

#THE PATELS

The Patel Motel Revolution

How a Gujarati Dream Redefined the American Hospitality Industry



When you think of America's hotel giants, names like Hilton, Marriott, Ritz-Carlton, or Four Seasons might come to mind. But behind the scenes, there's another name quietly, yet powerfully, running the show: Patel.

Though the Gujarati Indian community represents less than 1% of the U.S. population, they now own or operate more than 60% of all motels and small hotels across the country. This astonishing transformation, often referred to as "The Patel Motel Revolution," is a tale of hard work, community spirit, and an unshakable belief in collective success.

It All Began with One Man: Kanji Manchhu Desai

The story starts in 1934, when Kanji Manchhu Desai, a young man of Indian descent from Trinidad, arrived in the United States. Like many early immigrants, Desai's journey was far from smooth. He overstayed his visa and took up work on the farms of California, toiling long hours under the sun for a modest wage.

Then came World War II, and with it, a twist of fate. A Japanese-American hotel owner, forced to relocate due to wartime restrictions, entrusted Desai and his friends with managing his property. It was a chance that would change everything.

The Birth of a Business Legacy

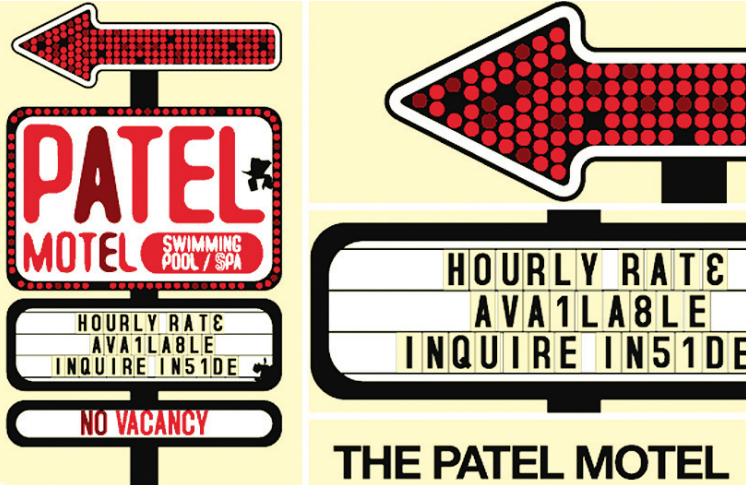
Desai and his friends learned every aspect of the trade, from managing guests and maintaining rooms to handling laundry and finances. They worked tirelessly, absorbing not just the tasks but the ethics of hospitality: efficiency, cleanliness, and service.

After the war, Desai took the bold step of leasing his own property, the Hotel Goldfield in San Francisco. From there, he began writing to his friends and relatives back in Gujarat, India, sharing what he had learned and encouraging them to join him in this growing opportunity.

He didn't just inspire them; he helped them. For new arrivals, Desai offered:

- Housing during their early days in America.
- Financial support to lease their first motels.
- Practical training in hotel management and customer service.

Through these acts, Desai wasn't just building a business; he was building a community.



The Pahlavi Reign Wasn't Very Nice To Indian Pilgrims

The colonial authorities were incensed with Iran. Not only were Indian pilgrims facing harassment there, but even Indians resident in the country were put through difficulties. Among those who complained of discrimination in Iran were Sikh truck drivers with transport businesses. Trucks imported to Bushehr by British Indian subjects were "suddenly commandeered and sent away to Jahrom to carry troops," said the Foreign Department. Even British oil executives faced problems. "A touring car containing three British employees of the Anglo Persian Oil Company was raided by Boir Ahmadi Sarhidis," a report in the Foreign Department file said. "The raiders stripped the men and released them after making them walk for a considerable distance, bare feet and in scanty clothes." Taking note of the growing complaints, Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the head of the British Legation in Tehran, wrote to Indian Foreign Secretary HAF Metcalfe in March 1934: "I have for some time past been somewhat exercised about the number of cases which come to my notice involving the ill-treatment, administrative baiting, malicious persecution and so on of Indian British subjects. The cases occur all over Persia, but more particularly in Khorasan, Sistan and Zahedan, partly because there are so many more Indians in those provinces than in others, partly because of the control of the ministries in Tehran over the administrative departments, at any rate in Sistan and Zahedan, is weaker than elsewhere."

● Bulbul Joshi

Yes, the Pahlavi reign (1925-1979) in Iran was often harsh towards Indian (and other foreign) pilgrims, particularly in its early days, with reports of rampant corruption, official harassment, and extortion, especially around holy sites like Mashhad.

In June 1931, the British Consul in Mashhad, a city in northeastern Iran, received a plaintive letter from a resident of Lucknow. In the letter, Kishwar Jahan Begum complained that when she arrived in Mashhad with nine others, their belongings were confiscated by the octoroi officials and they were made to pay a hefty fine.

She appealed for the return of the belongings, which included silk cloth and handkerchiefs. She said these things were not for sale, as claimed by the octoroi officials, but were gifts for relatives. "Moreover," she added for good measure, "I wish to point out that I belong to a Royal family of Lucknow who always remained loyal to [the] British Govt."



Indian pilgrims have always visited Mashhad, home to the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam.

To the British consular authorities, Kishwar Jahan Begum's complaint must not have been unique. Before the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, many Indian pilgrims travelled to Iran either overland from Baluchistan or by steamship to Iraq and then overland to Mashhad. A number of them had the same complaint: harassment from Iranian officials.

These were the early days of the Pahlavi Dynasty in Iran (1925-1979). Corruption was rampant and Tehran's writ did not run all over the country. Families from as far as Bombay and Bengal would write to British consular authorities, seeking redress or justice for the harassment they faced from officials in Iran. A large number of these letters were addressed to the consul in Mashhad, a city popular with Indian pilgrims as home to the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam, Ali al-Rida.

Not that the pleas worked. The consul in Mashhad, then spelt Meshed, took up pilgrims' grievances with the local authorities but in fact belonged to his family members. He insisted on adding this disclaimer to the statement before signing it, but his request was denied and, under the threat of jail, he had to relent.

"I address you this long and tedious letter with the object that you will please move the Persian authorities at Damghan and Tehran and get from them the articles they have confiscated, valued at about £100 plus 3142 Krans in cash," Habib wrote to the British authorities.

His family was planning to return to Bombay from Iran via Delhi and Agra but abandoned the idea after their clothes were confiscated. During Partition, the Habib family moved their businesses to Pakistan and set up Habib Bank and the House of Habib, a large business group in the country.

British concerns

A Foreign Department file documented all sorts of cases of high-handed Customs officials in Iran seizing basic items from pilgrims. One entry from 1935 read: "A family of pilgrims consisting of 12 persons was deprived of the Customs of 8 cakes of Sunlight and 3 cakes of toilet soap, a very reasonable allowance for personal use on a long journey. They were also fined a sum of 52 rials on the ground that the soap was not declared on the frontier."

#EXPERIENCES



Tehran in mid-20th century.

ment in Iran. Mohammad Ali Habib, a partner in a company with a 'turnover of Rs. 2 crore,' said he was on a pilgrimage with six family members when "the Persian Customs officials at Khandah thoroughly examined our luggage and charged us 5 toman duty on gramophone records and 2 bottles of rum which I am carrying with me for medicinal purposes."

Habib's travails did not end there. Despite producing the duty voucher from Khanaqin, he and his family were stopped by officials in Damghan and their belongings searched.

"The Customs officials at Damghan could not find anything except our personal effects, in spite of that, they took out all the embroidered silk saris, which were worned (sic) several times by the ladies," Habib wrote. "The officers maybe had never seen a sari, which Indian ladies wear and they started taking all the saris that were in the four ladies bags. The officer only left absolutely dirty clothes and barring that, he confiscated all the saris."

The Customs officials, who held up the family for 24 hours and charged it 3,142 krans (a currency in use in Iran and Afghanistan), tried to make Habib sign statements in Persian. "I said that I did not know a word of Persian and that I could not sign a statement of which I had not the foggiest idea," Habib wrote in his complaint. "One person was called who knew French and he explained to me in French that the statement was an inventory of the articles confiscated as contraband



A Warm Hug is enough!

National Hugging Day, observed each year, celebrates the simple yet profound act of hugging. A warm embrace can boost emotional wellbeing, reduce stress, and strengthen bonds between family, friends, and loved ones. Beyond physical comfort, hugging releases oxytocin, often called the 'love hormone,' fostering feelings of trust, happiness, and connection. Whether it's a quick hug hello, a comforting embrace during tough times, or a celebratory squeeze, this day reminds us of the power of human touch. National Hugging Day encourages everyone to share warmth and affection, spreading kindness, positivity, and emotional support through this universal gesture.



Reza Shah Pahlavi was the Shah of Iran from 1925 to 1941 and the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty.

of the ministries in Tehran over the administrative departments, at any rate in Sistan and Zahedan, is weaker than elsewhere."

Knatchbull-Hugessen said that, in the past, Indians would directly approach consular authorities for help. "But unfortunately, the Indians very quickly fell into the habit of bribing their way out of any difficulties, and that of course, was fatal. The Persian officials lost all respect for them and opened their mouths wider and wider. Today, an Indian rarely brings his difficulties to the Consul until he has bribed every official in sight without success and hopelessly compromised his case from every point of view."

Diplomatic manoeuvres

Lt Col Hugh Daly, who visited Iran to look into the problems faced by Indian pilgrims, suggested that Britain pressure Iran by restricting pilgrimages to Mashhad or stopping them altogether.

"The value of the weapon consists in the fact that with trade, as bad as it is with at present the town of Meshed, depends for its existence to a large extent on the pilgrim traffic," Knatchbull-Hugessen, taking note of Daly's suggestions, wrote in a letter to Metcalfe. "The Shrine itself, of course, has large revenues from its properties throughout Persia, but its income even, and indirectly that of the Shah, would be affected if the traffic dried up altogether."

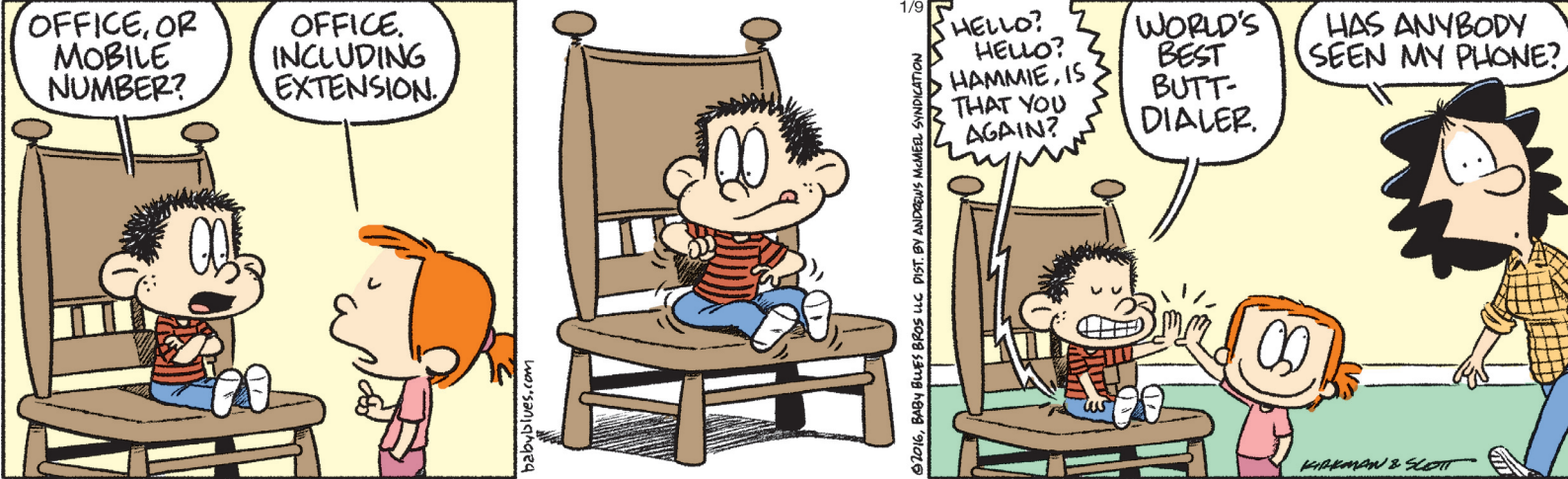
Metcalfe said that Iranians had 'peculiar notions of nationalism,' whenever their diplomats were



Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, 1973.

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



#LAUGHTER

HOW DO COURT RECORDERS KEEP STRAIGHT FACES????

These are from a book called *Disorder in the American Courts* and are things people actually said in court, word for word, taken down and published by court reporters that had the temerity of staying calm while the exchanges were taking place.

ATTORNEY: What was the first thing your husband said to you that morning?

WITNESS: He said, 'Where am I, Cathy?'

ATTORNEY: And why did that upset you?

WITNESS: My name is Susan!



ATTORNEY: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

WITNESS: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

ATTORNEY: Are you sexually active?

WITNESS: No, I just lie there.

ATTORNEY: What is your date of birth?

WITNESS: July 18th.

ATTORNEY: What year?

WITNESS: Every year.

ATTORNEY: How old is your son, the one living with you?

WITNESS: Thirty-eight or thirty-five, I can't remember which.

ATTORNEY: How long has he lived with you?

WITNESS: Forty-five years.

ATTORNEY: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

WITNESS: I forget.

ATTORNEY: You forget? Can you give me an example of something you forgot?

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: He's 20, much like your IQ.

ATTORNEY: Were you present when your picture was taken?

WITNESS: Are you shitting me?

dress when I go to work.

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

ATTORNEY: Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

WITNESS: All of them. The live ones put up too much of a fight.

ATTORNEY: ALL your responses MUST be oral. OK? What school did you go to?

WITNESS: Oral...

ATTORNEY: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

WITNESS: The autopsy started around 8:30 PM.

ATTORNEY: And Mr. Denton was dead at the time?

WITNESS: If not, he was by the time I finished.

ATTORNEY: Are you qualified to give a urine sample?

WITNESS: Are you qualified to ask that question?

And last:

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law.

ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And what were you doing at that time?

WITNESS: Getting laid.

ATTORNEY: She had three children, right?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: How many were boys?

WITNESS: None.

ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?

WITNESS: Your Honor, I think I need a different attorney. Can I get a new attorney?

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Take a guess.

ATTORNEY: Can you describe the individual?

WITNESS: He was about medium height and had a beard.

ATTORNEY: Was this a male or a female?

WITNESS: Unless the Circus was in town, I'm going with male.

ATTORNEY: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?

WITNESS: No, this is how I



These are from a book called 'Disorder in the Courts!' Hilarious! We believe 'Disorder in the Court: Great Fractured Moments in Courtroom History' you can find on Amazon! From my understanding, these were some of the funnier ones!

Addenda

Arbit regrets a typo in the story 'A legacy of violence.' Westpac was meant to be Westbank. Please excuse us this mistake.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

ZITS

