

INTEGRATING PATEL AND GANDHI IN INDIA'S DIGITAL WORLD: THE EVERLASTING LEGACIES

Sonawane Sushilkumar Prakash* Dr. Rajesh Kumar Shukla

*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department Of Journalism & Mass Communication, School Of Education And Humanities, IFTM University, Moradabad UP- 244102, Email-Id:sushilkumar.s@rediffmail.com, Contacts No:8700973966

Head, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication School of Education and Humanities, IFTM University, Moradabad UP- 244102 Email ID:

dr.rajeshkumarshukla@iftmuniversity.ac.in

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.63001/tbs.2026.v21.i02.S.I\(2\).pp1658-1665](https://doi.org/10.63001/tbs.2026.v21.i02.S.I(2).pp1658-1665)

KEYWORDS

*Mahatma Gandhi,
 Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,
 State Sovereignty,
 Sarvodaya,
 Swaraj Technology,
 Ethics, UPI,
 India Policy,
 Digital Divide.*

Received on:

18-04-2026

Accepted on:

26-05-2026

Published on:

06-06-2026

Abstract

This paper argues that conscious integration of Patel's pragmatic state-building vision with Gandhi's emphasis on decentralised human and moral responsibility is needed to resolve the complexities of the digital world, around issues of state sovereignty, social harmony, and individual rights, with an ethical use of technology within the context of modern India's rapid digital transformation. This paper critically observes the distinct yet harmonising legacies of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahatma Gandhi. Analysis of Patel and Gandhi's roles in the freedom struggle, Patel's efforts for unifying India into a nation-state and establishing a strong administrative structure. Gandhi, in many aspects, thought of (self-rule) swaraj and (welfare for all) Sarvodaya. Arguments and contemporary examples, legacy, along with a synthesis of Gandhi and Patel, will provide a road map to decode the importance of Gandhi and Patel in the digital era.

1. Introduction: Exhibiting the digital dilemma and distinguishing the blend

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India and Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the father of the nation, are two towering personalities; often, the phrase Patel Gandhi emerges in popular discourse as an accidental blend yet distinct.

The walkway to India's independence was carved by the ideology of Satyagraha and nonviolent confrontation. These ideals surpassed the simple achievement of political dependence. On deeply diving into the historical involvement of architects of the Indian independence

movement, particularly the philosophical and strategic divergences, we can truly understand the core of Indian nationhood.

To root the future of the nation in the stage of rapid integration in technology, ever-changing state-citizen equations and big change in social fabric, harmonising the disparate legacies is not only an academic exercise but a crucial loyalty. In the current scenario, where erosion of data privacy, social disparity caused by the digital divide, along with continuous friction between issues such as national

security and free expression and civil liberties.

In the large digital landscape of India, the Aadhaar biometric identification system and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have significantly transformed the monetary and societal fabric, nurtured financial inclusion while simultaneously reshaping public dialogue and political mobilisation.

The self-governing landscape and the central doctrines of the ideas advocated by figures like Gandhi and Patel are recapped basically by these technologies. The complexities of India's modern digital age must be estimated through their philosophies, though the two leaders were working from disagreeing ideologies.

In India, money circulated in paper form; now money instantly moves flawlessly, paperless, through a mobile device. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) acknowledges a fundamental shift in the nation's financial landscape, as Unified Payments Interface (UPI) by 2023 scaled to a massive 10 billion transactions per month. The administrative acumen of Sardar Patel and the grassroots optimism of Mahatma Gandhi is synthesis in the form of a digital revolution.

Interestingly, this digital revolution acts as a modern synthesis of two divergent historical philosophies: the common sense of Sardar Patel and the grassroots optimism of Mahatma Gandhi.

This paper argues that in this digital era, for achieving India's sustainable and equitable progress, a thoughtful blend of Patel's legacy of pragmatic state-building, national integration and administrative efficiency with Mahatma Gandhi's legacy of decentralised self-reliance

(Swaraj), humanistic ethics and technology serving human welfare (Sarvodaya).

Patel focused on building the external structure of the nation state-its unity, sovereignty, and capacity for action. Gandhi emphasised the internal transformation of the individual and community.

Sardar Vallabhai Patel, a pragmatic visionary:

Pragmatic Statism realist in his own sense: Patel believed in a strong state apparatus to manage the development and maintain order to protect the Nation. He was in favour of Pvt. Enterprise still acknowledged that the role of the state is crucial in planning and executing the large-scale project for national benefit. Within the framework of a democratic republic, he had decisive action, efficiency and focus.

Importance of unity and security: National Unity was paramount for Patel. He viewed communalism, regionalism and separatism as existential threats to the nascent republic. For Patel, territorial integrity and internal security remain a central pillar of Indian state policy. His resolve to prevent balkanization can be seen from his actions in Hyderabad and Junagadh (Guha, 2007).

The essential structural foundation, Patel's legacy: Implementation of policies and maintaining sovereignty with the application of a robust administrative system by a united territorial entity, was Patel's policy. In a digital context, this can be interpreted as a state capable of building critical digital infrastructure, securing national cyber security enforcement of regulations and provisions of universal digital services. The very "steel frame" operating in cyberspace.

2.2 M.K. Gandhi-Advocate of Self Rule and Ethical Means:

For Gandhi, the India of the future was more than mere political independence (Raj-Swaraj). Swaraj for Gandhi was self-sufficiency for community moral autonomy, individual self-rule. Philosophy rooted in Ahimsa (Non-Violence) and Satyagraha (Truth force). Gandhi placed ethics and means at the centre of any political or social objective (Parekh, 1999).

Key Elements:

(1) Village Republics and Decentralisation:- Gram Swaraj: Village as a Unit of a self-reliant, self-governing committee with minimum dependence on centralised state governance structure. Gandhi promoted local solutions, community control and appropriate skills. He does not believe in alienations of individuals from their community and labour. (Gandhi, 1968, Vol. 39, page 377).

(2) Human Welfare and Truth:- Importance of means over ends. Gandhi argued, "They say means are after all means". I would say "means are after all everything" as the means to the end. (Gandhi, 1968, Vol. 60, page 246). For utilitarian approaches, the radical counter point insistence on ethical conduct in the pursuit of a goal. Regarding the value of technology, Gandhi was neutral; its value depended entirely on alignment with human welfare and truth.

(3) Liberating Tool Technology:- (Spinning wheel) Charkha Symbol of self-reliance, resistance to exploitation by industrialisation, dignity of Labour. Gandhi believed in the appropriate use of technology, empowerment of grassroots communities, accessible, serving human needs, harmless and interdependent.

Gandhi foresaw the danger of technology deviating from ethical consideration. (Gandhi, 1968, Vol. 39, page 377).

(4) Welfare for all (Sarvodaya) and last person (Antyodaya):- the pure goal for the society, Development was measured by the conditions of the poorest and most marginalised. The role of technology should serve to uplift the weakest and not widen the gap or power concentration (Gandhi, 1968, Vol. 65, page 408).

For Gandhi, the ethical and human sphere is important. Evolving Technology must be based on the moral fabric of society. Community programme, individual dignity, and quality are just evaluated on their efficiency or economic potential. Gandhi's thought was against privacy-eroding exploitation of the vulnerable and concentration of power if they serve the state efficiently.

Vigour and Competence: Patel's Institutional legacy

Single unified structure of public, private, and cooperative institutions and a patchy banking sector in India is amalgamated by UPI, which functions as a digital spine. For promoting transparency, minimising the influence of black money and strengthening national security, digital finance plays a crucial role in curbing a cash-heavy economy. The state has provided the infrastructure for fintech players Google Pay and PhonePe; the state has built a strong digital foundation by operating the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to supervise security and standards. This echoes Patel's vision of a strong, central, state characterised by administrative rigour and national integration.

Sarvodaya and Grassroots Empowerment: The inheritance of Mahatma Gandhi

A distinct Gandhian objective echoed in parallel to this institutional efficiency. For Gandhi, the common man was important. An inclusive approach brings citizens without banking into the economic fold, which is achieved by UPI opting for user-friendly QR codes and virtual IDs in place of complex hardware and card-swiping machines.

UPI is designed to solve real-world struggles with low-cost, suitable technology in the spirit of Sarvodaya. UPI has granted a degree of financial autonomy even to the most marginalised individuals, whether a small-scale farmer or a street vendor and also the sense of nurturing digital self-rule and amalgamation of the grassroots economy into the international market.

Bringing together the diverging thoughts:

Consolidation of the philosophies of Gandhi and Patel paved the way for successful policy; the path forward is not without its challenges.

Complex pressures continue to materialise as the system scales, demanding an elusive balance between the competency of the state and the evolving needs of the masses on a day-to-day basis.

Assessing Infrastructure and Expression in digital space paradox: The UPI idea

State-aided digital design UPI still brings many challenges. Gandhian thoughts prioritise privacy and protection of individuals from both business surveillance and government overreach.

Aadhaar project and UPI huge data is collected by third-party intermediaries, which raises concerns about data protection.

Gandhi further gives importance to an impartial spirit. In the case of UPI, a few tech giants are creating a monopoly in the market, which is against the Gandhian principle of a level playing field for all.

A fundamental prerequisite for a just society is closing the digital divide on priority. For achieving comprehensive growth, the conception of Sarvodaya, the upliftment of all, remains incomplete if technology isolates the senior citizens. For meaningful social progress, the state administration can serve from a top-down approach by making open-access public goods that can effectively unite a nation and promote mobility.

3.3 Fragmented thoughts: In public discourses portrayed on Social Media,

The tension between the philosophies of Sardar Patel and Mahatma Gandhi is mostly visible in social media, which literally turns the virtual world into a contested space. Though UPI shows power of digital consistency, social media platforms (WhatsApp, X, Facebook) often act as promoters for hate.

Patel's take on Order and Sovereignty of the government:

Patel had a strong vision for the internal security of India in terms of protection. National stability is intimidated by the spread of disinformation during elections, provocative speech and external meddling. The Information Technology Rules of 2021 bring the regulatory purpose, which gives power to the government to remove content, track the originators of harmful

messages and emphasise the need for corporate responsibility. In this framework, state regulation is the essential fortification against disintegration.

Gandhi's take on Truth and Civil Exchange of ideas:

Gandhi has a take on the necessity of free expression and truthful communication for his dedication to Swaraj (self-rule) and Ahimsa (non-violence). Critics are of the view that recent digital regulations make scary effect, under the impression of security, where investigative journalism and dissent are stifled. Furthermore, toxicity breeds when algorithmic are augmented this is a direct contradiction to Gandhian ideals of consensus-building and honest, non-violent exchange.

Connect, Fusion in contrasting situation: A definite Path forward

In this dynamic situation, managing digital risks without enabling dictatorial surveillance requires strong efforts.

The dependency on state-regulated restrictions undermines the basic foundations of democracy, and the algorithmic pursuit of employment frequently destroys the social fabric. Over-reliance on state-mandated repression risks undermining the very foundations of democracy, while algorithmic pursuit of "engagement" frequently destroys the social fabric.

Blending Gandhi and Patel perspective a needed balanced approach:

Gandhian influence on Digital Swaraj:

Digital literacy can be encouraged by practising accountable citizenship online. User friendly and priory of truth over mere click driven returns.

Patel influence on Guided Regulation :

For fundamental speech rights to remain intact, Laws should be transparent, narrowly focused with no scope of judicial omission, and targeted strictly at authentic incitement to violence. Autonomy should be exercised by the institution responsible for oversight and also it should be shielded from adherent influence.

Sole dependence on State to resolve the digital realm is insufficient. Strong control is needed to avert the chaos with ethical clarity of dialogue. Only combined efforts of state and private players can make the balance and give stable ,inclusive and free society.

Without this amalgamation, the digital revolution risks becoming a source of lethal the very antithesis of the stable, inclusive, and free society which both Gandhi and Patel strived to build.

Connect, Fusion in contrasting situation: A definite Path forward

In this dynamic situation, managing digital risks without enabling dictatorial surveillance requires strong efforts.

The dependency on state-regulated restrictions undermines the basic foundations of democracy, and the algorithmic pursuit of employment frequently destroys the social fabric. Over-reliance on state-mandated repression risks undermining the very foundations of democracy, while algorithmic pursuit of "engagement" frequently destroys the social fabric.

Without this amalgamation, the digital revolution risks becoming a source of lethal the very antithesis of the stable, inclusive, and free society which both Gandhi and Patel strived to build.

Ongoing debate makes both Gandhi and Patel important as they are the two vital sides. Instead of forcing the choices between Gandhi and Patel most important thing is to balance their contributions.

Robust digital infrastructure can be generated by unification of moral and ethical structure as visioned by Gandhi and democratic accountability and citizen centric services as technological advancement echoed by Patel.

Here is an efficient approach:

1.Gandhian Philosophy and basics of digital communication:

Antodaya, serving the last person and Sarvodaya, welfare for all must be rooted in the digital design. Intrinsic structure should be protected by privacy. These tools should ensure the empowerment of individual rather than disaffecting or disenfranchising the most susceptible. Also the data harvesting and authentication process must be implemented with great wisdom by the law makers and developers.

2. Ingredient of Constitutional Integrity in the State Capability:

Safeguards as enshrined in the constitution must be in line with the Patels vision of a strong, unified state, digital governance. Interference of state in scrutiny and moderation must be justified. The guaranteed digital liberty should be given on infringement with needful judicial intervention and definite way to resolve the issues if any. This approach follows

Gandhian approach of ethical conduct in letter and spirit and echoes the belief of means are as crucial as ends.

3.Significant and reachable Tech Policy

Suitable technology solutions need to be prioritised as decentralised and designed to resolve the challenges that are faced by the masses. The top-down approach and one size fits all systems should be avoided. Subsequently most. Promotion of digital literacy, focused with critical thinking, citizen centric with self-sufficiency and an informed understanding of their rights.

This is not a zero-sum game, the current narrative suggesting that India must choose between vigorous digital sovereignty and the fortification of fundamental digital rights is a false dichotomy that must be taken to bits. True development requires an essential reform that goes beyond mere practical novelty. Policy architects must turn away from measure success through simplistic metrics like user adoption or transaction volume. Instead, they should evaluate the digital ecosystem based on its ability to uplift the marginalised, make sure see-through responsibility in public life, and uphold the seemliness of the individual. Similarly, engineers and developers must weigh the public and moral cost of their creation as heavily as they do their technical presentation.

For the people entitled to vote, there is an imperative need to get rid of gratification. People must advocate for both immediate technological convenience and the iron fist protection of their rights achieving a form of “Digital Swaraj.” As India appears as a global digital powerhouse, the combined legacies of Patel and Gandhi serve as a

sensible, actionable design rather than mere sequential oratory. Patel's authority reminds us that a nation requires a solid, resilient structure to function and exercise agency. On the other hand, Gandhi teaches us that such a structure is empty unless it is populated by a community devoted to truth, non-violence, and service. A sustainable digital future for India depends on embracing this absurdity. We cannot rely on one at the expense of the other; rather, our path toward genuine transformation lies in the seamless amalgamation of Patel's focus on institutional strength and Gandhi's vision for pluralistic, compassionate cooperation.

References:

- Bhargava, R. (Ed.). (2005). *Secularism and its critics*. Oxford University Press India.
- Chacko, E. (2020). Revisiting the IT Rules, 2011: India's evolving approach to intermediary liability and freedom of expression online. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 2264–2284. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3680381>
- Chakravartty, P., & Roy, S. (2018). *Media and power in India: Critical perspectives on media and society*. Oxford University Press.
- Chandrasekhar, C. P. (2016). Aadhaar: A biometric history. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(2), 14–17. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2016/02/special-articles/aadhaar-biometric-history.html>
- Das, V., & Tak, S. (2016). Aadhaar and the social production of uncertainty. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(44), 44–50. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2016/44/special-articles/aadhaar-and-social-production-uncertainty.html>
- Eriksson, T. (2009). *Gandhi and the limits of nonviolence*. Lexington Books.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1968). *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi (Vols. 1-100)*. Publications Division, Government of India. [Note: Specific volumes/pages cited in text. Critical to use the authoritative Collected Works for academic reference].
- Guha, R. (2007). *India after Gandhi: The history of the world's largest democracy*. Picador.
- Menon, V. P. (1956). *The story of the integration of the Indian states*. Orient Longmans.
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India. (2023). *Digital India: Powering India's transformation*. <https://www.meity.gov.in/>
- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). (2023). *UPI transaction statistics*. <https://www.npci.org.in/what-we-do/upi/product-data>
- Parekh, B. (1999). *Gandhi: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI). (2023). *Payment systems in India: Report for 2022-23*. <https://www.rbi.org.in/>
- Sen, A. (2005). *The argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian history, culture and identity*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Supreme Court of India. (2017). *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 494 of 2012*.
- Tripathi, S. (2022). *Digital surveillance and freedom of expression in India*. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/digital-surveillance-freedom-expression-india-84223/>

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). (2023). Aadhaar statistics. https://uidai.gov.in/aadhaar_statistics.html

Zuboff, S. (2019). The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power. PublicAffairs.