

# Statue of Unity or Opportunity? An Argumentative Review

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**Abstract:** 31st October 2018, marked the 143rd birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and a tribute to the “Iron man of India” in form of much awaited and eye-catching statue. It has certainly turned the odometer backward when people saw it for the first time and recalled the sacrifices of Sardar Patel.

The statue has proved its importance when the number of visitors surpassed the expected standard set by the officials but this statue also could not escape the ever-dogging controversy when certain groups of farmers boycotted the inauguration and CAG expressed its grief over the enormous amount used for the construction of the statue. We are trying to present argumentative analysis including socio cultural, political and economic factors in terms of certain merits and definite criticism behind making of ‘Statute of Unity’ in real sense a political opportunity for current Indian Govt or its prospect of great tourist place in future earning revenue and employment opportunities for local residents mainly tribals. We are trying to analyse both aspects with supportive data and our own inferences. We can finally conclude that looking at alarming rate of unemployment, poverty, lack of education and healthcare facilities, low industrial output and environmental concerns, huge expenditure of 3000 crores for such statue is not justified rather we need public spending more on education, small scale sector industries, health care and infrastructure for overall development of all parts of India rather mere future revenue opportunity for the state of Gujarat which is already a prosperous state in India.

**Keywords:** Statue of Unity, Sardar Patel, Taj mahal, Tourism, Employment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Vallabhbhai Patel (31 October 1875 – 15 December 1950) popularly known as Sardar Patel (“Chief” in many Indian languages) was an Indian politician who served as the first Deputy Prime Minister as well as the first Home Minister of India where he practiced “Suraaj” (Good Governance). He was one of the most influential Indian Barrister and Statesmen, A senior leader of the Indian National Congress who successfully organised the Non-violent Civil Disobedience and the Quit India Movement against the British Raj. He was the Founding father of the Republic of India who played a leading role in the country's struggle for independence and guided its integration into a united, Independent nation. He successfully unified the British colonial provinces that had been “allocated” to India. Besides those provinces, approximately 565 self-governing princely states had been released from British suzerainty and Sardar Patel was therefore named as the “Unifier of India”. The Statue of Unity, World’s Tallest Statue was dedicated by the Gujarat government on 31 October 2018 (Birth Anniversary of Sardar Patel) for his significant contributions for the nation.

The Statue of Unity is an iconic 182 meter tall landmark statue dedicated to the visionary leader, located on a river island facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the river Narmada, southeast of the city of Vadodara. The monument and its surroundings occupy more than 4.9 acres of land and are surrounded by a 12 km long artificial lake. It was built by Larsen & Toubro, who received the contract for ₹2,989 crore for the design, construction and maintenance in October 2014. The construction started on 31 October 2014 and completed in mid-October 2018. Recently, The Collector of the Kheda District, I.K. Patel has been appointed as the Chief Administrator of the Statue of Unity.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study uses explorative approach to understand, discuss and bring out the issue relevant to the title. Secondary data and resources have been used to do this study. Entire paper is based on online articles, news, reports and Govt publications. Our study is mainly critical and argumentative review based on non-empirical study.

### Argumentative Analysis

We are presenting our case on ‘Statue of unity’ by dividing our discussion in 2 parts mainly predictive benefits and

criticism based on secondary economic data and social data available to us. In our country we have abundant historical Monuments, Palaces and Statues in every part of India but unfortunately we have inadequate number of schools, hospitals, homes and employment for poor people to ensure real growth and development of all people and regions equally and respectfully. Still political opportunism is giving priority to symbolic grandiose and show of power game through public spending on these statues wasting precious public money where on the contrary, our Govt. is withdrawing public funding from Higher education and public health care by giving excuse of reducing of high fiscal deficit. We are building our another strong political argument here by looking at time just before 6 months are left for national election when said statue was commissioned by our PM to the nation as a strategy of gaining attention of Indian population through emotional and social connect by showing statue as matter of great pride in the World as tallest in the World. It may be an attempt of hiding definitive failure of our Govt in promoting more FDI, more employment opportunities and GDP growth post demonetisation. Let's give us opportunity now to present our critical analysis without any prejudice as an Educator.

### **Predictive Benefits (Social, Cultural and Economical dimensions)**

#### **1. A Rendezvous with History:**

"The Statue will stand high, not just in meters and feet, but much more in terms of academic, historical, national and spiritual values. My vision is to develop the place as a source of inspiration for ages to come."

Shri Narendra Modi

(Honourable Prime Minister of India)

- Standing on the gigantic pedestal of 190 feet, Statue of Unity is as grand as the stature of charismatic Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. It truly reminds us the way India's first deputy Prime Minister (Sardar Patel) unified the bigoted and feuded states to become part of the Indian state after Independence in 1947.
- The tallest statue in the world might fade with time but the memories of Sardar Patel's contribution towards the epitome of unity and democracy what we call today will not evaporate from our transient minds for years to come.

#### **2. Tourist Spot:**

"Gujarat has registered 17 per cent year-on growth in tourism with a total 5.2 crore tourists visiting the state in 2017. The Statue of Unity will help in achieving considerable growth in arrival of tourists to Gujarat,"

- 10000 visitors per day was the standard set by the officials (before the statue was open to public) which was achieved within 11 days when 1.28 lakh visitors visited the statue adding 2.1 crore to India's GDP.
- The Well-Planned statue is accompanied by a 3-star hotel with 128 rooms, food service, guest amenities and conference facilities and "tented cities" with 250 tents in middle of the forest behind a nearby hill to promote adventure tourism.
- No stone was left unturned in order to make tourists feel fully satisfied with 350 Rupees investment by adding observation deck, valley of flowers, the Sardar Patel memorial, museum and audio-visual gallery. The Statue of Unity has a selfie point with pristine surrounding and the laser, light and sound show on unification of India during post-independence period is like a cherry topping to the package.

### **III. EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSIVENESS**

- The statue has employed 3000 workmen and 250 engineers during its construction and promises to provide 2000 direct and 5000 indirect jobs in near future.
- The very fact that the statue is built in tribal part of India is ipso facto that it would lead to tribal development and the "Shreshtha Bharat Centre" at the feet of the statue will facilitate agricultural research.
- In order to make farmers feel connected to the statue, Loha (iron) campaign was initiated by Chairman of the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust, wherein agricultural tools were collected from 700000 villages across India and melted down for use. 120 tonnes of iron was donated in total which truly stands with the slogan; "EK BHARAT, SHRESTH BHARAT" (One India, Noble India)

### **Factual Criticism (Social, Cultural and Economical dimensions)**

#### **1. Deceitful Allocation of PSUs Funds:**

- The funding of the statue has engulfed it in a controversy as an amount equivalent to 550 crores was contributed by the already sick central and state public sector undertakings, private companies and individuals under guise of corporate social responsibility (CSR).
- Interestingly, the enormous expenditure incurred by the companies in the name of CSR activities does not qualify the conditions specified in the Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013.

2. Therefore, the memorial is standing tall on the misused social funds from cash strapped PSUs. A CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) report has brought out serious irregularities in the use of social responsibility funds by the Public Sector Undertakings under the administrative control of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural gas.

- S J Haider

(Principal Secretary of Tourism)

| Public Sector Undertaking Name | Amount Contributed |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Oil & Natural Gas Corporation  | 50 crores          |
| Indian Oil Corporation Ltd.    | 21.83 crores       |
| Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd.     | 45 crores          |
| OIL India Ltd.                 | 25 crores          |
| Gas Authority of India Ltd.    | 25 crores          |
| Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd   | 25 crores          |
| Power Grid                     | 12.5 crores        |
| Gujarat Mineral Corp. Ltd.     | 11 crores          |
| PETRONET                       | 5 crores           |
| Balmer Lawrie                  | 1 crore            |

**Made in China:**

- The Statue defeated the “**Make in India**” initiative launched by PM Modi as the major bronze cladding and the steel framework was sourced from China.
- Also, Thousands of Chinese workers were employed for the construction of the memorial despite very high unemployment rates in our country.
- 9% of the total cost of the project (2989 crores) was incurred on the materials procured from China.

**3.Forced Migration of the Local Tribes:**

- The Gujarat government displaced around 185 families from the **Sadhu Bet** for the construction of the statue by giving them a compensation of 1200 acres of land.
- The official ideology of RSS driven **BJP** is “Integral Humanism” i.e. A commitment to **Hindutva** (its policy has historically reflected Hindu Nationalist Positions). However, they ignored the religious sentiments of the

locals residing at the statue site despite the land being of religious importance to them.

- On October 31, 2018 (Inauguration day), Thousands of Tribals marched towards the statue as they observed a day long **BHARAT BANDH**. The shutdown was observed by about 72 villages in 9 tribal districts. The reasons for the protest were –:
  - ✓ Tribals claimed that an Rs 3000 crore statue had no meaning in a district lacking basic amenities.
  - ✓ Thousands of trees were cut to build a four-lane road between Vadodara & Kevadiya (Statue Site).
  - ✓ They were given inadequate compensation for the forced migration
  - ✓ PM misused Patel’s legacy to score Political Mileage.

**4.Crowd Sourced Iron wasn’t used in the Construction of the Statue:**

- Yet another promise made to break was made by the BJP led NDA government when approximately 120 tonnes of Iron collected from 1,69,078 farmers wasn’t used for the construction of statue as promised.
- After facing a severe backlash from the farmers, the government justified that they wanted the Statue to last for Centuries thereby using High Quality Steel and not the Iron Tools collected from farmers which were of uncertain quality.

**5.Uneconomical Funding:**

- Taj Mahal, One of the seven wonders of the world earns about 25 crores a year revenue from the 80-lakh tourist that visit the monument. It would take the Statue of Unity more than 120 years to reach the Break-Even Level (Cost = Revenue) provided it becomes as popular as the World Heritage Site i.e. Taj Mahal.



- BJP in 2014-15 allocated 200 crores from the union budget for such statue ignoring priorities like Women Safety, Education & Agricultural Schemes.

“To take 1.1 billion pounds in aid from U.S. and then at the same time spend 330 million pounds on a statue is a total nonsense and it is the sort of thing that drives people mad”

- Peter Bone  
(Member of British Parliament)

•Such Statements affect the Reputation of a country at International levels as the funds were given for various social projects, including women's right issues, renewable energy projects, and to encourage "religious tolerance".

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

While the world is busy with straddling the moot issue of the very existence of the Statue of Unity, Indians are leaving no occasion to brag about the statue architected by the same hands which erected BurjKhalifa. Needless to mention here that the statue has gained world attention that can be vindicated by the everyday rise in number of tourists visiting the statue. The statue might have dejected certain groups of people because of its might-be-higher opportunity cost of Rupees 2989 crore but the pinnacle reaching statue might perhaps stand as a reminder of unity, harmony and integrity till eternity. But it would have been a real pride for developed countries where people have abundant wealth to spend on leisure and tourism rather for developing countries like India, where there are many important priorities like affordable education, affordable health, affordable electricity, water and fuel, inclusive growth in every region still have to be fulfilled. Sardar Patel himself would not have allowed going with erecting a statue as symbol of integration and Unity which was conceptualised for already developed state like Gujarat goes against with spirit of Unity and parity. If generation of employment for locals and promoting tourism was the spirit behind said project then it could have been fulfilled partially through building of hospitals, schools and infrastructure facilities in most economically and socially

backward areas in place of symbolic statue which has disturbed Eco system of nearby area and hurt the sentiments of local tribal community of 72 nearby villages asking for inclusive growth and progress to fulfil Sardar's dreams of National Integration in real terms.

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