

Essay on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Iron Man of India)

"Vallabhbhai Patel was born in Gujrat. He studied law in England but returned (1915) to India and practiced in Ahmedabad. Influenced by the nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi, he joined the civil disobedience movement and successfully organized (1928) the landowners of Bardoli against British tax increases. In 1931 he served as President of the Indian National Congress. The British imprisoned Patel a number of times for his activities. As home minister, minister of states, and deputy prime minister (1947-1950) under Jawaharlal Nehru, Patel adroitly achieved the peaceful integration of the princely Indian States into the Union. His swift, cool reaction to Gandhi's assassination in 1948 is widely believed to have averted a possible civil war."

Sardar Vallabhai Patel was born on the 31st of October 1875—in Gujrat. He was the son of Zaverbhai who had served in the army of the Queen of Jhansi and Ladbai. Vallabhbhai started his education in a Gujarati medium school and after middle school, he switched over to English medium in the Nadiad High School. During the course of his studies, his penchant for organizing came to light. He successfully organized many events. He matriculated in 1897.

In 1891 he married Zaverbai and had two children. But after she passed away in 1909, the following year he went to England to study law. He completed his law studies in 1913 and came back to India and started his law practice. He joined the Gujarat club and started following a western lifestyle. One day Gandhiji came to the club to give lectures. Sardar Patel was greatly influenced by this master spokesperson. As soon as he came in contact with the Mahatma he

decided to discard his foreign clothes and follow the rules of Satyagraha as laid down by Gandhiji i. A relationship between teacher and student began to develop them.

In 1918 when there was a flood in Kaira, the British insisted on collecting tax from the farmers. This time the Sardar made optimum use of Satyagraha and asked the farmers not to pay the taxes to the government. All of this was done peacefully and the farmers followed his guidance. The British got fed up and eventually returned the land confiscated by them earlier.

In 1928 the farmers faced a similar problem and Vallabhai came to their rescue again with agitation. The British were as usual demanding an unjust tax and the farmers of Bardoli under the supervision of Vallabhbhai did not budge. The government in retaliation seized the lands. This agitation took on for more than six months until Patel's brother, Vithalbhai, an important figure in the Central Legislative Assembly struck a truce. This event immensely delighted Gandhiji and the title of Sardar' was conferred on him. When he was assisting Gandhiji in the Salt Satyagraha, he faced imprisonment for the first time.

When India became free and Pakistan attacked Kashmir, it was Patel who asked to withhold the cash balances left by the British for Pakistan. Gandhiji felt this was immoral and went on a fast until death. Sardar withdrew his argument because he could not bear to see his teacher's suffering. In independent India, he held the portfolio of Home Minister, Minister of State, and the Minister for information and broadcasting. One of his major achievements included the integration of the princely states into the union of India.

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. There were a lot of problems connected with the reunion of the numerous states into India. Sardar Patel's untiring efforts towards the unity of the country brought success. Due to the achievement of this massive task, Sardar Patel got the title of 'Iron Man. He is one of the prestigious leaders of the world who became immortal by uniting a scattered nation without any bloodshed.

On 30th January 1948, when Gandhiji was assassinated Sardar Patel was a totally shattered man. He had lost a dear friend and the guiding force of his life. India lost a great Iron man in Bombay in December 1950.