



A Warm Hug is enough!

ational 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.

#THE PATELS

The Patel Motel Revolution

How a Gujarati Dream Redefined the American Hospitality Industry



hen 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 Manchu Desai

The story starts in 1924 when Kanji Manchu, 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.

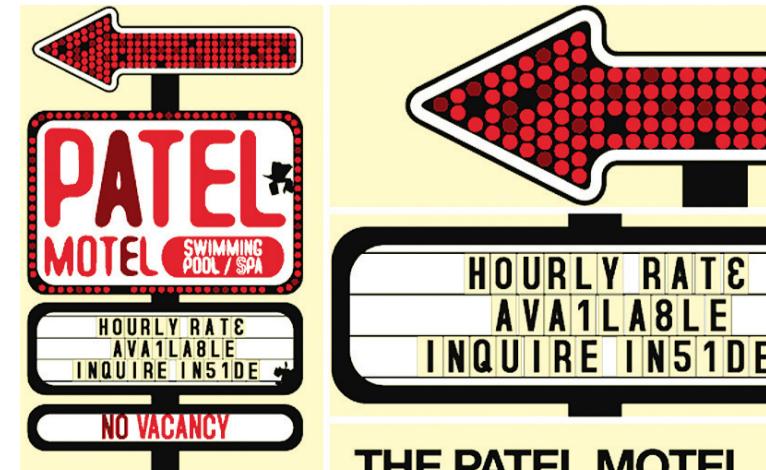
After the war, Desai took the bold step of leasing his own property, the Hotel Goldfield in San Francisco. From there, he began writing to his friends and relatives back in Gujarat, India, sharing what he had learned and encouraging them to join him in this growing opportunity.

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 that true success is not measured by how high one climbs alone, but how many others rise along the way.



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

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 Bombay and Bengal would write to British consular authorities seeking redress. The desire for such traditional values, created an environment where foreign visitors, even for religious purposes, faced significant difficulties, with many finding exploited or oppressed.

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. The desire for such traditional values, created an environment where foreign visitors, even for religious purposes, faced significant difficulties, with many finding exploited or oppressed.

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 octroi 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 octroi officials, but were gifts for relatives. "Moreover," she added for good measure, "I wish to point out that I belong to a Royal family in Lucknow, who always remained loyal to [the] British Govt."

Names like AA hotels, Americas Best Value Inn, and even franchises of Hilton or Marriott often have Patel owners behind the desk. What began as a survival story in a foreign land has evolved into one of the most successful immigrant business movements in U.S. history.

More Than Business: A Cultural Legacy

Beyond wealth, the Patels built something even greater, a shared identity and a culture of mentorship. Older generations continue to guide newcomers, passing down lessons of resilience, humility, and entrepreneurship. For the Patels, success was never about rivalry. It was about lifting each other up, ensuring that the next family could also achieve the American dream.

A Lesson Beyond Business

The Patel story is more than a business case study, it's a philosophy of life. It shows how collective success can thrive over individual gain, and how sharing knowledge can uplift an entire community. It's a reminder that true success is not measured by how high one climbs alone, but how many others rise along the way.



#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 Kharanah thoroughly examined our luggage and charged us 5 tomans duty on gramophone records and 2 bottles of rum which I am carrying with me for medicinal purposes.'

The businessman tried to explain that those were not contraband goods and 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 to return the articles they have confiscated, valued at about 100 plus 3142 Rials in cash," Habib wrote to the Foreign Department.

Customs officials at Damanhur could not find anything except our personal effects, in spite of that, they took out all the embroidered silk saris, which were worn (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 samples for 24 hours and charged it 3,142 rials (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

goods and that they belonged to me personally."

The businessman tried to explain that those were not contraband goods and 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 to return the articles they have confiscated, valued at about 100 plus 3142 Rials in cash," Habib wrote to the Foreign Department.

Customs officials at Damanhur could not find anything except our personal effects, in spite of that, they took out all the embroidered silk saris, which were worn (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."

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."

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

The Home Secretary also recommended using the media to change public opinion among Shias. "If Persia is anything like as sensitive as is Afghanistan to what appears in the Indian press, I think the best way to meet this is propaganda."

Hallet wanted the government's public officers to nudge Shia-run newspapers to 'ventilate the grievances of Indian pilgrims' in Iran. "If it were generally known that these pilgrims were badly treated, their number (whatever they may be) are likely to be reduced. It will do no harm if Massaihans urge their government to make the Government of India to make representations to Persia."

If the government did use propaganda, it did not have as big an effect on Shias' attitudes as word of mouth. Data collected from British India and the princely states put the number of Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran at around 2,000 at best. There was a small drop in the figure from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War. And yet, those visiting the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam, Ali-Rida.

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."

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

The Home Secretary also recommended using the media to change public opinion among Shias. "If Persia is anything like as sensitive as is Afghanistan to what appears in the Indian press, I think the best way to meet this is propaganda."

Hallet wanted the government's public officers to nudge Shia-run newspapers to 'ventilate the grievances of Indian pilgrims' in Iran. "If it were generally known that these pilgrims were badly treated, their number (whatever they may be) are likely to be reduced. It will do no harm if Massaihans urge their government to make the Government of India to make representations to Persia."

If the government did use propaganda, it did not have as big an effect on Shias' attitudes as word of mouth. Data collected from British India and the princely states put the number of Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran at around 2,000 at best. There was a small drop in the figure from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War. And yet, those visiting the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam, Ali-Rida.

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."

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

The Home Secretary also recommended using the media to change public opinion among Shias. "If Persia is anything like as sensitive as is Afghanistan to what appears in the Indian press, I think the best way to meet this is propaganda."

Hallet wanted the government's public officers to nudge Shia-run newspapers to 'ventilate the grievances of Indian pilgrims' in Iran. "If it were generally known that these pilgrims were badly treated, their number (whatever they may be) are likely to be reduced. It will do no harm if Massaihans urge their government to make the Government of India to make representations to Persia."

If the government did use propaganda, it did not have as big an effect on Shias' attitudes as word of mouth. Data collected from British India and the princely states put the number of Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran at around 2,000 at best. There was a small drop in the figure from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War. And yet, those visiting the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam, Ali-Rida.

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."

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

The Home Secretary also recommended using the media to change public opinion among Shias. "If Persia is anything like as sensitive as is Afghanistan to what appears in the Indian press, I think the best way to meet this is propaganda."

Hallet wanted the government's public officers to nudge Shia-run newspapers to 'ventilate the grievances of Indian pilgrims' in Iran. "If it were generally known that these pilgrims were badly treated, their number (whatever they may be) are likely to be reduced. It will do no harm if Massaihans urge their government to make the Government of India to make representations to Persia."

If the government did use propaganda, it did not have as big an effect on Shias' attitudes as word of mouth. Data collected from British India and the princely states put the number of Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran at around 2,000 at best. There was a small drop in the figure from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War. And yet, those visiting the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam, Ali-Rida.

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."

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

The Home Secretary also recommended using the media to change public opinion among Shias. "If Persia is anything like as sensitive as is Afghanistan to what appears in the Indian press, I think the best way to meet this is propaganda."

Hallet wanted the government's public officers to nudge Shia-run newspapers to 'ventilate the grievances of Indian pilgrims' in Iran. "If it were generally known that these pilgrims were badly treated, their number (whatever they may be) are likely to be reduced. It will do no harm if Massaihans urge their government to make the Government of India to make representations to Persia."

If the government did use propaganda, it did not have as big an effect on Shias' attitudes as word of mouth. Data collected from British India and the princely states put the number of Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran at around 2,000 at best. There was a small drop in the figure from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War. And yet, those visiting the Imam Reza Shrine, the final resting place of the eighth Imam in Shia Islam, Ali-Rida.

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."

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