

Sardar Patel's Vision of a Strong Centre: Contemporary Relevance and Constitutional Legacy

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ABSTRACT

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, popularly known as the “Iron Man of India,” played a foundational role in shaping the Indian nation-state after independence. One of his most remarkable achievements was the integration of over 565 princely states into the Indian Union—a task that required exceptional political skill, firmness, and foresight. Patel believed that for India to function as a united and stable country, especially given its vast diversity in language, religion, and culture, it was essential to establish a strong Central government. At the same time, he acknowledged that states should have the freedom to govern their own local matters. His concept of federalism was practical and balanced giving the Centre authority in critical areas like defence, foreign affairs, and internal security, while granting states autonomy in local governance, culture, and development. This balanced vision of federalism became the guiding framework during the drafting of the Indian Constitution. It laid the foundation for a unique Indian model of cooperative federalism, where the Centre and states work together within clearly defined boundaries. However, over the years, India's federal structure has faced new pressures such as the increasing assertion of regional identities, the growth of strong state-level political parties, demands for greater devolution of power, and debates around central overreach. In this context, Patel's ideas remain highly relevant. His emphasis on national unity, backed by a strong Centre, needs to be harmonised with the democratic need to respect regional voices and local aspirations. This paper examines Patel's vision of federalism and the strong Centre, as reflected in his speeches, decisions, and role during the Constituent Assembly debates. It also explores how his approach can offer valuable insights in addressing contemporary federal challenges in India. The paper argues that while a strong Centre continues to be necessary to maintain the unity and integrity of the country, it must evolve to become more inclusive, responsive, and cooperative. Re-engaging with Patel's federal thought can help India strike the right balance between national cohesion and regional diversity in a rapidly changing political landscape.

Keywords: *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Indian Federalism, Strong Centre, Centre–State Relations, National Unity, Regional Autonomy, Cooperative Federalism, Constitutional Framework*

INTRODUCTION

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was lovingly named by his father, Jhaverbhai, after the great saint and scholar Vallabhacharya. He later became one of the most important leaders in India's struggle for independence. His leadership during the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928, a peaceful farmers' movement against unjust British taxation, earned him the title of 'Sardar', meaning leader or chief. Throughout his life and even after his passing, Patel was honored with many titles that reflected his strength, vision, and commitment to the nation. He was called the "indomitable captain of freedom fighters" for his fearless role in the independence movement and "India's Bismarck" for unifying over 565 princely states into the Indian Union, much like how Bismarck unified Germany. Referred to as the "modern Ashoka", Patel was admired for his governance and nation-building efforts. The title "Iron Man of India" symbolized his firmness and determination in national matters. Some even referred to him as the "Lenin of Bardoli" for his revolutionary leadership during the farmers' agitation. Celebrated as the "consolidator and builder of new India", "the greatest statesman", and "a remarkable son of India", Sardar Patel's contributions remain a cornerstone of India's political unity and national integration (Kashyap, 2011:126).

The integration of princely states into the Indian Union after independence in 1947 was a complex and critical task that shaped the territorial and political unity of the nation. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a key role in

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uniting these princely states with India. On 25 June 1947, a special department called the States Department was created for this purpose, with Sardar Patel in charge and V.P. Menon as the Secretary². Together, their smart planning and diplomacy helped in solving many difficult challenges such as preserve national unity, ensure internal security, and protect territorial integrity, while still acknowledging the cultural and administrative autonomy of states. With over 565 princely states at the time of British withdrawal, each with the option to join India, Pakistan, or remain independent, the stakes were high. The saga of accession was marked by both strategic challenges and diplomatic triumphs, with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel emerging as the central figure in ensuring India's unity. His pragmatic approach and political acumen helped secure the accession of hesitant states like Jodhpur, which initially explored better terms with Pakistan before acceding to India in June 1947. Similarly, Travancore, which had declared its intention to remain independent in July 1947, was persuaded by Patel's diplomacy to join the Indian Union setting a precedent that influenced other rulers. More tense was the situation in Junagadh, where the Nawab chose to accede to Pakistan despite popular opposition. Patel responded firmly, and the state was eventually integrated into India following a public plebiscite in February 1948. The case of Jammu and Kashmir was uniquely complicated, its ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, delayed accession but sought Indian help during the Pakistani invasion in October 1947. He signed the Instrument of Accession under pressure of military conflict, and the special terms of this accession were later reflected in Article 370 of the Constitution, granting Jammu and Kashmir special status under Part XXI³. The integration of Hyderabad into the Indian Union marked another major step in the unification process led by Sardar Patel. The Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Usman Ali Khan, had initially signed a Standstill Agreement with the Indian government to maintain temporary status quo. However, growing communal unrest and violence in the state led Patel to act decisively. In September 1948, the Indian Army carried out Operation Polo, leading to Hyderabad's accession following the Nizam's announcement of a ceasefire on 17 September. The unification process continued beyond Patel's death. In 1954, France handed over Pondicherry and other territories to India. Goa was under Portuguese rule until December 1961. It was liberated through Operation Vijay. Goa, along with Daman and Diu, became a Union Territory. Later, in 1987, Goa was granted statehood, while Daman and Diu remained Union Territories. In another significant development, Sikkim, which was earlier a protectorate with limited autonomy, became a full-fledged state of India in May 1975 through the 36th Constitutional Amendment, thereby abolishing its monarchy. The final step of national integration came on 5 August 2019. On this day, Article 370 was abrogated that had given special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Its removal confirmed the state's full and permanent integration into India. This marked the realization of Sardar Patel's vision of a united India. As a tribute to his role as the architect of national integration, his birth anniversary, 31 October, has been celebrated as National Unity Day since 2014. Further honouring his legacy, the Government of India unveiled the Statue of Unity in 2018 standing at 182 metres in Gujarat making it the tallest statue in the world and a symbol of national solidarity and pride⁴. On December 15, 1950, as Vallabhbhai Patel was laid to rest at Sonapur, Mumbai, President Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and elder statesman C. Rajagopalachari stood by his funeral pyre, overwhelmed with grief. As Dr. Prasad solemnly remarked, "*Sardar's body is being consumed by fire, but no fire on earth can consume his fame. We grieve for ourselves, not for him.*" The scene was marked by profound national mourning, as Nehru, Rajaji, and Dr. Prasad stood weeping beside his pyre.⁵ This paper explores Patel's federal vision, its influence on the Indian Constitution, and the continuing relevance of his ideas in contemporary India. As India grapples with rising regional aspirations and complex Centre-State dynamics, revisiting Patel's thoughts provides valuable insights into maintaining unity in diversity.

Patel's Vision of Federalism and Constitutional Reflections of Patel's Vision

² Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: The Man Who United the Nation National Unity Day- 31 October Ministry of Home Affairs, https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2021/oct/doc2021103031.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid

The idea of a strong Centre in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's mind didn't emerge suddenly but it evolved through his deep engagement with issues of national unity, internal security, and the integration of princely states. This vision crystallized during the period of transfer of power (1946–1947), especially when he saw the dangers of fragmentation, communal violence, and the ambitions of princely states. As a Congress leader and a former President of the Indian National Congress, Patel had long been aware of the fragile political unity of British India, especially the challenge posed by the princely states and communal divisions. As Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, and Tribal and Excluded Areas, Patel played a crucial role in shaping the constitutional framework that sought to balance India's vast diversity with the need for political cohesion. One of his most defining contributions was in reinforcing the idea of a strong Centre through the deliberate phrasing of Article 1, which states, "*India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.*" This was not a mere linguistic preference but a conscious political choice. Patel strongly rejected the idea of India being a federation of sovereign units, as was common in other federal constitutions. In a significant intervention in the Constituent Assembly on 5 July 1947, he clarified, "*The federation is a compact between independent states, but here the States have come in by surrendering all their powers to the Union*"⁶. The use of the term "Union" symbolized that states did not voluntarily form the federation and that their territorial integrity was not subject to unilateral alteration. Patel's federal vision was characterized by the vesting of residuary powers in the Centre (Article 248), a significant deviation from classical federalism⁷. He warned the Assembly: "It is no use saying that we are going to have a weak Centre because it is a federation. A federation does not mean that the Centre should be weak"⁸. In this context, Constitutional scholar Granville Austin observes that "Patel's federalism was one of pragmatism and national unity. He used the language of federalism but built the architecture of a unitary state" (Austin, 1966:143). Through his chairmanship of the Advisory Committee, Patel also ensured that while minority and tribal rights were safeguarded, they would not serve as instruments for political separatism. His emphasis on unity through institutional centrality left a permanent imprint on India's constitutional design, establishing a model where national cohesion was placed above sectional autonomy.

He also Patel played a key role in building the administrative structure of independent India. One of his most important contributions was his firm support for the creation of the All India Services, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS). Patel believed that these services were crucial for keeping the country united, disciplined, and efficient. In a powerful speech in the Constituent Assembly on October 10, 1949, Patel warned that without such services, India's unity could be in danger. He said: "The Union will go; you will not have a united India if you do not have a good All India Service which has the independence to speak out its mind... Without these services, India would break into pieces like in the past."⁹ This wasn't just a theoretical fear. Patel had studied the problems of pre-colonial India, where lack of unity and strong administration had led to fragmentation. So, he strongly argued for a central civil service that would work above regional politics, ensuring discipline, neutrality, and unity in governance. Patel's ideas were later given a legal basis in Article 312 of the Indian Constitution. This article allows the Parliament to create new All India Services if the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) approves it by a two-thirds majority. The existence of the IAS and IPS today is a direct result of Patel's vision for a strong, centrally coordinated bureaucracy. M.P. Jain explains that the inclusion of Article 312 was "designed to maintain uniform standards of administration throughout the country" and reflects the centralising tendency of the Constitution in line with Patel's vision (Jain, 2013: 883). (Austin, 1999:188). To safeguard the neutrality and effectiveness of the bureaucracy, he advocated for constitutional guarantees and protections that would ensure the civil services remained impartial, transparent, and accountable. Patel firmly believed in the necessity of a fearless and upright bureaucracy, one that would serve the interests of the nation without succumbing to political pressures. In this context, he viewed the Constitution as the supreme authority, and the civil services as custodians of national interest, entrusted with upholding administrative integrity and supporting democratic governance (Desai, 2016). On 21 April 1947, he

⁶ Constituent Assembly Debates (1947). *Parliament of India*. Vol. IV, 5 July 1947, p. 1277

⁷ Constituent Assembly Debates (1947). *Parliament of India*. Vol. V, 13 October 1947, p. 32.

⁸ Constituent Assembly Debates (1947). *Parliament of India*, Vol. V, p. 32.

⁹ Constituent Assembly Debates (October 10, 1949). *Speech by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on All India Services*. Retrieved from https://cadindia.clpr.org.in/constitution_assembly_debates/volume/10/1949-10-10 on p. 40.

addressed the first IAS probationers, emphasizing their duty to remain “impartial” and “incorruptible” and to refrain from political or communal involvement. Dr. Subhash Kashyap, a leading constitutional expert, writes that Patel regarded the All India Services as a “steel frame” that would hold the Indian Union together in challenging times². His commitment to creating such a system was based on his practical experience in governance and his deep concern for national integrity (Kashyap, 2004: 117-118). Patel was not alone in this belief. Later scholars like R.C. Bhardwaj have pointed out that the All-India Services were the “institutional arm of unity” within India’s federal system, ensuring that regional interests did not override national objectives (Bhardwaj, 1995, 68). Even today, the IAS and IPS continue to play a central role in holding together India’s vast administrative machinery, reflecting Patel’s long-term foresight.

Additionally, Patel’s ideas significantly influenced the incorporation of emergency provisions and Centre’s overriding authority in the Constitution. These provisions (article 352, 356 and 360) grant the Union government the authority to override the constitutional distribution of powers during extraordinary situations such as war, external aggression (Article 352), failure of constitutional machinery in a state (Article 356), or financial emergency (Article 360). The primary goal behind these provisions was to ensure national integrity and swift executive action during moments of crisis. Although Patel did not directly draft these provisions, his influence is seen in the centralising spirit of the Constitution. As he had emphasized in the Constituent Assembly, “*It is of vital importance that the Centre should be strong and powerful enough to keep the country intact under any circumstances.*” (CAD, Vol. 10, p. 41). Additionally, Granville Austin observes that these emergency powers were designed not out of authoritarian ambition but as a “defensive mechanism against the possible breakdown of law and order, secession, or civil war”. He further notes that India’s federal system is “so strong at the Centre that it can be called a Union rather than a federation” (Austin, 1999: 196 & 203).

The Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which distributes legislative powers between the Union and the States through three lists—Union List, State List, and Concurrent List was significantly influenced by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s vision of a strong Centre. During the Constituent Assembly Debates, Patel consistently argued that in a diverse and fragmented country like India, especially in the wake of Partition, the Centre must retain overriding legislative authority on crucial matters such as defense, foreign affairs, communications, and internal security¹⁰. He supported the British Government of India Act, 1935, as a starting framework, but advocated for key changes to reduce the legislative autonomy of states. The final structure of the Seventh Schedule reflects this balance: the Union List (List I) contains the most vital and extensive powers (currently 100 subjects), the State List (List II) has 61 subjects, and the Concurrent List (List III) has 52 subjects, where both Centre and State can legislate, but in case of conflict, the Union law prevails (Article 254). Patel believed that such a distribution was essential to prevent the resurgence of regionalism and separatism. In the Constituent Assembly, Patel strongly opposed a weak Centre. He warned: “*A weak Centre would spell disaster for India. Only a strong Centre can ensure peace, stability, and national integrity.*” (CAD, Vol. 7: 46). Therefore, the Union List was made intentionally broad, and the Constitution allowed the Centre to legislate even on State subjects during emergencies (Article 356 and Article 249). Granville Austin called India’s system a “cooperative but strong centralised federation”, arguing that this model was necessary in view of the country’s diversity and vulnerability to division³ (Austin, 1999: 198). Moreover, the Concurrent List, which allows both Centre and States to legislate, also favours the Union. If there is a conflict between Union and State laws, the Union law prevails under Article 254 again reinforcing the Centre’s supremacy, in line with Patel’s approach. Therefore, the Seventh Schedule, with its heavy emphasis on the Union List, is not just a technical division of power it is a political and constitutional reflection of Patel’s firm belief that only a powerful Centre can maintain India’s unity, security, and administrative coherence. The federal structure of the Indian Constitution is distinctive in its design federal in form but unitary in spirit. This unique character was deeply influenced by the vision of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India’s first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister. In the tumultuous years surrounding independence and partition, Patel emerged as a pragmatic statesman who viewed national integration and administrative centralisation as imperative for the survival of the Indian nation-state. His approach to federalism, unlike that of classical federations such as the United States or Switzerland, was not built upon a

¹⁰ Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. V, 13 October 1947, p. 33–34.

compact among sovereign states. Instead, he argued for a "Union of States" where sovereignty resided solely with the Centre (Austin, 1999: 186-188).

Challenges to a Strong Centre or Indian Federalism

While Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's vision of a strong Centre helped consolidate a fragmented and newly independent India, contemporary democratic realities are increasingly characterised by the assertion of regional identities and demands for decentralisation. This trend has intensified with the rise of regional parties in states like Tamil Nadu (DMK), West Bengal (TMC), Telangana (BRS), and Punjab (AAP). These political formations often assert distinct linguistic, cultural, or economic interests, resisting uniform national policies that they perceive as unilateral impositions by the Centre. This marks a significant shift from Patel's era, where national unity was prioritised to prevent balkanisation. However, today's mature democracy calls for negotiated federalism. As Rajeev Bhargava aptly notes, "The language of centralised integration must give way to mutual negotiation in federal democracies". (Bhargava: 2010, 143). He argues that pluralism and participatory governance require states to be treated not as administrative arms of the Centre, but as equal partners in the democratic process. For example, Tamil Nadu's opposition to Hindi imposition, Punjab's protests against central farm laws, and West Bengal's resistance to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and CAA highlight how regional governments are asserting their constitutional rights and challenging the centralising tendencies in policymaking. These states often invoke Article 131 of the Constitution (original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in Centre-State disputes) to legally challenge Union laws indicating growing friction within the federal structure. For instance, states like Kerala and Chhattisgarh have used Article 131 to challenge laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) or the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, arguing that these laws violate their rights or autonomy. Scholar Sujit Choudhry has pointed out that Indian federalism has been changing over time, with states becoming more powerful and important in governance. Because of this, he says there is a need for policies that give more decision-making power to states and for institutions to respect the autonomy of state governments (Choudhry, 2006:158). He also warns that if the central government tries to control too much power—whether politically, financially, or through administration—it could weaken the trust and balance that holds India's federal system together. In simple terms, India's unity and democracy work best when the Centre and the States share power fairly and when the voices of the states are respected. Moreover, with the expansion of centrally sponsored schemes, many states argue that they have become executing agencies of Union programmes, with little say in planning or resource allocation. Although Patel's model supported a strong Centre to keep the country united, it was never meant to ignore or suppress the genuine needs and aspirations of the states. His idea was designed for a time when India had just become independent and was facing many challenges—it was meant to hold the country together during a fragile time. Today, India has become a much stronger and deeper democracy, so there is a need for better ways for the Centre and states to talk and work together. Institutions like the Inter-State Council, NITI Aayog, and GST Council should not just be for formality—they should be used for real cooperation and decision-making. That's why when states express their regional identities, it should not always be seen as a threat to national unity. Instead, it shows that Indian federalism is growing and maturing, with states becoming more confident and active in shaping the country's future. As Granville Austin has noted, "Indian federalism is a dynamic process. influenced as much by politics as by constitutional text" (Austin, 1999: 205).

Another challenge in India's federal system is the frequent use of central agencies and constitutional powers like Article 356, which allows the President's Rule to be imposed in a state. Sardar Patel supported this provision because he wanted to make sure that if a state's government failed to follow the Constitution properly, the Centre could step in to protect law and order and maintain governance. However, over the years, Article 356 has been used many times, especially in states ruled by opposition parties, and often not because of real constitutional breakdowns. One of the earliest and most controversial examples was in 1959, when the Kerala government led by E.M.S. Namboodiripad (the first elected Communist government) was dismissed by the Centre under Nehru, allegedly due to pressure from opposition and religious groups (Austin, 1999: 232). Another major instance of the misuse of Article 356 occurred during Indira Gandhi's tenure (1966–1977), when President's Rule was imposed 39 times, often to unseat non-Congress governments. Notably, in 1973, the DMK

government in Tamil Nadu was dismissed following political unrest, even though the state government still enjoyed majority support. Similarly, opposition governments in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar were also removed, reflecting a pattern where Article 356 was used more for political gain than constitutional necessity (Rao & Singh, 2004: 83). After coming to power in 1977, the Janata Party government used Article 356 to dismiss nine Congress-ruled state governments, justifying the action by citing the “will of the people” following the Congress Party’s defeat in the general elections. The states affected included Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa (now Odisha), Rajasthan, and West Bengal. This mass dismissal was not due to any constitutional breakdown but was clearly a political move aimed at removing Congress governments from power at the state level. It drew strong criticism for undermining the federal structure and for using Article 356 as a tool of political vengeance rather than a constitutional safeguard (Austin, 1999, 284). Scholars like Subhash Kashyap have warned that “excessive use of Article 356 threatens the federal balance envisioned by the Constitution” (Kashyap, 2014: 237). The misuse of Article 356 in such instances later came under sharp judicial scrutiny. In the landmark case of *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court laid down strict guidelines for its use, ruling that the President’s satisfaction under Article 356 is not absolute and is subject to judicial review. This judgment became a crucial safeguard against arbitrary dismissal of state governments and helped restore the balance between the Centre and the states (Basu, 2016: 461).

In addition to these constitutional concerns, there are non-constitutional challenges that erode the balance between the Centre and the states. For instance, the Rajya Sabha, which is supposed to represent states’ interests, has unequal seat distribution (based on population) that often sidelines smaller states. The influence of centralised media narratives and nationwide political discourse further reduces the visibility of state-specific issues, subtly reinforcing a unitary mindset within a federal structure. One of the primary criticisms is that Patel’s model leaned toward a quasi-federal or even unitary structure, which compromised the spirit of genuine federalism. As constitutional expert Granville Austin observed, the Indian Constitution, heavily influenced by Patel’s ideas, created a system that was “federal in structure but unitary in spirit” (Austin, 1999: 216). Sir Kenneth Wheare, a British constitutional expert often regarded as the father of modern federal theory, classified India’s system as “quasi-federal” rather than genuinely federal. (Wheare, 1963: 28).

Relevance in Contemporary India

Even after more than 75 years of independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s vision of a strong Centre remains highly relevant in India’s dynamic political environment. His ideas, developed during a time of extreme uncertainty Partition, integration of princely states, and communal tensions continue to influence Centre-State relations, national security policies, administrative frameworks, and debates around cooperative federalism. Rajeev Bhargava reflects on this shift: “Patel’s federalism aimed at integration, but integration today must mean negotiation with diversity, not suppression of it.” (Bhargava, 2010: 141). This suggests that while Patel’s structure provides stability, it must now be adapted to ensure inclusion and decentralisation in a pluralistic democracy. In today’s changing political situation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s idea of a strong central government is still very important, though it faces some challenges. Today, the Union government continues to retain a dominant role in key national matters, reflecting Patel’s original emphasis on a centralised federal model. One key example is the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which replaced state-level indirect taxes to establish a uniform tax regime. Though hailed as an instance of cooperative federalism, the structure of the GST Council disproportionately favors the Centre in decision-making, raising concerns about fiscal centralisation. As M.P. Jain notes, “The fiscal arrangements reflect the superior position of the Centre in India’s quasi-federal structure” (Jain, 2013: 576). Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre invoked the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to impose nationwide lockdowns, even on subjects like public health, which traditionally fall under the State List. This central directive limited the states’ operational flexibility, reaffirming Patel’s belief that “a strong Centre is indispensable during national emergencies. However, such central actions also triggered tensions. The Farm Laws of 2020, passed by the Union government without adequate consultation with states, sparked nationwide protests and were eventually repealed. Critics viewed these laws as federal overreach, especially since agriculture is constitutionally a state subject under the Seventh Schedule. Despite these debates, the relevance of a strong Centre is undeniable in addressing issues like terrorism, economic planning, disaster

management, and maintaining territorial integrity—areas where national coordination is critical. However, Patel's vision, while still foundational, requires adaptation to contemporary democratic needs. Today, the challenge is to balance central authority with participatory federalism, ensuring both unity and pluralism.

CONCLUSION

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel strongly believed that a powerful central government was essential to keep newly independent India united, safe, and stable. At a time when the country was dealing with Partition, the integration of princely states, and communal tensions, Patel saw central authority as the best way to protect national interests and prevent the country from breaking apart. His ideas influenced many parts of the Constitution, such as giving more powers to the Union (in the Seventh Schedule), creating All India Services (under Article 312), and including emergency powers (Articles 352–360) that allow the Centre to act during national crises. - However, today's India is very different from the India of the 1940s. With the rise of strong regional parties, coalition governments, and growing demands for more power to the states, Patel's model of a centralised federation faces new challenges. Many people now argue that while a strong Centre is still important—especially for dealing with national security, disasters, or major policy issues—it should not come at the cost of ignoring the role and rights of the states. In this sense, Patel's vision must be seen as a starting point, not the final word. His idea of unity through central strength needs to be adapted to today's democratic and diverse India, where cooperation and dialogue between the Centre and states are equally important. Respecting Patel's legacy today means not just having a strong Centre, but also building a system where states are treated as equal partners in shaping the country's future. In nutshell, we should follow Patel's vision of unity, but also make sure that states feel respected and empowered. By sharing power fairly and working in harmony, we can protect the democratic spirit of India.

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