



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE



Lok Sabha Secretariat  
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*Bharat Ratna* Atal Bihari Vajpayee was an outstanding parliamentarian, who stood tall in the galaxy of our national leaders. Renowned and respected for his courage of conviction, dedication and far-sightedness, he remained a guiding light in bringing about major developmental changes in the country. His multifaceted personality and the simple way in which he expressed himself with a matchless oratory skill enabled him to strike a chord with one and all. The illustrious political career that he had is a witness to his eventful journey, from the grassroots level to the pinnacle of national affairs. He firmly believed that upholding the highest traditions of parliamentary democracy is fundamental to our democratic existence.

Born on 25 December 1924 in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh to Shri Krishna Bihari Vajpayee and Smt. Krishna Devi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee did his schooling from *Saraswati Shishu Mandir*, Gorkhi, in Gwalior. He completed his graduation with Hindi, Sanskrit, and English from Victoria College in Gwalior (now known as Laxmi Bai College) and thereafter, did his post-graduation in Political Science from DAV College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. After completing M.A., Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to Lucknow to do Ph.D, but got involved with the work of *Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh*, of which, he was a member since 1939. Simultaneously, he worked for a Hindi Monthly, *Rashtradharma*; Weekly, *Panchjanya*; and dailies *Swadesh* and *Veer Arjun*. Besides, Atal Bihari Vajpayee remained associated with *Arya Kumar Sabha* of Gwalior, the youth wing of the Arya Samaj. This association greatly influenced his young impressionable mind and gave him a direction and a purpose in life.

Like every youth of his times, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was drawn to the freedom movement, which was at its peak. He was imprisoned during the Quit India Movement in 1942. Later on, when Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party in 1951, Atal Bihari along with Deendayal Upadhyaya worked for this newly formed political party. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, who was then the leader of Jana Sangh, was impressed by his talent and made him his deputy and secretary. In turn, Dr. Mookerjee's inspiring speeches on Kashmir, his protest, fast and determination in fighting for the cause of Kashmir and later his death made a deep impact on young Vajpayee. At this stage, Shri Vajpayee's strong leadership qualities and charisma brought him to the forefront of politics. Thus, it was no surprise that he got elected to the Lok Sabha at a young age of 33, in 1957. He blossomed as a fine parliamentarian in the erudite company of many stalwarts, who adorned the Chamber those days. He spoke freely and fearlessly, though a first timer. A keen debater and a gifted orator, he contributed immensely for the enrichment of parliamentary proceedings with his insightful interventions.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee entered the portals of Parliament in the Second Lok Sabha from Balrampur constituency in Uttar Pradesh. He was elected to the Lok Sabha ten times and to the Rajya Sabha twice. This speaks volumes of people's trust and enduring faith in his leadership. As a parliamentarian, he had held the Chairmanship of many important Parliamentary committees such as Public Accounts Committee, Committee on External Affairs, and Committee on Petitions. As a Leader of the Opposition, he had conducted himself with great dignity and high decorum.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee possessed an inherent charm and sharp acumen which helped him forge political alliances easily. His honesty of purpose and amiable

nature surmounted all ideological and political differences and enabled him to reach out to leaders of other political parties. He had the rare ability to build bridges and consensus across political spectrum. Shri Vajpayee along with his long time associate, Shri L.K. Advani formed the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980 and was able to carve out a political space for the newly established party. The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party owes, in no small measure, to the strong foundation laid by him. Shri Vajpayee subsequently rose to become the Prime Minister of India not once, but thrice, between 1996 and 2004. During his tenure as Prime Minister, he provided outstanding leadership and earned world-wide appreciations. He was the first Prime Minister of India to address the United Nations in Hindi.

As political leader and particularly, as Prime Minister, Shri Vajpayee has many contributions that would go down in history as milestones. Be it economic reforms that paved way for a stronger economy or infrastructure development that gave India the golden quadrilateral connecting the country through quality express highways. His deep understanding of strategic issues and foreign affairs enabled him to enhance India's position in the global arena. He distinguished himself as a great statesman and a world leader.

During his time, relations with the neighbouring countries reached a new high. His concern for peaceful existence with neighbouring countries can be lauded through his initiative of Delhi-Lahore bus service. He was successful in establishing cordial relations with world powers too. Under his leadership, India was able to deftly handle any difficult situation coming on the way. His resolve demonstrated to the world that India is a country determined to protect its national interests. On several occasions, in his address, he made a strong plea for a better world through harnessing modern science and technology, and appealed to the world community for universal peace based on freedom and justice.



India's development was foremost in his agenda. His Government expanded the process of economic liberalisation and facilitated the participation of private sector in Indian economy. He wanted the Indian industry to become competitive and efficient to face future challenges. It is worthwhile to recall what he said while speaking at the 3rd Meeting of the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industries on 2 December 2000. He said, "The Indian Industry must adopt itself to face competition. An over-protectionist approach will only foster inefficiency. It will lead to stagnation. What are the steps which are necessary to enable Indian industry to face competition? We must have a strategy and a design. Let us talk about that today. Let us also talk about how to harmonize the interests of consumers with the interests of the industry. And how to combine the gains in productivity with the virtues of a non-disruptive transition?".

The launching of the National Highways Development Project – the Golden Quadrilateral, the *Antyodaya Anna Yojana* Scheme, introduced in 2000, to provide subsidised food to millions of the poorest families and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, operational since 2000-01, to spread literacy are some notable initiatives that he took during his Prime-ministership. It was Shri Vajpayee who made right to education a fundamental right by bringing in the 86th Amendment to the Constitution. This Act has made education free for all children between the age of 6 to 14. The Pokhran nuclear tests and the Prevention of Terrorism Act are testimony to his determination and courage to protect India's national interest. Engaging the Indian Diaspora was another effort by him to associate people of Indian origin in country's development. Today, the '*Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*' is celebrated and the *Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award* is given due to his initiative.

The international image of the country improved greatly with the modernisation of industrial and public infrastructure; increased foreign investments; booming of IT industry; creation of new jobs; industrial expansion; and improved agricultural outputs.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee won many laurels for his contribution to the parliamentary and political life as well as for his huge role towards nation-building. Amongst others, he was conferred with *Padma Vibhushan* in 1992, D.Litt by Kanpur University in 1993, *Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant* Best Parliamentarian Award, 1994 and the *Lokmanya Tilak* Award also in 1994. The *Bharat Ratna* was befittingly bestowed on him in 2015. In the same year, the Government of Bangladesh also conferred on him the Bangladesh *Muktijuddho Sanmanona* .

Apart from being a remarkable political personality, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a great human being. The depth of his feelings are truly reflected in his writings and speeches. His poetry and writings earned him accolades long before his arrival on the Indian political landscape. His poems captured the aspirations of the common people.

Shri Vajpayee lived a simple and an exemplary life. He converted his only property in Gwalior into a reading room for children under the *Krishna Bihari Vajpayee Trust*. The Trust promotes a number of activities which include promoting literacy, setting up training institutes, schools and libraries, starting healthcare and nourishment projects and welfare activities for women, children and downtrodden people.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee passed away on 16 August 2018, at the age of 93. With his passing away, India lost an illustrious son who made invaluable contribution for the welfare and wellbeing of the people and the nation. His commitment to value-based and inclusive approach to politics will continue to be the source of inspiration and guidance for generations to come. A true leader, a visionary statesman and a human being *par excellence*, he was loved and respected by people across the length and breadth of our country, cutting across not only the regions but also across generations. Millions of people paid their rich tributes to their beloved leader following his death, including dignitaries as well as the common people.

Shri Vajpayee's leadership qualities, conviction and vision are reflected in one of his famous poems:

गीत नया गाता हूँ  
टूटे हुए तारों से फूटे बासंती स्वर  
पत्थर की छाती में उग आया नव अंकुर  
झरे सब पीले पात कोयल की कुहुक रात  
प्राची में अरुणिमा की रेख देख पाता हूँ

गीत नया गाता हूँ  
टूटे हुए सपनों की कौन सुने सिसकी  
अन्तर को चीर व्यथा पलकों पर ठिठकी  
हार नहीं मानूंगा, रार नई ठानूंगा,  
काल के कपाल पे लिखता मिटाता हूँ  
गीत नया गाता हूँ

कदम मिलाकर चलना होगा  
बाधाएं आती हैं आएँ  
घिरें प्रलय की घोर घटाएँ,  
पांवों के नीचे अंगारे,  
सिर पर बरसें यदि ज्वालाएँ,  
निज हाथों में हंसते-हंसते,  
आग लगाकर जलना होगा

कदम मिलाकर चलना होगा  
हास्य-रुदन में, तूफानों में,  
अमर असंख्यक बलिदानों में,  
उद्यानों में, वीरानों में,  
अपमानों में, सम्मानों में,  
उन्नत मस्तक, उभरा सीना,  
पीड़ाओं में पलना होगा.....

## *Tributes*

Describing Atal Bihari Vajpayee as a statesman of modern India, Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind said, "Atalji was truly the renaissance man of Indian politics".

Paying his homage, Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu had said, "He is, undoubtedly, one of the tallest leaders in post-independence India. His contribution to strengthen democracy and good governance has been stupendous".

In his tributes, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi said, "India grieves the demise of our beloved Atal ji. His passing away marks the end of an era".

Paying her respect, Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan said, "he was not only Bharat Ratna but was truly a bright jewel in the crown of our motherland". Describing him as "one of the greatest sons of Bharat Mata" she said that "people were mesmerized by the magic spell of his enchanting personality", and "in his death, we have lost a true visionary who dreamt of making India a land of our dreams and relentlessly worked to achieve them. His demise has left an eternal void".