

Vajpayee acted as he preached

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Simplicity and exemplary oratory skills were the hallmark of the former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, recalled K. Ram Bhat, the former BJP MLA from Puttur and long-term associate of Vajpayee.

In his conversation with The Hindu on phone from Puttur, the octogenerian vividly recalled his meeting with Vajpayee in the house of Karamballi Sanjeev Shetty. "I cannot recall the year, but we met in the old house of Shetty. Vajpayee also visited my old house a few times," Mr. Bhat said.

"Vajpayee was a unique personality. He was a tall leader who acted in the same way as he preached," Mr. Bhat said, while recalling the guidance he gave him in strengthening the party's base in the State. When he had differences with the party, Mr. Bhat said, he met, along with senior leaders of the State BJP unit, the then BJP national president Nitin Gadkari and L.K. Advani in New Delhi. "But I could not meet Vajpayee as he was unwell," he added. The former Dakshina Kannada BJP unit president Pratapsimha Nayak said that Vajpayee worked with Bhat, C.G. Kamat, founder-president of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh Prabhakar Ghate, the former Home Minister V.S. Acharya and senior BJP leader B.B. Shivappa to make the undivided Dakshina Kannada a base of the Jan Sangh and later of the BJP.

"Vajpayee is among the few national leaders of the BJP who have extensively campaigned in all the Assembly constituencies of the district," Mr. Nayak said and recalled the visit of Vajpayee for the Executive Committee of the State unit of the BJP in the city in 1985 that was attended by the former Speaker K.S. Hegde.

His work etched in nation's memory

In his video statement posted on WhatsApp from Bengaluru, Pejawar Mutt seer Vishweshwara Tirtha said that he was personally saddened over the death of Vajpayee with whom he shared a good relationship. The seer said that Vajpayee's contribution to the nation will remain etched in the nation's memory. He was a leader who was acceptable to all political parties.

Harikrishna Bantwal, who was president of the BJP Bantwal taluk unit in 1980, recalled the extensive campaigning of Vajpayee during the 1984 Lok Sabha elections in which the BJP candidate Mr. Bhat lost to B. Janardhan Poojary in the city. "Vajpayee easily mingled with party workers and was a source of inspiration for many young activists like him," he said. Sudhir Ghate, son of Prabhakar Ghate, said that there was a good following for Vajpayee's speech in the coastal region.

The district unit of the BJP held a condolence meeting at the party office on Thursday evening. MP Nalin Kumar Kateel and party leaders attended the programme.

District in-charge Minister U.T. Khader too has expressed his condolences.