially in the presence of growing opposition from their subjects. With great wisdom and political foresight, he consolidated the small kingdoms. The public was with him. He tackled the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Junagarh who initially did not want to join India. Sardar Patel's untiring efforts towards the unity of the country brought success. He united a scattered nation without much bloodshed. Due to the achievement of this massive task, Sardar Patel got the title of 'Iron Man'. Sardar Patel died of cardiac arrest on December 15, 1950. For his services to the nation Sardar Patel was conferred with Bharat Ratna.