

Blog

Sardar Ko Salam, Indirajika Smaran : 31st. October



Come October 31, we have functions to mark events relating to two great personalities who have played very important role in the making of India. They are Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mrs Indira Gandhi. Like many other friends in public life, I also have to attend functions involving these two leaders at some places as speaker while at some as guest.

Despite two representing two different phases of India- pre and post independence India, they had some common qualities which made Sardar Patel Iron Man of India and Indira Gandhi Iron Lady of India. Both were quite sensitive to the needs of people and committed to the cause of India. At the same time, they had a tough frame of mind and strong will to take their convictions to ultimate conclusions.

With the rise of parochial regionalism at the cost of unity and integrity of the country, we need nationalistic spirit of these two leaders today more than that of any other time. We have to think in terms of

common man. The need of the hour is more today because the world is under market driven economy and it is the common men whose interests are to be safeguarded.

We have rising regional kshatras who are trying to bend the federal structure of the constitution to satisfy their insatiable hunger for power and indiscriminate and unjustified use of power for personal gratification. It calls for something like bringing over 600 provinces in the fold of India. By all means Sardar was a national leader with a clear vision of strong and integrated India. His all actions show this. Despite a strong personality and boldness to disagree with leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, Sardar remained integral part of the team that led India to freedom.

In the case of Indira Gandhi, whether it was nationalization of banks or the nuclear test only two factors were predominant – people and India. Nuclear test by India or intervention in Bangladesh clearly established India as an independent power with its decisive say. That is the reason even today people remember these two leaders when it comes to thinking India as an entity, an independent country with its own voice and image in the world.

These were the leaders whom people loved and adored for their qualities. They did not stage manage applauses and laurels to show that they were mass leaders. No doubt these leaders were firm and committed in their views, but this was guided by their sensitivity to common people and the spirit of united and integrated India.

Congress had number of leaders with prime ministerial mettle and Gandhi was the unifying force of this network of genius and talent. This prowess of knowledge and talent made them humble. It brought to them

strength to stand dissent and dissolve differences for the common cause of the national interest.

Such people are doing damage to Sardar in their blind pursuit for power. Sardar had done many things besides unifying princely states. He was a great administrator. He was a man who had grounded himself through ground realities of India. This was reflected in his role in Kheda satygarh, his role in municipalities and role as president of Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee for pretty long 20 years. At the time of partition, riots broke out in Amritsar. Here is an excerpt of his address to people from his car. “Here, in this same city, the blood of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims mingled in the bloodbath of Jalianwala Bagh I am grieved to think that things have come to such a pass that no Muslim can go about in Amritsar and no Hindu or Sikh can even think of living in Lahore. The butchery of innocent and defenceless men, women and children does not behoove brave men... I am quite certain that India’s interest lies in getting all her men and women across the border and sending out all Muslims from East Punjab. I have come to you with a specific appeal. Pledge the safety of Muslim refugees crossing the city. Any obstacles or hindrances will only worsen the plight of our refugees who are already performing prodigious feats of endurance. If we have to fight, we must fight clean. Such a fight must await an appropriate time and conditions and you must be watchful in choosing your ground. To fight against the refugees is no fight at all. No laws of humanity or war among honourable men permit the murder of people who have sought shelter and protection. Let there be truce for three months in which both sides can exchange their refugees. This sort of truce is permitted even by laws of war. Let us take the initiative in breaking this vicious circle of attacks and counter-attacks. Hold your hands for a week and see what

happens. Make way for the refugees with your own force of volunteers and let them deliver the refugees safely at our frontier” It is the time that we think about India as a country and inculcate the spirit of nationalism of these two leaders associated with October 31. I feel that there is a deliberate attempt to undermine the stature of Sardar by some leaders to pose them selves as leader which they are not.

Sardar Patel had banned RSS. Now we have RSS pracharak and RSS appointed Prime Minister claiming Sardar Patel’s legacy? What can be more ironical?

The people of the nation know. Sardar Patel had said nobody in this country spreads more poison than the RSS. This is what Sardar said but BJP is a party without any role models. Without any credible mentors. And so it is now trying to hijack Sardar Patel.

Sardar Patel was a secular man. And till he died, he was with the Congress.

Sardar Patel and Nehru did not compete with each other. They complemented each other.

In fact, they had differences and when Sardar Patel offered to resign over one such difference. Nehru wrote back to him saying that No, you will not resign. I will resign.
