



## **Bardoli Satyagraha and Leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel**

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Most of the people of total 87,000 population of Bardoli taluka, who participated in Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928, were farmers. There were many Patidars, Brahmins and Muslims from Bardoli in the Satyagraha of Gandhiji in South Africa. They went there with the purpose of earning. But they participated in the Satyagraha abandoning their work when it started and showed their enterprise to Gandhiji. In 1921-22, Gandhiji decided to experiment Savinay Kanoonbhang first in Bardoli. But when it was cancelled, Sardar Patel with his companions continued to do his creative work and dreamt of preparing Bardoli for Satyagraha.

When British government suggested increase in revenue by giving different reasons in Bardoli Taluka, a conference of farmers was called under the leadership of Dadubhai Desai in 1927. After discussion, it was decided not to pay revenue. Kalyanji and Kunvarji met Sardar Patel in Ahmedabad and requested for Satyagraha. Sardar said,

“If people are ready not to pay revenue and are ready to die, I shall come.”<sup>1</sup>

Sardar was given the assurance of readiness of the farmers of Bardoli for dying. Sardar and other leading persons went to Sabarmati Ashram to meet Gandhiji. Vallabhbhai told that he had inquired the whole case and was ready to start a movement. Gandhiji replied,

“Then, I am to wish only that the victorious Gujarat may triumph.”<sup>2</sup>

On 4th February, Sardar reached Bardoli and then started sharp leadership of Vallabhbhai and sympathetic guidance of Gandhiji. Common sense of farmers, his unique bravery, innocent diplomacy and sharp management were among the chief characteristics of his leadership. A conference of the framers of the whole taluka was called under the leadership of Patel Vallabhbhai in which farmers of 80 villages participated. Vallabhbhai gave public speech after inquiring them all and gave warning,

“There must not be any game with me. I am not interested in ordinary works. I will be with him who is ready to take risk. In 1921 we were to be tested. But it did not happen. Now the time has come. But are you ready? This is not the question of a single taluka but of several talukas and several districts. If you lose, the future will be bad.”<sup>3</sup>

In Ahmedabad, Patel wrote a letter to the governor and put the demand for Bardoli Satyagraha. But it was rejected and answer was given that the letter had been sent to the department of Revenue. On 12th March, a meeting of farmers was called where Patel said to the farmers again,

“If you are prepared for such risky works, you will have to finish it. If you lose, it would be humiliation for Bardoli and for the country. The whole nation stands on you. Yet no one listens to your complain. So a responsible fight is necessary against this government. Are you ready for that fight?”<sup>4</sup>

The farmers of Bardoli showed their readiness for not suffer any injustice and to fight against cruelty. Then in the meeting Mahadevbhai Desai got the meeting sing the song,

“Shur sangramko dekh bhage nahin,

Dekh bhage sou shura nahin.”<sup>5</sup>

Vallabhbhai got the intention of people through this meeting and arranged for camps at different places in the taluka. The news of Satyagraha and booklets of speeches of Patel started to be published. People read speeches and opinions about Satyagraha of Sardar with great Interest. In the beginning 5000 copies were sold a day but after three months the number increased to 14000. It was the leadership of Sardar that increased the reputation of the booklets. About the booklets Mahadevbhai Desai wrote,

“Once I came to Navsari from Mumbai. I was passing through the bazaar of Navsari. I had cotton beg on my shoulder. A Parsi thought looking at me that I was selling the booklets so he ran after me and said, “Brother, give me a Bardoli booklet.”<sup>6</sup>

Vallabhbhai was traveling the taluka day and night. Swami Akhand was helping him as a secretary. Patel wandered many villages in an open ford motor and poured confidence to the hidden power of the people by explaining the principle of Satyagraha to them in characteristic way.

Vallabhbhai put a resolution to the conference on 12th March that is regarded as a historical resolution of Bardoli Satyagraha.

He checked the arrangements in all talukas before Bardoli Satyagraa started. Camps of main activists and leaders were organized so the unity could be retained among all the castes in which many activists at different place of Gujarat participated.

Vallabhbhai frequently visited villages. His speeches were favorite among the listeners. He inspired them with his colloquial languages which touched their heart. In his speech at a village, he said,

“I am pleased knowing that your fear is vanishing. And remove it if there is any. Throw your fear in well you have nothing to fear but the government has when I wander the taluka at Twelve one at night no one asks me “Who is there?” Ravishankarbhai says that even a dog does not bite any stranger in the villages of this talukas, a buffalo does not hit its horn. Your land lordship obstructs you. Let confidence enter in your eyes and learn to fight against injustice for justice.”<sup>7</sup>

Farmers were annoyed by British government. Notices for paying the revenue were issued and the government started confiscation for not paying it. People were steady though the government applied the policy of parting. Pledges were taken every village. Those who paid the tax were boycotted by people. The

government was also not inactive. Buffaloes were taken away as confiscation. Activists were punished. Persons like Ravishankar Maharaj, Chimanlal, Gordhandas were captured and were punished for the six months jail.

During this time was organized an assembly by Patel in Valod. As Patel was going to finish his speech, cries of buffalos were heard. And this gave an opportunity to Patel to speak. He said,

“Listen the cries of buffalos, Reporters, Report that even buffalos speak in Valod. You don’t understand yet how cruel this government is. But the cries of buffalos convey that justice is gone from this state.”

Here it is not difficult to understand the simple and effective mixture of laughter and seriousness. But Sardar became so serious that people could get the fire burning in his heart.

Vallabhbhai gave the exact answer to the cruelties of the government. He said that if Commissioner wanted to meet, he would show his readiness for expression of desires of farmers of Bardoli Taluka through their meeting. The purpose of the fight was not political but was confined to the inquiry commission. Patel opened the secrets of cruel and monstrous administration of the government.

During Bardoli Satyagraha, Sardar said,

When iron is heated and becomes red, sparks are there. The government is flying sparks. When iron is hot, hammer does not become hot. if we want to shape iron, it is not necessary to heat hammer. We must not be annoyed in any condition.”<sup>8</sup>

A Committee On the increase in land revenue was announced on 1<sup>st</sup> October. Two officers of the government enquired for a fortnight. Desai Bhulabhai came forward to present the side of People. From the side of Vallabhbhai came Narhari Parikh, Mahadevbhai Desai, Ramnarayan Pathak, Kalyanji Mehta and Gordhandas Chokhvala The inquiry commission affirmed the complaint by Satyagrahis. Thus, this Satyagraha ended happily and became successful.

Vallabhbhai came to be called ‘Sardar’ because of his leadership of the Bardoli Satyagraha. Then he worked for the country for 22 year. He had unique characteristic of removing the pain of villagers as well as patience and power for fighting against the government. His speeches were highly rhetoric. It was a great fortune for Bardoli that it got a leader who was infused with such virtues.

#### **References:**

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