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SARDAR JATEL



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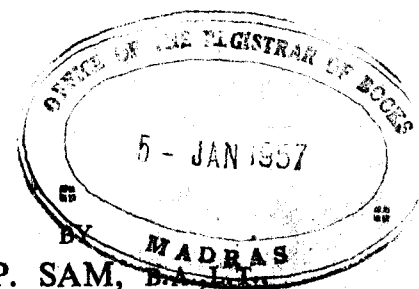
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MCHANDER & Co.,
12, High Road Madras-5.

SARDAR PATEL

A biography of
Shri Sardar Vallabhai Patel

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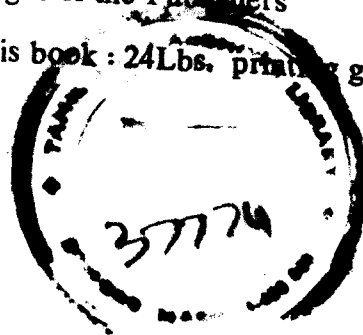
RAJA RAMCHANDER & CO.,
520, Triplicane High Road, Madras-5.

First Edition : 1950

Prepared as per the latest Departmental Syllabus.

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Paper used in this book : 24Lbs. printed glaze.



Price As. 7.

Printed at Raja Ramchander Press, No. 4, Nallathambi
Mudali St., Madras-5.

PREFACE

The life sketch of Patel, one of the greatest sons of Bharat Matha, is given in this book, in as simple a style as possible, taking care to avoid all unnecessary political matters and concentrating mainly on his heroism and self-sacrifice. The aim of this book is to inculcate in the minds of the young, the high ideals of our national hero, so that, imbibing these ideals, they may grow into true citizens of our country. It is believed that the inspiration which our youth get from the study of the lives of our national heroes will never fail to stand them in good stead in their later lives.

Quotations from his speeches are selected and used very sparingly, for the reason that political speeches are often a little bit too high for the comprehension of the pupils for whom they are intended.

Author

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EARLY LIFE OF PATEL

Many years ago, there lived a farmer in Gujarat. His name was Jhaveribhai. He was a good and brave man. He loved his country very much. The people of his district loved and respected him.

The farmer had many sons. His third son was a very intelligent little boy. His name was Vallabhai Patel. He was clever, truthful and honest. He studied in a high school at Nadrada. Young Patel would never tell a lie and would cheat no one. So his classmates liked him and his teachers loved him.

Even as a boy, he was kind and just to everyone. He would not put up with any injustice. One day

a big fellow in his class began beating a weak friend of his. Patel, himself was not a big boy, nor was he very strong. All the same, he took up the cause of the small boy and stopped the big boy from beating the little one.

He was a good student. He would never miss a class; nor would he ever go to school without doing home-work. In due time he passed the Matriculation Examination.

Patel then sat for the District Pleaders' Examination and came out successful. He thus became a pleader at a very early age. He started practice at a small town called Gothra. Clients came to him from different places. Everyone found that he was honest and hard-working. He soon earned a good name for himself.

He then moved to a bigger town, namely, Ahmedabad. Here, too, his fame spread quickly. His clients increased and so did his income. Very often he had to work hard without taking any rest for hours together.

Comprehension Questions :

1. What was Patel's father ?
2. Why did Patel's teachers love him ?
3. What kind of a boy was he in the class ?
4. What did he do, after passing the Matriculation Examination ?
5. How did he earn a good name ?
6. Answer the following questions by saying, 'Yes' or 'No' :
 - (a) Did Patel go late to the class ?
 - (b) Was he honest as a pleader ?

PATEL IN LONDON

Patel wanted to become a barrister. He should go to London and spend a lot of money for this. Having made up his mind, he went to London and began his studies.

At first, Patel felt homesick. He often thought of his parents, his brothers and sisters and the many friends he had left in India. He could not get the kind of food he liked. Sometimes, the English climate did not suit him. But he said to himself, "I did not come here to eat good food and enjoy life. I came here to study and become a barrister." He spent most of his time in studies. He seldom cared for idle amusements. He spent his leisure hours usefully.

Patel won for himself the name of the most hard-working student in London. He generally studied for fourteen hours a day in the library and the Middle Temple. God rewarded him for his hard work. In the examination he got a first class and was first among the firsts.

Patel, no doubt, felt very glad. He always said that, if we worked hard, God would surely help us to win success. This great capacity for very hard work and his firm faith in God remained with him all through his life.

Comprehension Questions :

1. Why did Patel go to England ?
2. What made him homesick at first ?
3. How did he spend his time in England ?
4. How many hours a day did he spend in the library and the Middle Temple ?

5. What was the result of his hard studies in England ?
6. Why did the young men of England respect him ?
7. What were the two qualities that saved Patel from bad company ?

PATEL, THE YOUNG BARRISTER

When Patel returned to India, all his friends and relatives were very glad. They found in him a barrister of great worth. He presented a smart appearance with his clean and well-made suit of clothes. Everyone knew that he also had a warm heart.

As a barrister, he became very famous. People came to him from different parts of Bombay to consult him on legal matters. Soon he found that he had too many clients to leave him time to take rest even in his house.

The judges had great respect for Patel. He would never take up a false case. He would never put

up with anything that was not just. His arguments were clear and brief and he had a ready wit.

Patel used to spend his evenings at the Gujarathi Club in Ahmedabad. In the beginning he did not care very much for politics. It was law, and that too criminal law, that appealed to him. But if any injustice was done anywhere, he would not keep quiet. In his fight against injustice, he would even forget his own work. There were many in the club who wished that he should turn his attention to his country. They thought that India would be very much benefited if he took up her cause. With his deep sense of justice, he could not stay away from the fight for his motherland for long.

Comprehension Questions :

1. How did Patel look when he returned to India ?
2. Did he have much rest when he was a barrister ?
3. Why did the judges respect him in the court ?
4. What quality of Patel surprised the judges ?
5. How did Patel spend his evenings ?
6. What part of law attracted Patel most ?
7. Did he show any interest in politics at first ?

LIFE AT AHMEDABAD

Mahatma Gandhi had just then returned to India from South Africa. His mind was filled with ideas of Satyagraha. He had tried it in South Africa and succeeded. He wished to try it in India. He wanted a large number of his countrymen to learn it and practise it in their daily life. So he founded a Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad. Young Patel heard of it, but did not care much for it at first. In fact, he did not think much of the power of Satyagraha. Once Gandhiji came to the Gujarathi Club. At that time, Patel was playing bridge with some of his friends. No one knew at the time that this visitor would later become Patel's guru.

Two years later, Patel became a member of the Ahmedabad Munici-

pality. He made up his mind to do his best for the improvement of the city. Luckily for the city he became the Chairman of the Sanitation Committee.

Just then, a terrible plague broke out in the city. Thousands died of it and many left the city. His friends begged him to get away from Ahmedabad. But Patel would not leave his post of duty.

Patel said, "I will not leave the city. I will stay on and save the people. If I stay here, the municipal servants will take heart and do their work well and rid the city of this disease."

He personally attended on the sick and consoled them. Very often he examined the unclean places himself and had them cleaned at once. He

set an example for others to follow and made everyone join together and fight the plague down.

Patel strongly believed in the proverb, "Example is better than precept." The people of Ahmedabad were not slow to find out what a brave and good man he was. Who will not love a man who puts service above self?

Patel showed, by his selfless work during the plague, that he wanted to serve the people. He did not want to be a member of the municipality simply for the honour of it. He became one, only to work for the good of the city. He worked for it at the risk of his own life. He thus became very popular.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What was Gandhiji doing in Ahmedabad?
2. What was Patel doing when Gandhiji visited the Gujarathi Club?

3. Why did Patel refuse to leave the city when plague broke out?
4. How did Patel make the people work for the cleanliness of the city?
5. Why did he become a member of the Ahmedabad Municipality?
6. How did he become very popular?
7. Answer the following by saying, 'Yes' or 'No'
 - (a) Was Patel anxious to help the people at the risk of his own life?
 - (b) Did he make other people work for the city by force or by threats?

PATEL COMES UNDER GANDHIJI

Gandhiji had by this time spread his principles of Satyagraha. Many people had learned about its great power and many more had become great believers in it.

Just at this time, he became the President of the Gujarathi Sabha. Patel had thus occasion to meet him very often. As a magnet pulls a bit of iron to itself, so Gandhiji attracted Patel towards him. Little by little Patel learnt about the greatness of the Mahatma.

Without knowing it himself he had become a follower of Gandhiji. Patel felt the power of Satyagraha and, under his master, learned to use it.

Just then a golden chance came to test its power for good. In Gujarat,

especially in the Kaira district, a great famine had broken out. All the crops had failed, and the farmers suffered very much. So, the people requested the Government not to collect taxes for that year. But the Government did not pay heed to their request. Patel wished to see justice done to the farmers. The people looked to him for guidance. They wanted to offer Satyagraha under his leadership. Patel never hesitated. He organised the Satyagraha movement in this district.

For the first time, he cast off his hat, coat, suit and boots and moved among the people in simple Indian clothes. He appealed to the sense of honour and the patriotism of the people. The humble villagers listened to him with respect. There was truth and sincerity in every word

he spoke. People followed him in thousands. The name of Patel was on the lips of everyone all over Gujarat.

The Satyagraha movement proved a success. The Government made peace with the farmers and gave up the taxes.

Comprehension Questions :

1. When did Patel first come under the influence of Gandhiji ?
2. What did he learn from Gandhiji ?
3. Why did not the people of Gujarat pay their taxes ?
4. Why did Patel support the cause of the farmers ?
5. When did Patel first cast off his European mode of dress ?
6. Why do you think this Satyagraha movement a success ?
7. Did the people of Gujarat feel thankful to Patel ?

PATEL THE POLITICIAN

By now Patel became known everywhere as a fearless fighter for truth and justice. Everyone welcomed him as a selfless worker for his motherland. He felt keenly about the position of India under the British. He now decided to give up his entire life for the freedom of his country.

Meanwhile Gandhiji and other leaders had decided upon the "Tri-colour Flag" as the National Flag. All the Congress workers wanted this flag to become known to all. In Nagpur, they decided to take the National Flag in a procession. Patel and his brother were to lead this procession.

But the police objected to this. They said that they should not carry

the flag in the direction of the Civil Lines. Patel then started the "Flag Satyagraha." In this his elder brother helped him much. They arranged for a big procession. Thousands of men and women took part in it. Once again Satyagraha triumphed. Patel thus upheld the honour of the National Flag.

After this, he became the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Ahmedabad Congress. It was a rather difficult time for the people. So Patel's work was not a bed of roses. He worked with one aim, namely, 'country first and everything else next.'

Ahmedabad had not forgotten his services during the time of the plague. He was made the President of the Ahmedabad Municipality, the highest

honour it can give him. Patel took up his job seriously. Many parts of Ahmedabad owe their improvements to him.

Whatever Patel touched, he adorned. If it was politics, he put his heart and soul into it. If it was a simple municipal affair, still he brought the same thoroughness into it. Only this quality made him a successful leader. If one stayed with him only a short time, he would come to know his sincerity and truthfulness. He meant every word he said. Being a man of few words, he never said anything that he did not mean. This kind of thoroughness, sincerity, brevity and hard work can never remain unnoticed. This was the secret of his success. His friends admired him for these qualities and his enemies regarded him with terror.

Comprehension Questions :

1. What did people think of Patel in regard to his public work ?
2. Why did he take part in politics ?
3. Why did they arrange the National Flag procession in Nagpur ?
4. Who were to lead this procession ?
5. Why did the police object to this procession ?
6. What was the result of the Flag Satyagraha ?
7. Who was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Ahmedabad Congress ?
8. How did the city of Ahmedabad honour Patel ?
9. What was the secret of Patel's greatness as a leader ?

"SARDAR" PATEL

Bardoli is a taluq in Surat. It consists chiefly of farmers, most of whom are very poor. At one time Government asked them to pay higher taxes. They could not do so. Hence trouble started there.

Patel taught these simple farmers to stand united. He told them that they should tell the truth to the authorities in a calm manner. He taught them that true Satyagraha would make the authorities understand their difficulties. At first the villagers were afraid that they would lose their lands. Some even feared going to jail. But Patel was an expert in organisation. He spared no trouble in going almost to everyone of them and speaking to them. In simple

words, he made them understand the power of Satyagraha.

Patel's zeal and sincerity had their effect upon them. They understood that truth and justice were more powerful than the British. To the wonder of all, they became united and strong. Fear had left them for good. They were ready to go to jail for the sake of truth. They had come to have complete faith in Patel. At his word they were willing to go through all hardships. Once more Satyagraha triumphed. The Government reduced the taxes and the poor farmers were very happy. Everyone admitted that Patel was a godsend. Many wondered what would have happened to the farmers, if Patel had not led them.

Mahatma Gandhi rejoiced in Patel's leadership. He praised him

in an open meeting. He said that Patel's skill in organising people was beyond all words. So, he declared that Patel should be his deputy in his Satyagraha battles. He thus got the title of 'Sardar' from the Father of the Nation. Even to-day we all lovingly call him 'Sardar Vallabhai Patel.'

Comprehension Questions :

1. How did trouble start at Bardoli ?
2. What did Patel teach the simple farmers to do ?
3. What were the farmers afraid of ?
4. Why did the farmers think that Patel was a godsend ?
5. What quality of Patel do you see in the Bardoli Satyagraha movement ?
6. How did Gandhiji show his admiration for Patel ?

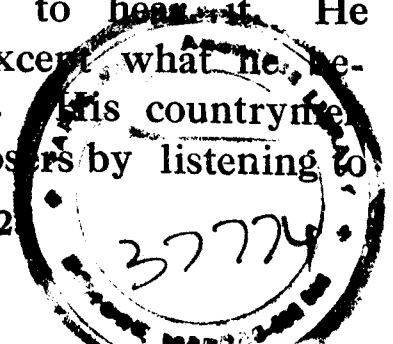
THE BEST SPEAKER

Patel was called a man of few words. This was true to a great extent. But when he did speak, very few could speak as he did. He put even the most difficult of ideas in simple and clear sentences. He could make people laugh or weep at will. He could keep his hearers spellbound for hours together. He spoke from his very heart. Even his political rivals who listened to him went away convinced.

He was a strict disciplinarian. He criticised people very severely, if they failed to do their duty. Even the highest of British officers would think twice before doing anything unjust in his presence. He exposed dishonest public officers.

When Gandhiji started the great Civil Disobedience Movement, with the historic march to Dandhi, Patel went in advance. He spoke to the villagers in a language which they understood. The effect of those speeches was that the villagers became non-violent soldiers in the fight for their country's freedom. The power of these speeches was felt in all parts of India. When he was in jail, he could not of course speak to his countrymen. But the people never forgot him.

He did not speak in order to become a great speaker. He spoke because he had something to tell the people. He believed that he had something very important to say. He wanted everyone to hear it. He spoke nothing except what he believed to be true. His countrymen would never be losers by listening to



his words. So everyone should read his speeches for their truth, sincerity brevity and simplicity. And even people who did not agree with him in many matters liked to listen to him.

Comprehension Questions :

1. Did Patel talk much ?
2. When did he speak forcibly ?
3. How did the audience feel when he spoke ?
4. Why did Patel feel sad when anyone did not do his duty ?
5. How did he speak of unjust people ?
6. How did Patel help Gandhiji during the Dandhi march ?
7. What was the secret of the great power of his public talks ?

CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Patel's great work at Bardoli won for him the name of 'The Hero of Bardoli'. People everywhere came to know that he was a leader of rare merit. It is no wonder therefore that the Congress elected him as its President for the Karachi Session. No one deserved this honour better than he did. All agreed that he would do much good for the Congress and the people. Moreover Gujarat felt honoured by this election.

As President of the Congress, he taught the Congress workers to forget their 'self'. He wanted every patriot to work for his country as much as he could and not to expect any reward in return. India, he said,

needed selfless workers. He, who worked for his country, should not care to make himself rich; nor should he try to get jobs under the government. Titles should have no charm for a true patriot.

Patel made everyone understand that India was chiefly a land of villages. Most of its people were humble and poor villagers. In fact, he knew that the real people of India were the villagers. So, everyone should work for the improvement of villages. When the villagers became happy and rich, the whole country would become happy and rich. Patel therefore could not keep quiet, when anything done injured the villagers.

The British did not understand Patel; so they put him in jail. Patel was willing to suffer any hardship for the sake of his countrymen. He was

in Yerravada prison. His greatest happiness in this prison was that Gandhiji was his companion. Patel took great care of him. Till his death, Gandhiji spoke of Patel's loving care of him during his prison life. Gandhiji says in one of his letters, "The affection with which Patel covered me, recalls to me that of my own dear mother."

Comprehension Questions :

1. Why do we call him 'The Hero of Bardoli' ?
2. Why did Gujarat feel honoured specially when Patel became the President of the Congress ?
3. What did he teach to the Congress workers ?
4. Why did he wish to improve every village in India ?
5. In what prison did they keep Patel ?
6. What was his greatest happiness in the prison ?
7. How did Gandhiji show his thankfulness to Patel ?

THE NATION'S GUIDE

Sardar Patel was rightly called the 'Iron Man'. Even in moments of great danger and trouble, he never lost heart. In fact, the greater the trouble, the greater was his courage. This was why the people of India looked to him for guidance in times of trouble.

In 1934, when Patel came out of prison he became a member of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. His work was to guide the Congress ministers in the various provinces. This was not a very pleasant job, because his duty was to find fault, when anything went wrong.

Being a man of character, he was never afraid of anything. Without

fear or favour, he did what was right. No one else could have done this work so ably or so nobly as Patel did.

Patel showed to all the Congress workers that discipline was the foundation of their organisation. Himself being a strict disciplinarian, he could not allow loose discipline in anyone-least of all in the organisation of which he was the President.

Even those, who came to Patel for the first time, felt his discipline. All right-thinking men loved him for this strong sense of discipline. Men of weak nature were afraid of this iron discipline and avoided him.

Whenever Patel spoke to young men and women, he spoke about the value of discipline. He believed that, without a strong sense of discipline,

we can never become good. He advised teachers to teach discipline to the pupils first. He said that, if there was discipline then everything else would follow. Patel thought that boys never learned anything in a school where there was no discipline. He once said, "Good education given in an atmosphere of indiscipline would be like good seeds sown on a rocky ground."

Comprehension Questions:

1. Why did people call Sardar Patel 'The Iron Man'?
2. What work did he do as a member of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee?
3. Why did Patel feel that discipline was necessary in the Congress organisation?
4. Why were men of weak nature afraid of Patel?

5. What did Patel teach young men and women?
6. Why did he insist on discipline in schools?
7. When will good education become useless?

ROCK OF COMMON SENSE

An American once spoke of our land thus: 'India is a land of many poor men with very rich common sense.' It is certainly men like Patel who make the foreigners think of 'very rich common sense.' We see the richness of Patel's common sense in all his organising movements like the 'Bardoli Satyagraha.' His speeches delighted the people because they were full of common sense.

Once while addressing a meeting in Bardoli, a young farmer asked, "You say, join the Satyagraha movement. What shall we do if the British take away our lands?"

Patel in reply asked him, "What! can the British carry your lands to England?" This reply made the

farmer understand that their strength lay in their unity.

In 1942 the 'Quit India Movement' began. Patel made the British understand that they must give freedom to India. So, in a simple way he appealed to them thus: "Can you ever defeat your enemies without the help of the forty million people of India? Will these forty million people ever join a war, in which they have no interest? On the other hand, will they not fight to the bitter end, if they know that they are fighting for the freedom of their country?"

Patel's strong common sense was like a beacon light to the other leaders of India. He understood any difficult situation at a glance. When many of our countrymen had no great hope of winning freedom, Patel said, "Inde-

pendence is coming like a flood tide. I am only afraid how we will face it. We should not allow our strength to be wasted away by pointing out the failures of our men during past years."

Patel always called on his countrymen to work for peace and unity in the country. His solid common sense told him that India had to fear nothing so long as its people remained united. He spent almost all his lifetime in teaching us the need for unity.

He said, "The first condition for building a strong and free India is unity and peace. If there is no unity in the country, it is bound to go down. Therefore we must first make up our differences and behave in such a manner that there will be peace and mutual good will in the country. We

lost our leader Gandhiji because we forgot the very first lesson of freedom. If, even after his death, we do not know that in unity lies strength, we will suffer great misfortunes. I hope and trust that the country has learnt that lesson. To have unity we must forget our religion, our caste or community. We are all Indians and we are equal. There is no difference between man and man in a free country. All should have equal chances, equal rights and equal responsibilities."

Comprehension Questions :

1. What did an American once say of our land?
2. What quality of Patel delighted the hearers when he spoke?
3. What was Patel's reply to the farmer who feared the British?
4. How did he appeal to the British to give us freedom during the war?

5. Did he tell beforehand that India would become independent?
6. Why did he want his countrymen to get united?
7. According to Patel what was the best way to have unity?

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

In 1947, Patel became the Deputy Prime Minister of India. In this position he had to look after Home Affairs as well as the States. In respect of Home Affairs he brought about order and peace in the land with an iron hand. Everyone soon found out that a strict disciplinarian was in charge of the order and peace of our land. It was a time of great disorder and confusion. But Patel rose to the occasion; he who tried to disturb the peace of our land soon felt sorry for it.

The civil officers understood that Patel was their friend and that their duty was to serve the nation truly. He told the government officers that their first duty was to work for the

well-being of the country as a whole. Government would keep them contented and happy. But government servants should not make high salaries as a condition of service.

Patel personally looked into every government department under him. He would allow no corruption in the officers. He was not slow to detect honest and hard-working officers and reward them fittingly. Patel's service to the States will never be forgotten. He is rightly called 'the architect of the Indian Union'. He is the real cause for the unification of this country into one. The six hundred and odd States, large and small, in this country became one with the Indian Union. Patel had done this and India can never forget this great service of Patel.

Though his health was rapidly failing, he would never shirk his various duties as a member of the cabinet. Doctors advised him many times to take complete rest. But Patel would not care for his health. Service to his country was a religion with him. He undertook long journeys even in his old age, when he felt that the people in distant parts of India wanted him.

When he went to Madras for the last time in his life, he said, "I have come to you probably for the last time, (because it is not easy for me to stand the strain of travel), to tell you where we stand and what our fortune is. I and my co-workers want, in the evening of our lifetime, to put this country on the rails and strengthen it so that India will be regarded as a

nation which is fit for the leadership of Gandhiji.”

Comprehension Questions :

1. What did Patel do as minister for Home Affairs ?
2. What was his advice to civil officers ?
3. What was Patel's service to the States ?
4. Why did he undertake long journeys even in his old age ?
5. What did he say when he came to Madras for the last time ?
6. Why was Patel called 'The Architect of India' ?
7. Answer the following questions with Yes or No:
 - (a) Did he allow corrupt officers to carry on their work peacefully ?
 - (b) Was Patel a friend of honest and handworking civil officers ?

PATEL THE MAN

We shall always remember Patel as one who loved his country and served her till the last breath of his life. He served her, fought for her, and defended her to the last. He never took rest. Even when life was fast flying from his body, he talked only of his beloved country. With India on his lips, he breathed his last. He gave up his all—time, energy and power—for the country he loved and served so well.

A great patriot like Patel never knows fear. His strong sense of discipline and strict principle of justice naturally made many enemies for him. There were several attempts to kill him. Everyone around him warned

him; but he made light of these dangers.

On one occasion some thoughtless people pelted stones at his car and smashed its window panes. This terrified those who were with him. But Patel remained unmoved. He calmly told the driver, 'Drive on, we should not be late for the meeting.'

Once he had to leave his home a little late, quite by chance. But that helped him to escape from his enemies on the road. When Patel heard this he did not make much of these dangers nor did he hate those people who were planning to give him trouble.

Our country owes a deep debt of gratitude to Patel. He has taught us discipline and unity. He has shown us how to make our country great.

Everyone should carry on the great work from where he left it. Only in this way we can show our love and respect for the memory of Patel. Our country should produce many Patels. Why not?

Patel himself addressing a rally of children in Delhi once said, "I like children. You must learn about the power of truth and the value of discipline. You should realise that work is worship. You are small today. Soon you will grow and become pillars of this country. We must have strong pillars. That is why your motto should be 'Service above Self.'"

• Comprehension Questions :

1. Give one incident to show that Patel worked for his country till he actually breathed his last.
2. Why did some people try to kill him ?

3. How do you know that he was a brave man?
4. What did Patel teach us?
5. What did he teach young children?
6. How can we show our love and respect for the memory of Patel?

GLOSSARY

barrister	a lawyer
brevity	shortness of speech
bridge	a kind of card-game
cause	reason
client	a person who gets help or advice from a lawyer, etc.
console	give comfort, help or sympathy to a person who is suffering, etc.
expose	make bare
homesick	sad because one is away from home
precept	a rule, a command or a maxim
spellbound	too interested or amazed to move
smart	clever, skilful
terrible	arousing fear
triumph	success

