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Tribute to Bharat Ratna,
Former President Pranab
Mukherjee



FIA Congratulates Prime
Minister Narendra Modi
in his 70th Birthday



Significance of Adhik
(Purushottam) Maas in
Hindu Culture

Tribute to Bharat Ratna, Former President Pranab Mukherjee

By Chandrakant Trivedi

India's former president, Pranab Mukherjee, affectionately known as Pranabda, passed away on Aug. 31, 2020 in New Delhi. He was 84. He is survived by his children - Indrajit Mukherjee, Abhijit Mukherjee and Sharmishtha Mukherjee. Pranabda's wife, Surva Mukherjee, an accomplished singer of Rabindra Sangeet and an artist, died in 2015.

A man of all seasons, Pranabda served as India's president from 2012 to 2017. He held many prestigious positions as a Cabinet minister, and managed different portfolios such as finance, defense, commerce and external affairs. He was elected to the Upper House of the Parliament (Rajya Sabha) five times from 1969 and twice to the Lower House of the Parliament (Lok Sabha) from 2004. He was a member of the Congress Working Committee, the highest policy making body of the Party for a period of 23 years.

His incredible brilliance, versatility, prolific experience and expertise in all areas and his deep rooted political mastery throughout his career in the Congress ministry made him a scholastic statesman and a political leader. With a career spanning five decades, Pranabda was unmatched in Indian politics. He was a cerebral politician with an astute understanding of the political system - the workings of the government, key ministers, the Parliament and the Constitution. Pranabda was considered to be a walking encyclopedia on everything related to politics and governance. He had a vivid memory and used to remember all the details of negotiations held and deals conducted.



His versatility, brilliance, and multiple talents elicited respect from leaders of the BJP and other parties. India's current Prime Minister, Hon. Narendra Modi had tremendous respect for Pranabda, and used to seek his guidance, opinion and blessings on several issues of national importance. Both had developed a natural trust and respect for each other.

Pranabda's genius was recognized by Indira Gandhi in 1969, and he was groomed to play a significant role in her regime. He was made deputy minister, shipping and transport, steel and industry and Minister of State for Finance in the period 1973-74. He assumed office as Finance Minister of India for the first time in 1982 in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and was leader of the House

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Then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee during the World Economic Summit 2009 in New Delhi.

in the Rajya Sabha from 1980 to 1985. Later, he was Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission from 1991 to 1996; Minister for Commerce from 1993 to 1995; Minister of External Affairs from 1995 to 1996; Minister of Defense from 2004 to 2006 and once again the Minister of External Affairs from 2006 to 2009. He was the Minister of Finance from 2009 to 2012 and Leader of the Lok Sabha from 2004 to 2012 till he resigned to contest election to the office of the president.

Pranabda had extensive diplomatic experience and served on the Board of Governors of the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank. He led the Indian delegations to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Conferences in 1982, 1983 and 1984; the United Nations General Assembly in 1994, 1995, 2005 and 2006, the Conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government at Auckland in 1995, the Non-Aligned Foreign Minister's Conference at Cartagena in 1995 and the Conference to mark the 40th anniversary of the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1995.

He almost became the prime minister after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, but instead, Rajiv Gandhi was chosen to take his mother's position. Pranabda's grasp of the intricate functioning of the Congress helped him emerge as a natural coalition manager. Some people say Pranabda was a custom-made, multi-purpose political vehicle with a reputation of a truly bipartisan leader. A sheet anchor of the UPA government, Pranabda was an indispensable leader.

Despite his assets, Pranabda was deprived of the country's prime ministership twice. Finally he accepted the ceremonial position of president.

Pranabda's reservoir of political experience, expertise and confidence, made him most suitable for this position and honor. He is known to have sent back bills for revision before signing them. He rejected the mercy plea of Afzal Guru, Kasab and others.

A powerful orator and scholar, Mukherjee's intellectual and political prowess as well as remarkable knowledge of international relations, financial affairs and parliamentary process are widely admired. He has been well known for his role as a consensus builder on difficult national issues through his ability to forge unity amongst the diverse political parties that form part of India's vibrant multi-party democracy.

A man of humble origins, Pranabda was born in the small village of Mirati in Birbhum District of West Bengal as son of freedom fighters, Shri Kamada Kinkar Mukherjee and Rajlakshmi on December 11, 1935. His father was a Congress leader who endured great hardship including being sent to jail several times for his role in India's struggle for independence.

Pranabda has a Master's degree in History and Political Science as well as a degree in Law from the University of Kolkata. He then embarked on his professional life as a college teacher and journalist. Inspired by his father's contribution to the national movement, Pranabda plunged into full time public life following his election to the Rajya Sabha in 1969.

He received the Bharat Ratna, India's highest national honor, in 1991. A prolific reader, Pranabda has authored several books on the Indian economy and on nation building. The many awards and honors conferred on him include India's second highest civilian award, Padma Vibhushan in 2008, the Best Parliamentarian Award in 1997 and Best Administrator in India Award in 2011. He is recipient of Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa conferred by the University of Dhaka in 2013; and Honoris Causa conferred by the University of Calcutta in 2014. ; Honorary Doctorate conferred by the Russian Diplomatic Academy in 2015; and Professor Honoris Causa conferred by the Belarus State University in 2015. Honorary Doctorate conferred by the University of Jordan in 2015; Honorary Doctorate conferred by Al-Quds University, Palestine in 2015; and Honorary Doctorate conferred by Hebrew University, Israel in 2015 and Honorary Doctorate conferred by the Kathmandu University, Nepal in 2016. He was rated one of the best five Finance Ministers of the world in 1984 according to a survey conducted by "Euro Money" Journal published from New York and was declared 'Finance Minister of the year' for Asia in 2010 by "Emerging Markets," the journal of record for the World Bank and the IMF.

FIA had the honor and privilege to host Pranabda and have him garland the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Union Square Park in Manhattan, New York.

FIA Congratulates Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 70th Birthday

By Chandrakant Trivedi



Narendra Modi takes the oath of office as the Prime Minister of India, with President Pranab Mukherjee administering the oath.



Modi interacts with school children after delivering his address on Independence Day in New Delhi, Aug. 15, 2017.

India's popular and visionary prime minister, Shri Narendrabhai Modi, will turn 70 on September 17, 2020. Born in Vadnagar, Gujarat on Sept. 17, 1950, Narendra Damodardas Modi has come a long way from an ordinary chaiwala to the country's prime minister. Prime Minister Modi's success saga is a story of determination, dedication, hard work, multiple talents and support of the people for all his political endeavors.

Modiji is the 14th and second five-year term prime minister of India. He has represented Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh as a Member of the Parliament since 2014. Prior to that Modiji was the 14th chief minister of Gujarat from October 7, 2001 to May 22, 2014. He won the Gujarat elections with a superb majority in 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Modiji's career trajectory is an inspirational story of hard work bringing triumph. After spending his childhood and youth at his native place, he left his home to pursue his dreams. He joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Singh (RSS). He went underground during the Emergency imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1975-1977). During that period he continued to work to enlighten people through various publications. In 1978, Modiji became a Sambhag Pracharak for the RSS. A few years later, Modiji began actively working for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1985. Thus began his upward journey and his in-depth involvement with the party. Modiji was named BJP's national secretary and played an important role in Lal Krishna Advani's All India Rathayatra to mobilize support for his mission to construct the Ram mandir in Ayodhya in 1990. Modiji was also assigned to work in Gujarat to strengthen the BJP foothold. Modiji's work enabled BJP to emerge victorious despite many odds. BJP named Keshubhai Patel as Gujarat's chief minister in 1998. That success helped Modiji become the general secretary of BJP.

After a devastating earthquake in Gujarat, the BJP hierarchy replaced Keshubhai Patel with Modiji as chief minister. He was sworn-in on October 7, 2001. And as they say, rest is history.

With his incredible political brilliance, hard work and visionary and dynamic leadership, Modiji consolidated his position as a chief minister par excellence by winning the Gujarat legislative elections three times in a row - 2002, 2007 and 2012.

The media and opposition parties continued to spoil Modiji's success by bringing the unfortunate "Godhara Kand," where riots ensued after coach S6 of the Sabarmati Express was lit on February 27, 2002, killing 59 persons. The incident attracted global attention. After many legal inquiries, Modiji was declared innocent by a special investigative team.

During his tenure as the chief minister of Gujarat, Modiji hosted a series of 'Vibrant Gujarat' events bi-annually and also presented a sound Gujarat model for development. He also broadened the horizons of Gujarat internationally. It achieved the prestigious ranking of being a top industrial state.

In 2013, Modiji was declared as the official candidate of the BJP for the position of prime minister. His untiring efforts of holding hundreds of election meetings nationwide, the "Chai Pe Charcha" events and the support of the people resulted in BJP's win in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections with 282 seats and alliance with other parties under NDA. That's when the second "Modi era" began, this time at national level.

Modiji gave India many milestones during his first five-year term (2012–2019), including surgical strike, Balakot strike, mission to Mars, demonetization, and GST, among others. People were impressed with Modiji's work, zeal and patriotism. With projects geared towards India's common man, he carved a special place in the hearts of many.

Greek philosopher Aristotle once wrote, "The old order changeth yielding place to new." And this is evident in Modiji's successful political journey.

Modiji traveled all over the world to convince leaders of India's reservoir of resources, a technically brilliant youth power, a mission to create a beautiful, borderless world, and reviving India's ancient philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." Countries like the U.S, Russia, Japan, UK, Germany France, the UAE, and Israel, started believing in Modiji's vision and mission and began supporting India's advent as an emerging superpower.

In 2019, Modiji won with a resounding victory with the BJP emerging as the single largest party with 303 seats. Modiji's second term began with a bang - criminalization of teen talaq, abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, CAA, NRC, and the historic verdict of the Supreme Court in ending a 500 plus years stalemate, granting permission to build a Ram mandir in Ayodhya. This made Modiji a powerful leader, and patriotic prime minister of the people.

At the age of 70, Modiji is continuously working without a break for 16–18 hours a day, facing unprecedented and unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic causing death tolls, and an economic catastrophe, impacting employment, education, business and professional sectors as well as the health sector. Natural calamities like floods have worsened the situation. Modiji is a leader who appreciates the people and their understanding and support in the government's continued struggle to master the situation.

Modiji has developed a trust and friendship with President Trump. Modiji's historic mega event at New York's Madison Square Garden in 2014, 'Howdy, Modi!' in Houston, Texas in 2019 and 'Namaste Trump' in Ahmedabad in 2020, are examples of the growing bond between the world's largest and the world's oldest democracy. Modiji has a similar bond with Japan as well.

Modiji's support from a worldwide network of well-wishers and leaders at this critical juncture when China is behaving differently is very welcome and useful. Our opposition leaders should appreciate this positively.

Modiji is very pious, honest and truly patriotic in nature. He is a great orator and thinker and is blessed with an incredible talent of creative writing and poetry and is a superb planner and executioner.



Modi meets his mother after winning the 2014 elections.



Modi with President Donald Trump at the 'Namaste Trump' rally in Ahmedabad, Feb, 24, 2020.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation on the occasion of the 74th Independence Day, Aug. 15, 2020.

His 100-year-old mother, Hiraba, is a great source of inspiration and blessings to him.

It was Modiji who made Gujarat state most popular worldwide by attracting foreign investment. He continued with development as the main theme of his 2014 Parliamentary elections, all the way to victory.

FIA conveys its heartiest congratulations to Modiji on his 70th birthday and wishes him all the best to accomplish his goals and pray for a long, healthy and successful life.

Significance of Adhik (Purushottam) Maas in Hindu Culture

By Chandrakant Trivedi

This year, Adhik Maas or Purushottam Maas falls from September 18, 2020 to October 16, 2020. It has a special significance in the Hindu religion. The Hindu calendar consists of 354 days - each month as 29 1/2 days - whereas a solar calendar has 365 days.

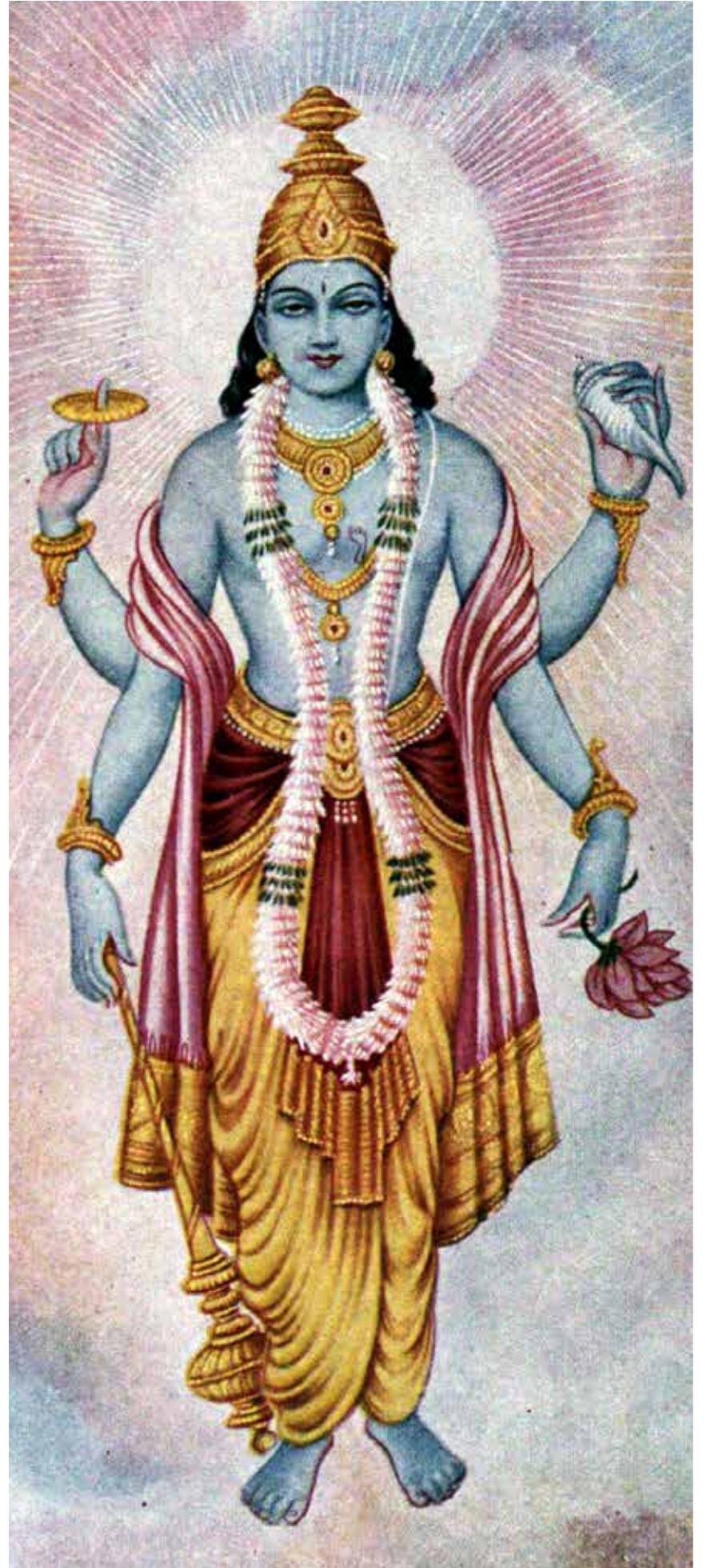
So in order to align both calendars, an additional month is added after a cycle of 32 months and 16 days to balance. That additional month is called Adhik Maas. It is believed that during this month, the sun stays in the same rashi (zodiac sign) and does not move.

Normally, the Adhik Maas falls between Chaitra and Ashwin Maas. It precedes the corresponding Indian calendar month. For example, this year, Vikram Samvat 2076, it falls before Ashwin Maas, and that's why it is Adhik Ashwin. This Adhik Maas is deemed inauspicious for carrying out functions like marriages, thread ceremony, house warming, etc.

However, Bhagwan Vishnu/Krishna has glorified Adhik Maas as Purushottam Maas. The story related to Purushottam Maas has been mentioned in the Padma Puran and in the 31st chapter of the Narad Puran. It is related back to the time when 88,000 sages, along with Shaunak Rishi, assembled at Naimisharnya and enquired from Shri Suta Goswami. Listening to the plea from Narad and other rishis, Lord Vishnu/Krishna made this extra month by bestowing all his divine qualities like quality, fame, opulence, realization, success and giving benediction to the devotees. Thus he made this month, which is abused as "Mal Maas," worshippable by one and all.

Purushottam Maas has two Ekadashis - Parvati and Padroni - which are regarded as very auspicious for fasting and worshipping Lord Vishnu. It is said to give good results, spiritually and worldly.

Bhagwan Vishnu said that in this holy month, all those who perform Shodas-Opachar (16 steps of worship), receive all fulfillment. Also, Bhagwan Vishnu mentioned many jaaps. For example, "Om Narayanaya Vidmahe, Vasudevaya Dheemahi, Tanno Vishnu Prachodayat," or "Om Namo Bhagwate Vasudevaya." Reciting such a mantra gives immense peace and prosperity. Reading the Bhagwad Gita or the Purushottam Maas Katha also enlightens one's life. Bathing in the holy river and charity is also recommended, instead of yagnas and other auspicious acts.



It is also suggested to perform Surya puja to remove all sins. Vishnu puja helps in removing nava graha dosha. Bhagwan Vishnu killed Hiranyakashyap in the form of Nirsimha avatar during Adhik Maas. It is said that a person can attain complete spiritual bliss and the soul can gain salvation by the virtue of good charitable deeds during this month.

Let our young and old generations take advantage of this forthcoming holy month and get rid of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seeking Justice For Sushant Singh Rajput

By Nalini Raja



Babu Patel, a community leader, president of the Mississippi chapter of the Indian American International Chamber of Commerce, Inc, chief trustee of the Gujarat Samaj, Mississippi and a board member of Nora's Home, Texas, and a warrior for justice for Sushant campaign, has installed two massive billboards on Interstate 20 (behind Patel Brothers store) in Jackson, Mississippi, on August 19, 2020, which was the same day the Supreme Court allowed the CBI to take control of the SSR death investigation.

Patel got inspired to do this by watching Republic TV, and listening to Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, both demanding justice for Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR).

Rajput's untimely death on June 14, 2020 which was ruled as suicide by Mumbai Police prompted many questions by his fans and friends in India and globally.

"Wanted to thank Arnab Goswami and his team at Republic TV Channel for his relentless coverage and for being a great warrior and supporter for this investigation for the past seventy seven days and going. Also, I would like to thank Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut who has been very vocal and very helpful in unfolding this case," said Patel.

Similar billboards have been installed in California and Georgia as well as other parts of the world by fans for SSR.