

Atal Behari Vajpayee

(Speech delivered on the occasion of release of the book entitled “Gathabandhan ki Rajneetee” - Dr. N M Ghatate, consisting of Shri AB Vajpayee’s speeches on 02.09.2004 at National Museum Auditorium New Delhi)

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee is a multi-faceted and multi-splendoured personality of our times. I have known Shri Vajpayee, since 1977 when he was the minister for External Affairs and I was in the opposition. In Parliament we always sat on opposite benches. And I can say from my experience that his speeches were always heard with rapt attention by both sides of the House.

He does not mince words when criticism is due or warning necessary. But his criticism does not hurt anyone. He has never hesitated to accept a good suggestion wherever it may come from. On one occasion when an opposition member of Parliament put a question “what Government proposed to do in Cambodia”, Vajpayee replied that the Security Council had vetoed the resolution. I am an old bird who had attended as India’s representative the UN General Assembly for several years, I put a supplementary whether Government would resort to the Resolution on *uniting for peace* and bring the matter before the General Assembly. Atalji then warmly said it was a good suggestion.

He proved that he was ready to accept any good suggestion notwithstanding that it came from the opposition. His approach is constructive and persuasive. He always emphasized what was best in national interest. His contribution in enhancing the standard of debates and maintaining the decorum and dignity of Parliament is exemplary.

Shri Vajpayee’s razor-sharp intellect is almost tailor-made for parliamentary debates. He has made impact on Parliament and the country through logic and eloquence.

Once he said democracy is not the game of 51 versus 49. Democracy is basically a cooperative endeavour to ensure good government for the Nation. It is based on moral values.

Shri Vajpayee proved that coalition governments can also ensure stability with tact, tolerance and mutual respect for each other among the parties to the coalition.

I would say that it was Vajpayee’s qualities that enabled the coalition to survive for five years rather than the inherent capacity to come apart.

He has made India a power to be reckoned with, both economically and internationally.

Under his Prime Ministership India conducted nuclear tests and I had congratulated him on his courage. I also spoke in IIT Madras, Chennai and before the nuclear scientists of Kalpakkam that the detonation is a protest against the NPT, which controlled the non-nuclear states and allowed the Nuclear club no restriction. Shri Vajpayee had once said, “I can change history, but not geography” and he gave special attention to improve India’s relations with its neighbours. He often expressed a view that developing countries should give up fighting amongst themselves; otherwise they would become victims of exploitation by superpowers.

With the bus trip to Lahore, he demonstrated his sincere desire to have peace with Pakistan but when Pakistan betrayed peace efforts by intrusions in Kargil, he resolutely drove away Pakistanis from our territory and firmly refused American President’s invitation to any peace talks with Pakistan Prime Minister.

The long-standing border dispute with China is steadily moving towards solution.

India has stood up against developed rich countries in WTO negotiations, which are blatantly discriminatory against developing countries. Under his directions as Prime Minister India has become a leader in the fields of information technology, out sourcing and call centers.

In the field of agriculture, insurance for farmers, insurance credit cards and rural road development projects have been pushed forward. If his infrastructural schemes like connecting the country with super highways, linking rivers and coastal shipping "*Sagar Maala*", if continued, will give further boost to the economy in the coming years.

These highlights of achievements show that Shri Vajpayee is not only an orator par excellence but is also an achiever. He has earned the love of our people and the respect of other Nations.