



## **BHAVNAGAR AND SARDAR PATEL: IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

People of every nation are seen struggling against rulers for justice and rights in one or other form in various era of history. Struggle for independence of India is an important and glorious chapter of modern Indian history. Political awareness and inspiration was strongly developed due to programmes given by People Representative Association and National Mahasabha of national level established in princely states of Saurashtra by people who were living under dual slavery of princely states and British rulers before independence. In fact, rulers like developed state of Bhavnagar had filled oxygen to people's tide by giving several rights to their people knowing the flow of time.

It was decided in 1931 A.D. to postpone struggle, according to compromise between Gandhiji the leader of national assembly and guide of national movement, and Lord Ervin, the then Governor General of India. In the same way British also postponed tyranny. So time after Gandhi-Ervin treaty is called "Time of Compromise", but leader of Gujarat Sardar Patel advised the freedom fighters to "put sword in scabbard, but to keep hand on handle". Leaders of people patriotic workers and organisations kept the movement continue in or other form according to advice of Sardar Patel.

The last decade of national movement for Indian freedom in the history of Bhavnagar state was just like a test for relations between people and the ruler and was historical. Sardar Patel visited Bhavnagar before independence on 14-15<sup>th</sup> May 1939 on the occasion of fifth conference of Bhavnagar Peoples Association and on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1948 on the occasion of announcement of democracy in Bhavnagar state and merging of princely states in Indian Union. A try has been one in this paper to evaluate these two visits of Sardar Patel in historical perspective under the title "Bhavnagar and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel."

### **A TRY OF MURDER OF SARDAR PATEL IN THE PREMISES OF BHAVNAGAR**

Fifth conference of Bhavnagar People's Association was held in ground situated near Radha Mandir on Vaghawadi road of Bhavnagar city during 14-15 May 1939 during the days of friction for freedom. Sardar Patel was selected as president of the conference who was also controlling Gujarat for freedom fighting struggle and guide of 'Kathiawad Political Association'. Bhavnagar People's Association had

important contributed in involving the people in national movement and bringing awareness among people. Due to this reference, Sardar Patel had accepted to come Bhavnagar accepting president ship in the fifth conference of Bhavnagar People's Association. Authorities of Bhavnagar People's Association had informed chief executive of Bhavnagar state Anantrai Pattani in written. But Gibson, the resident of British agency of Kathiawad region at that time, had given private orders to all princely states of Kathiawad to crush down any movements or struggles governed by people's Associations. According to this order Anantrai Pattani, the chief executive of Bhavnagar state, tried to murder Sardar Patel, making a pre-planned intrigue and to crush down the fifth conference of Association indirectly. But due to sacrifice of two youths, of Bhavena village Shri Bachubhai Virajibhai Patel and Jadavjibhai Gordhanbhai Modi, murder plan of Sardar Patel was not succeeded.

Sardar Patel reached Bhavnagar by air on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1939 to attend fifth conference of Bhavnagar People's Association. He was brought to railway station from airport which as 9Km away, for processing him from highway of city by a glorious and grand procession of Sardar Patel as per tradition to honour the Chief Guest and president of the conference and was honoured by people. Then the procession arranged by Bhavnagar People's Association with group of Sardar Patel reached near Kharget via Danapith. Here he was welcomed in a Samiyana. Then the procession turned at the corner of Danapith, a group of approx thirty jealous and antisocial persons came out, and attacked on the group of Sardar Patel with ticks and weapons like big knives. Nanabhai (Nrusinhprasad) Bhatt tried to stop them. A stroke of stick blown was on his head. Shri Makanjibhai Valia and Kalubhai Valia were also injured by attack. Congress secretary Atmaram Bhatt got a wound near his ear while a attack with knife. Volunteers named Bachubhai Virajibhai died on the spot and Jadavjibhai Girdharbhai Modi died on the next day during nursing. Sardar Patel stopped the procession understanding the situation and reached at Takhtasinhji Hospital where the sufferers were taking treatment. Then he reached to his resting place and gave a message to people of Bhavnagar:

“There is no reason to fear or anger in reaction to the today's sorrowful incidence. Who have attacked on procession and innocent people have forgotten their consciousness and have done a sinful act by madness. Building of People's shaping is constructed on the sacrifice of innocent people. All should maintain peace and should attend in association with zeal and love and try to make the conference succeeded.”

Sardar Patel also informed Gandhiji about the whole incident by telegram. Gandhiji replied that, “I read the telegram and became stunned. The God will guide us. I hope that Nanabhai and others' health will be getting better now. I am waiting for further details.”

People of Bhavnagar were shocked and feared due to this incidence of try of murder of Sardar Patel. Sardar Patel told while reproving this episode in meeting of the conference that, “We should not quarrel mutually, if we do nothing to make such elements separate, then they will proceed on the whole society. This is the time when antisocial persons may conceal small states. Now a day's such antisocial

activities are been seen everywhere. This is not an attempt done with the instant anger, but is an intelligent plan arranged priorly”.

Sardar Patel informed in a public meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1939 night that “Atmosphere of social disorder is not limited to only Bhavnagar, we can see such situation in the whole India. Strokes which were to be held on me are caught by Bachubhai Patel, Jadavjibhai Modi and Nanabhai Bhatt. This is not the first instance for me. Such kinds of incidences are happening on me occasionally, but God saves me.” Hearing these words, Anantrai Pattani the chief executive of the state became unhappy and went out quitting the place. A talk was among the people by such behaviour of him, that there is an indirect hand in the attack on Sardar Patel, but no solid evidence was obtained during the investigation. Here one thing should be noted that, Sardar Patel himself said while addressing the meeting of Peoples’ Association that, this was a pre-planned attack. Moreover, the same thing is accepted in the report of Peoples Association published in 1944.

Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji, the then king of Bhavnagar tried to punish the offenders by ordering immediately and heartily Chhelbhai Dave the police head of the state examined the whole chapter. Not only that, he called on advocate for crime Shri K.K.Shah from Bombay to Bhavnagar who was famous criminal advocate to attend the court. Sessions’ judge Shri Trivedi said while judging the case that, “It was more political attack rather than a command attack.” Here, one thing should be noted that, Anantrai Pattani, the Chief executive of the state was restricted to order any speech (address) in public and the king Krishnakumarsinhji signed on the order. His aim was to press any command attack or riot. Not only hat, he did not cancel the fifth conference of peoples Association considering the zeal and enthusiasm. It was a victory of people. One offender was sentenced, Shri Chhelbhai Dave, the police head also presented his report to king of Bhavnagar. But it was not published considering the peace of the state and society. Even though, it becomes clear from the various steps taken by Bhavnagar state that, people were doubtful regarding the incidence of Nagina massid was ended. Even though, a great tide was evolved in minds of people, become Sardar Patel was included in the incidence who was a national leader of freedom fighting movement. Not only was that Bhavnagar in the front line news for long time.

At last, a shameful incidence of try of murder of Sardar Patel in a developed start like Bhavnagar was an outlandish incidence in the history. Had the try had been succeeded, and then it was a black spot on Bhavnagar, not only is that, if the attackers had been succeeded in their intrigue then how the democratic India would have been, a matter of imagination, because, 562 princely states including 222 states of Kathiawad were united due to untiring and strategically act of Sardar Patel. It was a key-question whether any one other could play the role which was played by Sardar Patel. But it was the good luck of India that he was saved.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN THE PRESENCE OF SARDAR PATEL:**

Krishnakumarsinhji, the king of Bhavnagar was a strong lover of democracy tradition. He decided to give responsible government to Bhavnagar as early as possible by discussing with Mahatma Gandhiji and Sardar Patel. Sardar Patel, the Home Minister of India after independence visited Bhavnagar in January 1948. Krishnakumarsinhji the king of Bhavnagar called on an immediate meeting of assembly and announced historically to give a responsible government to people of Bhavnagar state in the presence of Sardar Patel who visited Bhavnagar. At the same time he announced committee to construct a constitution. He also announce that the administration will work with five nominated members till the constitution is framed. Announcement of these five members was also to be announced by members elected in assembly.

Krishnakumarsinhji specially thanked Sardar Patel who visited Bhavnagar on this occasion. Sardar Patel also visited for success of democracy by giving attribute to Sir Prabhushankar Pattani the past chief executive of the state who had contributed importantly in the process of democracy. Sardar Patel also put a foundation stone of 'Gandhi Smriti' building on the same day remembering the days of Gandhi era.

After remaining present in historical occasion of establishment of responsible government in Bhavnagar, Sardar Patel directly went Rajkot, where he arranged a meeting with other kings of Kathiawad and insisted them to think over in this direction and gave them an option to create one state from 222 princely states. As a result, inauguration of joint state of Kathiawad (then Saurashtra) was happened in the presence of Sardar Patel on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1948 in the premises of royal palace of Jamnagar. There was no region in rule of this joint state at that time. All the states of Kathiawad have to be handed over their administration till 15<sup>th</sup> April 1948. Bhavnagar state had started and handed over its rule to joint state. Rashiklal Parikh, the then Home minister of Saurashtra region came to Bhavnagar on the decided i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1948 to take over the charge of Bhavnagar. The formed programme was started at 2.00 p.m. in Motibaug Sachivaliya. In this way all the rules, power, rights, property and responsibilities and Army was handed over to Rashiklal Parikh. The formed announcement was happened and after this announcement Bhavnagar state was merged into Saurashtra state. In this way, Bhavnagar state played an important role in establishing of Saurashtra state and then its administration. V. P. Menon has also noted the matter.

In this way, king of Bhavnagar state announced for responsible government in the presence of Sardar Patel and shown bright example. He had also made the work of merging 222 princely states in Indian Union easily. There is a bright tradition of Bhavnagar to that to leave something for others." King Krishnakumarsinhji offered his state including his property in the feet of Gandhiji and realized the dream of Sardar Patel of United India by destroying limits of princely states. Who can be such noble who was foresighted, people loving and brad thinking of welfare of nation? Names of Krishnakumarsinhji who was an example of duty and the starter of union

from premise of Bhavnagar, Sardar Patel are noted in golden letter in the history of new India.

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