

## READING WITH UNDERSTANDING (Nation builders of India: Vallabh Bhai Patel and Bal Gangadhar Tilak)



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This lesson is about the two prominent nation-builders of India: Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. This lesson aims to provide an understanding of the contributions of these leaders in India's struggle for independence and nation-building.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, the learner:

- Analyses and evaluates different passages written in English;
- Interprets short theme-based passages by close reading, and answers questions on those passages.

### 18.1 LOKMANYA BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on July 23, 1856, in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra. He hailed from a Brahmin family and received an early education rooted in Indian culture and heritage. His quest for knowledge led him to pursue higher education in mathematics and law. Tilak's entry into politics was marked by his deep sense of national pride and a call for Swaraj. He became a part of the Indian National Congress but later founded the extremist wing within the Congress, advocating for a more assertive approach towards achieving independence. His newspaper, "Kesari," and later "Maratha," became powerful platforms for spreading nationalist ideas.

One of the most famous incidents from Bal Gangadhar Tilak's life is the story of how he popularised the Ganesh Chaturthi festival as a public celebration. When Tilak was a young boy, he witnessed a group of children in his neighbourhood playing outside during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. These children were upset because they couldn't

Reading With  
Understanding

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*Notes*

openly celebrate the festival due to restrictions by the British colonial authorities. Tilak was deeply moved by this incident and felt that the cultural and religious traditions of India were being suppressed. In response, he had a brilliant idea – he decided to make the Ganesh Chaturthi celebration a public event. He believed that by celebrating the festival openly and bringing people together, they could assert their cultural identity and build a sense of unity and pride. This initiative led to the public celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi, a tradition that continues to this day in many parts of India, where communities come together to worship Lord Ganesha with elaborate processions, music, and dance.

Another notable initiative he took was the celebration of the Shivaji festival. In 1895, Tilak organised a grand Shivaji festival in Pune to commemorate the Maratha warrior king, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This festival was not just about remembering the past but also about inspiring people to take pride in their culture and history. The festival included processions, historical exhibitions, and cultural events that brought the community together. Tilak's vision was to remind people of the valour and bravery of leaders like Shivaji and to instil a sense of patriotism and pride in their Indian identity. His efforts to revive and celebrate India's rich history contributed to the cultural awakening of the time.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a passionate leader who believed in direct action to achieve independence. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was known for his powerful speeches and his ability to mobilise the masses. In a memorable incident during a public gathering, Tilak declared, "Swarajya is my birthright, and I shall have it!" This powerful statement became a rallying cry for the independence movement and inspired countless Indians to join the struggle for self-rule. Tilak's words resonated deeply with people from all walks of life, igniting a sense of national pride and determination to work towards achieving Swaraj (self-rule). This declaration became an iconic moment in India's fight for independence and galvanised the spirit of freedom among the masses. His ability to mobilise the masses and his call for non-cooperation with the British authorities during the Swadeshi Movement and the boycott of foreign goods had a profound impact on the freedom struggle.

Tilak was not only a nationalist but also a reformer. He worked to promote education among the masses and emphasised the importance of cultural and linguistic identity. His efforts in the field of education and his contributions to the development of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival as a public celebration were notable. Tilak's unwavering commitment to the cause of independence led to several imprisonments by the British colonial authorities. He spent a significant part of his life behind bars, enduring hardships

for his convictions. Despite this, he remained a steadfast and inspirational figure for many.

One significant aspect of Bal Gangadhar Tilak's prison life was his commitment to the cause of Indian independence while incarcerated at Mandalay Central Jail in Burma. Despite the challenging conditions, Tilak continued to write prolifically. He authored several works, including "The Arctic Home in the Vedas" and "Gita Rahasya," during his imprisonment. These literary works not only showcased his intellectual prowess but also played a vital role in inspiring the Indian masses to join the struggle for freedom. His writings were smuggled out of prison and published in newspapers, amplifying the call for independence and demonstrating his unwavering dedication to the cause even from behind bars.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's legacy is multifaceted. He is remembered as a passionate nationalist who ignited the spirit of self-rule among the masses. His contributions to the Swadeshi Movement, the promotion of education, and the assertion of cultural identity continue to influence India's socio-political landscape. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's life and work exemplify the power of unwavering determination and the ability of one individual to inspire a nation. His call for Swaraj and his role in shaping India's struggle for independence make him a revered figure in India's history, a true patriot who dedicated his life to the cause of freedom.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.1

Choose the correct option for each question.

1. What were the names of the newspapers started by Tilak?
  - a) Kesari and Maratha
  - b) The Times of India and Hindustan Times
  - c) Swarajya and Young India
  - d) The Pioneer and The Tribune
2. Which festival did Bal Gangadhar Tilak start to celebrate in public?
  - a) Holi
  - b) Ganesh Chaturthi
  - c) Diwali
  - d) Eid



*Notes*

Reading With  
Understanding

## Notes

3. What did Tilak mean by the statement “Swarajya is my birthright, and I shall have it?”
  - a) He demanded a salary increase for government officials.
  - b) He asserted his right to celebrate religious festivals openly.
  - c) He declared his unwavering determination to achieve self-rule for India.
  - d) He insisted on becoming the President of the Indian National Congress.
4. What did Tilak do when he was imprisoned?
  - a) He organised a cricket tournament.
  - b) He authored literary works like “The Arctic Home in the Vedas.”
  - c) He went on a hunger strike.
  - d) He travelled to London to meet with British officials.
5. Where was Tilak imprisoned when he wrote his book “Gita Rahasya”?
  - a) Alcatraz Prison, USA
  - b) Tihar Jail, India
  - c) Mandalay Central Jail, Burma
  - d) Robben Island, South Africa

### 18.2 SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL - THE IRON MAN OF INDIA

Vallabhbhai Patel was born on October 31, 1875, in Nadiad, Gujarat, India, into a humble agricultural family. From a young age, he displayed remarkable **determination** and a thirst for knowledge. Patel’s journey led him to study law at the Middle Temple Inn in London, England, where he honed his legal skills and developed a keen sense of justice. Upon returning to India in 1913, Patel began his legal career as a barrister in Ahmedabad. His sharp legal acumen, coupled with his deep concern for social issues, quickly gained him recognition. Patel’s legal practice became a platform through which he advocated for the rights of the underprivileged and disenfranchised, setting the stage for his future political career.

Patel’s growing involvement in India’s freedom struggle drew him towards the Indian National Congress. His tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to the cause of independence led him to rise through the ranks of the Congress, earning respect and

admiration for his leadership. Sardar Patel's commitment to India's independence was unwavering. He was not only a vocal proponent but also a staunch practitioner of nonviolent resistance. During the struggle for independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a crucial role in the Kheda Satyagraha, a historic episode of nonviolent resistance against the British colonial administration. In Kheda, Gujarat, poor farmers were facing a severe crop failure, and they were unable to pay land revenue to the British government. Sardar Patel, known for his empathetic leadership, took up the cause of these distressed farmers. He led the Kheda Satyagraha, urging the farmers to withhold their taxes and demanding relief from the oppressive revenue policies. His participation in various civil disobedience movements earned him numerous prison sentences, but he remained resolute in his convictions. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's leadership during the Bardoli Satyagraha is a remarkable story. In 1928, the British government increased land revenue rates in the Bardoli region of Gujarat, causing immense hardship to the local farmers. Patel took up the cause and led the Bardoli Satyagraha to protest against this unjust policy. The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, under his leadership, stands as an iconic example of his dedication to the cause, earning him the revered title of "Sardar" or "Leader."

During the final stages of India's struggle for independence, Patel played a pivotal role in negotiations with the British authorities. His strategic acumen and diplomatic finesse were instrumental in securing India's hard-fought independence in 1947. He not only played a key role in convincing the British to grant independence but also in persuading the princely states to accede to the newly independent India.

After India's independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel assumed the crucial role of India's first Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs in the inaugural government led by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In this capacity, he faced monumental challenges. Patel's leadership was particularly evident in the integration of the princely states. His skillful diplomacy and persuasive abilities played a crucial role in peacefully assimilating over 500 princely states into the Indian Union, ensuring India's territorial integrity.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel faced another daunting challenge – the integration of Hyderabad, a princely state with a Muslim Nizam who was reluctant to accede to India. The Nizam of Hyderabad wanted to remain independent or possibly join Pakistan. Sardar Patel embarked on a mission to peacefully integrate Hyderabad into India. However, negotiations with the Nizam proved challenging. The situation escalated, leading to the "Operation Polo" military action in September 1948. Indian forces quickly and effectively defeated the Nizam's army, leading to the accession of Hyderabad to India.



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## Reading With Understanding



## Notes

Another remarkable incident from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's life is related to the integration of the princely state of Junagadh into the Indian Union. Junagadh, located in present-day Gujarat, was a princely state with a Muslim ruler, Nawab Muhammad Mahabat Khan III, who decided to accede to Pakistan after India gained independence in 1947. Sardar Patel was faced with the challenging task of bringing Junagadh, which had a Hindu-majority population, into the Indian Union. Despite the Nawab's decision to accede to Pakistan, Patel was determined to ensure the territorial integrity of India. He initiated negotiations, and when diplomacy failed, he decided on a bold move. In an unexpected turn of events, Sardar Patel organised a successful police action, sending Indian forces to Junagadh to secure the region. This move led to the integration of Junagadh into India, ensuring that the territory stayed united with the newly formed nation. This demonstrates his determination and strategic thinking in pursuing his goals like securing the unity of a newly independent India.

That is why Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's most enduring legacy is his contribution to national unity and integration. His nickname, "Iron Man of India," symbolises not only his unwavering determination and strong leadership but also his role in forging a united, democratic, and federal India. In honour of his memory and lasting impact, the "Statue of Unity," the world's tallest statue, was inaugurated on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, in Gujarat. This towering statue, standing at 182 metres (597 feet), represents not only Patel's physical stature but also his monumental stature in Indian history.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's life story serves as an inspiration for generations, illustrating the power of determination, diplomacy, and leadership in shaping a nation's destiny. His contributions to India's freedom struggle and the consolidation of the country post-independence make him an enduring symbol of national pride and unity.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.2**

1. What was Sardar Patel's profession before entering politics?
  - a) Doctor
  - b) Lawyer
  - c) Engineer
  - d) Teacher

2. Which historic event is associated with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's leadership in Gujarat?
  - a) Quit India Movement
  - b) Jallianwala Bagh Massacre
  - c) Kheda Satyagraha
  - d) Non-Cooperation Movement
3. What role did Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel play in the integration of princely states into India?
  - a) He opposed the integration of princely states.
  - b) He played no role in this process.
  - c) He was instrumental in peacefully integrating over 500 princely states into the Indian Union.
  - d) He led the princely states in a revolt against British rule.
4. Which princely state posed a significant challenge to Sardar Patel's efforts at integration due to its Nizam's reluctance to accede to India?
  - a) Kashmir
  - b) Hyderabad
  - c) Junagadh
  - d) Travancore
5. What significant action did Sardar Patel take to integrate the princely state of Junagadh into the Indian Union?
  - a) He initiated negotiations with Pakistan.
  - b) He organised a referendum.
  - c) He conducted a police action.
  - d) He appealed to the United Nations for intervention.



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**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****18.1**

1. a) Kesari and Maratha
2. b) Ganesh Chaturthi
3. c) He declared his unwavering determination to achieve self-rule for India.
4. b) He authored literary works like “The Arctic Home in the Vedas.”
5. c) Mandalay Central Jail, Burma.

**18.2**

1. b) Lawyer
2. c) Kheda Satyagraha
3. c) He was instrumental in peacefully integrating over 500 princely states into the Indian Union.
4. b) Hyderabad
5. c) He conducted a police action.



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