

Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee : A Legendary Personality of Indian Politics

25 Dec. 1924 -16 Aug. 2018

“Mei Ji Bhar Jia , Mei Man se Marun

LautkarAaunga, Kunch se KyoDaru”

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Abstract

Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee contributed to Indian politics in multiple ways .He made a major contribution to strengthening democracy in true spirit of the ideal enshrined in Constitution. Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee has dedicated over sixty years of his life in services of country of which five decades in Parliament. He is an orator par excellence, whose speech are listened with attention by friends and foes inside and outside Parliament like music. As a Parliamentarian, he used Parliament as an educational forum as well as political weapons and enhanced the prestige of parliamentary institution. He did not mince words when criticism is due or warning necessary. But his criticism has not hurt his opponents. Shri narsimha Rao described Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee “as one of the most outstanding parliamentary of our time.”¹ He has rear sharp intellect and wit that compelling effect. Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee often rises above party politics and gives primacy to national interest over political consideration. In his long parliamentary sojourns he never jumped into the well in Parliament to make his point and always appreciated well taken oppositions point of views. As a Prime Minister he also proved to be an achiever par excellence .He gave nuclear dimension to India’s Military power without fear of sanctions .This research paper is to explain about his history, Role as Politician, Role as Prime Minister, Character as Orator, his Policy towards Pakistan, Role as Poet,Important economic achievements of Vajpayee as Prime minister and about Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee departed from this world (A Nation’s Loss).

Reference to this paper
should be made as
follows:
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Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee
: A Legendary
Personality of Indian
Politics

*RJPSS 2018, Vol. 43,
No. 2, pp. 62-69
Article No. 9*

Online available at:
[http://anubooks.com/
?page_id=442](http://anubooks.com/?page_id=442)

Introduction

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was the first non congress prime minister to serve a full five year term (1999-2004).he becomes the only Prime Minister since Jawaharlal Nehru to occupy the office of the Prime Minister of India three successive mandates. He is also the first Prime Minister since Smt. Indra Gandhi to lead his party to victory in successive elections.

Born on 25 December, 1924 into a high-caste Brahmin family at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, to Shri. Krishna Bihari Lal Vajpayee and Smt. Krishna devi², Shri Vajpayee brings with him a long parliamentary experience spanning over four decades. He has been a Member of Parliament since 1957. He was elected to the 5th, 7th, 7th,Lok Sabha and again to the 10th,11th, 12thLoksabha and to Rajya Sabha in 1962 and 1986. He has again been elected to Parliament from Lucknow, in Uttar Pradesh, for the fourth time consecutively. He is the only parliamentarian elected from four different States at different time's namely-Up, Gujrat, MP, and Delhi.

Founder member of the erstwhile Jana Sangh (1951). President, Bhartiya Jana Sangh (1968-1973), leader of the Jana Sangh Parliamentary party (1955-1977) and a founder- member of the Janta Party (1977-1980), Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee was President, BJP (1980-1986) and the leader of BJP parliamentary party during 1980-1984, 1986 and – 1996 .He was Leader of opposition throughout the term of the 11thLok Sabha. Earlier, he was India's External Affairs Minister in the Morari Desai Government from march 24, 1997 to July 28, 1979.

Widely respected within the country and abroad as a statesman of the game of Pt. Jawahar Neheru, Shri Vajpayee's 1998-99 stint as Prime Minister has been characterized as 'one year of courage of conviction'. it was during this period that India entered a selected group of nation following a series of successful nuclear tests at PokhranIn may 1998.

It was during Vajpayee's 1998-99 tenure that despite a global recession, India achieved 5.8 percentage GDP growths, which was higher than the previous year. He was conferred Padma Bibhushan in 1992 in recognition of his services to the nation.He was also conferred the Lokmanya Tilak Puruskar and He was conferred India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee in 2015³, Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant Award for Best Parliamentarian, the Kanpur University honored him with an Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy in 1993.

Vajpayee remained a bachelor his entire life. He adopted and raised Namita Bhattacharya as his own child, the daughter of longtime friend Rajkumari Kaul and BN Kaul. His adopted family lived with him. The former Prime Minister came in

contact with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1939 and became a *pracharak* (full-time worker) in 1947. He also had a stint in journalism and worked as the editor of *Rashtradharma* Hindi monthly, *Panchjanya* Hindi weekly and the dailies *Swadesh* and *Veer Arjun*.⁴

Role as Prime Minister

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee walked into history book a long time ago as the first non-Congressman at the top post to complete a full term. Mr. Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee himself said once in parliament that, as Prime Minister, he may have been at the helm for a short time, but had achievement that would be remembered forever. The BJP may now occupy the pole position in Indian politics by invoking the emotions of Hindutva, but when it came to forming the government in 1998 and in 1999 (the third time that Mr. Vajpayee was sworn in, and the term that would last the full five years), the party under its consensus – building leader kept its three core issues of the Ram Temple, the abrogation of Article 370 and the demand for a uniform civil code aside. Mr. Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee a self – proclaimed staunch *pracharak* of the Rashtryaswayamseveksangh (RSS), did it to hold the fragile coalition together, and to also avail his party the opportunity of securing other important goals for itself. The first among these, in the short – lived thirteen – month government between 1998-1999, was the pokhran test that made India a nuclear state, an exercise that shocked the world, but which also gave the BJP the patina of a ‘doer’. The strong nationalist sentiment invoked, as well as Mr. Vajpayee’s handling of the war in Kargil with Pakistan, enabled the party to, without much of a role in the freedom movement, occupy a nationalist plank.

The tenuous coalition he led was not the only thing he overcame. In initiating and taking forward far reaching economic reforms in infrastructure and telecom, and some unpopular decisions with disinvestment, he took on elements of the RSS that opposed such actions.

As Prime Minister, He did not allow his political compulsions to consume him. He turned them tactile, malleable, some time even to an advantage, to emerge as a statesman Prime Minister, comparable to the greatest in the country.

The Orator

The long political career Vajpayee was marked by one unique fact: his mesmerising oratory in Hindi that touched friends and foes alike. While he stayed Prime Minister for six years – from 1998 -2004 his long parliamentary stint was marked by sharp oratory laced with humour.

Mr. Vajpayee first entered in Parliament in 1957 from Balrampur in UttarPradesh, in what was to be the first of his 10 Lok Sabha terms. Yet he made a mark, despite his party the Jana Sangh, being insignificant at that time. The older Prime Minister Vajpayee was more guarded and spoke with pauses, unlike the younger fiery orator Vajpayee. Arguably the best Hindi orator parliament has ever seen .he held people in rapt attention from the 1950 to the 1990s. When Neheru died in 1964, Mr. Vajpayee’s obituary speech in parliament read like poetry.

In 1997, as External Affairs Minister, Mr. Vajpayee addresses the UN General Assembly in Hindi. In the 1990s, as rising BJP sought a face acceptable to allies, Mr. Vajpayee returned as the party’s prime leader delivering one unforgettable speech in Parliament after another.

The Role as Politician

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee’s long time friend associate and friend, L.K Advani , summed up his political legacy by calling him the pioneer who gave India the first stable non-congress coalition government. After failing to find the numbers for his thirteen day old government, he resigned on the floor of the house but not before leaving a mark with his speech. “Governments come and go and parties are born and disappears above it all, the country must stay shining, its democracy immortal,” Mr. Vajpayee said in what has now become a defining moment of his long Parliamentary career. After the collapse of various collisions experiments like the Janta Party and the United front governments , Mr. Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee stitched up a formidable alliance of 13 parties in 1998 ,including the BSP, the AIADMK ,the TDP and the Trinamool Congress .But the government lasted only a little over a year. The number 13 struck to Mr. Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee-his first government lasted 13 days, his second government lasted only 13 months and his coalition had 13 parties.

“Vajpayee was instrumental in strengthening the BJP .From a party that had just 2 members in the Loksabha, Mr. Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee rode it to power. He was a successful MP, the leader the opposition, the Minister of External Affairs and eventually the Prime Minister”.Mr. Vajpayee’s public speaking skills allowed him to make contentious points in a gentle and affable manner. His rise in national Politics was linked to the many friends he made during his long parliamentary career .He was a spell binding orator , a leader of great vision , a patriot to the core for whom the national interest was paramount .but above all , he was a man with a very large heart and a real sprit of magnanimity .⁵

Vajpayee's Policy towards Pakistan

Terrorism is a horrible term that makes us shiver in fear and shame .It is the greatest crime against humanity. In this 21st century it is a stigma on our society, culture and intellect .This big issue of the day involves a wide range in the field of crime like the Pakistan issue, the Jammu Kashmir issue and Afganistan issue. Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee's point of views on 'terrorism' is noticeable and stroking in this regard. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is a 'core issue'.Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee made a beginning in the direction of jammu and Kashmir .The Initiatives was welcomed by the large collectivity of citizen in the region. The issue of Pakistan in not a recent one, but –an old wound that troubled much. Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee paid a visit in Pakistan by a bus January on 21stFebruary, 1999. The meeting between Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee and Mohammad Nawas Sharif was a friendly one and both of them discuses on the entire range of bilateral relation, regional cooperate within SAARC and issues of informational concern.

The effort of making a healthy and friendly relation came to a futile end. Pakistan after a few months turned the table upside down and showed a hostile attitude. This unfriendly manner expressed its color in Kargil war. Undoubtedly it was a great loss to us to see Pakistan's changed mood after friendly meeting .What Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee fried to do was to solve the clash and conflict existing between the two neighbor countries.Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee had led our country toward numerous victories soci economic, scientific, and technological. But the most crucial and moral boosting victory, was the one which our Jawan's scored, under Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee's supporting premiership, at Kargil sector, inflicting a humiliating defeat on the Pakistani army.

Pakistan faced a lot of flak both from the international community, as well as from within its own country, for his misadventure.⁶

Important economic achievements of Vajpayee

(i).Fast-tracking-Bharat

Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee's most memorable achievement was the ambitious roads projects he launched—the Golden Quadrilateral and the Pradhanmantri Gramin Sadak Yojna. The Golden Quadrilateral connected Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai through a network of highways while the Pradhanmantri Gramin Sadak Yojna was planned as a network of all-weather roads for unconnected villages across India. Both the projects proved to be immense success and contributed to India's economic growth majorly.

(ii).Privatisation

Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee's commitment to reducing the government role in running businesses and industry was reflected in the formation of a separate disinvestment ministry. The most important disinvestments were Bharat Aluminium Company (BALCO) and Hindustan Zinc, Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited and VSNL. These initiatives of the Vajpayee government, not free from controversies, set the tone for the government's role in future.

(iii).Reining in the fiscal profligacy

Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee government made another beginning by introducing the Fiscal Responsibility Act that aimed to bring down fiscal deficit. It boosted public-sector savings which rose from -0.8% of GDP in FY 2000, to 2.3% in FY 2005.

(iv).Telecom revolution

Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee government's New Telecom Policy unleashed the telecom revolution in India by replacing fixed license fees for telecom firms with a revenue-sharing arrangement. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd was created to separate policy formulation and provision of Service.

(v).Sarva-Shiksha-Abhiyan

It was a social scheme to provide universal access to free elementary education for children aged 6-14 years. Within four years of its launch in 2001, the number of out-of-school children dropped by 60 per cent. ⁷

Character as Poet

Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee has been a patriotic social activist since early childhood, when Vajpayee was admitted in a New York hospital. From the Hospital he wrote a letter and poem to the editor of Dharmyug, a popular hindi magazine of its time that has since publication. "Kavya ki kasauti par mera prayas bhale hi khara na utre, kintu yeh meri zindgi ka dastavez hai," wrote Vajpayee roughly translated into English as "My effort may not stand up to the benchmark of poetry but its my life's document."

The poem, where he wrote of his face-off with death, was published with the headline, Zindagi ka dastavez, in the magazine 's Dec 8-14, 1998 issue and become much-discussed, Wrote the politician poet, cryptically and philosophically, "Maut ki umra kya- Do pal ki bhi nahin What's the life span of death - Not even a few moments)".

In his lifetime, Vajpayee penned hundreds of poem which found their way into collections such as Meri Ekyavan Kavitayein and Na daniyam Na Palayaanam. In one of his work in prose, Atmakathya (My Story), the former Prime Minister wrote that he had inherited the craft from his father who was a famous poet in the Gwalior riyasat. His Poems, often written in flowery style, touched upon the themes of valour and-nationalism.⁸

Shri Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee departs (A Nation's Loss).

Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee finally gave up and lost this one battle on 16 august 2018, as he set sail for unseen horizons. Died on 16 August 2018.⁹Mr. Vajpayee was admitted to All India Institute of Medical science (AIIMS) on 11 June 2018 with a kidney tract infection and chest congestion. The BJP leader, who diabetic with one functional kidney, suffered a stroke in 2009 weakling his cognitive ability, His foster daughter Namitakaul lit the pyre as cries as Atal Bihari Amar Rahe reverberated in the air and a light drizzle fell. President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Naredra Modi , congress President Rahul Gandhi were among the thousands of people at Rashtriya Smriti Sthal on the bank of the Yamuna, the BJP patriarch's final resting place . Several foreign dignitaries, including Bhutanese king Jigma Khesar Namgyel Wang chuck, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali and Pakistan's Law Minister Ali Zafar were present as Vajpayee was cremated with full state honours.

Tributes

“Atalji the gentle giant, will be missed by one and all His leadership, foresight, maturity and eloquence put him in league of his own”

President Kovind

“A ‘Mahayanak’ of Indian politics has left us. My Ideal, Vajpayee ji, rose above politics to receive support from all political leaders. He had an exceptional quality of taking everyone together”

Ram Naik

“For Atal Bihari Vajpayee . National interest was first priority. He pursued politics of values and ideas and was a visionary who put the country on path of development”

Yogi Aditya nath

“I had personal rapport with Atal ji. He was one of the best orators and preferred giving due importance to people he know”

Mulayam Singh

“Atal Bihari Vajpayee wielded respect despite being a leader of Jan Sangh and its successor BJP. He rose above party and government to think and work for society and the country”.

Mayawati

“He favoured inclusive views of Gandhi and Neheru despite being a BJP leader. Atal Ji’s Death has left an irreparable loss to Indian politics and society”

Raj babbar¹⁰

Conclusion

Atal Bihari Lal Vajpayee, who has died aged 93, was the most important politician in 20th-century India. Vajpayee was a fearless leader. Not only his friends but also his enemies admired him. He never kneeled down against any enemy country. He had all the skills and art to winning the heart of even the enemies. Whenever he was in difficult situation, he faced difficulties bravely and came out as a winner. He was a role model for every citizen of the country. He had a firm belief that nothing is impossible in the world. Whenever he was pulled down by his competitor, he always took it as a challenge and never accepted defeat though he is no more with us now, he will continue to be the favourite leader for all the people of India. He was liked and loved by people of all religions. He was a strong nationalist, He was also a great leader, honest, matured and responsible and non controversial leader of all time.

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