

SOJITRA:

Ancient Origins and Mythological Foundations

Sojitra's history dates back to ancient times, with archaeological surveys and ancient documents indicating it was an established settlement that underwent multiple name changes and came under the control of various political entities over centuries. Popular local mythology attributes its founding to Sojan Rabari and his family, who are said to have settled and his family, who are said to have settled the area and named it Sojanpur or Sojatypur. Over time, this evolved into "Soja" and eventually the modern name "Sojitra."

The village proper was largely developed and settled by members of the Patel family lineage, who played a pivotal role in its growth as a farming community. Evidence suggests the Patel family were part of broader migrations of Hindus from West Asia and Punjab due to intense religious persecution and discrimination. The Patidar community's historical narrative is deeply rooted in a shared origin story that traces their lineage to ancient Aryan settlers. According to this tradition, the ancestors of the modern-day Patidars were part of an Aryan group that migrated from Shiraz region (Iran) and the Gujranwala region (Presently Pakistan) into Gujarat.

Initially known as the agricultural Kurmi Kshatriya caste, these farmers were called "Kanbi" in Gujarat. They were a sub-class of Kshatriyas who engaged in farming during peacetime, and their historical role as caretakers/custodians of the land is quite rightly cited as a source of community pride. The village proper was largely developed and settled by members of the Patel family lineage, who played a pivotal role in its growth as a farming community.

A pivotal moment in their social history occurred in the 17th century when the community began to shed the "Kanbi" identity and adopted the more prestigious "Patidar" and "Patel" names. This transformation was not a passive change but a deliberate act of social engineering to elevate their status. The community actively reformed its social practices, abandoning traditions like widow remarriage and meat-eating, which were deemed "impure," in favour of practices such as dowry-giving, vegetarianism, and the worship of Lord Krishna. The British Raj further solidified this transformation by favouring the land-owning Patidars over other castes and appointing them as revenue collectors, a move that formally cemented their elite status. This

process demonstrates how the community consciously reshaped its identity to align with a higher social standing, a strategic move that continues to define its culture and aspirations.

The history of the Patel family, particularly as it relates to the Sojitra region of Gujarat, India, is not a singular, linear lineage but a multifaceted narrative of social, economic, and geographic transformation. The surname "Patel" itself evolved from a socio-occupational title, signifying a village headman or landholder, into a common community identifier. This report establishes that the Patel community of Sojitra is part of the larger Patidar sub-caste, which traces its origins to the afore mentioned agricultural Kurmi Kshatriyas.

Sojitra, a strategic and historically significant town in the fertile Charotar region, served as a crucial hub for trade and power, a role that shaped the fortunes of its inhabitants. Its strategic location also made it a focal point for conflict.

Historical records reveal that Sojitra was a site of major battles in the 18th century, where Mughal imperial troops fought the Maratha forces. The town's historical and economic significance suggests that the Patel families of this region were not simple agrarian peasants but were deeply integrated into the region's political and economic power structures. Their resilience and ability to thrive in a dynamic, and often volatile, environment laid the groundwork for the community's later success.

The documented history of Sojitra becomes clearer from the medieval era, particularly during the Solanki dynasty and the subsequent Sultanate of Gujarat. During the reign of Raja Bhimdev I (a Solanki ruler, circa 1022–1064 local mythology attributes its founding to Sojan Rabari and his family, who are said to have settled here.

In 1527 the forefather Virabhai Patel obtained land in the nearby village of Devataj. His descendants—Mavjibhai, Laljibhai, Shamjibhai, Govabhai, Gopalbhai, Nensibhai, Malalbhai, Govabhai, Veranbhai, Novabhai, and

Virabhai—gradually settled in the area. Virabhai's son, Jesangbhai rose to prominence during the reign of Muhammad Begada (Sultan Mahmud Begada, 1458–1511 CE). In 1550 CE, Jesangbhai was appointed to administer Sojitra, farm its lands, and maintain law and order. In exchange, he paid an annual royalty 3000 rupees (in 2025 it would be worth around £25 million). In 1575, under Muzaffar Shah II (another Gujarat Sultan), the land of Sojitra was formally allotted to Jesangbhai Patel (son of Vitabhai Patel) for hereditary use. This grant solidified the Patel clan's control. Due to later reforms, famines, and lack of protection, Jesangbhai divided his 5,300 acres of land equally among his seven grandsons: Harakjibhai, Sunderbhai, Bhuderbhai, Saudasbhai, Amabaidas, Pragdas, and Mahidas. These divisions became known as the "seven Khadkis" (quarters), which still define social and land structures in Sojitra today. A key historical anchor for the local Patel lineage is the land grant of 1575 to Jesangbhai Patel, who in turn distributed the land among his seven sons, a foundational event for many family lines in the area. The seven Khadkis were the Seven main pillars of Sojitra's survival through famines, upheavals and man made disasters.

The Patels managed the village amid challenges like famines, leading to some migrations. For instance, some Sojitra Leva Patels migrated to areas like Amreli, Junagadh (settling in villages such as Kathrota, Majejadi, Govindpur, and Dhari around 1850), and even changed surnames (e.g., to "Ponkia" after blessings from Khodiyar Mata). An interesting layer of complexity in this genealogical puzzle is the use of "Sojitra" as a surname itself. While most references point to Patels *from* the town of Sojitra, the surname "Sojitra" is also explicitly listed as a name within the Kutch Leva Patel community. Online family trees also use "Sojitra" as a direct surname, indicating that some families have adopted the name of their village of origin as their primary family identifier. This suggests a separate genealogical trajectory for families who migrated from Sojitra to regions like Kutch and chose to carry the name of their ancestral village as a mark of their origin. This practice is a common phenomenon in Indian genealogy and underscores the fluid nature of family names and identities within a migrating community.

The historical and social forces that shaped the Patel community in Gujarat were also the catalysts for their widespread global migration. The community's movement began internally, with poor Patidar families migrating from Sojitra to other parts of India; clearing forests to cultivate new land around Rajkot and establishing many of new villages. This internal migration was driven by practical concerns such as land shortages, poverty,

Discrimination and oppression under Muslim rulers and later under British Raj.

This disciplined and hard-working approach to land development is a recurring theme in the community's history. This same entrepreneurial spirit, forged by a legacy of clearing forests and cultivating new lands, later propelled them into business ventures across India and the globe.

The British Raj provided new opportunities, leading many Patels to take advantage of a growing money economy to become merchants, moneylenders, and traders in towns like Ahmedabad. This historical foundation in both agriculture and commerce positioned them for success in the global diaspora. The community's ability to overcome challenges and adapt to new realities demonstrates a continuity of spirit that has defined the global Patel diaspora. They have become prominent in business and professional fields in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and East Africa.

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Sojitra was a strategic and economically significant location throughout its history. Its importance stemmed from its position on a major highway that emerged from the key port city of Khambhat, connecting it to the broader hinterland.¹ This made Sojitra an important industrial and commercial center, a hub for businessmen, money lenders, and artisans.

Under British colonial rule (from the 19th century), Sojitra remained an agricultural hub in the Kheda district (now Anand). The Patel community contributed to the independence movement and post-independence development. Post-1947, Sojitra became part of independent India and was integrated into the Anand district in 1965 when Gujarat was formed from Bombay State. In the modern context, Sojitra is an assembly constituency in Gujarat's Legislative Assembly, covering parts of Sojitra, Tarapur, and Petlad talukas (including villages like Balinta, Devataj, and Dharmaj). It remains a center for the Patidar community, with many descendants migrating globally. The town features amenities like C.C. Patel Hospital, Community Health Centre, and schools such as Smt. H.J. Patel Primary School for Girls (inaugurated in 2006), M.M. High School, and Library.

The Patel family from Sojitra has produced influential figures in Indian politics and administration:

- **State Level (Gujarat/Bombay):** Kamalaben Maganbhai Patel (Deputy Minister), Dr. Thakorabhai Patel (Cabinet Minister), Ravajibhai Maganbhai Patel (Secretary, Gujarat Congress Committee), Dr. Bhaskarabhai Patel (Deputy Minister, Bombay), Jashbhai Jivabhai Patel (Controller of Iron & Steel, Bombay).
- **National Level:** Gopalbhai Shivabhai Patel (Chairman, Unit Trust of India), Chimanbhai Patel (Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, Government of India).
- **Education and Development:** Shri Bhaikaka Patel, a proud son of Sojitra, founded Vallabh Vidyanagar (now part of Sardar Patel University) and played a key role in education reforms. He also founded the Swatantra Party in Gujarat.
- **Modern era Notables:** Dr. Amrish Patel Dr. Tejas Patel (cardiologist), Dr. Amrish Patel (ex-army scientist), and Praful Patel (Uganda Resettlement Board member).

Sojitra remained agriculture-centric village with key crops like cotton, wheat and tobacco, alongside animal husbandry (cows, buffaloes, and goats). Its culture is deeply Gujarati, with vibrant festivals such as Navratri, Diwali, Holi, and Uttarayan. The village boasts several ancient temples dedicated to Hindu and Jain deities, reflecting its religious heritage.

Today, Sojitra continues to thrive as a pilgrimage and cultural destination, with ongoing development in tourism, handicrafts (promoted via initiatives like "Vocal for Local"), and community efforts preserving its rich legacy.

1. Swaminarayan Temple

One of the most significant temples in Sojitra is the **Swaminarayan Temple**. The Swaminarayan Sampraday, founded by Swaminarayan (Swaminarayan Bhagwan) in the late 18th century, has numerous temples across India, and Sojitra houses one of them. The temple in Sojitra is dedicated to Swaminarayan Bhagwan and features stunning architecture, with intricate carvings and peaceful surroundings. It has a large following and serves as a center for both spiritual practices and community activities.

- **Historical Context:** The Swaminarayan tradition came to Sojitra in the 19th century, and this temple became an important religious and social center. The community here follows the teachings of Swaminarayan, which include principles of truth, morality, and devotion to God.

2. Kali Mata Temple

Another prominent temple in Sojitra is the **Kali Mata Temple**, which is dedicated to Goddess Kali, known for her fierce and powerful nature. The temple draws many devotees, especially those who believe in Kali's power to protect and provide strength.

- **Historical Context:** Kali Mata temples are spread across India, particularly in the states of Gujarat and West Bengal. In Sojitra, the Kali Mata temple has been a key part of the local religious life. It's believed that worshipping Kali here brings prosperity, protection, and spiritual strength.

3. Hanuman Temple

There is also a notable **Hanuman Temple** in Sojitra. Hanuman, the mighty monkey god, is revered for his strength, devotion, and loyalty. The temple here is visited by those seeking courage, blessings, and protection from evil.

- **Historical Context:** Hanuman has been a central figure in Hindu mythology, especially for devotees who focus on devotion to Lord Rama. The Hanuman Temple in Sojitra continues to hold significant importance for the local community, with people praying for courage and safety.

4. Shri Vithalnath Temple

The **Shri Vithalnath Temple** is dedicated to **Lord Vithal**, also known as **Vithoba**, an incarnation of Lord Krishna. The temple attracts a large number of pilgrims, especially during religious festivals like Janmashtami (the birth of Lord Krishna).

- **Historical Context:** The tradition of worshipping Lord Vithal is particularly prominent in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The temple in Sojitra is believed to have been established several centuries ago, and it plays a major role in the religious and cultural fabric of the area.

5. Jain Temples

In and around Sojitra, there are also several **Jain temples**. Jainism, an ancient Indian religion, is well-established in Gujarat, and many towns have temples dedicated to Jain Tirthankaras (spiritual teachers). These temples are known for their peaceful, serene atmosphere and architectural beauty.

- **Historical Context:** Jainism's roots in Gujarat go back to the 2nd century BCE, and many Jain communities settled in Sojitra. The temples dedicated to Jain Tirthankaras are places of meditation, worship, and learning.

In summary, the temples of Sojitra have deep historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. They are an integral part of the community's religious life and continue to attract devotees from all over India.

Temples in Sojitra, Gujarat, India

Sojitra is known for its religious significance with numerous Hindu and Jain temples. It serves as a local pilgrimage spot, attracting devotees from nearby areas. The town has a mix of ancient and modern temples dedicated to

various deities, including Mataji (goddess) shrines, Shiva temples, and Swaminarayan sects. Many are kuldevi (family deity) temples for specific communities. Below is a comprehensive list of all temples identified in Sojitra based on available sources, compiled from directories, local guides, and community information. I've included details such as location (all within Sojitra unless noted), contact info where available, historical or cultural notes, and ratings if mentioned.

Note that some temples may be small shrines, and details like history are limited as Sojitra's temples are primarily local rather than nationally famous.

I've organised them into a table for clarity, grouping similar ones and noting any overlaps. Distances are approximate from the town centre (e.g., based on one source's listings).

Temple Name	Location/ Address	Contact/Details	Notes/History
Shree Kshemkalyani Mataji Temple (also Kshemkalyani Mandir)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (near town center)	Phone: 93765 34252 (from Instagram); Facebook page available for updates; Instagram (@kshemkalyani_temple_official) for daily darshan.	Kuldevi of Mahida, Raulji, Chastiya, and Solanki Rajput communities. A popular Mataji temple with a serene atmosphere; photo records date back to at least 2008. The original temple is over 1000 years old. Attracts devotees for protection and wish fulfillment. Rated highly in local reviews (e.g., 4.7+ implied from similar sites).
Shri Shashandevi Mataji Jain Mandir (also Shasandevi Mataji Mandir)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.2 km from center)	Rated 4.7/5 based on 55 reviews (Justdial); 54 ratings overall.	Jain temple; kuldevi of Jain Visa Mewada community. A peaceful and holy Digamber Jain site, considered one of the best Jain religious places in Gujarat. Well-connected by road; nearest train: Sojitra Railway Station. Includes a temple for the community deity.
BAPS Shree Swaminarayan Temple (also Shri Swaminarayan)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.0-1.5 km	Phone: 02697 234 450.	Part of the BAPS Swaminarayan sect; dedicated to Lord Swaminarayan. One of the prominent Vaishnav temples in

Mandir)	from center)		town, with regular aartis and community events.
Sat Kaival Mandir (Shri Sat Kaival Mandir, SojitraPuri)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.3 km from center)	Phone: 02697 230 000.	Famous local temple; part of the Sat Kaival tradition. Attracts devotees for spiritual discourses and festivals.
Shree Amba Mata Temple (Shri Ambe Mata Temple)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.4 km from center)	N/A	Dedicated to Goddess Amba (Durga form). A key Mataji temple visited during Navratri.
Khodiyar Mandir (Shri Khodiyar Mata Temple)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.2 km from center)	N/A	Dedicated to Goddess Khodiyar, protector deity. Popular among locals for blessings related to safety and prosperity.
Shree Sojitra Kharakuwa Khodiyar Mataji Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.2 km from center)	Phone: 099047 45797.	Variant of Khodiyar temple; focused on community worship.
Vehrai Mata Temple (Shri Vaherai Mata Temple)	Near Juni Haveli, Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.5 km from center)	N/A	Dedicated to Goddess Vehrai (or Vaherai), a local protective deity.
Ramji Mandir (Shree Ramji Mandir)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.4 km from center)	N/A	Dedicated to Lord Rama; simple shrine for daily prayers.
Meldi Ma Temple (Maa Meldi Dham)	At Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/A	Dedicated to Goddess Meldi, a folk deity revered in rural Gujarat for warding off evil.
Sant Kabirasheb Temple	Prajapativas, Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.6 km from center)	Phone: 099096 34103.	Dedicated to Sant Kabir; focuses on bhakti and social harmony.
Neelkanth Mahadev (Nilkanth Varni Footprint)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/A	Shiva temple; includes footprints of Nilkanth Varni (young Swaminarayan). Linked to Swaminarayan history.
Shri Kamnath Mahadev Temple (possibly Kaamnath)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/A	Dedicated to Lord Shiva; local Mahadev shrine.
Shri Bhramani Mata Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/A	Dedicated to Goddess Brahmani, associated with creation and knowledge.
Navdurgha Mata Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/A	Dedicated to the nine forms of Durga; celebrated during Navratri.

Mahakali Temple	22°32'19.3"N 72°42'56.6"E, Sojitra	N/ A	Dedicated to Goddess Kali; for protection and power.
Bhairav Nath Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.6 km from center)	N/ A	Dedicated to Bhairav (fierce form of Shiva); guardian deity.
Vishva Karma Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.4 km from center)	N/ A	Dedicated to Vishwakarma, god of craftsmanship; popular among artisans.
Pranami Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240 (1.0 km from center)	N/ A	Part of Pranami sect; emphasizes devotion to Krishna-Radha.
Baapasitaram Nu Mandir	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/ A	Dedicated to Bapa Sitaram, a local saint; bhakti-focused.
Shakti Mata Mandir	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/ A	Dedicated to Goddess Shakti; energy and power worship.
Ramesvar Mahadev Temple	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/ A	Shiva temple; named after Rameshwar form.
Shree Annapurna Temple	Sojitra, Anand District, Gujarat 387240	N/ A	Dedicated to Goddess Annapurna, provider of food; small local shrine.
Ramdev Pir Temple (Baba Ramdev Temple)	Sojitra, Gujarat 387240	N/ A	Dedicated to Ramdev Pir, folk saint; revered by certain castes for miracles.