



# SIMULATION AND UPLIFTMENT: SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL'S IDEALS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ADVOCACY FOR EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, sobriquet "The Iron Man of India" is remarkable for his pioneering role in contemporary political unification and he is one of the visionary thinkers of modern India for the upliftment of woman status in society through the advocacy of proper education. Patel understood the critical importance of women's development as a foundation for the Nation's future progress. He realised that freedom, socio-political development, and economic prosperity of the nation could not be achieved without the women empowerment. In the then Indian society, women were treated as mere commodities; lived as second class citizen and remained under the control of patriarchal domination. As a political leader and a national figure, Patel advocated women education to eradicate their outcast situation in the patriarchal society. Patel established different educational institutions for girls, abolished child marriage and encouraged women's active participation in every sphere of society. He promoted few policies for the upliftment of women. Patel envisioned a harmonious society where women would be educated and empowered to lead in the future prospect of nation's building. This research paper entitled "Simulation and Upliftment: Sardar Patel's Ideals on Women Empowerment and advocacy for Education" critically analyses the significant contributions of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for women empowerment forging education as their basic strength. This paper also aims to study Patel's ideals and insights for gender equality, feminine leadership, and access to the mainstream political movement of India.

**KEYWORDS:** Empowerment, Simulation, Education, Upliftment, Equality.

## INTRODUCTION

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, sobriquet "The Iron Man of India" is remarkable for his pioneering role in contemporary political unification and he is one of the visionary thinkers of modern India for the upliftment of woman status in society through the advocacy of proper education. Patel understood the critical importance of women's development as an elemental foundation for the nation's overall progress. As a political leader and national figure, Patel advocated women education to eradicate their outcaste situation in the patriarchal society.

### Women in Indian society Pre- and Post-Independence

In pre-Independence Era, Indian society— primarily the ruling patriarchal society marginalized women, with no access to main-stream culture, education, and polity. They were asphyxiated to their house-hold duties. They were subjugated by the male dominance in the then society. Women were treated as the sex-object and the machine of child-production. Child marriage, becoming the sex-toy for the male gratification, child production and rearing was their only responsibilities and duties as ordained by the patriarchal society.

When the British East India company under the charter Act of 1813 initiated English education for the betterment of Government administration, higher-class women from Bhadrak society along with the male members started to learn English education remaining behind purdah. But, the social

reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Sardar Ballavbhai Patel etc., realized the importance of women education for the proper development of the country. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar established a woman school; later, many girls' schools were setup across the India and women's education began to recognize its value in the society.

Though Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was involved in the freedom movement during the Gandhian era, but he was indirectly and directly associated with the woman empowerment and socio-political upliftment.

### Patel: Advocate of Woman Education

"The Future of our country depends on our women. If they are brave, strong, and educated, the country will be strong".

—Sardar Patel

Sardar Patel realized that women empowerment can only be possible through the awakening of their identity consciousness. When they would be educated and knowledgeable, consciousness and participation would be possible.

"Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them".

—Sardar Patel



For girl education, Sardar Patel first took the initiatives to remove the prejudiced mentality of the society about female education. Patel set up many girls' schools, vocational training centers and community programs for skill development. When Vitthal Kenya Vidyalaya, established in honor of Vitthal bhai Patel, the first Indian president of the central legislature was out of money for providing education, Sardar Patel wrote a letter to Ravji bhai Patel to save the school from the financial crisis. His relentless efforts to keep the education institutions free from financial constraints made him remarkable leader. Even he stretched out his helping hands regarding financial management for Gujrat Vidyapith. A new school building was built under the supervision of Sardar Patel with the lump sum financial assistance from Seth Shri Mafatlal. Sardar Patel explained the role of education for a proper character, moral and spiritual values. To inspire the girl students of Vitthal Kenya Vidyalaya, Sardar Patel delivered an inspiring speech: "until today, parents used to think that teaching girls makes them depraved. But that superstition is rapidly disappearing. The chariot of the life runs on two wheels, but we have been crippled for the last two hundred years. Because we have let one of our constituent parts useless. The girls are not getting the help they should get".

Sardar Patel had set a perfect example of women education exemplifying his daughter Mani Behan. He sent her to Gujrat Vidyapith to adopt the national education. Even, he educated his son and daughter equally with proper ambition. In the then time, avoiding societal carping tongue he bought a bicycle for his daughter Mani Behan for comfortable journey. He manifested inherent development of his daughter through education. He always enkindled her daughter's spirit for acquiring education and societal status.

To acquire a proper identity in society— confidence, knowledge about status quo and awareness was much needed among the women. That could be only possible through proper teaching; assimilating education and acquiring consciousness rejecting prejudices about gender inequality, women inferiority, and patriarchal hegemony. Sardar Patel asserted that India would not be independent in its true sense if the women remained in the world of darkness, subjugation, and negligence. To quote a speech of him regarding women education— "If we give proper education to our girls, it will be easy to remove some evil-doers from our society, which do not allow us to progress".

In advocating women education, what kind of education should be provided to the students was uttered by Patel—  
"There are two things to be learned, girls studying in schools or colleges should get used to hard work and not entertainment. Let us not work like laborers but with knowledge. With it comes in us refinement, good thoughts, power to attract good things wherever there is in the world....."

Sardar Patel advocated woman education basically to manifest a good character with moral values; to assert own identity; to avoid societal criticism; to capable of expressing truth without fear; to be freed from societal prejudices and caste-based discrimination and to protest male-dominated society.

### Sardar Patel's Ideals on Women Empowerment

The brilliant spirit of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas" resonates in the zeal of Sardar Patel's activities and visions. Sardar Patel cherished girls for self-defense and character-building education. Patel's ideals on women's empowerment were deeply entrenched in gender equality and social justice. Sardar Patel sharply criticized gender discrimination and promoted girls' education along with the boys. Patel envisioned girl education not only in urban areas but also in rural areas also. Besides his patriotic spirit, he was a great social reformer. He believed that practice of child marriage was one of the obstructing for the girl children of attaining basic education and moral values. He challenged the age-old practices and baseless traditions delivering his lectures. He not only obstructed child marriages but also fought against Dowry System. In the then time, women were commodified. He cherished such a noble society where women could study, work, and lead. Patel instilled the inner strength and capabilities of women for the active participation in freedom struggle, political action, and leadership.

During the Bardoli Satyagraha, Sardar Patel organized a meeting with a group of women to prepare a strategic out-line for the upcoming Satyagraha and introduced them into the world of politics. He supported the Hindu Code Bill which uphold the rights of women and their empowerment. Sardar Patel, the Icon of Unity supported, and promoted Gandhian values which basically focused on improving the status of women and marginalized groups. Women played a pivotal role in Bardoli Satyagraha under the leadership of Patel. The contribution of women like Kasturba Gandhi and Indu Moti Chamanlal who fought against British repression was noteworthy. Patel acclaimed those women as "real heroines" for their courage, discipline, and determination. Sardar Patel encouraged the active participation of women such as Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Nehru in Civil Disobedience Movement (1930). Sardar Patel included their active presence in the Congress Working Committees and other local bodies.

As India's first Deputy prime Minister and Home Minister, Sardar Patel ensured constitutional laws that guaranteed gender equality in every sphere of society. He played a significant role in indicting Article 16 that ensures equal opportunity in the case of public employment. He tried to secure women's right in personal, professional, societal, political, and domestic sphere.

He said:

"Any man who does not respect women is unfit to call himself a citizen of India".

### CONCLUSION

We can conclude with the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: "History will record it in many pages and call Sardar Patel the builder and consolidator of the new India and say many other things about him. By many of us he will perhaps be remembered as a great captain of our forces in the struggle for freedom and as one who gave us sound advice both in times of trouble and in moments of victory; a friend and colleague and comrade on whom one could invariably rely, as a tower of strength which revived wavering hearts when we were in trouble". Sardar



Patel, the legendary barrister may not have pioneered women's rights movements, but his visionary zeal and futuristic vision for a country- "EK Bharat! Shrestha Bharat" included women emancipation, equal rights, and advocacy of women education. Patel, ensuring several rights for gender equality and active participation of women in personal, political, societal, and professional sphere laid lasting foundation for women's upliftment, empowerment, and proclamation in Post-Independent India. Sardar Patel not only envisaged women's active participation with men but also dismantled the socio-political barriers and mangled the shackle of patriarchal hegemony; uplifted their social status from subjugated condition and enkindled their potentiality for introspection. His invaluable contribution for making a unified nation and indomitable effort for the empowerment of women through education is praiseworthy.

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