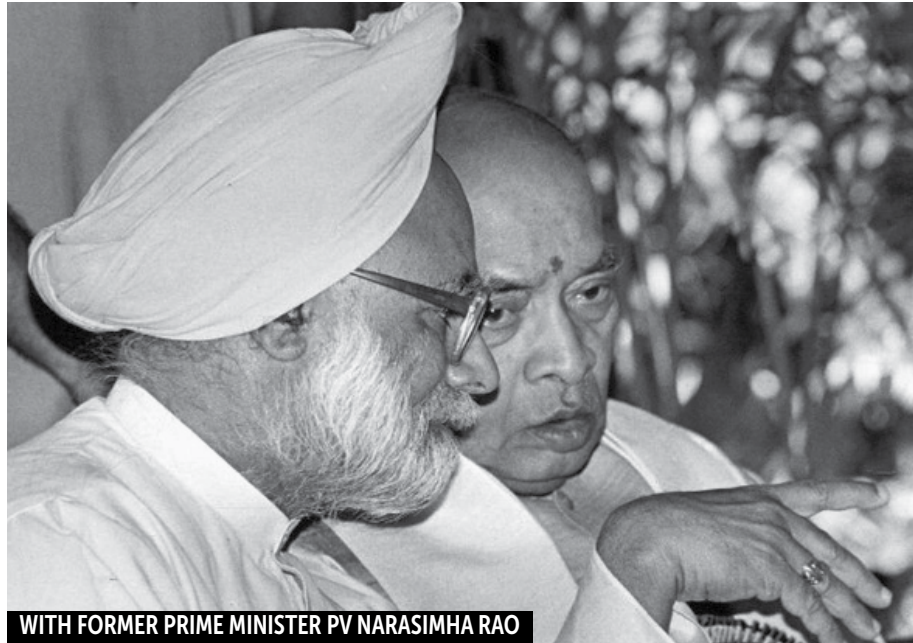


A POLITICIAN AND A GENTLEMAN

Leaders from across the political spectrum pay respects to a man who was unassuming, erudite, soft-spoken, a consensus builder and a stubbornly resolute politician

PTI, NEW DELHI: He drew the roadmap of India's economic reform, unshackled it from the licence raj and pulled it back from the brink when even all its gold reserve was pledged. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was the scholar and architect of the India of today who evolved into a stubbornly resolute politician.



WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER PV NARASIMHA RAO

Unassuming, erudite, soft-spoken and a consensus builder, Manmohan Singh died on Thursday night at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). He was 92.

The Congress leader, who steered the country for 10 years from 2004-2014 and helped set up the country's economic framework as finance minister before that, was a renowned name in the global financial and economic sectors.

The man who famously spoke of studying under the dim light of kerosene lamps in his village without electricity and went on to become a storied academic was the copybook reluctant politician, almost

stumbling into the rough and tumble of mainstream politics.

He was the proverbial dark horse when Sonia Gandhi stepped back from taking the prime minister's post, ignoring the clamour from her party, and chose him instead. And so Manmohan Singh the academic bureaucrat became the 14th prime minister of India in 2004.

ruption scams, establishing BJP's unbroken rule since then. Hailed for putting India on the road to liberalisation and privatisation in the early 1990s, Singh was criticised for turning a blind eye to charges of corruption.

The going often got tough.

During his first tenure as prime minister, the coalition

when he was seen defending his government's record and the Congress' positions on controversial issues such as the 2G scam, Singh spoke up and declared he was not weak.

"I honestly hope history would be kinder to me than the contemporary media, or for that matter, the opposition parties in Parliament," he had said famously in January 2004.

More than two decades later, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge reacted to Singh's death with a poignant post on X: "Undoubtedly, history shall judge you kindly, Dr. Manmohan Singh ji!"

The decade with Singh at the helm of affairs is widely believed to be an era of unprecedented growth and prosperity.

His journey to the acme of India's governance and political power is unique in the annals of India's politics.

Singh, always seen in a powder blue turban, was appointed India's finance minister in 1991 in the Narasimha Rao government. His role in ushering in a comprehensive policy of economic reforms is now recognised worldwide.

In January 1991, India struggled to finance its essential imports, especially of oil and fertilisers, and to repay official debt. In July 1991, the RBI pledged 46.91 tonnes of gold with the Bank of England and the Bank of Japan to raise \$400 million.

Manmohan Singh soon steered the economy well and was quick to repurchase it months later.

Vohra, who at the time served successively as defence and home secretary said he had to be at then finance minister Singh's door daily, "literally begging for some financial relief for the department I was serving".

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS AND REASONS



With his successor, Narendra Modi; (right) In conversation with Sonia and Rahul Gandhi



Dalai Lama greets Manmohan



Former Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif with Manmohan



Former US President Barack Obama and (right) ex-UK PM Tony Blair with the then Indian PM



His passing is a great loss to all of us. I pay my respectful homage to one of the greatest sons of Bharat and convey my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and admirers. Former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh Ji was one of those rare politicians who also straddled the worlds of academia and administration with equal ease. In his various roles in public offices, he made critical contributions to reforming Indian economy. He will always be remembered for his service to the nation, his unblemished political life and his utmost humility

— Droupadi Murmu, President

His interventions in Parliament were also insightful. As our Prime Minister, he made extensive efforts to improve people's lives. His wisdom and humility were always visible

— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

His legacy will forever guide Bharat's growth trajectory. His profound understanding of economy, gentle demeanour and unwavering commitment to India's progress will forever be etched in my memory

— Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President

Undoubtedly, history shall judge you kindly, Dr Manmohan Singh ji. With the passing of the Former Prime Minister, India has lost a visionary statesman, a leader of unimpeachable integrity, and an economist of unparalleled stature. His policy of Economic Liberalisation and Rights-based welfare paradigm profoundly transformed the lives of crores of Indians, virtually creating a Middle Class in India and lifting crores out of poverty

— Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress president

I have lost a mentor and guide. Millions of us who admired him will remember him with the utmost pride

— Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha

Few people in politics inspire the kind of respect that Sardar Manmohan Singh ji did. His honesty will always be an inspiration for us and he will forever stand tall among those who truly love this country as someone who remained steadfast in his commitment to serve the nation despite being subjected to unfair and deeply personal attacks by his opponents. He was genuinely egalitarian, wise, strongwilled and courageous until the end. A uniquely dignified and gentle man in the rough world of politics

— Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress general secretary

I had experience with him as prime minister and as finance secretary and late as governor. What I would say about Dr Manmohan ... that he was a great listener. He did not speak very much. But whenever he spoke, it has lots of substance

— D Subbarao, former RBI governor

When Manmohan said, 'History will be kinder to me'



PTI, NEW DELHI: Months before he demitted office as Prime Minister in 2014, Manmohan Singh had asserted that his leadership was not weak and history would be kinder to him than what the media projected at that time.

Addressing a press conference in January 2014, in what was one of his last media interactions, Singh had said, "I do not believe that I have been a weak Prime Minister ... I honestly believe that history will be kinder to me than the contemporary media or for that matter the Opposition in Parliament... Given the political compulsions, I have done the best I could do."

"...I have done as well as I could do according to the circumstances... It is for history to judge what I have done or what I have not done," Singh had said.

He was responding to a volley of questions regarding criticism that his leadership was "weak" and he was not decisive on many occasions.

Singh had also chosen the press conference to launch a blistering attack on BJP's then prime ministerial candidate Modi and referred to the 2002 Gujarat riots under the Chief Minister. The BJP at that time had projected Modi as a strong leader while targeting Singh over the issue of "weak" leadership in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls.

"If you measure the strength of Prime Minister by presiding over mass massacre of innocent citizens on streets of Ahmedabad, then I do not believe in it... I do not think that this kind of strength this country needs least from its Prime Minister," Singh had said.

"I have full confidence that the next Prime Minister will be from the UPA... It will be disastrous for the country to have Narendra Modi as Prime Minister... I sincerely believe what Narendra Modi is saying is not going to materialise," he had said.

He quit pre-medical course after losing interest, wrote daughter in her book

PTI, NEW DELHI: Manmohan Singh had joined a pre-medical course as his father wanted him to become a doctor but pulled out after a couple of months, losing interest in the subject, according to a book on the former prime minister by his daughter.

Singh died here on Thursday night at the age of 92 after he had sudden loss of consciousness at home.

In her book "Strictly Personal: Manmohan and Gusharan", published in 2014, Daman Singh also said economics was a subject that appealed to him.

She also wrote that her father was a funny man saying he had a good sense of humour.

In April 1948, Singh was admitted to Khalsa College in Amritsar.

"Since his father wanted him to become a doctor, he joined the two-year FSc course that would lead to further studies in medicine. After just a couple of months, he dropped out. He had lost interest in becoming a doctor. In fact, he had also lost interest in studying

GLORIOUS JOURNEY	
1954:	Completed Master's in Economics from Panjab University
1957:	Economic Tripos (3-year degree prog) from Cambridge University
1962:	D.Phil in Economics from Oxford University
1971:	Joins Government of India as Economic Advisor in Commerce Ministry
1972:	Appointed Chief Economic Advisor in Finance Ministry
1980-82:	Member, Planning Commission
1982-1985:	Governor of the Reserve Bank of India
1985-87:	Served as Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission
1987-90:	Secretary General of South Commission in Geneva
1990:	Appointed Advisor to Prime Minister on Economic Affairs
March 1991:	Appointed chairman of University Grants Commission



1991: Elected to Rajya Sabha from Assam, and re-elected in 1995, 2001, 2007 and 2013

1991-96: Finance Minister under PV Narasimha Rao government

1998-2004: Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha

2004-2014: Prime Minister of India

science," Daman wrote.

"I didn't have the time to think," the author, who based her book on conversations with her parents and hours spent in libraries and archives, quoted her father as saying.

"I went and joined my father in his shop. I didn't like that either, because I was not treated as an equal.

September 1948," Singh was quoted as saying.

Economics was a subject that appealed to him immediately. "I was always interested in issues of poverty, why some countries are poor, why others are rich. And I was told that economics is the subject which asks these questions," Singh told his daughter.

While studying at Cambridge University, money was the only real problem that bothered Singh.

"His tuition and living expenses came to about 600 pounds a year. The Panjab University scholarship gave him about 160 pounds. For the rest he had to depend on his father. Manmohan was careful to live very stingily. Subsidised meals in the dining hall were relatively cheap at two shillings sixpence," Daman wrote.

She said her father never ate out, and seldom indulged in beer or wine yet he would be in crisis if money from home fell short or did not arrive on time.

"When this happened, he skipped meals or got by on a sixpence bar of Cadbury's chocolate," she said.

Born in undivided India, he spoke of communal harmony

PTI, NEW DELHI: Born in a village in undivided Punjab, now in Pakistan, former prime minister Manmohan Singh's family witnessed first-hand the tragic Partition and he often spoke of communal harmony in his long public life.

He was born in Gah in Punjab province's western region, which now falls in Pakistan.

Singh was a noted economist and a respected figure in India and abroad. According to his profile

on the website -- pmindia.gov, "Dr Singh completed his matriculation examinations from the Punjab University in 1948. His academic career took him from Punjab to the University of Cambridge, UK, where he earned a First Class Honours degree in Economics in 1957."

Singh followed this with a D.Phil in Economics from Nuffield College at Oxford University in 1962.

His book, 'India's Export Trends and Prospects for Self-Sustained

Growth' was an "early critique of India's inward-oriented trade policy," the profile reads.

A man of few words, but immense wisdom, he often spoke of communal harmony and democratic values that are at the core of India as a nation. At an event in Amritsar in 2004 marking the 400th anniversary of the installation of Guru Granth Sahib, he had recalled his roots.

"Dr. Manmohan Singh, touched

an emotional cord while addressing a mammoth gathering in Amritsar, recalling his roots and paying tributes to the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib," reads a September 2004 statement carried on the website -- archivepmo.nic.in.

In his speech, then prime minister had underlined that there could be "no better way" to honour the holy text than to abide in practice by its teachings of "living in peace with one another".