



A unique personality - Lal Bahadur Shastri

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ABSTRACT :

Today we know a unique personality of India, the second Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who is known as an example of simplicity and straight forwardness. Who lived his life with simplicity even while holding the post of Prime Minister. He was such a personality who, as the Prime Minister, not only gave the gift of military glory to the country but also showed the path of Green Revolution and industrialization. While Shastri ji considered the farmers as the food providers of the country, he also had immense love for the border guards of the country. Due to which he gave the slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'. His brilliant personality can be gauged from the book written by his son, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Mere Babuji, in which he has written that his father worked on government expenses. Did not use the car found. Once he drove his father's car, he calculated the kilometers and deposited the money in the government account. There are many incidents about this type of Shastri ji which describe his simplicity, complete devotion and duty. One such incident is said about him that he used to give torn kurtas to his wife. His wife used to make handkerchiefs from the same old kurtas and give them to him for use.

His Early Life:

Lal Bahadur Shastri was born on October 2, 1904 in Mughalsarai, Uttar Pradesh to Munshi Sharda Prasad Srivastava. His father was a primary school teacher. Hence everyone called him 'Munshi ji'. Later he took up the job of clerk in the Revenue Department. Lal Bahadur's mother's name was 'Ramdulari'. Being the youngest in the family, the family used to fondly call the child Lal Bahadur as Nanhe. Unfortunately, when the little one turned eighteen months old, his father passed away. His mother Ramdulari went to her father Hazarilal's house in Mirzapur. After some time, even his maternal grandfather was no more. His maternal uncle Raghunath Prasad helped his mother a lot in raising the child without a father. He received primary education while living in his maternal home. His subsequent education took place in Harishchandra High School and Kashi Vidyapeeth. As soon as he received the degree of Shastri from Kashi Vidyapeeth, the enlightened child removed the caste-related word Srivastava, which was prevalent since birth, forever and added Shastri in front of his name. After this, the word 'Shastri' became synonymous with the name of 'Lal Bahadur'.

His Education

Lal Bahadur Shastri's education played an important role in shaping his political and ideological outlook. He completed his schooling in Mughalsarai and later pursued higher education at Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi. His dedication to academics and his interest in social and political issues began to emerge during his university years.

Despite financial constraints, Shastri continued his education and completed a degree from Allahabad University. The academic environment exposed him to the ideas of the Indian independence movement and he became actively involved in the struggle against British rule.

Lal Bahadur, an activist of the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi against the British government in India, went to jail for a short time (1921). After post-graduation, he returned to politics as a follower of Gandhi, went to jail several times and held influential positions in the Congress Party of the United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh.

Marriage

They got married in 1927. His wife Lalita Devi was from Mirzapur which was near his own town. Their wedding was traditional in every way. In the name of dowry, there was a spinning wheel and a few meters of hand-woven cloth. They wanted nothing more than this as dowry. He had six children from Lalita ji, four sons- Harikrishna, Anil, Sunil and Ashok; And two daughters- Kusum and Suman. Of his four sons, two – Anil Shastri and Sunil Shastri are still alive, the remaining two have passed away.

His Contribution For Country – Political Career

Shastri ji tried to change the direction and condition of the country through his entry into politics. In fact, in the year 1937, he obtained membership of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly in the elections of provincial assemblies. In this sequence, Congress, which came to power after independence, understood the importance of the leader of the national freedom struggle, Lal Bahadur Shastri. As a result, in the year 1947, he was included as a

minister in the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet. In the year 1951, he became the party general secretary. Thereafter Shastri ji was selected as the Union Minister of Railways and Transport. But, at the same time, in the year 1955, many people were injured in a railway accident near 'Ariyal' in South India, for which he resigned from the post of Railway Minister, holding Swayam responsible. Responding to the long debate on the railway accident, he said- "Maybe because of my small height and humbleness, people think that I am not able to be very strong, although physically I am not strong but I feel that internally I am not that weak either."

It is noteworthy that in 1957 he was elected from Allahabad parliamentary constituency. He was again given the transport portfolio and was also made the minister of industry and commerce departments.

In the year 1961, he was appointed as the Home Minister of India and to the 'Anti-Corruption Committee'. At the same time, Shastri ji was included in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio to support Nehru ji who was devastated by the India-China war. Here Shastri ji appealed to the people of India and said -

"When our freedom and integrity are at risk, our only duty is to meet the challenge with all our might." We must unite and be firmly prepared to make any sacrifice required so that we can better meet that challenge."

Shastri ji also did remarkable work for the deprived sections of the society. He became a life member of "Servants of India Society" (Public Service Board) founded by Lala Lajpat Rai.

Where he started working for the upliftment of backward classes and later he also became the president of that society. Similarly, he saw farmers and youth as the economic and military power of the country.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri also gave the slogan "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan", which later became a symbol of patriotism. The main objective of this slogan of Shastri ji was on one hand to increase the military power of the country and on the other hand to strengthen the economic condition of the country.

Shastri ji promoted the White Revolution by supporting 'Amul Milk Cooperative Society' of Anand (Gujarat) and creating the National Dairy Development Board. Due to which India emerged as a leader in the field of milk production.

During the India-Pakistan war (1965), India was going through a food crisis. This problem was solved through "Green Revolution". As a result, India became one of the food grain exporting countries.

Shastri ji always tried to maintain peace and balance in his relations with India's neighboring countries. In the same sequence, in relation to the India-Pakistan war (1965), reconciliation took place between India and Pakistan through the mediation of the Soviet President in Tashkent (the then Soviet Union). Under which "Tashkent Declaration" was signed with Pakistan President Mohammad Ayub Khan on January 10, 1966 to end the war. He died on 11 January 1966 in Tashkent. Shastri ji, for many years, created his own identity among the public due to his qualities like selfless service spirit, devotion to duty, honesty and compassion. Humble, strong-willed, tolerant and possessing tremendous inner strength, Shastri ji emerged among the people as a person who understood the feelings of the people. Through his visionary vision, he gave India a distinct identity on the world stage.

Prime Minister (1964-1966)

Jawaharlal Nehru died in office on 27 May 1964. Then Congress Party president K. Kamaraj was instrumental in making Shastri prime minister on 9 June. Shastri, though mild-mannered and soft-spoken, was a Nehruvian socialist and thus held appeal to those wishing to prevent the ascent of conservative right-winger Morarji Desai.

In his first broadcast as prime minister, on 11 June 1964, Shastri stated

There comes a time in the life of every nation when it stands at the cross-roads of history and must choose which way to go. But for us, there need be no difficulty or hesitation, no looking to right or left. Our way is straight and clear—the building up of a socialist democracy at home with freedom and prosperity for all, and the maintenance of world peace and friendship with all nations.

Domestic policies

Shastri retained many members of Nehru's Council of Ministers. T. T. Krishnamachari was retained as the Finance Minister of India, as was Defence Minister Yashwantrao Chavan. He appointed Swaran Singh to succeed him as External Affairs Minister. He also appointed Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru and former Congress President, as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. Gulzarilal Nanda continued as the Minister of Home Affairs. Lal Bahadur Shastri's tenure witnessed the Madras anti-Hindi agitation of 1965. The government of India had for a long time made an effort to establish Hindi as the sole national language of India. This was resisted by the non-Hindi speaking states particularly Madras State. To calm the situation, Shastri gave assurances that English would continue to be used as the official language as long the non-Hindi speaking states wanted. The riots subsided after Shastri's assurance, as did the student agitation.

Foreign policies

Shastri ji continued Nehru's policy of non-alignment but also built closer relations with the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and the formation of military ties between China and Pakistan, Shastri's government decided to expand the country's defence budget. In 1964, Shastri signed an accorresponsibilities of local governments to provide adequate facilities to shelter the repatriates upon disembarkation on Indian soil. Particularly in the Madras State the Chief Minister during that time, Minjur K. Bhaktavatsalam, showed care in rehabilitation of the returnees. In December 1965, Shastri made an official visit with his family to Rangoon, Burma and re-established cordial relations with the country's military government of General Ne Win.

War with Pakistan

On 1 August 1965, major incursions of militants and Pakistani soldiers began, hoping not only to break down the government but incite a sympathetic revolt. The revolt did not happen, and India sent its forces across the Ceasefire Line (now Line of Control) and threatened Pakistan by crossing the International Border near Lahore as war broke out on a general scale. Massive tank battles occurred in the Punjab, and while the Pakistani forces made gains in the northern part of subcontinent, Indian forces captured the key post at Haji Pir, in Kashmir, and brought the Pakistani city of Lahore under artillery and mortar fire.

The Indo-Pak war ended on 23 September 1965 with a United Nations-mandated ceasefire. In a broadcast to the nation on the day of the ceasefire, Shastri stated –

While the conflict between the armed forces of the two countries has come to an end, the more important thing for the United Nations and all those who stand for peace is to bring to an end the deeper conflict.... How can this be brought about? In our view, the only answer lies in peaceful coexistence. India has stood for the principle of coexistence and championed it all over the world. Peaceful coexistence is possible among nations no matter how deep the differences between them, how far apart they are in their political and economic systems, no matter how intense the issues that divide them.

During his tenure as prime minister, Shastri visited many countries including the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, England, Canada, Nepal, Egypt and Burma. In October 1964 while returning from the Non Alliance Conference in Cairo, on the invitation of the-then president of Pakistan, Muhammad Ayub Khan, to have lunch with him, Shastri made a stopover at Karachi Airport for a few hours. Breaking with protocol, Ayub Khan personally received him at the airport and they had an informal meeting.

After the ceasefire with Pakistan in 1965, Shastri and Ayub Khan attended a summit in Tashkent (former USSR, now in modern Uzbekistan), organized by Alexei Kosygin. On 10 January 1966, Shastri and Ayub Khan signed the Tashkent Declaration.

Tashkent Declaration

India-Pakistan [1966]

Tashkent Declaration, accord signed on January 10, 1966, by India's Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (who died the next day) and Pakistan's Pres. Mohammad Ayub Khan, ending the war between Pakistan and India that occurred from August 1965 to September 1965. A cease-fire had been secured by the United Nations Security Council on September 22, 1965.

Skirmishes between India and Pakistan began in April 1965 and escalated into major hostilities in August, when Ayub launched an operation to infiltrate Pakistan's forces into the disputed region of Kashmir so as to drive an insurgency against Indian rule. India responded strongly, and the two countries fought a widening conflict in which both sides won notable victories and seized territory while also experiencing considerable losses of soldiers and material. The insurgency that Pakistan hoped would develop in Kashmir also failed to take root. At the time Pakistan and India agreed to a cease-fire, the conflict was considered by observers to have reached a stalemate. However, because Pakistan had initiated the attack in Kashmir that began the war, the war was seen as a strategic and diplomatic failure for Ayub, and Shastri was lauded across India.

In order to secure a more permanent settlement of the conflict, a meeting was held at Tashkent in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (present-day Uzbekistan) in January 1966. The agreement was mediated by Soviet Premier Aleksey Kosygin, who had invited Shastri and Ayub to Tashkent. The two men, as the Tashkent Declaration states, expressed "their firm resolve to restore normal and peaceful relations between their countries and to promote understanding and friendly relations between their peoples." The declaration included the following pledges, agreed to by Ayub and Shastri:

- To "exert all efforts to create good neighborly relations between India and Pakistan in accordance with the United Nations Charter"
- To "settle...disputes through peaceful means" and "not to have recourse to force"
- To withdraw "all armed personnel" no later than February 25, 1966, and to move those personnel "to the positions they held prior to 5 August 1965," with both countries to "observe the cease-fire terms on the cease-fire line"
- To maintain cross-border relations "based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other"
- To "discourage any propaganda directed against the other country, and...encourage propaganda which promotes the development of friendly relations between the two countries"
- To return the countries' respective high commissioners to their posts and restore "the normal functioning of diplomatic missions" while also observing the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961
- To "consider measures towards the restoration of economic and trade relations, communications, as well as cultural exchanges between India and Pakistan"
- To repatriate prisoners of war
- To "continue the discussion of questions relating to the problems of refugees and evictions/illegal immigrations," to "create conditions which will prevent the exodus of people," and to "discuss the return of the property and assets taken over by either side in connexion with the conflict"
- To "continue meetings both at the highest and at other levels on matters of direct concern to both countries"

The declaration codifying what Shastri and Ayub agreed to at Tashkent was registered with the United Nations Secretariat on March 22, 1966.

In Pakistan the outcomes of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 and the Tashkent Declaration were significant. The country had entered the war with the belief that India would still be recovering from the losses it had experienced during the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and that Pakistan would achieve an easy victory. At that time Pakistan was also strengthened by its military partnership with the United States, which had enabled it to significantly upgrade its weaponry. But when the U.S. stopped providing aid to Pakistan during the war, claiming that Pakistan had violated U.S. restrictions when it

used U.S. weapons against India, Pakistan became increasingly dependent on China for weapons, which had long-term geopolitical effects in the region.

Pakistani officials were also divided in their views of the Tashkent Declaration. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's foreign minister, took a hard-line stance and was against signing an agreement, while Ayub, who was eventually blamed for what was believed in Pakistan to be an unfavorable compromise, went ahead with the agreement. These differences led to Bhutto's removal from Ayub's government; Bhutto would then go on to form the Pakistan People's Party, which would play a key role in Pakistan politics for decades. Ayub was forced to resign in 1969.

Uncertainty over Death

Lal Bahadur Shastri's sudden death in Tashkent on the night of 11 January 1966 is still shrouded in mystery. Many questions are asked about it even today. Even today, most people are not ready to believe that his death was a natural death due to a heart attack. After all, what happened to him that night in the last 03-04 hours? What do the people with him tell about the events that happened during that time?

In fact, the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had gone to the Soviet Union city Tashkent for the Tashkent Agreement. There he signed a historic agreement with Pakistan President Ayub Khan on 10 January 1966. There was a lot of pressure on him regarding this agreement.

After the agreement, he died of a heart attack at 1:32 in the night. Many newspapers of the country could not print this incident but Times of India stopped the night city edition and published this news.

The news was bannered in eight columns with the heading, "Shastri dies after a heart attack".

However, this news came in a long single column amidst the big news of the historic agreement. The report published by Times of India on this is as it is –

Tashkent, January 11. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died of heart failure at 1:32 pm in Tashkent tonight.

In this news of PTI it was said, his mortal remains are being brought from there to Delhi by plane this morning.

Mr. Shastri complained of chest pain at 1:25 pm. After this he became unconscious. He died within seven minutes.

Soviet Union chief Alexei Kosygin hosted a banquet the night after the signing of the Tashkent Agreement, at which Shastri looked healthy and better. Minister Sardar Swaran Singh, who accompanied him on the tour, said that when Shastri complained of a heart attack, the Indian doctor reached there within a few minutes.

After this a Russian doctor also came there. After that, both of them together tried to cure him for a long time but the heart had stopped responding.

At present, Kosygin, the head of the Soviet Union, is at the same place where Shastri died, with tears in his eyes.

In this news, quoting AFP below, it was said that the official confirmation of the death was made at 03:00 am as per the local time, while as per IST it was at 02:00 am.

Shastri's mortal remains will reach Delhi by plane at 09:00 am. This was the last time he publicly reacted to the agreement after the dinner. He reached a good agreement with Pakistani President Ayub Khan.

Pakistan President Ayub said in response, Allah will make everything right.

In this news, a news was added quoting PTI from New Delhi, the President has administered the oath of office to Union Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda as the acting Prime Minister.

Well-known journalist Kuldeep Nayyar also accompanied Shastri on that trip. He wrote in his autobiography "Beyond the Lines – An Autobiography", that night for some reason I had a premonition of Shastri's death. When someone knocked at my door, I was dreaming of Shastri's death. I got up in a panic and ran towards the door. A woman standing outside in the corridor told me, your Prime Minister is dying. I quickly dressed and set out in the car with the Indian officer to where Shastri was staying, which was a short distance away. Shastri was lying lifeless in the huge bed, it was further written in the book, "I saw Kosygin standing in the verandah. He raised his hands indicating Shastri's absence. Shastri was lifeless on the huge bed. His slippers were lying neatly on the carpet nearby. A thermos was lying overturned on the dressing table in a corner of the room. It seemed that Shastri had tried to open it. There was no bell in the room. When questions were asked to the government in Parliament regarding this mistake, the government could not clarify anything."

"At night I got a call from his other private secretary Venkatraman from Delhi. In which he was told that the people of Shastri's house were not happy. He also told that Surendra Nath Dwivedi of Praja Socialist Party and Atal Bihari Vajpayee of Jan Sangh had criticized the retreat of Indian forces from Haji Pir and Tithwal. When Shastri was told this after returning from the dinner at night, he said that the opposition will definitely criticize the agreement. "Yet Shastri was genuinely concerned about these reactions."

- According to Nayyar's book, "At around 11 pm, his secretary Jagannath Sahay asked Shastri if he would like to talk to him at his home, because he had not been able to talk to his family for the last two days. Shastri first said no, then changed his mind and asked to match the numbers. This was also a hotline, so the number was immediately available. First of all I talked to Shastri's son-in-law VN Singh. He didn't say anything special. After this, Shastri's eldest and favorite daughter Kusum came on the phone. Shastri asked her, how did you like it? Kusum replied, Babu ji we did not like it. Shastri asked about Amma. That is, about Shastri ji's wife Lalita ji. Then Kusum said, she also did not like it. On this, Shastri ji became sad and said to his colleagues, if the family members did not like it, then what would outsiders say? When Shastri asked Kusum to give the phone to Amma, she said that Amma did not want to talk. Despite repeated requests from Shastri ji, Lalita ji did not come on the phone. After this Shastri ji became very disturbed.
- milk before sleeping- After this, before sleeping at night, his assistant Ramnath gave him milk, which he always took before sleeping. After this Shastri ji started walking. After this he asked for water. A little before midnight, he asked Ramnath to go to his room and sleep, because he had to get up early in the morning to catch the plane to Kabul. When Ramnath expressed his desire to sleep on the floor in his room, Shastri asked him to go to his room upstairs.

- At 01.20 in the night, when the Indian Prime Minister's team was packing their luggage to leave in the morning, Shastri ji appeared at the door of Secretary Jagannath. He said with great difficulty, "Where is Doctor Saheb?" Then as soon as he returned to the living room, he started coughing badly. He was taken to bed by his colleagues. Jagannath gave water to drink. Shastri touched his chest and became unconscious. Doctor Chugh had reached by then. When he saw Shastri's wrist, he started crying and immediately gave the injection. If there is no response, try mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Then a lady Russian doctor also arrived. Then some more doctors. But Shastri had died.
- The wife had accused of killing by poisoning- Shastri ji died under suspicious circumstances on the night of 11 January 1966. How he died is still a mystery even after 49 years. The medical report said that Shastriji died due to a heart attack, but his wife alleged that he was poisoned.
- The case file is in the Prime Minister's Office - It is said that after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, his body turned blue. This gave impetus to the fact that his death was not due to a heart attack but due to poison. After this, the butler on duty was arrested, but he was released when no concrete evidence was found. However, many questions were raised on Butler's statement also. That case file is present in the Prime Minister's Office, but it has not been made public.
- There is no record of death investigation - The first investigation into Shastri ji's death was conducted by Raj Narayan, although it yielded no results. It is also alleged that Shastri ji's post-mortem was not even done. After this, in the year 2009, the Central Government said that Shastri's personal doctor RN Chugh and some Russian doctors had jointly investigated his death. But, the government has no record of it.
- Could not get first aid- Anil Shastri has also accused the Indian Embassy of negligence. He said that there was no bell or telephone in the room where Lal Bahadur Shastri was staying in Tashkent. Due to this he could not even get any first aid. The Indian Embassy was negligent.

Honours and awards

The whole of India remembers Shastriji with reverence for his simplicity, patriotism and honesty. He was awarded Bharat Ratna in the year 1966.

Conclusion :

2nd October is indeed a special day for the Indians. Our country was blessed with the most respected and influential leader on this day. The day certainly calls for double celebration. Shastri Ji has given a lot to our country as a freedom fighter as well as the Prime Minister of our country. He has earned respect and love of the Indians. His slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kishan' is popular even today. He was a true patriot. He dedicated his entire life to the service of the country. He was one of the most loved Indian political leaders.

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