

# PolicyWatch

Covering developments on policy responses, policy implementation and policy distortions on a quarterly basis. Comments are welcome.

Commemorative Edition – Atal Bihari Vajpayee

## Atal Bihari Vajpayee

### *The Statesman who Instilled Confidence in the Nation*

Pradeep S Mehta\*

The passing away of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, our former Prime Minister, was an unfortunate event. The only succour - this ended his decade-long suffering. He has departed, but his presence is felt through his ideals, his statesmanship and his stature.

I have fond memories of the inspirational, one-to-one interaction with Atalji. I recall him telling me that we should strive to create and nourish a questioning society.

*Gram Gadar*, a rural wall newspaper, launched in September, 1983 proved to be one such tool of creating a questioning society; and on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1983, while on one of his political tours, Atalji blessed *Gram Gadar* (see photo). *Gram Gadar* was a precursor to CUTS. In ways more than one, Vajpayee influenced the formation of CUTS.

During Rajiv Gandhi's regime in 1984-89, an amendment was made in the Commission of Inquiry Act. This allowed the government to withhold Inquiry Commission reports. People were enraged.

We decided to hold a public debate in Calcutta, my place of dwelling those days. I invited the then Minister of Law and Justice, Ashoke Sen, who was glad to visit and expound on the topic. I asked Atalji if he, too, could join the public forum. He asked a very innocent question, "What has a consumer group to do with the Commission of Inquiry Act?" I explained that the people needed to know



what was going on, that citizens and taxpayers are consumers of government services. There was a situation, wherein the government was bringing about an alteration which could destroy an institution engaged in promoting transparency and accountability. Such tumultuous changes warranted a public discourse. I also reminded him of our three-year-old conversation at Alwar.

Atalji could not make it due to prior engagements, but he sent a very encouraging message. Nowadays, one rarely runs into such happenings. It is a tragedy that many of our institutions have been eroded and degenerated. This generation may not be aware of the institutional culture which prevailed during Jawaharlal Nehru's and Atal Bihari Vajpayee's

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*"The reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new".*

**Machiavelli in *The Prince***

times, two of our great Prime Ministers, both liberals. Of course, Vajpayee's propensity for reforms was way greater than Nehru's.

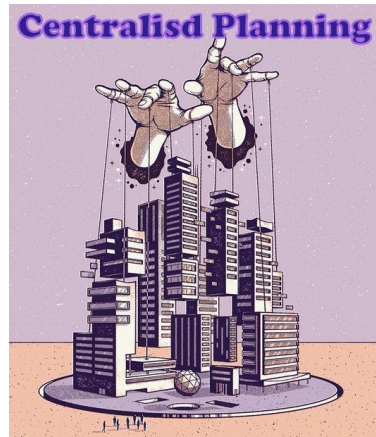
Nehru believed in the Soviet model of centralised planning and socialism. And this centralised planning was the system until, Shri P V Narasimha Rao, the Prime Minister in 1991, emancipated the country from this highly centralised system.

Soon after him, Vajpayee became the Prime Minister and carried on with the reforms vigorously. He was thrice appointed as our Prime Minister - once only for 13 days. An exemplary leader, a gifted speaker, a consensus-builder, and a great unifier – Vajpayee belonged to a rare breed of philosopher politicians. It is distressing that his own followers, disciples and acolytes are not able to follow his ethics, ideologies and deeds. The righteousness of those days greatly outweighs today's saddening, insubstantial rectitude.

A sound parliamentarian and an eloquent orator, Vajpayee once told Nehru in the Parliament that he was a combination of Winston Churchill and Neville Chamberlain - two British Prime Ministers with personalities which were poles apart. Churchill was known for his tireless spirit while Chamberlain for his policy of appeasement. Such criticism of Nehru was quite harsh. Later on, Vajpayee wrote, "I met him later at a banquet in the evening and he just laughed it off."

A remark of that sort today would result in mayhem. Shoes will be hurled, offensive words hollered, parliamentarians will be seen resorting to vandalism – and there will be no end to such chaos. Atalji endeavoured to uphold the integrity of the institutions – this virtue of his, is something we should foster.

I had several interactions with Vajpayee, including a 45-minute one-to-one meeting. He had come to Calcutta for a public debate sometime in 1987-88. Calcutta has the tradition of *The Statesman's* annual public debate which is followed by other newspapers such as *The Telegraph*. The public debate topic was: "Is the majority suffering from a minority complex?"



The statement is provocative. Are Hindus suffering from a complex in which they feel like second-class citizens because many governments or political parties pamper the minorities for vote politics?

C R Irani, the Editor of *The Statesman* introduced Vajpayee as the "Silver Tongued Orator" of India. I asked Atalji, "Aap kya Hindi me bhashan denge ya angrezi mein?" He said that he would speak in Hindi since he was not comfortable delivering a public speech in English. The audience, which comprised people who did not speak Hindi, followed and enjoyed Vajpayee's brilliant speech, in which he supported the motion. There is a lot of discrimination against the

majority. For example, if you are a Muslim, you can legally have four wives. This particular debate topic was selected to urge questioning on such prevailing norms – drawing forth the public sentiments.

Be that as it may, there was a high sense of maturity when P V Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister. He requested Vajpayee to head the country's delegation at the United Nations Commission for Human Rights convention in Geneva. The meeting's contentious agenda was human rights violation in Kashmir. Vajpayee agreed to go and the Pakistanis were surprised to see an opposition leader representing India at such a crucial forum.

Atalji led the delegation with utmost tact, and the Pak resolution failed.

The story goes that Narasimha Rao, an astute politician, would remain unharmed had India failed, and Vajpayee would be blamed. If India succeeded, the credit would have gone to Narasimha Rao -

Vajpayee knew this. He said that it did not matter as long as Rao had put his confidence in him to represent the country.

*"You can choose your Friends, but you can't choose your Neighbours"*

– Atal Bihari Vajpayee

On many of these issues, say on human rights in Kashmir, there has been a national consensus - there is no distinction between parties. A few might make some silly remarks but there exists a national consensus.

\* Secretary General, CUTS International

# The Unimaginable Vajpayee

## The Iconic Leader of BJP

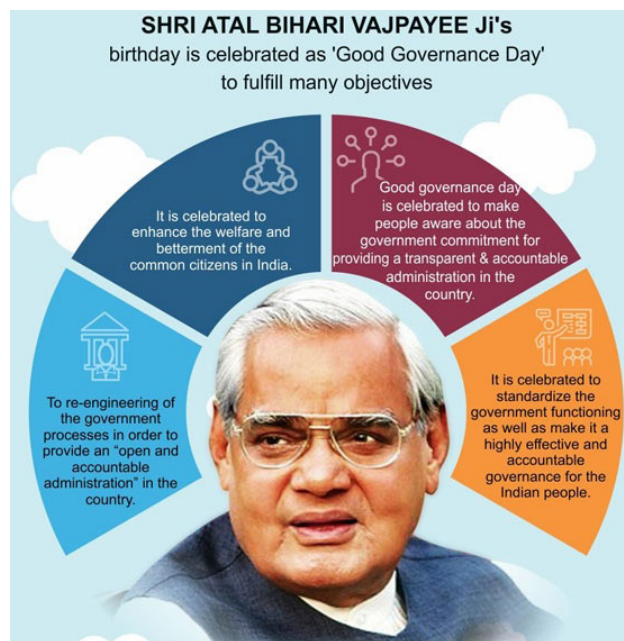
Atal Bihari Vajpayee was an iconic leader of the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), known for his cultural moderation, liberalism and political reasonableness. He became the Prime Minister of India thrice. The Modi government has declared his birthday, i.e. 25<sup>th</sup> December to be celebrated as **'Good Governance Day'**.

## Early Life

Vajpayee was born in a middle-class Brahmin family to Krishna Devi and Krishna Bihari Vajpayee on December 25, 1924 in Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh). His father was a poet and a school teacher. Vajpayee completed his schooling from the Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Gwalior. Later, he graduated from Victoria College, Gwalior – now Laxmi Bai College. It was at Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College, Kanpur that Vajpayee completed his post-graduation in Political Science. Joining as the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) worker in 1939, Vajpayee became a *pracharak* in 1947. He also worked for *Rashtradharma* a Hindi monthly, *Panchjanya* a Hindi weekly and the dailies *Swadesh* and *Veer Arjun*. Vajpayee chose to stay bachelor for entire life. He adopted the daughter of longtime friends Rajkumari Kaul and B N Kaul and raised her as his own child.

## Political Journey

Vajpayee was the 10<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of India. His Prime Ministerial tenure includes three non-consecutive terms – the first for 15 days (from May 16, 1996 to June 01, 1996), the second for a period of 13 months (from March 19, 1998 to April 26, 1999) and the third for five years (from October 13, 1999 to May 22, 2004). Over the course of his political career he was elected nine times to the Lok Sabha and twice to the Rajya Sabha or the Upper House of the Parliament. He was a member of the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* party started by Shri Syama Prasad Mookerjee in 1951. Vajpayee won his first election from the Balrampur Lok Sabha (parliamentary) constituency of Uttar Pradesh in 1957. Vajpayee served as the President of the party from 1969 to 1972. Vajpayee also served as the Minister of External Affairs in 1977 when the Janata Party won the Lok Sabha elections and Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister of India.



## Retirement

The 2004 General Election brought about the downfall of the NDA, which lost almost half its seats, and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) assumed the reins of power. Vajpayee refused to take up the Leader of the Opposition's position paving the way for his closest friend, Lal Krishna Advani's leadership of BJP.

## Awards and Achievements

Top seven awards conferred upon former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee are:

- Padma Vibhushan in 1992
- D. Lit. from Kanpur University in 1993
- Lokmanya Tilak Award in 1994
- Best Parliamentarian Award in 1994
- Bharat Ratna Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant Award in 1994
- Bharat Ratna in 2015
- Liberation War Award (Bangladesh Muktiyuddho Sanmanona) in 2015



## Call from Heaven

Sadly, Vajpayee's journey of life ended on August 16, 2018 due to prolonged illness.

***However, his spirit will guide in building 'India of his Dreams'.***

This has been abridged from news published in MapsofIndia and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/Yt8YbT](https://goo.gl/Yt8YbT)



## The Statesman

*L K Advani, Indian Politician*

L K Advani, who along with Vajpayee was a central figure in the party for much of its existence, today described the Atalji as one of the country's greatest statesmen and his closest friend for over 65 years whom he will miss immensely. Vajpayee's captivating leadership qualities, mesmerising oratory and soaring patriotism was remarkable. I had the privilege of working with Atalji as his deputy for six years.

*This has been abridged from news published in The Indian Express on August 16, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/S5Nhb7](https://goo.gl/S5Nhb7)*



## The Uncompromising Patriot

*Shakti Sinha, Former Finance Secretary*

Vajpayee was an uncompromising patriot, with a strong sense of his *Hinduness*, which was cultural and civilisational, i.e. the primary loyalty of citizens was to the country. Lacking a word, or concept, for 'religion' in any Indian language, he used to publicly say that the State had no role in any individual's choice of *upasana padhati* (forms of worship). There could be no discrimination/force, in the choice of belief systems. I started working for him on May 13, 1996 when he became the PM, the head of a government whose days were numbered even as he was being sworn in. I continued working with him when he became, once more, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

*Abridged from an article published in Hindustan Times on August 16, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/WdBXe5](https://goo.gl/WdBXe5)*



## The Atalji's Way

*Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Minister for Communications and IT*

Atalji left a profound imprint on the polity, public speaking and, above all, the democratic awakening of India. In independent India, I have not the slightest hesitation to state that Vajpayee was the most powerful public speaker in Parliament or outside. Young people started emulating his style and there are hundreds of young workers who pride themselves as mini-Atals. In one public meeting in Delhi, a speaker in his presence emulated him very well. Atalji said, "if the duplicate is so good then why trouble the original?"

*Abridged from an article published in The Indian Express on August 21, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/e8omyb](https://goo.gl/e8omyb)*



## Making only Friends, No Enemies

*M Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India*

Atalji finally gave up and lost this one battle, as he set sail for new unseen horizons. This is a battle no one has won so far and Vajpayee is no exception. But what makes him vastly different from others of his generation are the several battles that he had fought when he was alive by remaining 'Atal' (unmoved) as far as his core values and convictions were concerned. He was both 'Atal' and 'Bihari' (a wanderer or dreamer) all through his life. It is usually said that one's 'inner core' is reflected on one's face. Atalji is a fine example of this maxim.

*Abridged from an article published in The Indian Express on August 17, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/GspvA6](https://goo.gl/GspvA6)*



## The Best PM the Congress Never Had

*Saeed Naqvi, Senior Indian Journalist*

I knew Atalji more. I say so with utmost modesty because there were many journalists who knew him better. Confronting him was always a renewal because your opening question was generally greeted with stony silence, bordering on lack of recognition. Then would come a well thought through response to a question asked five minutes ago. There was no unprocessed response. Exuberance was not his style but when moved by an idea he could be demonstrative as at the Hyderabad House banquet when he said, "I read your column several times; I agree with you". It was not just a Prime Ministerial approval of a column, but the warmth with which the appreciation was communicated.

*Abridged from an article published in The Milli Gazette on August 17, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/5KZToV](https://goo.gl/5KZToV)*



## The Man who Changed Indian Politics

*Meghnad Desai, Senior Indian Journalist*

Of all the political leaders who have reached heights in India, Vajpayee was the most gracious. His greatest contribution was to bring the *Jana Sangh* in from the cold neglect of the Congress establishment and make the BJP a widely accepted party. In the way right-wing politicians were portrayed in those days of the 70s, he was not supposed to be so gentle. As a man from the RSS, he should have been more a figure easy to dismiss, more cardboard cut-out than the elegant flesh and blood person that he was.

*Abridged from an article published in The Indian Express on August 19, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/TvbTLf](https://goo.gl/TvbTLf)*



# A Titan of Indian Politics

*Vajpayee moulded the modern Indian right and served as one of the country's most consequential Prime Ministers*

In a political life that spanned seven decades, Vajpayee rose to become one of India's most consequential Prime Ministers and a colossus of the Indian Right. His political life had **four** distinct stages. In the 1930s, K B Hedgewar's RSS was still in many respects a fledgeling organisation, digesting diverse influences — from Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the *Hindu Mahasabha* to, most importantly, V D Savarkar. Vajpayee joined the organisation towards the end of the decade.

When the BJP was formed in 1951, Vajpayee, along with Deendayal Upadhyaya and L K Advani, was sent by the RSS to build the party's organisational strength. Over the next two decades, he would repeatedly display the other qualities that would elevate him: a canny political instinct and ruthless pragmatism. The former saw him progress from standing at power's right hand — with Barrister Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Upadhyaya — to the leadership of the *Jana Sangh* over two decades, picking up his **first** electoral victory in 1957 along the way.

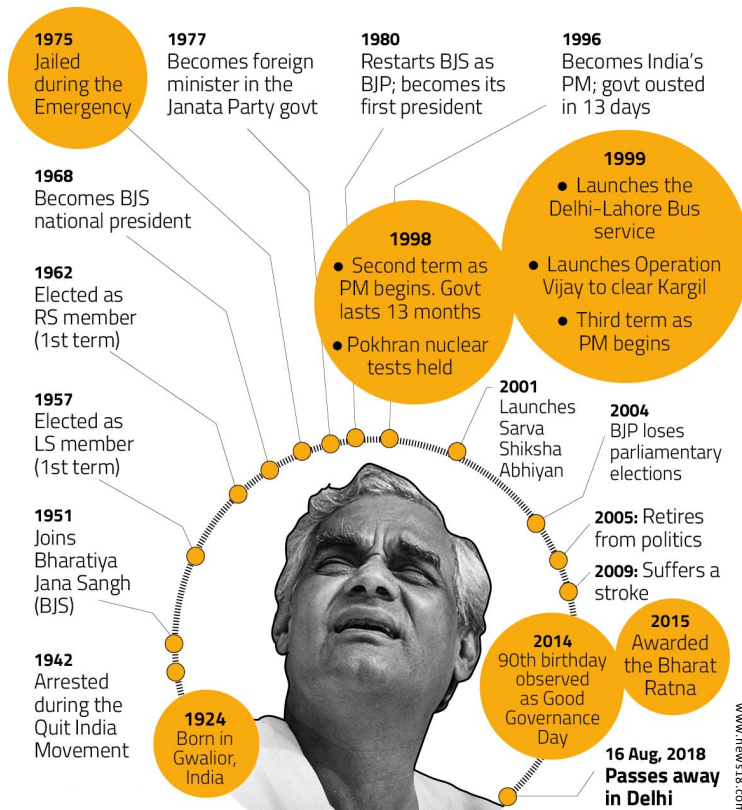
Vajpayee, in this **second** stage of his political career, was far less doctrinaire while managing to retain RSS support. Would the BJP exist as it does today if the Madhok faction had won? It is debatable. However, Vajpayee was able to broaden the *Jana Sangh's* appeal, in tandem with the change brought about in the RSS by Madhukar Dattatreya Deoras. Vajpayee was helped by Indira Gandhi's Emergency, during which he did jail time, and the RSS successfully entered the political mainstream.

Vajpayee's incendiary speech in Assam in 1983 during the state polls and his 1992 speech the day before the Babri Masjid's demolition showed a politician willing to appeal to the public's worst instincts. But equally, it is facile to call his retreat into the background during the 1980s and the early 1990s — the **third** stage of his career.

The **fourth** stage — three stints as Prime Minister, with the last, which ended in 2004, making him the first non-Congress Prime Minister to serve a full term. No other BJP leader at the time had the cross-party appeal to lead a ruling coalition as he did.

## BJP'S TALLEST LEADER

The life and times of Atal Bihari Vajpayee



As Prime Minister, Vajpayee stands with Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and now, Narendra Modi, in his ability to seize and shape the political discourse. A giant has left the national stage.

This has been abridged from news published in Mint on August 16, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/SXNroz](https://goo.gl/SXNroz)

## The Leader: Narendra Modi

In times of turbulence and disruption, a nation is blessed to have a leader who rises to become its moral compass and guiding spirit, providing vision, cohesion and direction to his people. Moreover, in such a moment at the turn of the century, India found one in Atalji, who was gifted in spirit, heart and mind. He was compassionate to the core, generous in spirit, warm beyond measure and kind to a fault. A life is to be judged not only by the extent of grief that follows when its light goes out. It is also to be measured by the lasting impact on the lives of people and the course of time. Hence, Atalji was a true **Ratna of Bharat**.

*Abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 17, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/NefAY2](http://goo.gl/NefAY2)*



## The John McCain of India

*Achin Vanaik, Writer & Social Activist*

The extraordinary deluge of praise showered by journalists and television news anchors, by leaders and spokespersons of all the opposition parties and scholars for Vajpayee is a clear indication of how widely and deeply the ideological-political hegemony of *Hindutva*, has penetrated society and polity. Vajpayee's carefully cultivated graces, civility of personal behaviour, the exercise of charm, etc. were never more than a superficial outer layer masking a ruthless and Machiavellian personality to maintain his leadership within the BJS and BJP.

*Abridged from an article published in The Wire on September 01, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/mujnUj](http://goo.gl/mujnUj)*

## The Liberaliser: Arun Jaitley

While the Congress dominated the political space for the first few decades in the world's largest democracy, Vajpayee created an alternative which has grown bigger and larger than the Congress in two decades, Union Minister Arun Jaitley said. Vajpayee was a 'quintessential gentleman' who accepted criticism and valued consensus as he was a 'product' of parliamentary democracy, Jaitley, who was a Senior Minister in the Vajpayee-led government, said. Vajpayee was always open to ideas and gave priority to national interest. Atalji was a democrat. His political style was liberal. He accepted criticism.

*Abridged from an article published in The Indian Express on August 18, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/tBMEpk](http://goo.gl/tBMEpk)*



## The Humanitarian

*G David Milton, Author*

This refers to "The poet, the politician, the Prime Minister". Atal Bihari Vajpayee was popular not only for his leadership and statesmanship, but also for his personal qualities. Even those who differed with him, held him in high esteem. Vajpayee had a big heart that accommodated people irrespective of their religion, race or region. He put humanity above faith and did not besmirch his reputation with attempts to polarise people. However, Vajpayee was ambiguous on some crucial issues when he should have taken a firm stand to uphold the Constitution and Secularism. Under him, the BJP managed to end its political untouchability and mainstream *Hindutva*. Vajpayee never laboured to project himself as a larger-than-life leader.

*Abridged from an article published in Business Standard on August 20, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/5MfPw2](http://goo.gl/5MfPw2)*

## The Nationalist: Lalji Tandon

There are so many memories, but there is one that epitomises his dedication to alleviate the pain of others. In 1992, Atalji was an MP from Lucknow and the *Ayodhya* movement was at its peak. Both of us were having dinner in Lucknow. Suddenly, the DM and the Adviser to the Governor barged in, saying that a plane had been hijacked and that the hijacker wanted to meet Atalji, or else he would blow up the aircraft with 120-odd passengers. Finally, Atalji had to go inside the aircraft and meet him.

*Abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 19, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/ndYx8t](http://goo.gl/ndYx8t)*



## The Saviour

*Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar, Indian Journalist*

Vajpayee came to power when India was down on its knees, hit by the Asian financial crisis. When he demitted office, India had become a miracle economy, averaging 8 percent growth.

He ruled in difficult economic times. India was hit by the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998-99, by the dot-com bubble bursting in 2000, a global recession in 2001, and two major droughts in 2000 and 2002. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth often stuttered in these years, and reached 8 percent only in his final year.

*Abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 17, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/gQ5wZm](http://goo.gl/gQ5wZm)*



## Biggest Contribution and the Art of Coalition

Murli Manohar Joshi, MP

Vajpayee's biggest contribution is that he initiated a politics of reconciliation and harmonisation in India. It was a miracle those days: how could a person rule with a coalition of 21 political parties with different ideologies for six and a half years. We must learn the art of reconciliation from Atalji. I have memories of some 60 years with him the Vajpayee era when I was the HRD Minister. As President of the *Jan Sangh*, he dissolved it and merged it with the BJP (in 1977). He did it for the cause of the country. Later, when people said that one should either be with the BJP or the RSS thereby, raising the issue of dual membership he said we could leave the party but not the RSS as our umbilical cords are attached to the RSS. Taking complete responsibility, he decided to resign. He agreed to continue on one condition: that a committee would take opinion from all over the country to find out why it lost. He said let Advaniji take over as BJP President and see how it goes.

*Abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 18, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/b4KFZ1](https://goo.gl/b4KFZ1)*



## Neither Tired, nor Retired

Sumit Pande, Political Editor, CNN News18

As body politic turns highly polarised, Vajpayee was perhaps one of the last exponents to have displayed both ideological commitment and flexibility of 'real politics' to wade through a complex federal democracy India is. That last lot of Parliamentarians who were equally at ease in the hallowed halls of the Parliament House and the rough and tumble of electoral politics — Indrajit Gupta, Chandrashekhar and a few others from that generation would make the cut. But sustaining oneself for over five decades in national politics is by no means an easy task. You win some elections and you lose some. The challenge, however, is to remain relevant — to survive and fight another day.

*Abridged from an article published in NEWS18 on August 17, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/s5NWNn](https://goo.gl/s5NWNn)*

## Deep Understanding for Films and Theatre

Sudhir Nandgaonkar, Film Critic and Freelance Writer

During his many visits to Mumbai, Vajpayee had shown deep understanding and passion for films and theatre, recalled Sudhir Nandgaonkar. "In the early 1980s, I received a call from a senior BJP leader asking me to recommend a film or play worth watching. 'Our leader Atalji wants to know', he said. I recommended Marathi film *Umbhartha*, which Vajpayee went to watch", he said. On another occasion, Vajpayee arrived in Mumbai for scheduled party work. But on his way, he saw posters on the *Marathi Sahitya Sammelan* and wanted to attend it ... I received a call from BJP leaders enquiring about the *Sammelan*. The next morning, Vajpayee arrived at the venue. When he spotted me, he said, "Can I come"? In reply, I said, 'Who can stop you... on the contrary, our *Sammelan* officials and Secretary are ready to welcome you", said Nandgaonkar.

*Abridged from an article published in The Indian Express on August 18, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/q4F2yj](https://goo.gl/q4F2yj)*



## Vajpayee was Different from Nehru?

Z G Muhammad, Writer and Columnist

India was ruled by fourteen Prime Ministers. Of all the Prime Ministers, two – **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** willy-nilly have got woven in the Kashmir narrative. First, for being too wily, having mastered the craft of cunningness and rhetoric in 1947, he had made an influential section of Kashmir leadership to sacrifice realities of history and logic for the sake of power. Second, for being too artful to sell clichés as resolution of the Kashmir Dispute and making the gullible as well as the reluctant Kashmir leaders to sing a song for him. Jawaharlal was cradled into politics by his father Motilal Nehru an important leader of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi 'foisted him on his nation' - some called him "Gandhi's lotus-eating disciple". Despite, draping *Khadi*, some 'saw him a lackey of Western capitalism, mouthing socialist slogans' to beguile teeming poor of India'. Vajpayee since 1936 had been a member of the RSS and after cast himself in the mold of Golwalkar-Savarkar.

*Abridged from an article published in Greater Kashmir on August 19, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/R2sRyk](https://goo.gl/R2sRyk)*

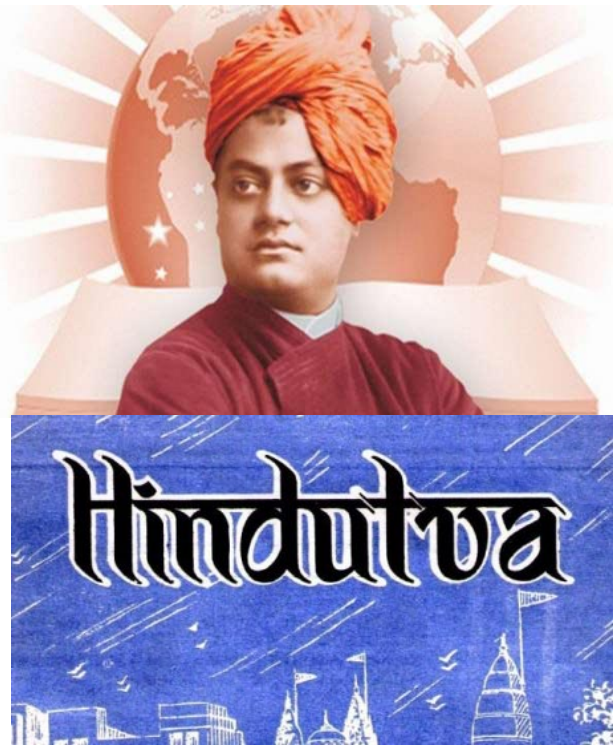
## Hindutva is Liberal

### Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Musings from Goa in 2002-03

I have come to Goa to see the sun set on 2002 and to welcome the first morning of 2003. I had come here more than a few decades ago to participate in the 'Goa Liberation Struggle,' which saw the sun set on this last enclave of colonial rule in India. I recall here the ringing words of Swami Vivekananda in his essay, *The Future of India*: "It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land, which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country."

*Hindutva* is an integral understanding of the entire Creation, showing the way both to the Here and the hereafter. It emphasises the inseparable relationship between the individual and society, as well as between man's material and spiritual needs. *Hindutva* is liberal, liberating and brooks no ill will, hatred or violence among different communities on any ground.

There is no difference between such *Hindutva* and *Bharatiya*, since both are expressions of the same *chintan* (thought). Both affirm that India belongs to all, and all belong to India. It means that all Indians have equal rights and equal responsibilities. It entails recognition of our common national culture, which is enriched by all the diverse religious and non-religious traditions in India.



My thoughts, especially go out to our children, who are the future of our nation. The government and society should work together with greater commitment to make all the emotional and material investment we can, to ensure that every Indian child is well fed, well-educated and well looked after.

*These are some of the thoughts and reflections that the idyllic setting in Goa has triggered in my mind, and which I wish to share with you.*

— Atal Bihari Vajpayee (2002-03)

*This has been abridged from news published in rediff.com on December 31, 2002 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/CdoWZg](http://goo.gl/CdoWZg)*

## A Master Orator whose Pauses Spoke Volumes

In a life lived fully, Vajpayee never shied from grasping all that it had to offer, revelling in the company of poets, politicians and friends, tucking into a good meal with relish, sharing a joke with gusto and yet offering pithy and enigmatic one liners when cannily sensing restraint to be a better and wiser option.

The 1996 'resignation speech' was to be the basis of the BJP campaign two years later when Vajpayee, marketed as 'the man India awaits', won the election with a coalition that had the mercurial J Jayalalitha. The government got to a rocky start with AIADMK withholding its letter of support and ended with *Amma* bringing the government down. Vajpayee was at his best campaigning, striking a chord with audiences, who came to hear him even when BJP, and earlier *Jan Sangh*, did not win elections. It was his 'X factor', the ability to sway voters outside the core Hindu vote that prompted L K Advani to declare him Prime Ministerial candidate. Vajpayee made his mark as a leader of substance who could use a turn of phrase or a pause to speak volumes.

*This has been abridged from news published in Times of India on August 17, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/UB8hYa](http://goo.gl/UB8hYa)*





# Vajpayee was so much more than a great orator: Pranab Mukherjee



*Former President Pranab Mukherjee spoke to Saubhadra Chatterji\* and Prashant Jha\*\* about Vajpayee – the politician, the leader and the friend.*

## Vajpayee and you were long term friends. How did this friendship evolve?

When I met him first, I used to watch his performance in Parliament but we were not personally known to each other. When I became a minister — first for revenue and expenditure and then revenue and banking — I used to go to Lok Sabha more frequently. But I don't remember the exact occasion when I met him for the first time.

## What were Vajpayee's qualities as a parliamentarian?

He was an excellent parliamentarian and carried people along with him. I think he was one of the top-most parliamentarians I have ever come across.

I remember that once I piloted the Delhi Sales Tax bill in Parliament. At that time, Vajpayee ji was not a member from the New Delhi constituency (he later represented New Delhi in 1977 and 1980) but in a masterly presentation of facts and figures, he argued that Delhi is suffering by being a centrally administered area; whereas neighbouring states have freedom to impose sales tax, it does not have that advantage. Ultimately, the government agreed to that and he supported the bill.

## Vajpayee often mentioned Nehru. He was seen as an admirer of Nehru:

A few times he mentioned Nehru. But he used to recognise the contribution of Nehru in introducing and stabilising parliamentary democracy in India.

## Was Vajpayee a secular politician?

Of course, he was a secular politician.

## How do you judge him as a Prime Minister?

He was a good Prime Minister and a good leader. He took people along with him. History will eventually judge him, but as a student of politics, I find that he was very liberal. It was he who made it a system that the Opposition members, too, would be sent to United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

\* Deputy Political Editor, The Hindustan Times      \*\* Journalist & Author

*Edited excerpts of an exclusive Interview about Vajpayee published in Hindustan Times on August 20, 2018 and this can be accessed at: [goo.gl/sLU6A5](http://goo.gl/sLU6A5)*

## Amazing Facts about Vajpayee

*Priyanka Shah, Writer*

### A First Class Student

He was a bright student and had been awarded a first class Post Graduate Degree in Political Science.

### Amar Kirti Vijay Pataka

Vajpayee dedicated his great career in politics to *Amar Kirti Vijay Pataka* by Mahatma Ramchandra Veer. According to him, it is this great work that had literally changed his life!

### The Gandhi Effect

Being an ardent follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Atalji and his elder brother participated in the 'Quit India' Movement, and were even imprisoned for 23 days. This incident marked his welcome in the political scenario of India.

### His Father, his Classmate

Vajpayee had pursued a degree in Law from the famous DAV College, Kanpur along with his father. Apparently, when his father saw Vajpayee enrolling himself for the course, he became very interested and expressed his ardent desire to study the same.

*These facts have been taken from TOPYAPPS published on August 16, 2018 and can be accessed at [goo.gl/juff6o](http://goo.gl/juff6o)*

# The Peacemaker for Enhancing Indo-Pak Relations

Satinder K Lambah, PM's Special Envoy for Pakistan

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Pakistan policy was an open book. He wanted improved relations with Pakistan without sacrificing India's interest. He wanted the people of the two countries to live in amity and friendship as good neighbours. Earlier, immediately after taking over as Foreign Minister in March 1977, he assured the Pakistan Ambassador that there was not going to be any change in policy towards Pakistan as the existing foreign policy "was based on more or less national consensus".

Earlier, in his January 01, 2001 message – the famous **Musings from Kumarakom** – Vajpayee had stated that it was time to resolve the Kashmir problem of the past and that "India is willing and ready to seek a lasting solution of the Kashmir problem". People in Kashmir still emotionally remember his musings.

*This has been abridged from an article published in The Hindu on August 20, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/psgnPZ](https://www.whatsapp.com)*



## Remembering Vajpayee as a Good Friend

Vivian Balakrishnan, Foreign Minister of Singapore



Vivian Balakrishnan has condoled the death of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and said the former Indian Prime Minister will always be remembered as a good friend of the country. "Vajpayee was a selfless and visionary leader who made great contribution India, transforming the economy and elevating the standing in the region and the world", Balakrishnan mentioned. "He oversaw strong growth in the relation between our two countries (Singapore and India) and will always be remembered as a good friend of Singapore", said Balakrishnan.

*This has been abridged from news published in The Indian Express on August 18, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/YmCPr8](https://www.whatsapp.com)*

## Shaping India's Foreign Policy

Dipanjana Roy Chaudhury, Journalist, The Economic Times

Atal Bihari Vajpayee left a lasting imprint on India's foreign policy that he helped shape both as the first non-Congress Foreign Minister and later as Prime Minister. While he made his mark as Foreign Minister, becoming the first person to deliver a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in Hindi, as PM he took initiatives that defined India's relations with major powers in keeping with changing geopolitics. In March 2000, when US President Bill Clinton visited India, he was the first US President to do so in 22 years since President Jimmy Carter in 1978. During this visit the two sides signed a comprehensive document – 'India Relations: A Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' – which laid the foundation that transformed Indo-US ties.

*This has been abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 17, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/XT5yYC](https://www.whatsapp.com)*



# Vajpayee's Decisive Moments as Prime Minister

## Pokhran 2

India carried out nuclear assessments, shocked the world, defied subsequent US sanctions underneath Prime Minister Vajpayee in 1998. India then introduced a moratorium whereas dialogue was opened between Overseas Minister Jaswant Singh and US Deputy State Secretary Strobe Talbott that reworked India-US relations. Described India, US as 'pure allies', initiated hi-tech ties that culminated in 2005 India-US nuclear deal.

## Experience to Lahore

For the primary time, India and Pakistan have been linked by a direct bus service. Vajpayee travelled on that first bus in February 1999. At Lahore's Minar-e-Pakistan, Vajpayee wrote within the guests' e-book



that India needed Pakistan to be 'sovereign and affluent' — the primary

time an Indian chief had emphasised Pakistani sovereignty. Particularly important coming from him as RSS all the time, stated it needed *Akhand Bharat*.

## Operation Vijay

In June-July, 1999, Vajpayee's government's compensation to households of Kargil martyrs and



public funerals for 'fallen troopers', put the thought of sacrifice on a

pedestal. It led to US's Invoice Clinton summoning Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif to Washington DC, and nearly ordering him to withdraw troops. On a six-hour go to Islamabad later, Clinton famously stated, "Borders can't be redrawn with blood".

## Parliament Assault

In December 2001, five terrorists from *Lashkar-e-Taiba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammed* stormed Parliament complicated.

12 folks, together with terrorists, died. Vajpayee selected a tricky



political response over instantaneous army motion. Over five lakh troops were moved to the border, and fighter jets and naval ships readied to ship out a message. Cross-border skirmishes continued for six months. The international locations got here to the brink of struggle twice. US lastly intervened and obtained Pakistan President Musharraf to challenge an announcement that led to demobilisation.

## IC-814 Hijacking

Vajpayee launched terrorists Maulana Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar and Omar Saeed Sheikh to safe launch of passengers on the plane hijacked from Kathmandu (Nepal) and brought to Kandahar (Afghanistan) in December 1999. Azhar went on to create Jaishe-Mohammed in Pakistan and Omar Sheikh murdered US journalist Daniel Pearl, in addition to being a part of 9/11 tragedy.

## Composite Dialogue

Vajpayee and Musharraf met in Islamabad in 2004, on the sidelines of a South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit.

For the primary time, Musharraf formally dedicated to not permitting terrorists to make use of "territory underneath Pakistan's management" to behave towards India.



This has been abridged from news published in Times of India on August 17, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/v1WeQ9](https://goo.gl/v1WeQ9)



# What Young India can Learn from Vajpayee

Sagarika Ghose, Indian Journalist

*Atalji witnessed many lows in his life. With these, come lessons that youth can learn*

## Your birth place does not define your future

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born in Gwalior and went on to become the Prime Minister of India three times.



Having a mentor can make your path easier, but, like Vajpayee, you can forge ahead even if you do not have one.

## Learn from the past

In the 1998 election, the BJP won 182 seats. Again, it was short of a majority.

He cobbled together an alliance with 13 partners under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance and went on to form the government.

## Your future is not dependent on what your parents' profession

Vajpayee's father Krishna Bihari Vajpayee was a schoolmaster, his mother Krishna Devi a housewife.

## No mentor? Don't let it hamper you

Vajpayee was 29 years old when he lost his mentor, he carried on his party work with other leaders like Deen Dayal Upadhyay and L K Advani.

## Never give up

Vajpayee refused to give up. The BJP contested the 1999 election with vigour and won. Sometimes, all you need is belief, gumption and hard work. Which will lead one to success.

*This has been abridged from an article published in rediff.com on August 17, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/3BMCaG](http://goo.gl/3BMCaG)*

### INBOXED



## What Modi can Learn from Vajpayee's Playbook

Syed Firdaus Ashraf, associated with Rediff.com

Today, Indian PM Modi's dramatically delivered addresses energise low-attention-span millennials. In the BJP, it was Vajpayee who first set the template for harnessing the magical, omnipotent power of words to political campaigns. Yet while Prime Minister Narendra Modi's thundering orations are delivered from the bully pulpit of an immensely powerful politician, Vajpayee's seemed to flow from the stage of a *kavi sammelan*.

Where Modi energises, Vajpayee soothed; where Modi's tough words can often polarise and ridicule – as seen in his recent lampooning of an opposition leader, remarks which had to be expunged from parliamentary records – Vajpayee reached out to unify, unthreatened by dissent. Parliamentary debate was Vajpayee's forte, Modi's is the high-voltage campaign *bhashan*.

*This has been abridged from an article published in rediff.com on August 17, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/kQ8AgD](http://goo.gl/kQ8AgD)*

## Lessons in Tehzeeb

Anil K Rajvanshi, Director, Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute

Eulogies have been written about the *tehzeeb* – a Urdu word translating into etiquette – politeness and political culture of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Apparently, Vajpayee – during his term as Prime Minister 1999-2004 – was not happy with the US pressure on India to join the Iraq war. So he invited the opposition party leaders discussion to his house. After the initial, the opposition leaders were keen to know why they were invited. Vajpayee told them about the US pressure on India, to which the leaders said that they will oppose it and the people's agitation was already on. Vajpayee replied that he is not hearing the noise of an agitation! The opposition leaders immediately understood the drift of the conversation – that they had to double their efforts to raise public opinion against US, so that Vajpayee could use it to stall the pressure.

We somehow have lost the *tehzeeb* in the present political and other discourses. Such wit and *tehzeeb*, which was also the Vajpayee's hallmark, is missing in the present Parliamentary debates.

*This has been abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 19, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/nxZ2Em](http://goo.gl/nxZ2Em)*



# Let us not Whitewash Vajpayee's Failures

Kumar Ketkar, Congress Member of Rajya Sabha

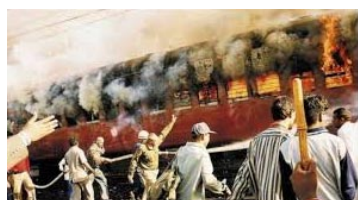
The death of Atal Bihari Vajpayee has led to a whole industry of obituary tributes, either whitewashing his gross shortcomings or sanitising his grotesque failures.

## Where was Vajpayee during Anti-liberalisation Protests?

There were also some commentators who have tried to convince the gullible, that Vajpayee was the 'real' economic reformer, suggesting that Dr Manmohan Singh was not what he is credited for. This was truly a full toss. Because it is on record that when Dr Singh announced liberalisation, and privatisation, and opened the doors for globalisation, the BJP, under the leadership of Vajpayee, opposed every inch of economic liberalisation. His party said that General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was aimed at bringing back the East India Company's version of colonial economy.

## Where was Vajpayee when Gujarat was Burning?

Vajpayee is often described as a 'decisive person' and a 'governance man'. But nobody has explained so far, that beyond asking Narendra Modi to observe *Rajdharma*, what steps did he actually take as a Prime Minister, to rein in the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, in 2002? Did he summon the military? Did he dismiss the Modi government? The RSS often proudly claims to go as *swayamsevak*s wherever there is a tragedy, and need for assistance. Hundreds and thousands were



killed or injured, and many rendered homeless in Gujarat in the 2002 riots. Where were the patriotic soldiers of the *Sangh Parivar*?

*Abridged from an article published in The Quint on August 20, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/VKrfmM](https://goo.gl/VKrfmM)*

## India's Most Reformist Leader took One Wrong Step

Mihir Sharma, Opinion Columnist of Bloomberg

Today, a decade and a half after Vajpayee was voted out, that optimism is a thing of the past. India has moved too slowly and let too many people down too often; many here now wonder if it has missed its moment entirely. You could blame Modi for this situation, or Singh. But, in fact, the foundations for this failure were laid during Vajpayee's administration – and by his defeat in the polls. But, the one moment you can point to as emblematic of the opportunities that India missed came in early 2001. Vajpayee's Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha – now a trenchant critic of Modi – had proposed that India's draconian labour laws be relaxed. Criticism was widespread and Vajpayee backed off and the promise to amend labour law went unkept.

*Abridged from an article published in The Economic Times on August 18, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/YMips8](https://goo.gl/YMips8)*

## The Speech that Vajpayee couldn't Finish

Salil Mekaad, Reporter, Times of India

Vajpayee was known for his speeches that could move millions or fire them up with enthusiasm, but very few people know that he was tongue-tied when he stood before his schoolmates during a debate in Barnagar town of Ujjain district in 1934. Vajpayee spoke of this 'life-changing moment' at a public rally while campaigning for the 1996 Lok Sabha election. He could not finish the first speech of his life. He was booed. He took a pledge that he would never rote-learn a speech. It was my first speech at Anglo Vernacular Middle School", Vajpayee had said.

*Abridged from an article published in Times of India on August 17, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/Eiunpe](https://goo.gl/Eiunpe)*

## Failing of Agra Summit

During his second term as Prime Minister, Vajpayee ordered nuclear tests in May 1998 in a strategic masterstroke to blunt Pakistan's nuclear ambitions while at the same time announcing a moratorium on future testing. Vajpayee followed this up with peace overtures to Pakistan, riding on the first direct bus from India to Pakistan in February 1999. Vajpayee met with then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in what was hailed as the dawn of a new era in India-Pakistan relations. In June 1999, Pakistan began hostilities in Kargil that took the two countries to the brink of a full-scale war. Vajpayee tried again to build



peace with Pakistan – by holding a historic Summit in Agra with the then President Musharraf in 2001. But the summit too failed spectacularly.

*Abridged from news published in Times of India on August 18, 2018 and available at: [goo.gl/d3U4W4](https://goo.gl/d3U4W4)*

# The Five Important Things India will Remember Vajpayee for

*Despite more than a dozen unruly and demanding coalition partners, Vajpayee was not only able to provide a stable government but also took several steps which turned out to be nothing less than revolutionary. Vajpayee carried on the spirit of economic reforms introduced by the P V Narsimha Rao government in 1991.*

*“When Vajpayee made a promise people believed him. There was a reason for that.”*

– Arun Shourie

## Fast-tracking Bharat

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.

## Privatisation

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.

## Reining in the fiscal profligacy

The 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 percent of GDP in FY 2000, to 2.3 percent in FY 2005.

## Telecom revolution

The Vajpayee government’s New Telecom Policy unleashed the telecom revolution in India by replacing fixed licence fees for

telecom firms with a revenue-sharing arrangement. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd was created to separate policy formulation and provision of service. The creation of the Telecom Dispute Settlement Appellate Tribunal also separated the government’s regulatory and dispute settlement roles. The government ended the monopoly of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd.’s on international telephony.



## 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 percent.



*This has been abridged from news published in The Economic Times on August 17, 2018 and can be accessed at: [goo.gl/at1NNq](http://goo.gl/at1NNq)*



## Vajpayee's Incredible Poetries

In most of Vajpayee's poems, even the passionate ones and those that ooze pathos, there is a cultivated attitude of 'observer'. If it is a mask, it has become the innermost one, skin tight and opaque, enabling Vajpayee to distance himself from what is happening to him and around him.

### *Peace of Mind*

*Never place me so high  
That I cannot embrace  
those who are not my own.  
On earth among the living  
Only a human being  
Feels alone in a crowd, and  
besieged by crowds when alone.*



### 'Agony of Hiroshima' and 'We shall not allow War'



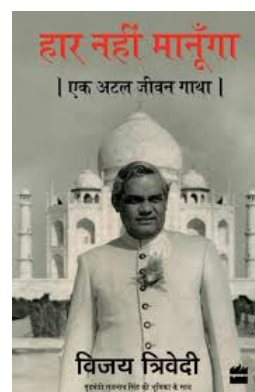
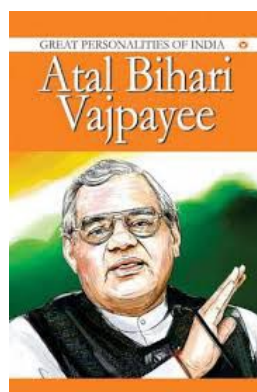
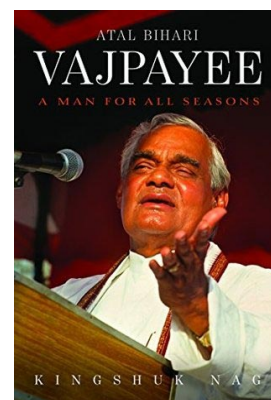
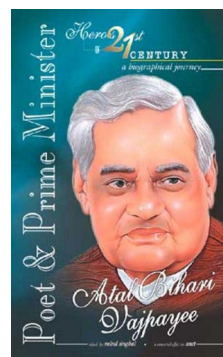
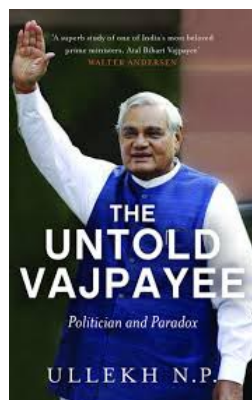
*The masks have dropped away:  
These scars run too deep.  
The spell has broken, I face the terror of  
truth  
Under the gaze of the evil eye  
The city shattered like glass  
I stand friendless among my own...  
The moon is a scimitar in my back...  
Rahu's fury knows no bounds  
Every moment of salvation conceals a  
snare.*

*No longer do I sing  
To those who try to reach  
The throne of power  
Over mounds of dead bodies  
Of innocent children  
Old women  
Young men,  
I have a question:  
Did nothing bind them  
To those who died?  
Their faiths differed;  
Was it not enough that they too were of this  
earth?  
'The Earth is our mother, and we are her  
sons':  
this mantra from the Atharvaveda  
is it only to be chanted, not lived?  
Children charred by fire  
Women savaged by lust  
Houses reduced to ash  
Constitute neither a certificate of culture  
Nor a badge of patriotism.  
They are proof of bestiality  
Proof of degradation...*

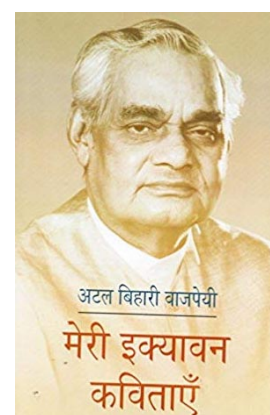
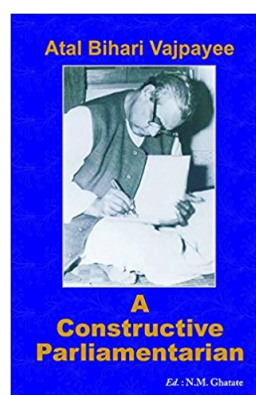
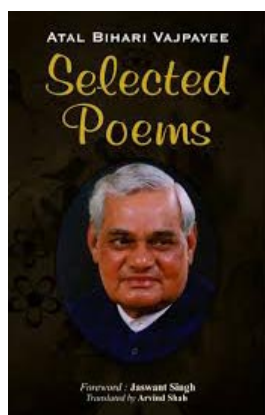
*Translated into English by Pavan K Varma, Author and Member of Janta Dal (United)*

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## Popular Books on Vajpayee



## Books by Vajpayee



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