

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE



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Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister of India, briefly in 1996, and again from March 19, 1998 until May 19, 2004. He retired from active politics in December 2005.

He was a senior leader of Bhartiya Janata Party and Indian politics in general. He has served as a Member of the Parliament of India for nearly 50 years. He was also a poet, writing in his native language, Hindi.

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Edited By

Prasanta Kumar Meher, Librarian, KV Jharsuguda

References

Encyclopedia of Great Indian Personalities. Pushpanjali Prakashan

<https://www.wikipedia.org/>

Early Political Career

- ♦ *Vajpayee's Politics began as a freedom fighter during Quit India Movement of 1942-1945.*
- ♦ *He was member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).*
- ♦ *Initially, he was follower of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the leader of Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS).*
- ♦ *After death of Mookerjee, Vajpayee took the baton.*
- ♦ *Vajpayee won his first election to parliament in 1957.*

The Janata Phase

- ♦ *In 1975, during national state of emergency, the RSS & BJS joined a wide-array of parties in opposing the suspension of elections and civil liberties.*
- ♦ *In 1977, the BJS joined the Janata coalition, a vast collage of regional groups, socialist, communist and right-wing forces. Janata swept the polls and fomed the next government under PM, Morarji Desai. Vajpayee took office as the Minister of External Affairs.*
- ♦ *Vajpayee went on a historic visit to China in 1979. he also visited Pakistan and initiated normal dialogue and trade relations.*
- ♦ *In 1977, he became the first person to deliver a speech in Hindi to the United Nations General Assembly.*

The Rise of the BJP

- ♦ *Vajpayee, along with many BJS & RSS colleagues, particularly his longtime and close friends Lal Krishna Advani and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, formed the Bhartiya Janata Party in 1980.*
- ♦ *BJP won only 2 parliamentary seats in 1984.*
- ♦ *BJP became the political voice of Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir Movement, which was led by activists of Vishwa Hindu Parishad & RSS.*
- ♦ *On December 6, 1992, hundreds of VHP & BJP activists broke down an organized protest into frenzied attack on Babri mosque, which resulted in violence between Hindus & Muslims, killing over 1000 people.*
- ♦ *Although widely condemned by many across the country for playing politics with sensitive issues, the BJP won the loyalty and support of millions of conservatives Hindus, as well as national prominence.*

Prime Minister of India

- ♦ *In 1996, BJP became single largest political party, asked to form government, but failed to gather enough support. Vajpayee resigned after just 13 days.*
- ♦ *In the second term (1998-1999), a cohesive bloc of parties lined up with BJP to form NDA & Vajpayee was sworn in as PM. The term ended in 13 months when AIADMK withdrew its support.*
- ♦ *After election of 1999, Vajpayee was sworn in as PM for 3rd time. The only non-congress government lasted its full term of 5 years.*

Nuclear Bomb Testing

- ♦ *In May 1998, India conducted five underground nuclear weapon tests in Pokhran, Rajasthan, which shocked & surprised the world, especially considering that the Vajpayee government had been for only 2 months.*

Lahore Summit

- ♦ *With historic inauguration of Delhi-Lahore bus service in February, 1999, Vajpayee initiated a new process aimed towards permanently resolving the Kashmir dispute.*
- ♦ *The Lahore Declaration was a bilateral agreement and governance treaty between India and Pakistan. The treaty was signed on 21 February 1999, at the conclusion of a historic summit in Lahore, and ratified by the parliaments of both countries the same year.*

Kargil Invasion

- ♦ *The Kargil War, also known as the Kargil conflict, was an armed conflict between India and Pakistan that took place between May and July 1999 in the Kargil district of Kashmir and LOC. In India, the conflict is also referred to as Operation Vijay.*
- ♦ *On October 13, 1999, General Parvez Musharraf, the chief planner of Kargil conflict, seized power from democratic government of Pakistan. On the same day, Vajpayee took oath as PM of India for the 3rd time. The BJP-led NDA had won 303 seats, a comfortable & stable majority.*

National Highway Development Project

- ♦ *Atal Bihari Vajpayee envisaged a highway network to connect the corners of the country. This is the fifth largest highway project in the world. This project looks like an urban centre connection programme but it was actually a policy to give Rural India access to Urban India.*
- ♦ *A total of around 6,000 km of the highway was built - completed in 2012, six years after the original deadline of 2006. It generated thousands of employment opportunities for Rural India. It was aimed at facilitating greater and faster access to produces of the villages and agricultural farms.*

Telecom Revolution

- ♦ *When Atal Bihari Vajpayee assumed office in 1998, India's telecom sector was static and lacked almost any momentum. Though the first mobile phone call had been made in 1995, nothing much had happened thereafter. Vajpayee brought the new telecom policy and opened up the sector.*

Attack on Parliament

- ♦ *Indian Parliament attack was a terrorist attack at the Parliament of India in New Delhi on 13 December 2001.*
- ♦ *The Vajpayee administration passed the Prevention of Terrorist Act against vigorous opposition of non-NDA parties.*

Personal Life

Vajpayee remained a bachelor his entire life, preferring to serve the nation over marriage. He adopted and raised as his own child Namita Bhattacharya, the daughter of longtime friend Rajkumari Kaul and BN Kaul.

Awards

1992, Padma Vibhushan

1993, D. Lit. from Kanpur University

1994, Lokmanya Tilak Award

1994, Outstanding Parliamentarian Award

1994, Bharat Ratna Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant Award

2015, Bharat Ratna

2015, Bangladesh Liberation War honour

Works

Vajpayee authored several works of both prose and poetry. Some of his major publications are listed below. In addition to these, various collections were made of his speeches, articles, and slogans.

Prose: *National Integration (1961), New Dimensions of India's Foreign Policy (1979), Gath-bandhan Ki Rajneeti, Kucha Lekha, Kucha Bhashana (1996), Bindu-Bindu Vicara (1997), Decisive Days (1999), Sankalp-Kaal (1999), Vicara-Bindu (Hindi Edition, 2000), India's Perspectives on ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Region (2003), Na Dainyam Na Palayanam, Nayi Chunouti : Naya Avasar,*

Poetry: *Kaidi Kaviraj Ki Kundalian, Amar Aag Hai (1994), Meri Ikyavana Kavitaem (1995), Kya Khoya Kya Paya: Atal Bihari Vajapeyi, Vyaktitva Aur Kavitaem (1999), Values, Vision & Verses of Vajpayee: India's Man of Destiny (2001), Twenty-One Poems (2003), Chuni Hui Kavitaeyin (2012)*