



INDIA ARAB CULTURAL CENTRE
JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA
New Delhi-110025

CONCEPT NOTE

International Conference

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Life, Works, and Indian Muslims

03 December - 04 December, 2025

(Wednesday- Thursday)

Organized by:

India-Arab Cultural Centre

Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University), New Delhi, India

Conference Convener: **Prof. Nasir Raza Khan**

The proposed conference on **Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel and Indian Muslims** aims to bring in light the contributions of the first deputy Prime Minister of India to the nation. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950), popularly known as the "Iron Man of India," was a central figure in India's struggle for independence and a key statesman in the early years of the nation. He is widely revered for his contributions to the political integration of India. Born on October 31, 1875, in Nadiad, Gujarat, Patel hailed from a farmer's family. He studied law in England at the Middle Temple, returning to India to become a successful barrister in Ahmedabad. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, he joined the Indian independence movement. He became a prominent leader in the Indian National Congress and was a close associate of Gandhi.

Patel was a leader in various non-violent civil disobedience movements against the British Raj, including the Kheda Satyagraha 1918, and the Bardoli Satyagraha 1928. His successful leadership in the Bardoli campaign earned him the title of "Sardar," meaning "leader." He was also a key figure in the Quit India Movement of 1942. After India gained independence in 1947, Sardar Patel became the country's first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister. His most significant achievement was the peaceful integration of over 560 princely states into the Indian

Union. This monumental task, which prevented the Balkanization of India, earned him the title of "Iron Man of India." He used a combination of diplomacy, persuasion, and, when necessary, military force to ensure a unified India. Sardar Patel is considered the "patron saint of India's civil servants" for his role in establishing the modern all-India services system. He played a critical role in shaping the Indian constitution, serving as the chairman of several important committees, including those on fundamental rights, minorities, and provincial constitutions.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's relationship with Indian Muslims is a complex and often debated topic. His views and actions evolved over time, particularly in the tumultuous period leading up to and immediately following the Partition of India in 1947. During the freedom struggle, Sardar Patel was a strong proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity. He worked closely with Muslim leaders and was involved in movements like the Khilafat Movement. In his early political life, he supported Mahatma Gandhi's mission of communal harmony. He presided over the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931, where a resolution on fundamental rights and economic policy was passed, which included provisions for minorities. However, his attitude began to change after the Muslim League, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, intensified its demand for Pakistan based on the Two-Nation Theory. Patel, along with other Congress leaders, was deeply opposed to this idea, believing that it would destroy the unity of India.

As India's first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel faced the immense challenge of dealing with the aftermath of Partition, including widespread communal violence and the displacement of millions of refugees. It was during this period that his policies and statements came under scrutiny. Patel was accused by some, including his own colleagues like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Jayaprakash Narayan, of being anti-Muslim. These accusations stemmed from his blunt approach and some of his policies. He himself strongly denied these charges, calling them an invention made to discredit me. He emphasized that his opposition was to the Muslim League's politics and not to the Muslim community as a whole. In a famous speech at Jama Masjid in Delhi in 1947, he expressed his anguish over the situation, questioning why Indian Muslims had supported the idea of Pakistan and were now facing the consequences.

Despite the accusations, historical accounts show that Patel was actively involved in organizing relief efforts for refugees, including Muslims fleeing from violence. He is credited with taking strong measures to restore peace and order. He did not spare Hindu or Sikh offenders who were involved in violence against Muslims. His administration, for instance, appointed a Muslim officer as the Chief Commissioner of Delhi and did not replace Muslim civil servants who had not opted for Pakistan.

Some of his policies, such as the Evacuee Property Law and the permit system which deprived some Muslims who had gone to Pakistan of their Indian citizenship, were criticized for causing hardship. However, these were implemented in the context of a chaotic and volatile situation. Historian Rajmohan Gandhi, in his biography of Patel, notes that while Patel's heart may have been more deeply affected by the suffering of Hindus and Sikhs, his hand was just. This meant that as Home Minister, he upheld the law and did not show partiality when dealing with communal violence.

Sardar Patel believed that Indian Muslims, who chose to remain in India, had to be loyal to the country. He was critical of those who had supported the Muslim League's call for Partition but then decided to stay in India. At the same time, he was a strong advocate for a secular India and resisted calls to declare India a Hindu state in response to Pakistan's declaration as a Muslim state. He was a key figure in the Constituent Assembly's Minorities Committee and worked to ensure that the rights of all religious communities were protected in the Indian constitution. His unwavering focus was on the unity and integrity of the nation, and he viewed any communal or separatist agenda as a threat to this core principle. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel passed away on December 15, 1950. His birth anniversary, October 31, is celebrated as National Unity Day (*Rashtriya Ekta Diwas*) in India. The Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue, was erected in his honor in Gujarat.

Themes of the Conference:

- India's Struggle for Independence and Sardar Patel.
- Political Integration of India and Sardar Patel.
- Sardar Patel and Congress Party.
- Sardar Patel: The first Deputy Prime Minister of India.

- Sardar Patel and Secularism.
- Sardar Patel and Muslims of India.
- Partition of India and Sardar Patel.

Those desiring to participate in the conference are requested to send their paper titles and 500-word abstract by 05 November 2025 to the following email address nrkhan@jmi.ac.in, and conference.iacc@gmail.com

Proposed Dates:

- Last date for sending abstract: 05 November 2025.
- Abstract confirmation: 10 November 2025.
- Last date for submission of full paper: 25th November 2025

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