



SARDAR PATEL'S CONTRIBUTION IN INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the great freedom fighters and makers of modern India. He was a pillar of strength to the people of a newly born nation. His contributions to nation building have been unparalleled. By nature, temperament and upbringing, Patel was a practical man, performing at his best as an organizer. An extra-ordinary feature of Sardar Patel was his ability to combine roles that are usually filled by many individuals having different training and contrasting sensibilities. He was a rare person who built and managed the congress party and an able administrator who unified India at a time of great uncertainty in the country.

INTRODUCTIUON

Sardar Patel was a mass leader, politician, administrator and astute diplomat. A man of sharp intellect and character, a patriot to the core, imbued with practical sagacity, Sardar Patel ranks among the greatest statement of his times.

He successfully fought the secretary of State on the issue that Indian officers had a duty to stay on in the service of their country after independence, and could not opt to 'retire' with generous compensations. On his part, knowing that safeguarding of service conditions was the traditional policy in all modern governments, he has no hesitation in giving the necessary assurance to the All India Services. Today, in the wake of the abolition of the so-called "privileges" of the ICS. Officers, expressly protected under the Constitution, it is relevant to recall the Sardar's view outlined in the Constituent Assembly with regard to these safeguards.

The Administrative Issue

Patel objected to Nehru as Prime Minister sending his Principal Private Secretary, Iyengar to visit Ajmer (the site of recent communal riots) without informing or consulting him (Patel)

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after Patel as Home Minister had visited the place, reported to Nehru and Publicly approved the measures being taken by the then Chief Commissioner of Ajmer, Shankar Prasad to maintain law and order. Following Iyengar's visit, the Chief Commissioner inquired of the Home Minister if the former had lost the confidence of the authority in Delhi (meaning thereby, of Nehru and Patel in their official capacities). Patel "reassured" him that his line of action had been proper and he should continue with that line.

It was because of the incident mentioned above that, Patel wrote a strong letter to Nehru demanding that he stopped such "visits of inspection". Affairs of department held by respective ministers without consulting and informing the departmental minister concerned about the action the Prime Minister proposed to initiate, Disagreeing with the conception of the Prime Minister's role as represented by Patel, Nehru upheld that since a Prime Minister functioned as a supervisor and co-ordinator of all the ministries of the Union Government, he had a certain "liberty of direction" and "freedom to act". Patel wrote to Gandhi that the Prime Minister had the right and the duty to seek information from ministers of the concern department and to initiate consultation of the lines of policy to be adopted and in the matter of its implementation, nothing more. If the Prime Minister were to act unilaterally (on learning from extraneous sources) without informing or consulting the minister concerned, enforcement of collective responsibility would be in jeopardy. If a minister acts through the established machinery and the Prime Minister intervenes through an emissary, both the authorities, taken together, will not find themselves "responsible" for the action or actions taken. Such unilateralism or overlordism is dictatorial and a negation of parliamentarism. Apart from violating the principle of "collective responsibility", it is the surest way to administrative inefficiency. Hence, the administrative issue raised by the two stalwarts can be appreciated in the broader context of parliamentary governance.

The civil service of the pre-independence period was anathema to the nationalist leadership. As was true with other nationalist leaders, Sardar Patel too was highly critical of the colonial civil service. As President of the Indian National Congress in 1931, he insisted on 'a heavy reduction in the civil service expenditure and a consequent reduction in the emoluments of the civil service'. Shortly before independence, he expressed his unhappiness with the civil service in the Constituent Assembly. As Home Member in the Interim Government in 1946, he was unable to take any action against to quote him, I tried to get the District Magistrate of Gurgaon transferred; I wrote to the then Governor of the Punjab; I pleaded with the Viceroy, but I found it difficult to remove him. I All this happened just *i* few months before Independence.

But after independence Sardar Patel revised his views and began to regard the civil service as an invaluable institution and its members worth } of trust as advisors and administrators. In 1949 he told the Constituent Assembly of India.

I wish to assure you that I have worked with them (civil servants! during this difficult period. I am speaking with a heavy sense of responsibility and I must confess that in point of patriotism, in point of loyalty, in point of sincerity, and in point of ability, they cannot have a substitute. They are as good as ourselves... I wish to place it on record in this House that if, during the last two or three years, most of the members of the services had not behaved particularly and with loyalty, the Union would have collapsed.2

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Sardar Patel regarded the civil service as invaluable partner in the task of governance in Independent India. He openly exhorted the civil servants to function fearlessly and professionally in their relationship with the ministers. Equally, he warned the ministers not to choose time-seeking civil servants who anticipated the wishes of their ministers and tailored their advice merely to please them. Sardar Patel stood for the constitutional safeguards and guarantees for the civil service. This was to ensure the latter full protection necessary for its fearless functioning. Above all, Sardar Patel is the true architect of all-India service.

The All India Service is the name of the civil service which is recruited and initially trained by the Government of India but which is common to both the levels of government, and serve both of them. Its member is allocated to a provincial (or, state) government but rotates between the Government of India and the government of his allotted cadre. The nomenclature 'All India Service' was coined by the M.E. Gauntlet Committee on Division of Functions in 1918 when the Government of India Act, 1919 was on the anvil.

One must recall that the Secretary of State for India had stopped recruitment to the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police during the Second World War. These two all-India services were known as the security services. When the war ended in 1945 recruitment to these services was not resumed on account of the constitutional changes taking place in India. The interim government under the prime ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru had been installed in 1946, with Independence well in sight. When a New India was in the offing the institution of all India services, at one time the proverbial thorn in the Indian leadership's flesh, began to be wooed: and in this saga Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a critical role.

Proposal Accepted

Sardar Patel, the 'Iron Man of India', would not give in and stood by his original proposal most tenaciously. He summed up the discussion by emphasizing 'a general feeling in favour of the formation of an All India Administrative Service', and expressed the hope that 'after the general scheme was framed, those who were at present not in favour, would be convinced that adequate allowance had been made for provincial susceptibilities regarding control and would agree to join in'.

Final Decision

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel concluded the discussion by emphasizing the provincial premiers' general support to the proposal for the creation of the All India Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. He wanted these services; and he got them. All this was a magnificent victory for the Government of India and, more truly, a personal triumph for Vallabhbhai Patel. Indeed, Patel may rightly be acknowledged as the father of All India Services. His task was probably rendered less arduous by the Muslim League's initial abstention from the interim central government. The Muslim League joined the central government after the Provincial Premiers' Conference had finished its deliberations.

A week after this Conference, there was an interpellation in the Central Legislative Assembly. Patel's terse reply was : A Conference of Provincial Premiers was convened on the

21st October 1946 by me to discuss arrangements to replace these (the Secretary of State's) services., The consensus of opinion at the Conference was in favour of the formation of new All India Services for this purpose. Details are being worked out in consultation with the provinces and when arrangements are finalized a public announcement will be made.⁹ When one member (Sri Prakasa) further asked: 'Have the government assured themselves that such services are at all necessary in future?', Patel merely said: 'That is the consensus of opinion of the provinces'.¹⁰ The partition of the country in 1947 cleared the way for the acceptance by all of the All India Services.

The Sardar would not remain content until he achieved something more. He succeeded in incorporating Article 312 in the constitution thus endowing the all India service with a constitutional berth. Article 312 is worth reproducing:

- i) Notwithstanding anything in Part XI, if the Council of States has declared by resolution supported by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting that it is necessary or expedient in the national interest so to do, Parliament may by law provide for the creation of one or more All India Services common to the Union and the States, and subject to the other provisions of this chapter, regulate the recruitment, and the conditions of service of persons appointed, to any such service,
- ii) The services known at the commencement of this Constitution as the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service shall be deemed to be services created by Parliament under this article.

That the Sardar is relevant today is proved also by the fact of his being remembered every time the nation is faced with a constitutional or political crisis. His name immediately comes to mind as one who could have rid us of the problems before us. The political parties compete with each other in owning him as their icon. Important leaders both at the Union and State levels, try to emulate his style and build their profile closest to their perception of his image. Nothing can please them more than to be somehow compared to the Sardar. The legend and the legacy continues to grow and with every passing year it glows brighter and brighter.

REFERENCES

1. All India States' People's Conference: What are the Indian States?'. All India State's People's Conference, Allahabad, 1939, p.7
2. Ibid. p.7
3. V.P. Menon, *Integration of the Indian States*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1985 edition (Originally published in 1956).
4. V.P. Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
5. The other member (or minister) was Abdul Rab Nishtar, whose name was suggested by Mohammad Ali Zinnah who represented the Muslim League.
6. V.P. Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 93.