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Aditi Mondal

Assistant Professor,

Department of Human

Development, Savitri Girls'

College, University of Calcutta,

Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Redefining social relationship: Influence of Mahatma Gandhi on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

Aditi Mondal

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Abstract

Sardar Patel is credited for being almost single handedly responsible for unifying India on the eve of independence. Patel emerged as a hero to Gujarati for Kheda Satyagraha, revolt by refusing the payment of taxes to British, and admired across India. Regarding partition of India Patel oppose Mahatma Gandhi's suggestion. Patel role regarding princely states and Kashmir issue was remarkable. There are three conditions for the optimum development of an iron or mature personality, which Sardar Patel had. The conditions are following: Extension of the Self, Self-Objectification, Unifying Philosophy of Life. Although Sardar Patel adopted with great skill and success Gandhiji's method of non-violent resistance to unjust authority, his organizing abilities and his personal style were his own.

Keywords: Sardar Patel, politician, social reformer, influence of Mahatma Gandhi, personality factors

Introduction

Sardar Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel, is remembered as the man who united India. He is, in this regard, compared to Otto Van Bismark of Germany, who did the same thing in 1860s.

Sardar Patel is credited for being almost single handedly responsible for unifying India on the eve of independence. Till date, he is regarded as the most successful Home Minister of India. He won the admiration of many Indians for speaking frankly on the issues of Hindu-Muslim relations and not shying from using military force to integrate India. His skill of leadership and practical judgment were appreciated by British Statesman. Some historians have criticized Patel's actions on the integration of princely states as undermining the right of self-determination for those states.

He was also instrumental in the founding the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service, and for his defence of Indian civil servants from political attack; he is known as the "patron saint" of India's services. When a delegation of Gujarati farmers came to him citing their inability to send their milk production to the markets without being fleeced by intermediaries, Patel exhorted them to organise the processing and sale of milk by themselves, and guided them to create the Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited, which preceded the Amul milk products brand. Patel also pledged the reconstruction of the ancient but dilapidated Somnath Temple in Saurashtra. He oversaw the restoration work and the creation of a public trust, and pledged to dedicate the temple upon the completion of work (the work was completed after his death and the temple was inaugurated by the first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad).

When the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir began in September 1947, Patel immediately wanted to send troops into Kashmir. But, agreeing with Nehru and Mountbatten, he waited until Kashmir's monarch had acceded to India. Patel then oversaw India's military operations to secure Srinagar and the Baramulla Pass, and the forces retrieved much territory from the invaders. Patel, along with Defence Minister Baldev Singh, administered the entire military effort, arranging for troops from different parts of India to be rushed to Kashmir and for a major military road connecting Srinagar to Pathankot to be built in six months.

Corresponding Author:

Aditi Mondal

Assistant Professor,

Department of Human

Development, Savitri Girls'

College, University of Calcutta,

Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Beginning of a politician

While often clashing with British officials on civil issues, as a sanitation commissioner of Ahmedabad, Patel did not show any interest in politics. Upon hearing of Mahatma Gandhi, he joked to a friend that, "...Gandhi would ask you know how to shift pebbles from wheat. And that is supposed to bring independence". But Patel was deeply impressed when Gandhi defied the British in Champaran for the sake of the area's oppressed farmers and Patel was particularly attracted to Gandhi's inclination to action.

Patel gave a speech in Borsad in September 1917, encouraging Indians nationwide to sign Gandhi's petition demanding, Swaraj from Britain. Patel became the secretary of the Gujarat Sabha public body which would become the Gujarat arm of the Indian National Congress, at Gandhi's encouragement. Patel emerged as a hero to Gujarati for Kheda Satyagraha, revolt by refusing the payment of taxes to British, and admired across India. In 1920, he was elected president of the newly formed Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee – he would serve as its president till 1945.

When Gandhi was in prison, Sardar Patel was asked by Congress to lead the Satyagraha in Nagpur in 1923 against a law banning the raising of the Indian National Flag. He organized thousands of Volunteers from all over the country in processions hoisting the flag. In 1928, after the victory in Bardoli tax-hike, Patel was increasingly addressed by his colleagues and followers as Sardar.

Salt Satyagraha and Indian national movement

In 1930 Sardar Patel was imprisoned for participating in the famous salt Satyagraha called by Mahatma Gandhi his inspiring speeches during this transformed the lives of numerous people, who later played a major role in making the movement successful.

Sardar Patel was freed in 1931 following an agreement signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin. The treaty was popularly known as the Gandhi – Irwin pact. In the same year, at Karachi session, Patel was elected as the president of Indian National Congress and committed itself to the defense of fundamental rights and human rights and a dream of a secular nation. An agreement regarding this was also sanctioned.

Mahatma Gandhi strongly pressured the All India Congress Committee to approve of an all out quit India campaign of civil disobedience. Patel gave emotional speeches to more than 100,000 people gathered at Gowalia Tank in Bombay at 7th August, 1942: "...the governor of Burma boasts in London that they left Burma only after reducing everything to dust. So you promise the same thing to India?... You refer in your radio broadcast and newspapers to the government established in Burma by Japan as a puppet government? What sort of government do you have in Delhi now? ...When France fell before the Nazi onslaught, in the midst of total war, Mr. Churchill offered union with England to the French. That was indeed a stroke of inspired statesmanship. But when it comes to India? Oh no! Constitutional changes in the midst of a war? Absolutely unthinkable... The object this time is to free India the Japanese can come and be ready to fight them if they come. They will round up the leaders, round up all. Then it will be the duty of every Indian to put forth his utmost effort – within non-violence. No source is to be left untapped; no weapon untried. This is going to be the opportunity of a lifetime".

Regarding partition of India Patel opposed Mahatma Gandhi's suggestion. Patel's role regarding princely states and Kashmir

issue was remarkable.

Psychology behind an iron or mature personality

There are three conditions for the optimum development of an iron or mature personality, which Sardar Patel had. The conditions are following:

1. Extension of the self

The developed person is one who has a variety of autonomous interests, that is, he can lose himself in work, in contemplation, in recreation and in loyalty to others. He (Sardar Patel) participates with warmth and vigor in whatever pursuits have for him acquired value.

Egocentricity is not the mark of a mature personality. Paradoxically, 'self-expression' requires the capacity to lose oneself in the pursuit of objectives, not primarily referred to the self, unless directed outward toward socialized and culturally compatible ends, unless absorbed is caused and goals that outshine self seeking and vanity, any life seems dwarfed and immature.

2. Self-objectification

It is a peculiar detachment of the mature person when he surveys his own pretensions in relation to his abilities, his present objectives in relation to possible objectives for himself, his own equipments in comparison with the equipment of others, and his opinion of himself in relation to the opinion others hold of him. The capacity for self-objectification is 'insight', and it is bound in subtle ways with the sense of humour, which as no one will deny is, in one form or another, an almost invariable possession of a cultivated and mature personality.

3. Unifying philosophy of life

Since there is an obvious antithesis between the capacity for losing oneself in vigorous participation and the capacity for standing off contemplating oneself, perhaps with amusement, integrative factor is required in the mature personality, namely, a unifying philosophy of life. Such a philosophy is not necessarily articulate, at least not always, articulate in words. The preacher, by virtue of his training, is usually more articulate than the busy mature personality participate and reflects, lives and laughs. According to some embracing philosophy of life developed to his own satisfaction and presently to himself his place in the scheme of things.

Sardar Patel's personality consist all above criteria to be a mature politician which also further motivated by Mahatma Gandhi.

Rarely does one encounter a person who seems to be completely integrated with only one dominant philosophy of life. By this every attitude, trait and individual act must proceed, and for who perfect prediction of conduct is possible. Sardar Patel does all these in redefining social relationship. If a personality is rightly understood it will always be found to be lie under the domination of one controlling goal, one ruling passion.

Conclusion

Although Sardar Patel adopted with great skill and success Gandhiji's method of non-violent resistance to unjust authority, his organizing abilities and his personal style were his own. In the later respect, especially, his manner was different from that of Mahatma Gandhi, for he was as apt to threaten and intimidate his opponents as to persuade them through gentle reason and self-sacrifice. He was known

especially in his mature years for his 'iron will', 'nerves of steel', 'fearlessness', 'personal courage', 'bluntness of speech' and 'fighting capacity'. No doubt was ever cast, even by his enemies and political opponents, on his personal integrity, devotion to his country, and his ideas, especially for the independence, self-sufficiency, and unity of India.

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