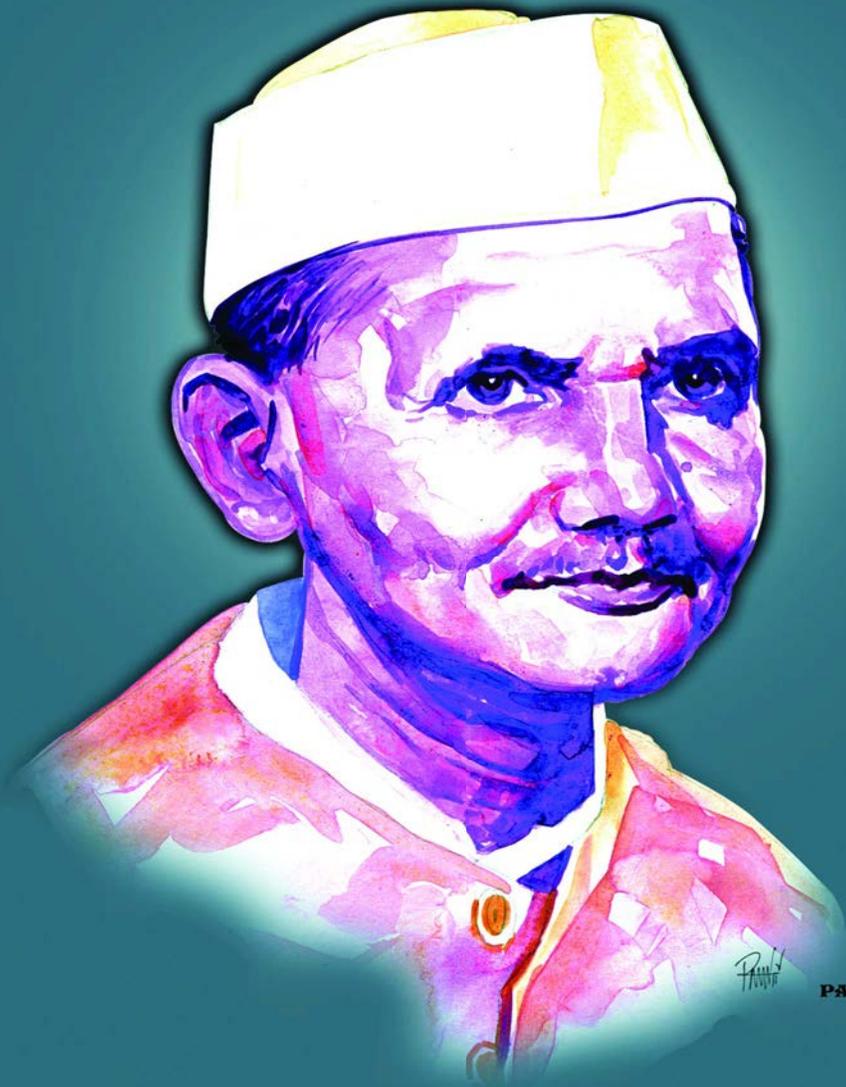


GREAT INDIAN PRIME MINISTERS

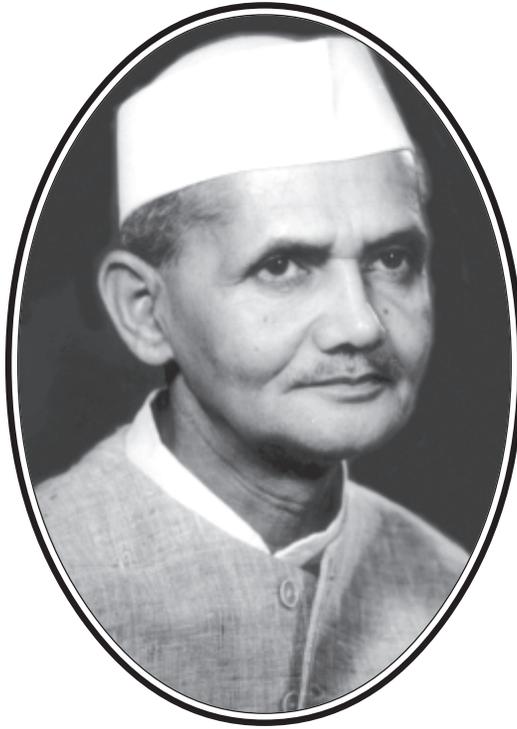
LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI



PAANI

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With Illustrations



M.V. Chalapathi Rao



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LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI

Indians celebrate the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2, as he was born on that date in the year 1869. He led the nation to freedom through non-violent means and he is hailed as the Father of the Nation.

On the same date, thirty five years after the Mahatma was born, another illustrious person came into this world. he is none other than Lal Bahadur Sastri, popularly known as Sastriji. Though his tenure as Prime Minister was short he made a lasting impression on the minds of his people. Perhaps India may not have a person like Sastriji at the helm of affairs. Sastriji was noted throughout India for his simplicity, honesty and resoluteness. There is wise saying that an honest man is the noblest work of God. Sastriji can apply be called an embodiment of honesty. He gave the nation, the slogan, “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan” and exhorted men to make sacrifices in the hour of adversity.

Lal Bahadur Sastri is an immortal who secured a permanent place in the hearts of the people. He was the second Prime Minister of India. Though he was in the post for a short period he gained much fame. He proved himself to be a person without enemies (ajatha

satru) and though short to be a competent one. Power came to him naturally and he didnot go in search of it. He was selfless. His sincerity, honesty and service-mindness are note-worthy.

CHILDHOOD

In the sacred city of Prayag, thousands of people had assembled on the banks of the Ganges on the day of Sankranti, on January 14, 1905. It was a seething sea of humanity. Pushed and jostled by the milling crowd, yet desperately trying to keep themselves on their feet was a couple - Sarada Prasad and Ramdulari Devi, clinging to her four month old son in her arms.

Suddenly the crowd behind surged forward in a wave and she, owing to the impact, lost her balance and fell down. By it, she lost her hold on the baby boy she held in her arms. In a moment she got up and looked around for her son. But the boy could not be found ont he ground. Did anyone grabbed her son ? Realising the mishap, Sarada Prasad searched frantically around but the child was no where to be seen! The shocked mother sat by the bank, weeping inconsolably. Sarada Prasad continued the search by seeking the help of some sympathetic on lookers.

There was a fleet of boats anchored along the bank of ferry passengers across the river. A humble cowherd sat in one of the boats watching the crowd. Suddenly he saw a bundle of cloth fall into his basket. A baby in the bundle! He was startled. It so happened that when Ramdulari lost her grip, the child, instead of falling on the ground or into the water, fell straight into the basket. The man was childless. He thought the baby to be a gift from Mother Ganges. He quickly picked up the child. The shocked baby was crying. The man dipped a piece of cloth in milk and put it on the babe's lips.

The search party led by Sarada Prasad returned empty-handed. The mother was beside herself with grief. Suddenly, Sarada Prasad caught sight of a baby resting cosily in a basket in the boat. He jumped into the boat and picked up the child. At first, the man refused to part with the babe but when Ramdulari came, he handed over the child to her. She thanked Mother Ganges and called her, dear son, 'Gangaputra'.

The 'Gangaputra' was none other than Lal Bahadur Sastri, the successor to Jawaharlal Nehru and the second Prime Minister of India.

Lal Bahadur belonged to a Kayastha family 'Kayasthas' are people who lead an honourable life

in the society. Lal Bahadur was born on October 2, 1904, in Moghul Sarai in U.P. His native place was Ramnagar, near Varanasi on the other bank of the river Ganges. His father was Sarada Prasad and mother Ramdulari Devi. His father, for some time worked as a teacher and later for some more time as a clerk in the Revenue department. His maternal grandfather was Hajari Lal. He was also a school teacher. When Lal Bahadur was 18 months old, his father died. Then Ramdulari Devi, along with her son and daughters went to her father's house. Hazari Lal felt very much for his twenty years old daughter becoming a widow. He took her and children under his care and looked after them. He brought up Lal Bahadur very affectionately and provided education. Under his care, Lal Bahadur developed the qualities of humility, respect for the elders, interest in studies and self-respect.

Once Lal Bahadur along with his friends went into a guava orchard. All started picking the fruits there. By the time, the watchman came all his friends ran away. Lal Bahadur alone could not. The watchman grew angry and warned Lal Bahadur saying, "You are fatherless! you should conduct yourself more carefully." Those words of the watchman developed in him the quality of a well-mannered man throughout his life.

EDUCATION

Lal Bahadur was enrolled in the local elementary school. It was on the other side of the Ganges. To go to school the river had to be crossed by boat. One day Lal Bahadur did not have the money to be paid to the boatman. He did not want to request the boatman to permit him without payment. So he swam the river holding his clothes and books in one hand. He respected his teachers and studied with care and attention. He passed every class with goodmarks and was an ideal to his co-students. These qualities won for him the love of his teachers.

During his school days Lal Bahadur had only one pair of clothes which were of low cost, a dhoti and a shirt. He put the nion, washing them everyday. During his school days he acted in dramas.

After completing sixth class in the local elementary school, he joined Haris Chandra High School in Varanasi. He was eleven years old at that time. In Varanasi he stayed in the house of his maternal uncle, Raghunath Prasad who was soft-natured and orthodox. His selfless nature had made a deep impression on Lal Bahadur. His truthfulness and sacrificial nature also left a mark on Lal Bahadur.

Nishkameswar Sarma, who taught Mathematics and English was another great person who served as a rudder to the life of Lal Bahadur. He was a store house of knowledge. He taught many things for the enlightenment of the students. He also related the heroic legends concerning Rana Pratap, Sivaji and Jhansi Bai and developed the qualities of heroism and patriotism in the students. He was a scout teacher. So he often took the students for camps. There he promoted worldly knowledge among his students. He also recounted the life histories of the eminent patriots like Lala Lajpati Roy and Balagangadhara Tilak who proclaimed. “Swaraj is my birth right” and told them that they too should work for the independence of the country.

Once Lal Bahadur came to know that Tilak would deliver a speech in Varanasi which was at fifty miles from his palace. As he was very much impressed by Tilak’s ideals, Lal Bahadur wanted to go to Varanasi and listen to Tilak’s speech. But he did not have the required money. So he borrowed some amount and went to Varanasi. Tilak spoke in an emotional manner about the need to break the shackles of the foreign rule and achieving freedom. Lal Bahadur was greatly influenced by Tilak’s speech there.

End of Preview.

Rest of the book can be read @

<http://kinige.com/book/Lal+Bahadur+Shastry>

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