

The world on Gandhi's reading list

M.K. Gandhi was the most prolific on M.K. Gandhi. The *Collected Works* of Mahatma Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, the Mahatma's letters, journals and essays are all well indexed. Then there is also a profusion of books on him, by both admirers and detractors. Yet, historian Ramachandra Guha managed to find a bit more about the making of the Mahatma, which he writes about in *Gandhi Before India*. Gandhi's years in London and South Africa, the two decades prior to his India phase, are when all his core ideas on interfaith harmony, ending caste discrimination, and philosophy of non-violence took shape, says Guha. The man from Kathiawar, who hadn't met many outsiders in his native place, suddenly found himself in an interracial household sharing space with associates of many faiths in South Africa. Guha writes about a couple, the husband Jewish and the wife Christian, who lived with the Gandhis in Johannesburg in 1905. They all influenced one another. He writes: "In Kathiawar itself Mohandas Gandhi could never have met or befriended these men, who became, as it were, unwitting agents of a transformative process whereby he moved from orthodoxy to heterodoxy in religion, from lawyering to activism in professional life."

That Gandhi was curious about other people's lives is evident from the books he himself appended for further reading in *Hind Swaraj*. He writes in his note to the reader: "I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth, I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things."

Some of those new ideas were picked up from books. On the reading list at the end of *Hind Swaraj* is Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which rejects all sorts of violence including those sanctioned by the state or the Church, and espouses the need for simple living. Two other Tolstoy books are recommended: *What is Art?* and *The Slavery of Our Times*. Some of Gandhi's views may have been influenced by the works of American philosopher Henry David Thoreau, particularly his 1849 essay 'Civil Disobedience'. Thoreau's *Life Without Principle* cried foul against the excessive devotion to business and money, for "in merely making a living, the meaning of life gets lost." Thoreau, who was once asked why he was eternally curious about things, responded, "What else is there in life?" Wasn't Gandhi too always questioning, always curious?

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Lingayat leap of faith

The agitation seeking minority status for Lingayats is once again revealing the politics of bad faith that often characterises the construction of religious boundaries in India. The Lingayats want to distinguish themselves from Hinduism, and in particular Veerashaivism, and they want to be recognised as a religious minority. Such demands have been in existence since the late 19th century, but the exigencies of politics are now creating unprecedented momentum for this demand. Next month there will be a Lingayat convention to lend it more weight.

In legal terms, this is a script India is destined to play over and over: The Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and others have successively tried for minority status. In the case of Lingayats, the movement has a social base, and ironically for a sect which sought to transcend caste, a deep caste basis. It is not a demand that is going away easily.

In a liberal democracy, self-identification should be, as far as possible, the norm. People should be free to call themselves whatever they want, and they can dispute their identities freely in the public sphere. But in India this has become a thorny public matter for two reasons. First, the state distributes rights and privileges based on whether or not communities are minorities or not. The great drive towards minoritisation is propelled largely by the view that getting a minority tag allows a community greater autonomy over its educational institutions. The Jains, for example, who recently got minority status, were largely driven by this consideration (for the record, this columnist had opposed granting minority status to Jains, see 'Tyranny of identity by decree', Outlook, February 14, 2010). The absurdity of laws that allow differential freedoms when it comes to running educational institutions has created in-built incentives for such movements to arise, and there is no stopping them.

But the second and perhaps even more disturbing aspect of this drive towards minoritisation is what it does to religion itself. One of the challenges of thinking about the politics of naming religion in India is this. Both scholars, and proponents of these movements, often assume that in these cases there are clearly designated categories of communities, whose actions, forms of consciousness, social practices, beliefs, set them easily apart from others. There must be some objective theological truth of the matter in which Jains are different from Hindus, or Lingayats from Veerashaivas, or Brahmos from other Vedantins.

Of course, there are interesting and creative differences. But their identities have been fluid in relation to their own past. They have often been non-exclusive in that being in one community often did not preclude reverence for the other. The social overlaps between them have often been considerable, and even the innovations they made were often intelligible only in light of their relationship to a vast and complicated tradition.

Identity and difference are not straightforwardly objective facts. It is a prior belief in separateness that leads one to construct narratives that exaggerate points of difference.

But in the modern process of religious identity construction like the Lingayats, three moves are made that are conceptually dubious: Objectification, essentialism, and rigidification. Objectification is the idea that there is a single authoritative truth about a sect that can be objectively defined. What is odd about the Lingayat movement is not just that it tries to delineate what its own beliefs are; in the process it seeks to define the core of Hinduism and Veerashaivism itself so that it can be set apart. This is very tricky territory. And in its construction of its own virtues, it has to necessarily oversimplify other histories, not just its own. Essentialism is the idea that Hinduism or Veerashaivism will always be wedded to whatever that rotten core is from which you are trying to separate or the conceit that Lingayats will always be progressive. Claiming virtue through

essentialism is the core of these movements. And rigidification is the idea that creation of a new form of identity will bring strong forms of identification and political assertion.

One of the things that has not been publicly discussed as much is how difficult freedom of expression is in Karnataka even beyond the murders of [Gauri Lankesh](#) and M.M. Kalburgi. A large number of freedom of expression cases involve writing about Basavanna. Perhaps more than Shivaji or even Prophet Muhammad, Basavanna is fast becoming a figure impossible to write about imaginatively without having a book banned. The Supreme Court has upheld bans on award-winning novels about him. In a characteristic judicial abdication, the Supreme Court recently refused to pronounce on a ban on Basava Vachana Deepthi. It says something about the intensity and suffocating nature of this kind of politics that it consistently throws up challenges to freedom of artistic and scholarly expression. This cuts across party lines.

This is a form of rigidification in which demands for minority status assert their identity by creating solidarity around supposed and imagined slights to the religion. It is also an interesting question whether the state government's decision to have government offices carry a picture of Basavanna is consistent with demands for a secular politics, and will generate similar demands elsewhere. One can construct Basavanna as a secular or a regional figure. But this construction only shows that what practices get designated as religious or secular or as a minority is entirely a function of political power.

Like with the Jains, there is also a bit of bad faith in this demand. It is not a threatened or marginalised minority; the designation of minority status will not either change the theological issues, nor any of the social practices. They will not get separate personal laws. It is another question whether the proponents of a common civil code should first advocate the abolishing of Hindu law as a category altogether which gives people a compulsory legal identity as Hindu. This is a necessary condition of getting the state out of the business of legally naming identities.

What is at stake in this debate over granting minority status to Lingayats is not just an archaic legal question. It is also a move to construct identities in a way that is both constricted and rigid. It is also turning a great reformer, radical and egalitarian like Basavanna into a mere minoritarian secessionist.

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](#)

Building Gandhi's India

A grateful nation paid rich tributes and celebrated the birth anniversary of [Mahatma Gandhi](#). I would call upon every citizen to take a vow to fight various pervasive social evils like poverty, corruption, illiteracy, casteism, black money, gender discrimination, atrocities against weaker sections and the lack of sanitation and hygiene. It is a matter of concern that 70 years after Independence, the country's progress is being hindered by such evils. Let us all strive together to realise the dreams of Gandhiji and usher in "Ram Rajya" where all are equal and there is no discrimination of any kind.

Gandhiji's thoughts are immortal. His wish for Ram Rajya should be understood in the proper perspective and governments and the people must work to realise that dream.

"The Ram Rajya of my dream ensures equal rights alike of prince and pauper", observed the Mahatma. "There can be no Ram Rajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat," he said. With around 22 per cent of people in the country living below the poverty line, there has to be a concerted effort from governments as well as non-governmental organisations to ameliorate their living conditions by adopting a clear-cut developmental strategy with a strong emphasis on inclusive growth. It should be noted that ensuring proper education to all, including the most marginalised, will go a long way in combating poverty.

I would like to recall what the father of the nation said: "The Swaraj of my dream is the poor man's Swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men. But that does not mean that they should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that Swaraj is not Poorna Swaraj until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it".

Gandhiji also said, "If Swaraj was not meant to civilise us, and to purify and stabilise our civilisation, it would be worth nothing. The very essence of our civilisation is that we give a paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private." These words, with an emphasis on giving a paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private, should be the guiding light for every Indian. Honesty and upholding high moral values should be the leitmotif in the life of every individual, irrespective of whether he is a politician, government servant, industrialist or a street vendor. The foundation for a strong moral character has to be laid from early childhood by parents and teachers.

What the father of the nation had stated on education is relevant even today. He said: "Literacy in itself is no education. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning. By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man - body, mind and spirit." "Basic education," he said, "links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India."

The biggest tribute we can pay to Gandhiji is to follow his ideals in letter and spirit. His statement that sanitation was more important than political independence clearly reflected the utmost importance he attached to cleanliness. He had also stated that a lavatory should be as clean as a drawing room. I am happy that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has turned into a people's movement with celebrities and commoners joining hands to usher in a clean India by the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhiji. I would like the people, particularly the youth, to display a similar kind of passion and determination in building a new and resurgent India in the near future.

It is ironic that at a time when scientific and technological advancements are shrinking barriers in a truly globalised world, some people are trying to use religion as a tool to divide people and create strife. Religion should serve as a bridge for promoting harmony and peaceful co-existence of various faiths and religious fundamentalism should not be allowed to spread its tentacles in any form. Again, I would like to recall the sagacious words of the Mahatma who said, "Religion can be defended only by the purity of its adherents and their good deeds. Never by their quarrels with those of other faiths." He also said, "For God-fearing men, all religions are good and equal; only the followers of different religions quarrel with one another and thereby deny their respective religions." He further pointed out that "the essence of true religious teaching is that one should serve and befriend all."

Finally, I would like to emphasise that progress and prosperity cannot be achieved without peace. In this context, I would like to appeal to the Maoists and other Naxal groups to lay down arms and join the mainstream of society. I will end by quoting the Mahatma, who had said "non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man".

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com

Bakhshali, Jambudvipa and India's role in science

Zeroing in: A page from the Bakhshali manuscript seen at the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. | Photo Credit: [HANDOUT](#)

London's Science Museum on Tuesday unveiled a new exhibition that traces India's contribution to science and technology over the past 5,000 years. Bringing together pieces from scientific institutes and museums across India as well as those held by British institutions, the Indian High Commission and the museum hope to be able to bring the exhibition to India too.

The highlight is a folio from the Bakhshali manuscript, loaned to the exhibition by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, which contains the oldest recorded origins of the symbol "zero".

Dated to 3rd century

In September, the Bodleian revealed that new carbon dating research into the manuscript revealed it to be hundreds of years older than originally thought and that it could be dated back to the third or fourth century.

Another remarkable piece is an 1817 version of Jambudvipa, or Jain map of the world, and a spectrometer from 1928 designed by Nobel Prize winner C.V. Raman. The exhibition also covers significant recent contributions — from the Jaipur foot that has been used across 27 countries to the Intel Pentium processor and the Embrace Nest Neonatal pouch. The exhibition also highlights writings by some of the most influential figures, including letters from S.N. Bose to Albert Einstein, held by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and selected papers of Srinivasa Ramanujan, held by Trinity College Cambridge.

It also includes an index chart of the great trigonometrical survey of India from 1860, which it says "no map in the world at that time could rival" for scale, detail and accuracy.

"It encapsulates what India has gone through in terms of science and technology in the past five thousand years," said India's Deputy High Commissioner to the U.K. Dinesh Patnaik, who hopes to work with the museum to take the exhibition to India.

"We wanted to tell that story of India's role in science and technology which is an incredibly difficult and complex thing to do— - we wanted to capture just how far reaching it has been in shaping science and technology," said the exhibition's head of content Matt Kimberly, pointing in particular to the spectrometer and the influence it had in shaping industries from forensics to art conservation.

Growth of photography

A separate exhibition charts the growth of photography in India. One section of it focusses on 1857 and includes the bizarre growth of what it refers to as "mutiny tourism", which led to sites of conflict and suffering getting turned into "postcards, stereocards and prints for a burgeoning British tourist industry".

It also includes works by artists like Ahmad Ali Khan, the court photographer to the last king of Avadh, and Felice Beato. The exhibition also focuses on 1947, and includes works by photojournalists Henri Cartier Bresson and Margaret Bourke-White.

A study of nearly 300 people living in different parts of India found that nine single-base variants

(single-nucleotide polymorphisms or SNPs) account

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com
crackIAS.com

Devadasi: An exploitative ritual that refuses to die

A. Mathamma of KVB Puram worshipping at a Mathamma temple in Tirupati. | Photo Credit: [Umashanker Kalivikodi](#)

It's a practice that is widely believed to have been abandoned decades ago. But NGOs and activists have been bringing to light accounts of young women being initiated into the Devadasi system.

The practice of "offering" girl children to Goddess Mathamma thrives in the districts of Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh and Tiruvallur in Tamil Nadu, forcing the National Human Rights Commission to seek report from the two States.

As part of the ritual, girls are dressed as brides and once the ceremony was over, their dresses are removed by five boys, virtually leaving them naked. They are then forced to live in the Mathamma temples, deemed to be public property, and face sexual exploitation, according to the NHRC.

Mathammas can be found in the villages of Chittoor district, on the border areas with Tamil Nadu but also right in the heart of Tirupati. The system is prevalent in 22 mandals of Chittoor district, mostly eastern mandals, such as Puttur, Nagari, Nagalapuram, Pichatur, KVB Puram and Srikalahasti, Yerpedu, Thottambedu, B.N. Kandriga, and Narayanavanam. The western mandals where the practice is prevalent include Palamaner, Baireddipalle and Tavanampalle and Bangarupalem.

The Mathamma system has its equivalent in other regions of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The system is called 'Basivi' in Kurnool and Anantapur districts, 'Saani' in Krishna, East and West Godavari districts, and 'Parvathi' in Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts. Women are unable to leave the exploitative system due to social pressures.

A. Mathamma, 40, of KVB Puram mandal said though she wanted to leave her hamlet and settle at Srikalahasti as a domestic help, the village youth would not allow her to do so. Nor would they let her stay with her 'owner', making her retreat to her home.

A daily wager, Mathaiah, father of a 14-year-old Mathamma at M.R. Palli in Tirupati, said his daughter has had a heart condition since birth.

"We dedicated her to Goddess Mathamma, when she was three, and she survived. She will live without marriage for life. It is painful, but we have to honour the divine powers," he said.

Social activists say the girls are exploited, and forced to live as sex workers. Many die old and lonely and sick as they are forced to sleep in the Mathamma temples or outside the homes where they work as domestic help.

A survey by the Mother's Educational Society for Rural Orphans based in Chittoor district says a number of awareness camps were organised by voluntary groups between 1990 and 1992. The society has worked with these women for over two-and-a-half decades after the abolition of the practice with the passage of the Women Dedication (Prevention) Act, 1988.

The organisation found a number of Mathammas had ventured into the red light areas of Mumbai and other metropolitan cities. Since 2011, seven of them died of AIDS in Chittoor district. At

present, there are an estimated 1,000 Mathammas in the district. Of them, 363 are children in the age group of 4-15. The Dedication of Women (Prohibition) Act has had no effect on the Mathamma system in the district. So far, just one case was booked in Puttur in 2016 and another in Thottamedu. Only in 2016 were rules formed for the Act. R.K. Roja, Sugunamma and D.K. Satyaprabha, MLAs from the district, raised the issue in the Assembly last year.

The Child Development Project Officers of the Puttur and Srikalahasti divisions said though the Mathamma system was still in vogue in several mandals, no scientific rehabilitation measures were possible due to lack of proper data and non-cooperation from the victims and village elders.

After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, there are no stipulated guidelines for the implementation of the Act. As it is linked with the sentiments of the community, the official machinery and the political parties shy away from taking on the tradition. Moreover, the victimised community is largely viewed as a minority group, with no influence on vote-bank politics, said N. Vijay Kumar, MESRO chairperson.

Former Union Minister Chinta Mohan, who represented Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency for nearly three decades, told *The Hindu* that the Mathamma system was a testimony to centuries of exploitation of the Madiga community. He said the practice would continue as long as the community was deprived of economic development. "In the name of rehabilitation, the governments just provide them a pittance, amounting to cheating the unfortunate women, which is as bad as the system itself," the former MP said.

S.V. Rajasekhar Babu, Superintendent of Police, Chittoor, said he would initiate a study of the living conditions of Mathammas and bring the facts to the notice of the government. Voluntary organisations estimated that there are as many as 2,000 Mathammas in various Madiga villages. Of this, those aged 19 to 30 would be around 400; and children below 15 years would be about 350.

The system is, however, slowly disappearing in certain mandals such as Varadaihpaalem and Satyavedu, thanks to Sri City Special Economic Zone which has allowed women and girls to move into the labour force. There are instances of Mathammas marrying and having children in Srikalahasti and KVB Puram mandals with the intervention of voluntary groups. A negligible number of Mathammas were provided with small economic benefits between 2000 and 2010.

At Kurmavilasapuram, a village in Tiruvallur in Tamil Nadu, a group of villagers were discussing the controversy outside the Mathamma temple in Arundhatiyar Palayam. "It was an enactment on the life of Sage Jamadagni and Renuka Devi (Mathamma) that kicked off the controversy," A.K. Venkatesan, former president, Kurmavilasapuram village panchayat, says.

The villagers say the Mathamma festival was held in the village from August 2 to 6. "On the fifth day, we held a drama to explain to the new generation the life of Mathamma. A little girl plays the role of Renuka Devi who takes food to Jamadagni. Four boys act like robbers who prevent her from doing so by different means, even an attempt to disrobe her," Mr. Venkatesan says. The villagers say the boys only touch the sari and not the girl. "It is part of our mythology. It was this drama that people mistook as disrobing the little girl," says A.S. Dhandapani, president, Arundhatiyar Viduthalai Munnani.

"The practice of offering children was present more than 50 years ago when superstitious belief was common. But it is no longer being practised here," claims Mr. Venkatesan.

Apart from children, even cattle are offered to Mathamma, if the calves are cured of their illness. "This is done by people from other castes too," Mr. Venkatesan says.

Tiruvallur Collector E. Sundaravalli said a detailed inquiry was under way.

(With Vivek Narayanan in Tiruvallur)

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com
crackIAS.com

International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations – IV (8th – 15th October, 2017)**International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations – IV (8th – 15th October, 2017)**

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with National Geographic Society is hosting an international conference on “Dialogue of Civilizations – IV” from 8th – 15th October, 2017 at Delhi, Gandhinagar and Dholavira. This conference is fourth in this series of ‘dialogues’ initiated by National Geographic Society in 2013 with an objective to encourage scholarly and public discourse about the five ancient, literate civilizations of the world, i.e. Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia, China and Mesoamerica and how the study of the past can share our present and future towards the right direction. The first conference of this series was inaugurated in Guatemala in 2013 followed by Turkey in 2014 and China in 2015. The present conference is the fourth in this series, with the final dialogue planned in Egypt.

The inaugural function of the conference held at 4.30 PM on 8.10.2017 at the Banquet Hall, The Ashok, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Hon’ble Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Culture & Minister of State for Environment, Forest & Climate Change will inaugurate the opening ceremony in the presence of Smt. Rashmi Verma, Secretary (Culture & Tourism), Dr. Alexander Moen, Vice President, Explorer Programs, National Geographic Society, Smt. Usha Sharma, Director General, Archaeological Survey of India and Prof. Monica Smith, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, Los Angeles.

The inaugural function was followed by a lecture by Prof. B.B. Lal, Padma Bhushan awardee on ‘Harappan Civilization’, which introduced the earliest civilization of South Asia to the scholars working on other ancient civilizations and others. The lecture of Prof. B.B. Lal traced the Harappan Civilization and its history of discovery, and highlighting on town planning, agriculture and animal husbandry, art objects, crafts, trade, both internal and external, script, disposal of dead, religion, political set up. He gave a brief account of all these aspects.

Besides, Prof. Lal also briefed on some of the new breaking news, and some unique features which are not found from other parts of the world. For example, he highlighted on the earliest ploughed field from Kalibangan in Rajasthan; evidence of earliest datable earthquake from Kalibangan (Rajasthan); earliest dockyard of the world which was found at Lothal (Gujarat); unique water management system that have been found at Dholavira (Gujarat).

Prof. Lal also talked about the evolution of Harappan Civilization and traced its history to the indigenous cultures only and not from any external influences. Prof. Lal tried to emphasize on the authorship of the Harappan civilization and he presented evidences related to, and while stating this he concludes that it is high time that the Aryan Invasion Theory has to be written off. He also traces the legacy of the civilization and quotes many of the customs and traditions of modern times having its roots to the Harappan civilization.

This lecture was followed by a Panel Discussion moderated by Dr. B.R. Mani, Director General, National Museum, Delhi. The panel discussion was attended by Prof. B.B. Lal (Harappan Civilization), Dr. Francisco Estrada-Belli (Mayan Civilization), Prof. Augusta McMohan (Mesopotamian Civilization), Dr. Anna Latifa-Mourad (Egyptian Civilization) and Prof. Xinwei Li (Chinese Civilization). In the panel discussion, various aspects of five civilizations were discussed and the common aspects and commonality were addressed.



Sanjay Kumar/

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com

The Pursuit Of Truth

Gandhi maidan is located in the heart of Patna. It is difficult to imagine the city without it. Many decades ago, the call for Sampurna Kranti (total revolution) resonated here with lakhs of people chanting JP Babu Zindabad. A frail old man set out to uphold the ideas and integrity of the Constitution of India.

Our generation was fortunate to have witnessed personalities who made an immense contribution to the evolution of our nation's political life. Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia, Deendayal Upadhyaya and Jayaprakash Narayan are some of the stars who continue to shine. Gandhi, Ambedkar, Upadhyaya and Lohia matter more today as we strive to create an egalitarian society.

JP, without doubt, deserves a mention in the list of great nation builders and social transformers. He was a part of the cohort that introduced the idea of non-Congressism to the political discourse, even before Independence, by forming the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). He actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and got incarcerated for that. During the Second World War, JP opposed the Congress's move to support the British army, soon after which he was imprisoned. In 1948, he along with some progressive elements in the Congress, left the party and worked relentlessly towards the creation of an anti-Congress platform. In 1952, they formed the Praja Socialist Party. By forming the PSP, he gave voice to the marginalised and offered an alternative political platform. Two years later, he announced that he would devote his life to the Bhoodan Movement, founded by Acharya Vinobha Bhave, for the redistribution of land among the landless.

In 1959, he argued for the reconstruction of Indian polity by suggesting Chaukhamba Raj, consisting of village, district, state and the Centre. From 1959 to 1974, he was a dedicated soldier for social reconstruction and national resurgence as he mentored political activists from across the spectrum.

JP came to India after completing his education at Berkeley, USA. He was an ardent scholar of political ideologies that led him to traverse from "communism to socialism" and from "socialism to Gandhian nationalism" and so on. JP represents strands of both Gandhi and Lohia. The role played by Gandhi during the freedom struggle was similar to the role played by the Loknayak post-Independence. The hero of the freedom movement was Gandhi whereas JP was the hero and harbinger of anti-Congressism. Characteristics that predominantly connect Gandhi and JP were morality, ethics and values. Concepts like "Total Revolution" and "Party-less Democracy" were idioms added to the political lexicon by the Loknayak. Without joining the electoral fray, JP and Gandhi played a phenomenal role in shaping the polity. JP steered the leadership of the anti-Emergency movement on the sole condition that it must remain non-violent. He was visibly irked with the vandalism unleashed by the young and aspiring political activists. The power of truth and morality in Gandhi is broadly reflected in the ethos of JP. The demise of the Congress as a political party was envisioned by Gandhi and the process was initiated by JP.

Without joining the electoral fray, JP and Gandhi played a phenomenal role in shaping the polity. JP steered the leadership of the anti-Emergency movement on the sole condition that it must remain non-violent. He was visibly irked with the vandalism unleashed by the young and aspiring political activists. The power of truth and morality in Gandhi is broadly reflected in the ethos of JP. The demise of the Congress as a political party was envisioned by Gandhi and the process was initiated by JP.

In 1977 he was the unanimous choice for the office of prime minister. But he declined and chose

to mentor the cabinet and political parties. Politicians across ideologies and affiliations respected him. The concept of "Antyodaya", as propagated by the founder of Jana Sangh, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, was reflected in the expositions of JP. While Upadhyaya, through the idea of integral humanism explored the third way beyond the conventional prism of "left" and "right", the life of JP reveals a perennial search for solutions to address the needs of common man. One cannot restrict JP's legacy to a particular ideological thought or a political outfit. The ideas of JP transcend the traditional classification of political thought.

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) is constantly urging political workers to adopt a social activity and pursue it vigorously in public life. Following the footsteps of Gandhi, Lohia and JP is essential to make effective interventions in the political system. The time is appropriate to remember a leader whose life is a message for the present leadership which seeks to build a New India, an equitable social order and a sustainable ecosystem.

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](#)

crackIAS.com

'Paika Bidroha' to be named as 1st War of Independence

Prakash JavadekarPTIPTI

The 'Paika Bidroha' (Paika rebellion) of 1817 will find a place in the history books as 'the First War of Independence' from the next academic session, HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Monday.

Mr. Javadekar had first made the announcement on Sunday here at a function to mark the bicentenary of the Paika rebellion, and added that the Centre has allocated Rs. 200 crore for commemorating it across the country.

"Paika Bidroha will find a place as the First War of Independence against the British Rule in the history books. The students should learn factual history of 1817," he said at a press conference.

Paikas were peasant militia under the Gajapati rulers of Odisha who rendered military service to the king during times of war. They rebelled against the British rule under the leadership of Bakshi Jagabandhu Bidyadhara as early as 1817.

Earlier, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had, in a letter to the Centre, urged that it should recognise 'Paika Bidroha' as the First War of Independence against the British rule as it took place four decades before the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, which has so far been regarded as the First War of Indian Independence.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

On a different trajectory: on Naxalbari movement

Half a century after the [Naxalbari movement arrived like a Spring Thunder over India](#), questions are beginning to arise as to whether the spark that gave rise to it is in danger of being extinguished. Independent India had previously experienced armed peasant movements, including the Telangana armed struggle and the Tebhaga movement (in Bengal), but the Naxalbari movement seemed to follow a different trajectory.

It was ignited by a small group of Bengal revolutionaries (all members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) formed in 1964) who felt disillusioned with the so-called embourgeoisement of the party which had only recently split from the CPI on the ground it had turned revisionist. Breaking away from the CPI(M), this faction received almost instant endorsement from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao. This was followed by a few cadres visiting China to receive the benediction of the CCP. In course of time some of the cadres went to China for training.

It was in April 1969 that the movement took formal shape, with the coming into existence of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar. It initially had a mesmeric effect, enthusing sections of the rural population as well as some semi-urban and urban elements mainly in the States of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. The Chinese Communists were keen that the new Naxalbari movement should follow the Chinese model of revolution relying on the peasantry, establishing base areas in the countryside and using the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities. As the movement progressed, it became obvious that the Indian Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries preferred the Ho Chi Minh model to that of Mao. The CPI(ML), hence, consisted of both rural and semi-urban elements. In the early years, and till the 1990s, a number of recruits to the movement came from the urban intelligentsia.

Naxalbari at 50

From the beginning, the movement, which included many well-known ideologues, suffered from a series of splits. Several leaders from Bengal and Andhra Pradesh thereafter set up their separate parties. A high degree of ideological motivation, however, helped the movement to survive despite the several splits. The ideological motivation could be sustained through the several hundred revolutionary journals in different languages published during the period.

The splintering of the movement subsided to some extent after Muppala Lakshmana Rao, aka Ganapathy, took charge in the early 1990s. Following this, the movement witnessed a degree of consolidation with the Communist Party of India (Maoist) formally coming into existence in the first decade of this century with the merger of several existing factions. Nevertheless, several smaller Marxist-Leninist parties and groups survive to this day.

The main strength of the CPI (Maoist) has been its organisational structure. It has a Central Committee headed by Ganapathy. It possesses a powerful military wing headed by Nambala Keshav Rao aka Basavaraj — the Central Military Commission (CMC). Members of key committees, and especially the Central Committee, are geographically distributed, thus ensuring a degree of cohesion across the party. The hierarchical organisational structure consists of regional bureaux, zonal committees and area committees. Some of the area and zonal committees such as the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, the Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee and the North Telangana Special Zonal Committee have been more active than others.

Over a dozen States have been, or are, affected by Naxalite activity to varying degrees. The most affected States are Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha. Naxalite or Maoist violence is mainly concentrated at present in pockets such as Abujmahad and Narayanpur districts, Bastar,

Dantewada and Sukma, all in Chhattisgarh. Areas of Odisha are also increasingly affected today by Naxalite violence. Considerable potential for Naxalite violence exists in Bihar, pockets in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Maharashtra and the tri-junction of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The movement's leaders are in constant search of new areas to expand their activities and to secure fresh recruits.

The village where it began

Maoist actions and scale of violence have steadily come down in recent years, and more so since 2010. The presence of over 100 battalions of Central paramilitary forces aided by State police forces has had a sobering effect on the movement. It has not, however, prevented Naxalites from carrying out a few spectacular attacks during this same period. One of the deadliest attacks took place in April 2010, involving the massacre of 76 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in Dantewada.

There have been other serious attacks as well, notwithstanding the overall decline in the tenor of the movement. This year, there have been at least two major attacks. One took place in March this year, leading to the killing of 12 CRPF personnel, members of a road opening party. In April this year, the Maoists carried out an even more daring attack on a CRPF patrol in Sukma district killing 25 personnel. On more than one occasion between 2010 and 2017, the Maoists were to demonstrate their penchant for large-scale attacks — in one instance ambushing a group of Congress leaders during electioneering (May 2013 in Chhattisgarh). At least 27 people, including former Union Minister V.C. Shukla, died.

In official circles, Maoist success is often attributed to the failure of police personnel to observe 'Standard Operating Procedures' and also to the failure of intelligence. This, however, ignores the intrinsic capacity of the Maoists to carry out ambushes, their skill in employing improvised explosive devices, and their capacity to resort to ingenious weaponry such as arrow bombs. It also underestimates the ability of the highly trained battalions of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army, who constitute the vanguard of the movement. They are well-armed and adept in the use of both orthodox and unorthodox weapons. Their skill is often evident in the so-called 'liberated zones' in the Naxalite heartland.

The forgotten war

The decline in the rate of Maoist successes — in the past year the numbers of those killed by the Maoists was hardly 20% of that in 2010 — and the relative success of the security forces, seems to have induced some rethinking in Maoist circles. There is growing demand today for a change in approach, and for a new direction.

The spirit of Naxalbari was predicated on a mixture of intellectual fervour and armed struggle methodology. Over the years, the concept of capturing the cities by mobilising the countryside has lost much of its steam. Far fewer recruits to the Maoist cause also came from the urban areas, especially the intellectual class. By the turn of the century, the movement had become increasingly militarised, more adept at so-called military actions and hardly retaining any of its intellectual élan.

Leaders like Ganapathy, who has remained General Secretary of the CPI (Maoist) since its inception, were more influenced by the past. They seemed out of step with the current genre of violent revolutionaries, who make up the bulk of the cadres today. Younger elements favour not only newer tactics but also a change of guard, viz. seeking a new leader more experienced in employing militaristic techniques. The demand for a churn has been growing louder in recent months.

All indications, hence, are that as perceptions of a Maoist decline intensify, the CPI (Maoist) would move away from the previous traditional line and embark on a more violent path. This would be under a new leadership more attuned to such policies and techniques. A strong possibility exists that Ganapathy may be replaced by the present chief of the CMC. The CMC is in direct charge of guerrilla type violent activities of the party. With the change of guard, the ideological content of the movement is bound to decline still further. The link with Naxalbari and the Naxalbari spirit threatens to snap as a result. The CPI (Maoist), bereft of ideology, could then drift towards becoming like any other militant or terror group active in different parts of the country. This could have graver consequences for the country since the CPI (Maoist) has a much wider base than any other militant outfit.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Advisor and a former Governor of West Bengal

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com

Mahatma Macaulay

Once in India, Lord Robert Clive, more often than not, would be in uniform and battle ready. He would sport long moonboots, ride horses. Conjectural of sorts, he would flash a gun in one hand, and a sword in the other. Conjectural because, when both hands are armed, what body part held the bridle?

The fact is, in 1757 at the battle of Plassey, Clive won India for England. Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay walked into India, as if pacing into a palanquin. Clad in suits and gleaming shoes that appeared as though they had just been procured. Academic D. Shyam Babu describes Macaulay as a Mahatma. With Lord Macaulay-like simplicity, he dislodges the Crown's greatest stamp of honour, "Lord".

India thus turns home to three Mahatmas - Mahatma Macaulay, Mahatma Phule and [Mahatma Gandhi](#). Decades before Gandhiji returned to India in 1915, Macaulay began scripting the path Gandhiji would enact. "Freedom"? Who imagined that enterprise for British India? "It would be far better for us that the people of India were well governed and independent of us, than ill governed and subject to us," argued the would-be-Mahatma in his July 10, 1832 speech in the House of Commons.

His regard for India continues: "Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive? Or do we think that we can give them knowledge without awakening ambition? Or do we mean to awaken ambition and to provide it with no legitimate vent? It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history." Once in India in 1835, seeding ideas of freedom was Macaulay's mission.

When the British parliament asked the East India Company to set aside one lakh rupees for the education of Indians, the officials were divided: One set insisting to continue with the existing Arabic and Sanskrit education, and the other group, led by the Mahatma-in-making, argued for English education that would be seeped in the sciences. In order to convince his fellow officials who were obsessed with the Arabic/Sanskrit system, Macaulay in his Minute on Education makes fun of 15th century England. "To which I refer is the great revival of letters among the Western nations at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time, almost everything that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Had our ancestors... neglected the language of Thucydides and Plato, and the language of Cicero and Tacitus. Would England ever have been what she now is?"

Macaulay adds, "What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India." This Mahatma had won for India not only the English language but the sciences as well. But what about the account that paints Macaulay as a mind-slaver? The slave theorists hate the Lord with the pen more than they hate the Lord with swords.

In his 1832 speech, Macaulay spoke thus: "I fully believe that a mild penal code is better than a severe penal code, the worst of all systems was surely that of having a mild code for the Brahmins... while there was a severe code for the Shudras. India has suffered enough already from the distinction of castes, and from the deeply rooted prejudices which that distinction has engendered." Clive won England an empire but he wouldn't say a word against the "deeply rooted prejudices" that caste breeds. Mahatma Macaulay set the stage for ending not only those

prejudices but the British rule in India itself.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com
crackIAS.com

A true seeker

The semi-classical music form "thumri" is known to have derived its name from thumakna. Loosely translated the word means, "dance-like movements". Thumri was about mild eroticism and dramatic gestures and was the stock-in-trade of courtesans. Girija Devi, who passed away on Tuesday, was amongst those who brought this music form to the proscenium stage from the courts and kothas. She, though, was no prisoner to the semi-classical form's antecedents. Her renditions lost none of the thumri's purbaiya lilt, but in Girija Devi's mellifluous voice, often interspersed with a twang of metallic sharpness, eroticism turned to sensuousness, the song became a carrier of love, longing and despair.

Girija Devi gave her first public performance at the age of 20 on All India Radio Allahabad in 1949 despite the opposition of her mother and grandmother. But 10 years earlier, she had earned the praise of [Mahatma Gandhi](#) at the Jabalpur session of the Congress for essaying the role of an untouchable girl in the film, Yaad Rahe. Though she never acted in a film again, Girija Devi brought the ability to emote in her singing. She would often say that though her training in khayal acquainted her with the grammar of music, that wasn't enough for thumri singing.

The song was also about the rasa. If the rising and falling of her voice in jhir jhir bayat bazaar, prem ras ghole evoked the sensuousness of the wafting breeze, piya milan hum jaibo, Rama throbbed with the restless anticipation of a separated lover awaiting reunion and the strains of babul mora maihar chhuto hi jaye made the listener identify with the sorrow of the Nawab of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah, who had composed the song equating the bride's bidaai from her father's home with his own displacement from Lucknow to Calcutta.

She took this rare ability to strike the chord of human experience in her renditions of devotional music, much like Nirguna poets whose songs she would sing often. Like them she was a seeker - of the spirituality that musical knowledge bestows.

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Special Feature: Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (31st October)

Sardar Patel's Birth Anniversary

Sardar Patel's Economic Ideas



*Puja Mehra

Sardar Patel dominated Indian politics from 1917 to 1950. First, he was at the forefront of the freedom struggle. Then, after Independence in 1947, as Deputy Prime Minister, he held the crucial portfolios of Home, States and Information and Broadcasting. The 'Iron Man' and a founder of modern India, he restructured the Indian bureaucracy after the transfer of large number of officials to Pakistan, integrated the princely States into the Indian union, and had an important role in shaping the Indian Constitution.

Following territorial consolidation, the immediate goal was for the Government, industrialists and labour to participate in a great national effort for recovery and reconstruction. The objective was to bring an improvement in the living standards of countrymen. The British had taken what they had to, leaving behind, in his words, only their statues. Many of the instruments of economic control that had been put in place by the British government to gear the Indian economy towards the war effort were still operating. So, imports remained severely restricted, and foreign currency earned from India's exports for the war had still not been transferred by the Bank of England to the Reserve Bank of India. As a result, a sizeable sterling balance had accumulated, but war-damaged England was in no position to settle the dues. Inflation had spiralled out of control. Speaking at the meeting of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) at Indore in May 1949, Sardar Patel declared his intention of rejuvenating the Indian economy. He said, "Our long period of slavery and the years of the recent war have drained the life-blood of our economy. Now that we have taken over power, onus is on us to rejuvenate it; new blood has to be poured in drop by drop,"

Partition added to the vulnerabilities and thus restoring business confidence was paramount. Ahead of Partition, Calcutta's worried businessmen had wanted to move out of the city that they had operated out of for generations. Sardar took the lead in dissuading them and asked them to

stay on. He said in Kolkata, "I advised them to stay on because I was certain that no power on earth could take Calcutta away from India." The factories there had been dependent on jute grown in what was now Pakistan. The neighbour refused to honour agreements; even jute that had been paid for in advance was not delivered. Sardar Patel realised that India had no time to lose and gave a call for self-sufficiency. Speaking at a public event in Delhi in January 1950, he asserted, "If they cannot guarantee to implement agreements, we had better not depend on them. Let us grow the jute and cotton and the food grains we need."

Sardar Patel's thoughts and approach to India's economic challenge were shaped, to a great extent, by the historical setting at that time and also by his role of a nation-builder and a founder of India's political democracy. Self-reliance was among the chief tenets of his economic philosophy, on which, his views were closer to those of Pandit Nehru than Mahatma Gandhi's, who championed self-sufficiency at the village level. The role he envisaged for the government was that of a welfare state, but realised that other countries had taken up the task at more advanced stages of development. He was unimpressed with the slogans raised for socialism, and spoke often of the need for India to create wealth before debating over what to do with it, how to share it. Nationalisation he rejected completely; clear that industry ought to be the sole preserve of the business community. Nor was he a great believer in planning, especially of the kind practised in the developed and industrialised countries.

He was not for controls. The indifference was, in part, because there simply wasn't enough staff to implement them. He was working with an administration capacity depleted owing to the departure of a disproportionate number of officers that had opted to go to Pakistan and the posting of senior civil servants in the newly-established embassies across the world. Addressing the Chief Ministers of the States in April, 1950 he said, "We run the administration of the country with one-fourth of the service which was in existence when we took over. Fifty percent of the people whose presence was enough to keep law and order and make subordinates work with efficiency, and even overtime, are gone."

To him, the profit motive was a great stimulant to exertion, not a stigma. He wholly approved of it, and advocated it for even the non-capitalist classes, the middle classes, the labour and even the agriculturists. That does not mean he did not recognise concentration of wealth as a social problem and unethical. He did, and in fact, appealed for a higher sense of civic consciousness and national duty to transcend all motives. His argument was that it was not merely ethical and patriotic, but even economically pragmatic, to channelise hoarded wealth in economic undertakings, where the returns were certain to be richer. Besides, what good could the stashes be if the country's economic problems led to chaos. He constantly advised against greed. To the labour, he said, participate in creating wealth before claiming a just share, and advocated Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy on labour- employer relationships. The Mahatma's methods, he said, could bring labour its legitimate reward through constitutional means.

He wanted to see India industrialise quickly. The imperative being to reduce dependence on external resources. A modern army required equipment that only machines could produce: apart from arms and ammunition, uniforms and stores, jeeps and motor cars, aeroplanes and petrol. But

machinery was not going to solve the “great disease” of idleness in the thickly populated country. “*Millions of idle hands that have no work cannot find employment on machines*”, he said while addressing the Chief Ministers’ meet in April 1950. Being primarily a farming country, agricultural revival was of primary importance. His promise to industry was for no “impediments, bottle-necks or red-tape” as he said in a radio broadcast on Pandit Nehru’s birthday On 14th November 1950.

In the same broadcast, he championed investment-led growth and said, “Spend less, save more, and invest as much as possible should be the motto of every citizen.” He appealed to every segment of the society - lawyers, farmers, labours, traders, businessmen and government servants for saving every ‘anna’ that could be spared and to place their savings in the hands of the government for utilisation in nation-building enterprises. In the same address, he emphasised on saving every spare penny and said, “We must have capital, and that capital must come from our own country. We may be able to borrow from international markets here and there, but obviously we cannot base our everyday economy on foreign borrowing.” This was a call for voluntary savings, and for savers to choose their preferred means of investment.

Sardar Patel’s approach was balanced, pragmatic and liberal. Economics was an “intensely practical science” for him. Short cuts and arbitrary policies of temporary palliatives or artificial reductions in prices or stimulation of investment were not acceptable to him. He wanted Indian economy built on surer foundations of increased production, industrial and agricultural, and increased wealth.

**Puja Mehra is a Delhi-based journalist.*

Views expressed in the article are author’s personal.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Sardar Patel, a shared inheritance

Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950), whose birth anniversary it is today, is sorely missed. He has been, ever since he died at the none-too-great an age of 75, in 1950. He was the keel that the boat of the freedom struggle needed so as never to tip over, the ballast that the ship of state required to stay steady, move safe.

This is because he was, first and last, a patriot. A Congress patriot. And then, a man who knew India. The India which the Congress was seeking to define for itself, for India.

What was that India? Let us have Gandhi answer the question. In 1931, the year that Patel, for the first time, became Congress president, Gandhi went as the Congress's sole representative to the second Round Table Conference in London. He defined at that Conference, the nature of the party, and explained to that gathering how the Congress represented the entire country. He explained, in fact, their inextricable oneness.

In Gandhi's words: "In as much... as I represent the Indian National Congress, I must clearly set forth its position. In spite of appearances to the contrary, especially in England, the Congress claims to represent the whole nation and most decidedly the dumb millions among whom are included the numberless untouchables who are more suppressed than depressed, as also in a way the more unfortunate neglected classes known as backward races..."

And again, at the Conference's Minorities Committee: "...if you were to examine the register of the Congress, if you were to examine the records of the prisons of India, you would find that the Congress represented and represents on its register a very large number of Mohammedans. Several thousand Mohammedans went to jail last year under the banner of the Congress... The Congress has Indian Christians also on its register. I do not know that there is a single community which is not represented on the Congress on its register...even landlords and even mill-owners and millionaires are represented there..."

Serving the nation through that party representing 'the whole nation' and its various communities, strengthening that party at its plural grassroots, shaping the resolutions and decisions of its Working Committee and helping it form ministries in eight of the 11 provinces in the elections of 1936-37, Patel then guided it as it took over the reins of the Government of India in 1947. Working for and through the Congress was the Alpha and Omega of Patel's political career.

That made him what he was, the 'indomitable' iron man of India. That also made the Congress, in very great part, what it was — an all-India organisation.

No Patel, no national Congress. No Congress, no Sardar Patel. Congress patriotism was his patriotism; Congress politics was his politics.

No one, howsoever anxious to wrench his legacy off from that of the Congress, can dispute and much less deny that basic and incontrovertible fact. No one, howsoever desperate to annex his legacy to that of another body, cultural or political, like the Hindu Mahasabha or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or the Bharatiya Janata Party, can succeed in staging so ridiculous a trapeze show.

Sardar Patel was the Congress's spine. The Congress was Sardar Patel's life.

Does that mean that the Sardar's membership, leadership and stewardship of the Congress was free of tensions? Of course not, because he was human and his party was led and peopled by

other humans, each with tempers and temperaments that were distinct. Despite Gandhi's pre-eminent position in it and in the hearts of the people of India, the Congress was not a hegemonic party and its most charismatic leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, was, by instinct, self-training and practice, its most natural democrat. Nehru's was a lunar luminosity in Gandhi's Congress. Nehru's glow could brighten and lessen, and on a moonless light plunge the party in inky gloom. Patel, with his seven great skills — resoluteness, clarity, direction, focus, loyalty, grounded-ness and guts — was the party's saptarshi, its Ursa Major.

The Congress not only accommodated personality and political variations, it regarded itself as their natural home. It was a place to which people belonged, not a place in which people assembled for a drill. Its sifat, to use a Persian word that stands for essence or ethos, was its diversity. And its Working Committee embodied that sifat. It had, Gandhi apart, Nehru the socialist and agnostic, Patel the conservative, C. Rajagopalachari the liberal, Rajendra Prasad the traditionalist, Abul Kalam Azad the scholar, J.B. Kripalani the scoffer. At different times it had Subhas Chandra Bose the nationalist, Sarojini Naidu the poet. Each Congressman and Congresswoman was himself or herself first, and then a soldier of the party. Each person was 'rare'. Which is why, describing Acharya Narendra Deva in his obituary speech in Parliament, Nehru spoke of him being "...a man of rare distinction — distinction in many fields — rare in spirit, rare in mind and intellect, rare in integrity of mind and otherwise." The Congress's ranking leaders, as indeed its countless 'file', differed, debated, wrangled and even warred, but stayed true to the party's sifat, because the party gave them that 'play', not as a policy but as an inherent personality trait, India's trait.

The mutual differences between Nehru and Patel are no secret. The Congress did not believe in secrecy. Their mutual trust was no secret. The Congress believed in trust.

Their differences are not to be exaggerated. They are not to be minimised. They are to be contextualised. In the democratic spirit of that plural party.

Sardar Patel led a party as its Ursa Major that was anything but a homogenising factory. It was as plural as it was because it saw itself in the words Gandhi used to describe its eclectic rolls in London in 1931.

Gandhi, who knew the meaning and action of political variegation, encouraged and succeeded in getting Nehru and Patel to work with coordination and cooperation if not coalescence. And for this, the realism of both leaders has to be thanked. Their realism, and their sense of 'India first'.

India first was part of their idea of India. And 'India first' was integral to their sense of patriotism, their Congress patriotism.

Four days after Gandhi's assassination, in a letter to his senior in politics, in the party and in age, Nehru wrote: "With Bapu's death everything is changed... I have been greatly distressed by the persistence of whispers and rumours about you and me, magnifying out of all proportion any difference we may have."

Patel replied on May 5, 1948: "I am deeply touched... We both have been lifelong comrades in a common cause. The paramount interests of our country and our mutual love and regard, transcending such differences of outlook and temperament as existed, have held us together."

The very previous day, addressing the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly, Patel described Nehru as "my leader" and said: "I am one with the Prime Minister on all national issues. For over a quarter of a century, both of us sat at the feet of our master and struggled together for the freedom of India. It is unthinkable today, when the Mahatma is no more, that we should

quarrel.”

The Congress’s rank and file should ponder these observations of Nehru and Patel and rectify years of neglect, post-Nehru, of the Sardar’s legacy at the false altar of political cronyism. That neglect has lubricated the crassly opportunistic co-option of Patel by the Hindu Right which has no right, logical, political or moral, to that legacy. What the Congress squandered, Hindutva is shovelling in.

The Congress’s unwitting de-option of Patel was an error, Hindutva’s calculated co-option of Patel is an execration.

‘India first’ believers should be aware of both.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and Governor

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com

The great unifier

No country can ignore its heroes, the ones who shaped its destiny. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one such iconic personality who shaped India's destiny in a far-reaching manner. After India attained Independence, Patel fashioned the country's political integration with the swiftness of a military commander and the deftness of a visionary leader.

Present-day India owes immeasurable debt to the vision, tact, diplomacy and pragmatic approach of the Sardar in preventing the Balkanisation of the country. He was instrumental in the merger of more than 560 princely states with the Union of India after the country's partition. What makes this achievement very remarkable is that it was achieved without any bloodshed.

Adopting different approaches, as warranted by the situation, Patel gave friendly advice in some cases, persuaded the rulers to see reason in others and even used force as in the case of Hyderabad. It is remarkable that he fashioned a unified country at a time when the rulers of the princely states were given the option of joining either India or Pakistan or remaining independent.

The Nizam of Hyderabad nurtured ambitions of remaining independent of India and issued a firman to that effect. At the same time, he let loose razzakars and even toyed with the idea of merging Hyderabad with Pakistan, although there was no geographical continuity between the two. Travancore also declared that it would remain independent and the Nawab of Junagarh announced accession to Pakistan.

Sardar Patel secured the accession of Junagarh in a swift action code-named "Operation Polo". Hyderabad was integrated with the rest of India in just four days. What is popularly described as a "police action" to liberate and integrate Hyderabad commenced on September 13, 1948, and ended on September 17. September 17 is celebrated every year as "Hyderabad Liberation Day" in the city and in some areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka, which were parts of the erstwhile Hyderabad State.

In a masterful display of statesmanship, Patel ensured the smooth integration of the troubled domains by not allowing the situation to deteriorate into civil unrest. There was neither bloodshed nor rebellion as he went about the task of building a strong India with a missionary zeal. He said, "the safety and preservation of these states as well as of India demand unity and mutual cooperation between its different parts. By common endeavour we can raise the country to a new greatness while lack of unity will expose us to fresh calamities".

Patel was the greatest unifier of India. There is, perhaps, no parallel in modern history to this achievement. Acknowledging the monumental contribution of Patel in nation building, [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) said, "History will call him the builder and consolidator of new India."

His biggest asset was his down-to-earth disposition. He exemplified what the Father of the Nation had said about leadership: "I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles. But today it means getting along with people".

When he returned to India on completing of his law studies in England, Sardar Patel gravitated towards [Mahatma Gandhi](#)'s non-violent campaign against British rule. He was chosen by Gandhiji to lead the Kheda campaign. "Many were prepared to follow me, but I could not make up my mind as to who should be my deputy commander. Then I thought of Vallabhbhai," Gandhiji said.

The trust that Gandhiji reposed in Patel was not misplaced. Gandhiji's trusted lieutenant not only became an organiser par excellence but also a people's leader. He earned the title of "Sardar"

after spearheading a no-tax campaign by peasants at Bardoli in Gujarat. He also led the relief and rehabilitation operations when Gujarat was ravaged by floods and worked tirelessly during a plague outbreak in Ahmedabad.

Patel was also instrumental in the creation of the All India Administrative Services which he described as the country's "Steel Frame". In his address to the probationers of these services, he asked them to be guided by the spirit of service in day-to-day administration. He reminded them that the ICS was neither Indian, nor civil, nor imbued with any spirit of service.

His exhortation to the probationers to maintain utmost impartiality and incorruptibility of administration is as relevant today as it was then. "A civil servant cannot afford to, and must not, take part in politics. Nor must he involve himself in communal wrangles. To depart from the path of rectitude in either of these respects is to debase public service and to lower its dignity," he had cautioned them on April 21, 1947.

The remarks he made during the Quit India Movement are also relevant today. He said: "We have to shed mutual bickering, shed the difference of being high or low and develop the sense of equality and banish untouchability. We have to live like the children of the same father".

After he passed away, The Manchester Guardian commented on the role Patel played during the freedom struggle and after Independence: "Patel was not only the organiser of the fight for freedom but also the architect of the new state when the fight was over. The same man is seldom successful as a rebel and a statesman. Sardar Patel was the exception".

It is unfortunate that there has been no proper recognition of Patel's monumental contribution in unifying the country at its most critical juncture in history.

The invaluable contribution of Sardar Patel in building a modern and unified India needs to be remembered by every Indian as the country marches ahead as one of the largest economies in the world.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Special Feature: Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (31st October)**Sardar Patel's Birth Anniversary*****Guru Prakash**

“Work is worship but laughter is life. Anyone who takes life too seriously must prepare himself for a miserable existence. Anyone who greets joys and sorrows with equal facility can really get the best of life.”

This statement can easily be mistaken as a thoughtful musing of a spiritual saint who has renounced the world, and has dedicated his life to a greater cause. It is difficult to believe that the aforementioned is one amongst many non-political quotes of the iron man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

EARLY LIFE & PEASANT STRUGGLE

Born as one amongst five brothers and sisters in a peasant family of Ladbai and Jhaveribhai Patel in village Nadiad in Kaira district of Gujarat, Vallabhbhai was set for a far greater cause of independence and integration of independent India. In his formative years, his mother has had a profound impact on his psychology. Like in a normal rural setting, the mother would gather all her children and narrate stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. While it impacted the spiritual quotient of young Patel, it was his father who introduced him to the world of peasantry. Young Vallabhbhai used to accompany his father to the fields and eventually became an expert in land tilling and cattle tending, two important aspects of cultivation. Such was his affection to his peasant ancestry that once an American journalist asked him about his cultural activities, to which he retorted, *“Ask me another. My culture is agriculture”*.

The first spate of struggle that brought Patel to public life was primarily his journey as a peasant

leader. His foray into public life and eventually into the freedom movement was possible through successful satyagrahas in Barod and Kheda, wherein he through his exceptional skills in leadership and consensus building brought the British government on knees to agree to the demand for the withdrawal of exorbitant increase in revenue.

Statesmanship and Political Acumen

Sardar Patel belongs to the legion of leadership who effectively contributed both to the freedom struggle, and guided the project of national reconstruction following independence.

“We worked hard to achieve our freedom; we shall have to strive harder to justify it”.

Patel was clearly conscious of the fact that independent India needed a steel frame to run its civil, military, and administrative bureaucracy. His faith in institutional mechanisms like having an organized command based army and a systemized bureaucracy proved to be a blessing. It was Patel who sent Indian navy to the port of Lakshadweep at an appropriate time, as Pakistan was equally keen to occupy the strategically important islands. One can only imagine what would have been the plight had our neighbours succeeded in her plans. He also pre-empted the relevance of Independent Tibet as a buffer state between India and China, as can be found in his correspondence with Pt. Nehru.

RSS and Sardar Patel

In a letter dated July 16th, 1949 to TR Venkatarama Sastri, Sardar Patel says, *“I was myself keen to remove the ban at the earliest possible opportunity.... I have advised the RSS in the past that the only way for them is to reform the congress from within, if they think the congress is going on the wrong path”.*

In another correspondence the second sarsanghachalak of RSS MS Golwalkar writes to Sardar Patel, *“I have decided to meet friends like Venkatarama ji etc. After meeting him and after attending to preliminary details with regard to our work, I shall do my best to call on you. I have learnt with sorrow that there has been some deterioration in your health. This indeed has given me much anxiety. The country is in so much need of your able guidance and service. I pray god to grant you long and healthy life. I hope till the time I shall be able to meet you; you would have much improved in your health. Some innermost feelings of heart are inexpressible through the medium of language. I am having such experience while I am writing this letter to you.*

The communication establishes the fact that Sardar was open to the idea of ‘conversation without confrontations’. There is a pertinent need to move beyond rhetoric; which can only be made

possible through independent research on the subject.

“Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is perhaps the only pragmatist in the Gandhi, Nehru, Patel trio who were the most important people especially in the run-up to independence and immediately afterwards. Most Indians do not realize that the map of India would not look anything like it does today had Patel not contributed to it. Without him, large chunks of India would have broken away through malicious intent. He almost single-handedly prevented this balkanization from happening. The one place where Patel could not entirely implement his wise policies is Kashmir, and we are paying the price for that even today. Next to Gandhi, and sometimes even better than the Mahatma, Patel understood the grassroots ethos and culture of India. If he would have lived even for a decade after independence, possibly many of India's persistent issues would have been resolved”, observes Hindol Sengupta, author of the upcoming Patel biography *The Man Who Saved India*.

** The author is working as a Senior Research Fellow at India Foundation, New Delhi.*

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Special Feature: Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (31st October)

Sardar Patel's Birth Anniversary

Sardar Patel - Man who United India



***Aaditya Tiwari**

Sir John Strachey, a British Indian civil servant used to address his civil servants-in-training by saying, "The first and most important thing to learn about India is that there is not and never was an India." Historian David Ludden in his book *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* writes 'the territory that we use to describe the landscape of Indian civilization was defined politically by the British Empire. India was never what it is today in a geographical, demographic, or cultural sense, before 1947.' Many like Winston Churchill had predicted that post independence, India would disintegrate and fall back into the Middle Ages.

India, after attaining independence faced massive challenges. One of the biggest tests the leaders of the time faced was to have a defined boundary of the land whose geographical sense had flowed among the masses through ages. Diana L Eck in her book, *India-A Sacred Geography* describes this land of Bharata to have been 'enacted ritually in the footsteps of pilgrims for many hundreds of years.' Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru writes about this sense of unity of India as an emotional experience. In *Discovery of India*, he explains the experience of instilling sense of oneness among the peasants of India, 'I tried to make them think of India as a whole...the task was not easy; yet it was not so difficult as I had imagined, for our ancient epics and myths and legends, which they knew so well, had made them familiar with the conception of their country.'

The task of reconstructing India - territorially and emotionally - was immense. Entire nation was going through a period of mayhem. There were forces at play which wanted a divided nation. The big question for leaders like Mahatma Gandhi at the time of partition was whether there will be two nations once British are gone or 565 different nations. At such a time, responsibility of reconstruction of India fell in the able hands of Iron Man – Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Sardar Patel despite his falling health and age never lost sight of the larger purpose of creating United India. VP Menon who ably assisted Sardar Patel in this enormous task writes in *The Story of the integration of the Indian States*, 'India is one geographical entity. Yet, throughout her long and chequered history, she never achieved political homogeneity.....Today, for the first time in the country's history, the writ of a single central Government runs from Kailas to Kanyakumari, from Kathiawar to Kamarupa (the old name of Assam).' Sardar Patel played an instrumental role in creating this India.

Congress had given its assent to the June 3 plan which was about partitioning India into two

territories - India and Pakistan. India was then a mosaic of British occupied territory and 565 princely states. The princely states had to choose between joining either of the two nations or remain independent. Few princely states like Travancore, Hyderabad, Junagadh, Bhopal and Kashmir were averse to joining the state of India while others like Gwalior, Bikaner, Baroda, Patiala and others proactively joined India.

Sardar Patel was aware '*you will not have a united India if you do not have a good all-India Service*', therefore before embarking on reorganization of states, he build confidence in the '*Steel Frame*' or the Indian civil services. Sardar Patel worked tirelessly to build a consensus with the princely states but did not hesitate in employing methods of *Sama, Dama, Dand and Bhed* where ever necessary. Sardar Patel along with his aide VP Menon designed 'Standstill Agreements and Instrument of Accession' accommodating requests and demands from various rulers.

Approach of Sardar Patel and VP Menon was more conciliatory as compared to the approach of Pandit Nehru, who in May 1947, had declared that any princely state that refuses to join the Constituent Assembly would be treated as an enemy state. The official policy statement of the Government of India made by Sardar Patel on July 5, 1947 made no such threats. It reassured the princely states about the Congress' intentions, and invited them to join independent India '*to make laws sitting together as friends than to make treaties as aliens*'. He stitched the princely states along with British Indian territory, and prevented balkanization of India.

Sardar Patel was also conscious of the fact that mere political reorganization of this land was not enough. He was aware that the wounded civilization of India needed to be stirred to its core and woken up from the past slavery and misery. There was an urgent need to rekindle among the people of India the bond they shared with their diverse cultures. On November 13, 1947, Sardar Patel, the then deputy Prime Minister of India, vowed to rebuild Somnath Temple. Somnath had been destroyed and built several times in the past and the story of its resurrection from ruins this time would be symbolic of the story of the resurgence of India. The then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad speaking at the inaugural ceremony at the temple said, "It is my view that the reconstruction of the Somnath Temple will be complete on that day when not only a magnificent edifice will arise on this foundation, but the mansion of India's prosperity will be really that prosperity of which the ancient temple of Somnath was a symbol." He added, "The Somnath temple signifies that the power of reconstruction is always greater than the power of destruction."

Sardar Patel played a heroic role in the reconstruction of the Indian civilization, and at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a call for '*New India*', Patel's words in a letter to Princely rulers are more relevant than ever, "We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavour, we can raise the country to new greatness, while lack of unity will expose us to unexpected calamities. I hope the Indian States will realise fully that if we do not cooperate and work together in the general interest, anarchy and chaos will overwhelm us all great and small, and lead us to total ruin.....let it be our proud privilege to leave a legacy of mutually beneficial relationship which would raise this sacred land to its proper place amongst the nations of the world and turn it into an abode of peace and prosperity."

**The author is currently a Senior Research Fellow at India Foundation.*

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

END

crackIAS.com
crackIAS.com