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### Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the Freedom Movement: A Study of Strategy, Leadership, and Unification

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| <b>Dr. Khursheed Alam</b><br>Associate Professor,<br>IMS Ghaziabad (University Courses Campus)<br>Pg:14-27 | <b>Citation:</b><br>Alam, K. (2025). Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the Freedom Movement: A Study of Strategy, Leadership, and Unification. <i>INNOVATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES</i> , 2(1), 14–27<br>Doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17960943">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17960943</a> |
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#### Abstract

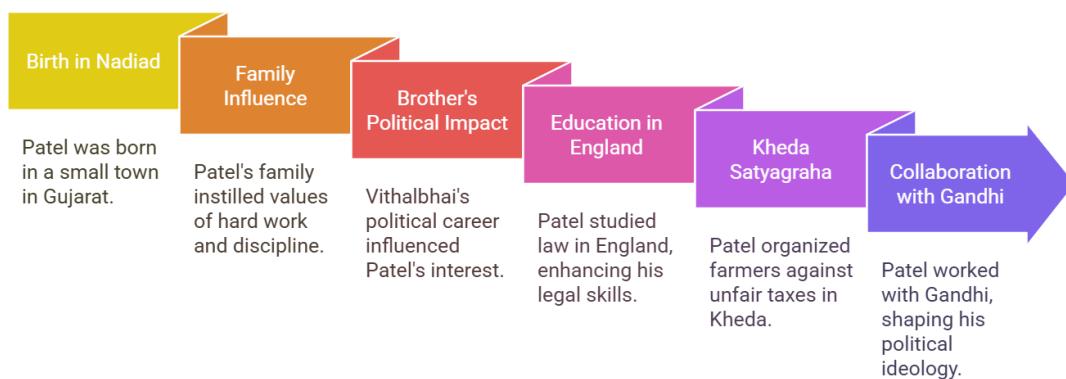
Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, popularly known as the "Iron Man of India," played a foundational role in India's freedom struggle and post-independence unification. This paper explores his life, leadership, and legacy, focusing on his strategic mindset, diplomatic firmness, and deep commitment to national integration. Born in 1875 in Nadiad, Gujarat, Patel's early influences—his legal studies in England and association with Gandhi during the Kheda Satyagraha (1918)—shaped his resilient leadership style. His success in the Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) earned him the title "Sardar." A major focus is Patel's unification of 562 princely states into the Indian Union after 1947 through diplomacy, the Instrument of Accession, and at times, decisive force, as in Operation Polo in Hyderabad. He also envisioned a strong administrative system and called the IAS the "steel frame" of India. His interactions with Gandhi, Nehru, and Lord Mountbatten reflect his ability to manage complex political situations. The paper addresses misconceptions such as Patel being sidelined post-independence and highlights his modern relevance, exemplified by the Statue of Unity (2018). Using primary sources like his correspondence and works by V.P. Menon and Ramachandra Guha, this study emphasizes Patel's enduring principles of unity, discipline, and institution-building.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Leadership, Iron man, unification, Bharat

## Introduction

On October 31, 1875, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was born in Nadiad, a small town in Gujarat's Kheda district. Patel was up in a simple farming family, which taught him the importance of hard labor, self-discipline, and tenacity. His father was a farmer and his mother was a homemaker. They created a simple and determined environment. Vithalbhai Patel, Patel's older brother and a well-known political figure, had a big impact on Patel's interest in politics. Vithalbhai's work in local government taught Vallabhbhai how to organize and advocate for political issues. Patel's education had a big impact on his career and intellectual growth. He went to school in Gujarat and then went to England to study law. There, he sharpened his legal skills and learned a lot about how to think politically. He learned about Western political ideas while he was in London, and he later combined them with Indian ideas of justice and self-reliance. This mix of global and local points of view became a key part of how he led. The Kheda Satyagraha in 1918 was a turning point in Patel's life. He worked closely with Mahatma Gandhi. The British government put unfair tax demands on the Kheda area, which was suffering from famine. Patel organized farmers to fight these unfair taxes because he believed in Gandhi's ideas of nonviolence and civil disobedience. His calm determination and smart negotiating not only helped the farmers, but they also made him a well-known national leader with a lot of potential. Patel's lifelong loyalty to Gandhi began with this collaboration. He saw Gandhi as both a mentor and a moral guide.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's Early Life and Political Development



Patel helped India's fight for freedom by being a good organizer and a practical thinker. Gandhi gave the movement its conceptual base, while Patel put those ideas into action. This position was shown by his leadership in the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928. Patel organized a peaceful protest against the British government's high taxation on farmers in Bardoli, bringing together people

from different backgrounds for a similar cause. The campaign was so successful that the British had to give in, and Patel was given the title of "Sardar," which means "leader" or "chief." This showed how important he was becoming. His position in the Indian National Congress made him much more powerful. As a senior leader, he set the party's direction, conducted campaigns at the grassroots level, and brought together members with different points of view. His ability to keep the Congress together, even when there were differences of opinion, showed how good he was at diplomacy. Patel's practical approach often worked well with Gandhi's idealism, establishing a balanced approach that kept the liberation struggle going during tough times.

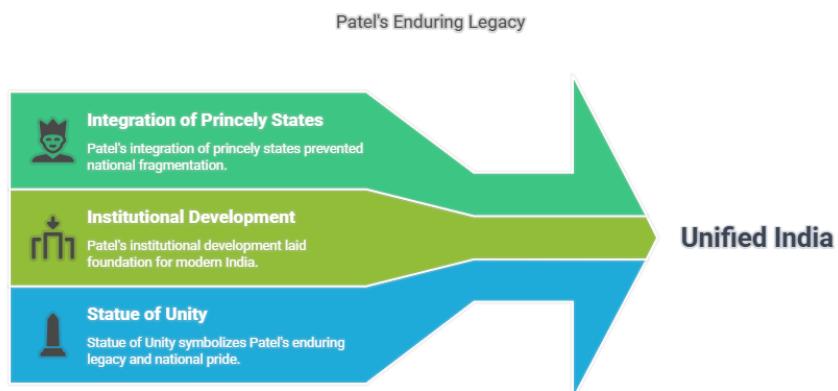
### **Strengthening the Administrative Framework**

Patel's ambition went beyond bringing the country together to include building a strong administrative structure. He knew that a strong, neutral bureaucracy was needed to run India's different areas in a way that brought them all together. He supported the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), which together are known as the All India Services. Patel famously called these services the "steel frame" of India, which showed how important they were for keeping the country together. The IAS was based on the British Indian Civil Service and was meant to make sure that states were run well. Patel's insistence on a merit-based, centralized bureaucracy went against regional sympathies and made sure that administration was the same across the board. He saw the need to enhance these institutions, which helped shape India's government structure and allowed the country to handle its variety while working toward national progress. Patel's changes to the way the government worked went beyond only the civil service. He also put a lot of emphasis on internal security since he knew that a newly independent country was at risk from sectarian violence and turmoil in the region. His strong leadership during the difficult times after the partition, when he had to help refugees and restore law and order, helped India stay stable during a time of great change.

### **Patel's Enduring Impact**

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel died on December 15, 1950, but his legacy still affects India's politics, government, and culture. His work to bring the country together, manage it, and construct institutions is still unmatched. The merging of 562 princely states, which was done with little violence, kept India from falling into chaos and breaking up. Patel's idea of a strong, centralized

nation helped India become a worldwide power. The Statue of Unity, which opened on October 31, 2018, in Kevadia, Gujarat, is a perfect way to honor Patel's memory. It is the tallest statue in the world, standing 182 meters tall, and it is a source of national pride. The statue lies on the banks of the Narmada River and is now a significant tourist attraction that draws millions of people each year. The Statue of Unity is a reminder of Patel's role in bringing together a varied nation and how important he is still in India today.



### Modern-Day Relevance

Patel's legacy is still very important in modern India, where people still argue about leadership, governance, and national unity. His focus on unity over division can help us deal with problems we face today, such as regionalism, communal strife, and political polarization. Patel is a good example for leaders who have to deal with complicated local and international issues because he knows how to be both diplomatic and forceful. The recent resurgence of Patel's legacy shows how important he is becoming in India's political and cultural story. Politicians from all sides use his name to talk about strong government, national pride, and strong leadership. The Statue of Unity is a monument to Patel, but it also acts as a political symbol that emphasizes how important unity and good governance are in India's national conversation.

Patel's work on constructing institutions, especially the IAS, is still a big element of how India runs its government. Even though the civil services face new problems, they are still an important part of India's government, making sure that things run smoothly and consistently in all parts of the country. As India deals with problems of governance and accountability, Patel's idea of a neutral, merit-based bureaucracy is still important.

## Objective of the Study

The Objective of this study is to look at all of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's contributions to India's liberation fight and the unity of the country, with a focus on his strategic leadership, diplomatic skills, and efforts to construct institutions.

- What impact has Sardar Patel's legacy had on the current political and administrative climate in India?
- What effects do contemporary interpretations and historical accounts have on how the general public views Sardar Patel's contribution to India's independence and unity?

## Literature Review

Primary sources provide firsthand insights into Patel's strategies and actions. Patel's *Correspondence and Speeches* (National Archives of India, New Delhi) offer direct evidence of his diplomatic communications with princely rulers and British officials, including Lord Mountbatten, during the integration of 562 princely states post-1947. These documents are critical for understanding his negotiation tactics and vision for a unified India. Similarly, **V.P. Menon's** *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (1956) details the legal and diplomatic maneuvers, such as the Instrument of Accession, employed under Patel's leadership. Menon's account, as a key advisor, is invaluable for verifying the practical implementation of unification strategies.

The Indian National Congress Archives (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi) document Patel's organizational role in the freedom struggle, particularly in the Kheda Satyagraha (1918) and Bardoli Satyagraha (1928). These records highlight his ability to mobilize communities and shape Congress strategies, providing a foundation for analyzing his early political career.

**Ramachandra Guha's** *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (2007) provides a comprehensive history of post-independence India, emphasizing Patel's role in territorial unification and administrative reforms. Guha notes that Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru "suppressed their differences" to unite India, with Patel focusing on territorial integration and Nehru on emotional unity (Guha, 2017, as cited in India Today, 2017). This source is essential for contextualizing Patel's post-independence contributions and his relationship with Nehru.

**Bipan Chandra** et al.'s *India's Struggle for Independence* (1989) details Patel's involvement in the Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas, underscoring his organizational prowess and collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi. This work is particularly relevant for understanding Patel's early role in the freedom movement and his pragmatic leadership style.

Biographies such as **Balraj Krishna's** *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: India's Iron Man* (1995) and D.V. Tahmankar's *Sardar Patel* (1970) provide in-depth analyses of Patel's life, leadership, and legacy. Krishna's work includes anecdotes from Patel's negotiations with princely rulers, offering insights into his diplomatic firmness, while Tahmankar verifies key events like Operation Polo in Hyderabad. These biographies are crucial for understanding Patel's personality and decision-making processes.

Official publications substantiate Patel's administrative contributions. *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents* (1968), edited by **B. Shiva Rao**, highlights Patel's role in the Constituent Assembly, particularly in shaping India's constitutional framework. The Ministry of Home Affairs' *Report on the Indian Administrative Service* (1950) details Patel's vision for the IAS and IPS as the "steel frame" of India, emphasizing their role in maintaining national cohesion. These sources are vital for assessing Patel's contributions to India's governance structure.

Biographies of related figures provide context for Patel's relationships. **Rajmohan Gandhi's** *Patel: A Life* (1990) explores Patel's close association with Mahatma Gandhi, highlighting their mutual respect and ideological alignment during the freedom struggle. **M.J. Akbar's** *Nehru: The Making of India* (1988) examines the dynamics between Patel and Nehru, noting their ideological differences—Patel's nationalism versus Nehru's socialism—and their collaborative efforts in governance (Akbar, 1988, as cited in The Statesman, 2018). **Judith M. Brown's** *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (1989) further details Gandhi's reliance on Patel as a key lieutenant, particularly during the Kheda Satyagraha.

## Methodology

The methodology employed to realize the research objectives. The discussion centered round the rationale of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study/ aim, demarcation of the research, the population, the sample, and sampling technique,. The info collection process and also the process to research the collected data were described of these were to confirm that the objectives of the research were achieved. We used both primary &

secondary data in this study. Original data was gathered from the survey, and additional information was sourced from research articles, books, journals, online resources, and magazines, among others.

### **Research Design**

The survey approach is how the research project is planned. It took place in Ghaziabad. The researcher limited it to understand the conclusions of "The Powerful Role of Print Media in India's Fight for Independence."

### **Sample Size**

The target group included people of all ages, genders, and income levels. The researcher took a total of 100 samples.

### **Sampling**

Getting a sample in a research project is highly crucial. This could be because it's not possible to research everyone in the study region. The purposive sampling strategy is used to acquire data for this investigation.

### **Instruments:**

A questionnaire was used to gather the main data. The survey results on the subject were used to come up with the findings and conclusions.

### **Respondents:**

The participants of the research were made up of various age ranges, genders, and income levels.

### **Procedure of data gathering:**

The questionnaires were distributed among the respondents from different age group, gender and Income group.

### **Area of study:**

The area of the study is **Ghaziabad**.

Below are five questions framed in a way that allows for a simple response—yes, no, maybe, or can't say:

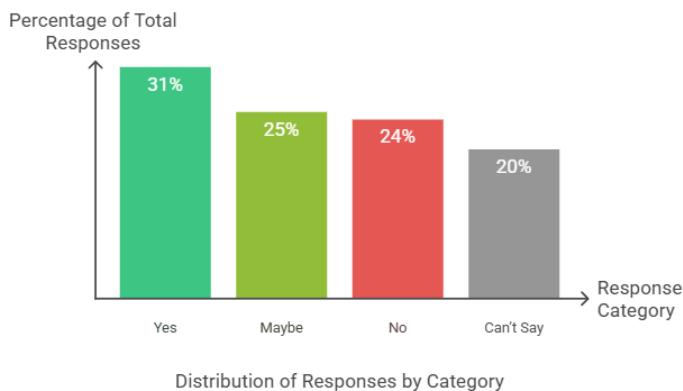
#### **1. Is the Statue of Unity Relevant in Today's Times?**

The bar graph indicates that opinions on the relevance of the Statue of Unity in contemporary India are divided. Out of 100 respondents, 31% believe the statue holds relevance today. This group may see it as a symbol of national pride, unity, and a tribute to Sardar Patel's legacy.

On the other hand, 24% of respondents feel the statue lacks relevance, potentially due to concerns over cost, priorities, or political motivations behind its construction. Meanwhile, 25% answered "Maybe," reflecting a mixed or situational perspective—possibly acknowledging the cultural importance but questioning practical impact. Additionally, 20% of respondents remained uncertain or had no opinion.

Overall, the data suggests that while many value the symbolism behind the Statue of Unity, a considerable portion of the population either questions or remains undecided about its present-day significance.

| Response Category | Responses  | Percentage % |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes               | 31         | 31%          |
| Maybe             | 25         | 25%          |
| No                | 24         | 24%          |
| Can't Say         | 20         | 20%          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b>  |



## 2. Do people think Sardar Patel's relationships with others were clear?

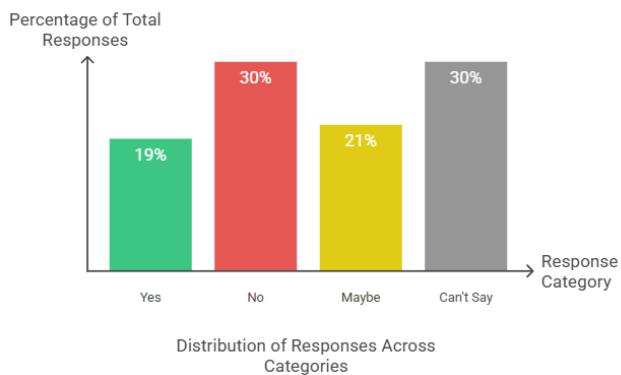
According to the chart, only 19% of people said "yes," believing Patel's relationships were clear.

Meanwhile, 30% disagreed, feeling that his relationships were not so transparent. 21% responded

with "maybe," indicating some uncertainty on the matter. The largest group, 30%, answered "can't say," reflecting a lack of clarity on the subject.

Overall, this data suggests that opinions about Patel's relationships were varied, with ambiguity being a key aspect.

| Response Category | Responses  | Percentage % |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes               | 19         | 19%          |
| No                | 30         | 30%          |
| Maybe             | 21         | 21%          |
| Can't Say         | 30         | 30%          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b>  |

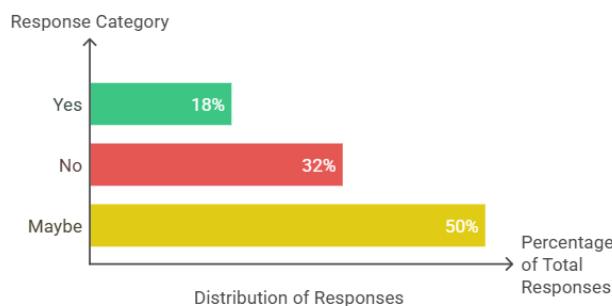


### 3. Have the IAS and IPS strengthened India's administration?

According to the chart, only 18% of people believed that the IAS and IPS contributed to strengthening India's administration. In contrast, 32% disagreed, while the largest segment—50%—was uncertain and responded with "Maybe."

This data indicates that public opinion on the matter lacked clarity, with a significant number of respondents feeling unsure about the impact of these services on governance.

| Response Category | Responses  | Percentage % |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes               | 18         | 18%          |
| No                | 32         | 32%          |
| Maybe             | 50         | 50%          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b>  |

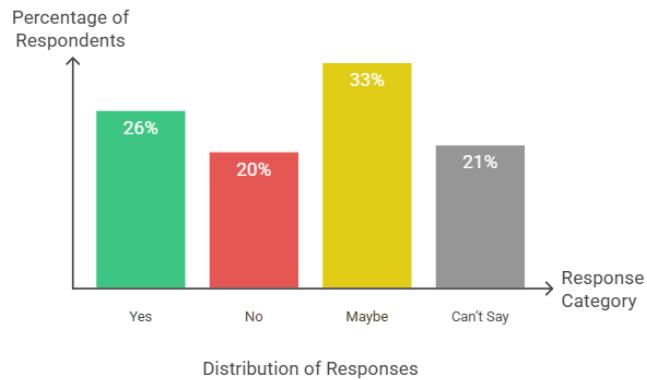


#### 4. Do people believe Patel contributed to India's unity?

In this survey, 26% of respondents answered "yes," acknowledging Patel's significant role in unifying India. Meanwhile, 20% disagreed, while 33% responded with "Maybe," indicating uncertainty among some participants. Additionally, 21% chose "Can't Say," further reflecting mixed opinions on the subject.

Overall, the responses show a diversity of perspectives, with no clear majority opinion on Patel's contribution to national unity.

| Response Category | Responses  | Percentage % |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes               | 26         | 26%          |
| No                | 20         | 20%          |
| Maybe             | 33         | 33%          |
| Can't Say         | 21         | 21%          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b>  |

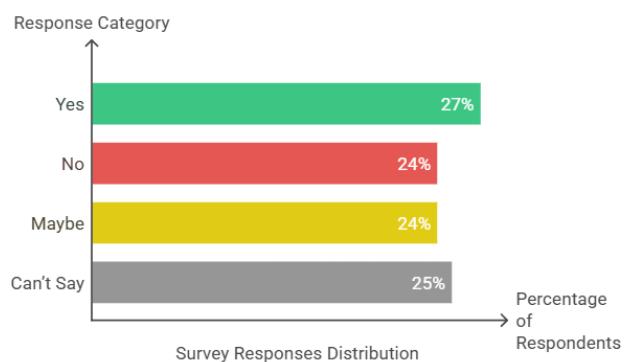


## 5. Was Sardar Patel's contribution to Satyagraha significant?

According to the graph, 27% of people believed Patel played an important role in Satyagraha. Meanwhile, 24% disagreed, while another 24% responded with "Maybe," indicating uncertainty. Additionally, 25% chose "Can't Say," reflecting further ambiguity on the subject.

This data suggests a clear divide in public opinion, with no dominant perspective emerging on Patel's contribution to the movement.

| Response Category | Responses  | Percentage % |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes               | 27         | 27%          |
| No                | 24         | 24%          |
| Maybe             | 24         | 24%          |
| Can't Say         | 25         | 25%          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b>  |



## Summary

1. Is the Statue of Unity Relevant in Today's Times?  
31% view the monument as a potent emblem of national pride and Patel's unifying legacy. In contrast, 24% dismiss its relevance—citing cost overruns or political motives. Meanwhile, 25% answer “maybe,” and 20% “can’t say,” reflecting widespread ambivalence about its symbolic and practical value.
2. Do people think Sardar Patel's relationships with others were clear?  
Only 19% see his political alliances and personal dealings as transparent. Meanwhile, 30% reject this clarity, 21% say “maybe,” and 30% “can’t say.” This high uncertainty highlights the opaque nature of historical perceptions and the need for more scholarly debate and public discourse.
3. Have the IAS and IPS strengthened India's administration?  
Only 18% affirm that these elite services have enhanced governance efficiency and accountability. In contrast, 32% disagree, pointing to bureaucratic inertia or elitism. Most notably, 50% remain undecided, with “maybe” signaling widespread public hesitation to definitively assess their institutional impact.
4. Do people believe Patel contributed to India's unity?  
While 26% acknowledge his pivotal integration of princely states as key to national cohesion, 20% disagree. The respondents split between 33% “maybe” and 21% “can’t say,” reflecting diverse perspectives and indicating a need for clearer historical context on his unifying role.
5. Was Sardar Patel's contribution to Satyagraha significant?  
A slim plurality (27%) credits him with essential support in Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns. However, 24% deny his direct impact, 24% say “maybe,” and 25% “can’t say.” These divided views underscore continuing debate about the depth and visibility of his activist role during India's freedom struggle.

Across all five questions, non-committal responses dominate: “maybe” and “can’t say” collectively form a majority in each case. Only a minority takes definitive stances affirming or denying Patel's contributions and related institutions. This ambivalence invites deeper public education, enriched historical narratives, community forums, and discussion to clarify his enduring legacy.

## Conclusion

The life and legacy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel are the very definition of nation-building. Patel's path from a poor man in Gujarat to the architect of a unified India shows how powerful dedication, strategy, and vision can be. He made a lasting impact on the country by helping it fight for freedom, bringing together princely realms, and setting up a strong system of government.

Patel's ideas of unity, discipline, and constructing institutions are still very important now, when there are problems at home and around the world. The Statue of Unity, which stands high above the Narmada River, is more than just a statue; it is a call to live by the values that Patel stood for. Sardar Patel's legacy is both an inspiration and a guide for India as it moves forward. It reminds us that a great, united nation is founded on the pillars of determination, practicality, and selfless service.

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