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PILIBHIT AFTER VAJPAYEE'S DEATH | 3**



## When Atal was swamped with flowers in Agra

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Agra: No stranger to the city, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Agra connect goes back to his early age, when his family moved to Baleswar, a village in the district on the banks of the river Yamuna. He studied up to class V in the town of temples. Perhaps, that is why Vajpayee had a personal connection with a majority of the local party leaders. During his political career, he paid several visits to Agra to attend both public and private functions. Old times in the party recall one such trip he made to the city on April 9, 1988. As member of the party's national executive, he was in the city to attend BJP's national convention. Overwhelmed by love and support of the city residents, who showed him with flowers as he passed the market place, Vajpayee, while addressing the convention, had said, "Zara bachay rehna bhayya, yeh Agra hai. Yahan kay log khatainak hai. Yeh toh phoolon say ghayal kar deay hain Gay say bhadher, this is Agra. People here injure you with flowers."

On the occasion, people gathered along roadsides and stood on rooftops to catch a glimpse of their leader. As Vajpayee passed through market places in an open vehicle, he was rained with rose



Vajpayee's road show in Agra

petals and sunflowers. People stopped him from point to point to garland him. Such was the response that Vajpayee had to request people to "take it easy", said BJP state vice-president Purushottam Khandulwal. "Agraites had poured out their hearts to welcome Atal ji. He was overwhelmed by their support. The open vehicle in which he was travelling was completely filled with flowers and petals," he added.

Senior BJP leader Sunil Kumar Vikal, who is the son of first party MLA from Agra Satya Prakash Vikal, said, "Atalji's road show ended in a mega public meeting at Bijli Ghar. After the three-day convention in 1988, a BJP wave swept Agra. After this, party emerged as a major political force in the municipal corporation, legislative assembly and the Lok Sabha from Agra."

## Agra University mourns loss of former student

**Vajpayee Studied  
Pol Science Here  
In The 1940s**

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Agra: Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a student of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University here for several years in the 1940s. Throughout his life, he remained connected with his teachers and close friends. A day after his demise on Thursday, Agra university remained closed to condole the death of its illustrious alumnus. On Friday, university vice-chancellor Arvind Kumar Dixit went to New Delhi to pay homage to the former PM.

Vajpayee completed his MA in political science with first division marks from DAV College, Kanpur (then affiliated to Agra University). After this he secured admission in an LLB program but was not able to complete it due to his political interests.

According to the university staff, Vajpayee completed his schooling and BA in Agra. Back then, the princely state of Gwalior led by Jiwajirao Sindhia, used to offer scholarships to meritorious students to pursue higher studies. Vajpayee applied for the scholarship and got selected. In 1946, he got admission in Agra University's DAV College.



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Talking to TOI, vice-chancellor Arvind Kumar Dixit said, "It is a great honor for Agra university to have former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its alumnus. Every phase of his life reflects a lesson. We will surely try to carry forward his legacy."

In his early years, Atalji worked as a journalist. This boosted his understanding of society and politics. As a mark of respect, we have started working on a plan to develop a center of excellence in journalism named after him," the VC added.

## How Vajpayee stayed optimistic about Indo-Pak ties

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Agra: Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was cremated with full state honours at Shri Shival in New Delhi on Friday, did not lose hope about finding a lasting solution to tensions between India and Pakistan, even after talks with former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf failed to yield result in 2001. The round of talks between the two leaders, also known as the Agra summit, was a landmark peace initiative by Vajpayee.

The three-time PM's optimism is etched in the guest register of Jaypee Palace Hotel, where he stayed. "I carry back with me unforgettable memories of my talks with his excellency Gen Pervez Musharraf, President of Pakistan. I am confident and I sincerely pray that the Agra summit will ultimately move to a useful milestone along the high road to peace and normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan," Vajpayee wrote. He had stayed in room number 203, which is now known as the "summit suite". Two special chairs, which were made available for the summit, are still preserved by the hotel.

Praising the hospitality of the staff, Vajpayee wrote, "I express my deep appreciation and thanks for the excellent hospitality accorded by the management and staff of Jaypee Palace Hotel, Agra to me and members of my delegation." Hari Sukumar, the hotel's vice-president, told TOI that even though he was not here at the time of the summit, the staff that was present still remembers every moment of the former PM's stay. Food and beverage manager Pawan Kumar, who was here in 2001, recalled that Vajpayee preferred simple food like 'ghya' (gourd), 'bhindi' (brinjal), 'tawa roti', 'missi rot' and 'namkeen lassi' (salted buttermilk).

Sukumar said that he got the chance to meet Vajpayee in New York in 2003, when the latter addressed the United Nations General Assembly. "I was the general manager of the New York Hotel where he stayed. I will never forget those 15 minutes with him. I haven't seen such a humble person, who treats everyone equally," said Sukumar.



The Agra summit was a landmark peace initiative by Vajpayee

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**Atal supported AMU's minority status**

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Agra: Aligarh Muslim University's minority status might have become the issue now, but the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a strong proponent of the university's minority character.

Director of Urdu Academy, Dr Rahat Ali, also a former PRO in AMU, said that everything is documented. He said, "Atal ji supported the minority character of AMU. In fact, he had promised in the election manifesto to restore the minority character of the University if it comes in power." During the 1979 mid-term elections, his manifesto read, "The Janta party will give priority to enacting appropriate legislation to restore the autonomy and original character of the university as an institution for Oriental and Islamic studies, and for the promotion of educational and cultural advancement."

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