

# Tearful Gwalior bids adieu to Scindia

By Javed M. Ansari  
and Lalit Shastri

*9. Pers...  
49-1  
5/10*

**GWALIOR, OCT. 4.** The country's top political leadership, friends, relatives, industrialists, heads of former princely states and thousands of admirers in and around Gwalior today gathered at the Chatri grounds here to bid farewell to Madhavrao Scindia. With a prayer on their lips and heads bowed, they watched his son Mr. Jyotiraditya perform the last rites, not far from the spot where nine months ago Scindia himself performed the last rites for his mother.

Gwalior today poured out onto the streets and all roads led to the Chatri grounds. People came in thousands, commoners and kings alike, to watch their Maharaj in his last journey in a palanquin atop a gun carriage, escorted by personnel of the armed forces.

Cries of *Madhavrao Scindia amar rahe* (Long live Madhavrao Scindia) rent the air. Loved during his lifetime, in death he is revered by his people. A banner at the gate of the Institute of Information and Technology set up by Scindia spoke volumes of the place he had come to occupy in their hearts. *Sab se pyara India, Jahan se pyara Scindia* (We love India, but Scindia is the dearest).

Schools, colleges, markets, cinemas and entertainment channels on cable TV were shut for a third day in succession.

Scindia's last journey began at 10.20 a.m. from the Rani Mahal. The Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, arrived early in the morning by a special flight.



**Mr. Jyotiraditya Scindia lighting the pyre of his father, Madhavrao Scindia, in Gwalior on Thursday. —**  
Photo: V Sudershan (More photos on Page 15)

Mr. Jyotiraditya held the urn containing the fire, while Army officers bore the decorated palanquin carrying Scindia's body. As the Army contingent provided a 21-gun salute and the chanting of Vedic hymns reached a crescendo, Mr. Jyotiraditya bent down and placed his head at his father's feet for the last time before he lit the pyre.

Scindia's colleagues, friends and rivals in the political arena

turned out in full strength. The Centre was represented by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Union Ministers, Mr. L.K. Advani, Mr. Arun Jaitley, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Mr. Nitish Kumar and Mrs. Sumitra Mahajan and the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi. The former Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, also attended the funeral. The Chief Ministers of various States — Dr. Farooq Abdullah,

Ms. Shiela Dixit, Mr. S.M. Krishna, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh, Mr. Ajit Jogi, Mr. Ashok Gehlot and Mr. Digvijay Singh — sat through the ceremony.

Scindia's friends from the business community, Mr. Nusli Wadia and his wife Mrs. Maureen, had flown in with their son, while Mr. Amar Singh, Mr. Lalit Suri and Mr. Omar Abdullah's wife accompanied Dr. Farooq Abdullah in his state plane.

# Remembering Madhavrao Scindia

By Malini Parthasarathy

I grieve at the passing of Madhavrao Scindia. Not just because I have lost a dear personal friend but because as the spontaneous outpouring of grief all over the country testifies, our civil society, increasingly engulfed as it is by the politics of hate and sectarianism, has just been robbed of a truly promising national leader who had the potential to steer India out of the increasing darkness and to recover the receding dreams of a vibrant future. It is not just the Congress party which has been deprived of a political icon who could have been persuasive and modern enough to lure back to it the middle classes who have so eagerly bought the spurious promises peddled by the vendors of sectarian Hindu nationalism. The national political discourse has lost one of the fewer and fewer voices who are committed to preserving the basic pluralism and forward-looking liberalism of the Indian nation state as originally conceived of when India became independent and it was decided to run it as a democratic and secular state.

There were few who had the impeccable credentials of Scindia to lead India. An Oxford-educated modern maharaja who lost his title when democratic India decided to abolish the regime of privy purses and princes, he entered the democratic game with real earnestness, plunging into the politics of the republic with every intention of winning the right to be a people's representative and leader through the ballot box. He wore his historical inheritance very lightly and was in fact amused by the stereotype of 'stuffiness' that invariably accompanies impressions of Indian princes. While other former maharajas were inclined to dwell in the yesteryears of the princely era, in their dilapidated and damp palaces, Scindia was reluctant to cling to imagined privileges, preferring to roll up his sleeves and getting to work as a latter day technocrat. He was in fact stung by allusions to his maharaja origins. A decade ago, when a mutual friend had suggested that I meet him as a promising political leader, I had resisted the suggestion, faintly prejudiced against his princely origins, convinced that

he was not capable of transacting the serious business of democratic politics and executing a democratic agenda. When I did finally meet him, his first words with a disarming smile: "So you think I am feudal and therefore you don't want to meet me?" He never forgot that initial reservation and through the years since, was wont to joke about my having branded him "feudal".

But he was also genuinely riled by attempts by his political rivals within the Congress party to edge him out of the leadership reckoning citing his princely origins as a factor militating against his potential to lead a democratic party and country. He believed that he had proven enough that he was a worthy citizen of India's secular republic. Resisting his family's well entrenched ties with the Jan Sangh and the BJP, at the cost of his own personal relationship with his mother and sisters, Scindia's transition to a Congressman was authentic and committed. While he did not believe in wearing his patriotism on his sleeve, nor did he seem at all drawn to the Gandhian traditions in the Congress party, he was instinctively secular and unhesitatingly anchored to the belief that India must have a pluralist polity. It was possibly because of his own instinctive liberal persuasion and Western-style modernity that he had little trouble negotiating ideas such as secularism and human rights. He had no trace of the ambivalence in his attitude that many in the Congress party had towards the politically loaded campaign spearheaded by the Hindutva groups against "secular governance". Never did he buy the fallacious argument that has tempted many a non-BJP politician that secularism is tantamount to "appeasement of the minorities". In private conversation, he often contested the pejorative associations of the word "Hindutva", arguing that it was not the BJP's or the RSS's right to hijack the concept of Hindutva which, he insisted, in its purist sense and semantic substance could not have a political connotation.

Yet it was also true that Scindia shied away from the sharp-edged critiques of the present political crises that are preferred by the

Left parties. The reluctance on his part to sharpen arguments to a point that could radically polarise the political space perhaps blunted his capacity to project himself as a leader willing to take risks. But he was perceptive enough to see that unless the Congress party began coordinating closely with the Left parties on the agenda of democracy and secularism, the effort to resist the onslaught of the BJP's majoritarian politics would lose its cutting edge. He went out of his way to cultivate contacts with the Left parties, even as he kept his distance from the sharper edges and tactical consequences of their formulations. In other words, his political efforts had all the potential of injecting fresh life into the Congress party's jaded and cliched agenda and thereby persuading an electorate turned off by the Congress party's stale rhetoric that the Congress was capable of offering a political vision that was forward looking and inclusive rather than revanchist and sectarian.

Despite the harshness of the ground realities in India today where basic rights to food, shelter and security still cannot be taken for granted, the peculiarity of the Indian political system is that the Indian voter has tended to avoid choosing political extremes and radical solutions but has instead preferred to stay with what he or she perceives as the centre of the political spectrum. In this sense, a leader like Madhavrao Scindia could have offered leadership to this country that held the promise of modernity and growth without abandoning this polity's historic moorings in pluralist and inclusive governance. The life of Madhavrao Scindia with all its triumphs and tribulations as he made his arduous journey from being a maharaja to an enthusiastic and committed citizen of the republic, ceaselessly casting his energies into the practice of democratic politics, unswerving in his belief that India's future lay in embracing modernity without jettisoning pluralism and the commitment to address the sharp social and economic inequalities is an inspiring example of democratic India at its best. Farewell and thank you, Madhavrao Scindia.

THE HINDU

5 OCT 2002

# Cabinet expresses grief over Scindia's death

By Javed M. Ansari  
**NEW DELHI, OCT. 1.** In an unusual gesture, the Union Cabinet placed on record its condolences over the sudden demise of the senior Congress(I) leader, Mr. Madhavraj Scindia, in an aircraft in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday.

In a resolution, adopted at an emergency meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, here this evening, the Cabinet said the untimely death of Mr. Scindia in his prime had cut short a bright political career and promising leadership and recorded its deep appreciation of his services to the nation.

Offering heartfelt condolences to the members of Mr. Scindia's family, the Cabinet resolution described him as a seasoned parliamentarian and recalled that he had never lost an election since he was first elected to the fifth Lok Sabha in 1971. It also noted his love for sports. The Cabinet meeting also condoled the death of others who died in the accident.

Meanwhile, the political establishment slowly began coming to

terms with the enormity of the loss. Reflecting the poignancy and sense of disbelief at the sudden and tragic turn of events were the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, and the Prime Minister, who led

Mr. Narayanan drove down to 27, Safdarjang Road to pay floral tributes to the departed leader at



The President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, consoling Mr. Madhavraj Scindia's wife, Mrs. Madhavi Rajle Scindia, and his son, Mr. Jyotiraditya. The Congress president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, is also seen.

# Cabinet expresses grief over Scindia's death

his residence. "It is impossible to believe that he is no more," Mr. Narayanan wrote in the condolence book, describing Mr. Scindia as "one of the brightest stars in our political firmament".

A visibly-shaken Mr. Vajpayee echoed similar sentiments. "It is a bolt from the blue. Can destiny be so cruel?" he wrote in the condolence book. He consoled the grieving members of family and spent some time talking to Mr. Jyotiraditya, who stood by his father's body.

The former Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Chandra Shekhar and Mr. I.K. Gujral, the CPI(M) general-secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, senior journalists and diplomats were among the visitors to 27, Safdarjang Road.

Distraught Congress(I) leaders made a beeline to Mr. Scindia's residence. The party president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, was present at the airport with the senior leaders, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Mr. Natwar Singh and Mr. P.M. Sayeed, and the Rajasthan Chief Minister, Mr. Ashok Gehlot, when the special

IAF plane arrived this morning from Agra carrying the body of Mr. Scindia and the four journalists. Mr. Jyotiraditya stood with folded hands and received the visitors, while his mother sat in a corner of the room, a picture of silent grief. By her side were her daughter and Mr. Scindia's sister, the Union Minister, Ms. Vasundhara-raje Scindia.

Mr. Scindia's body will be taken to the Congress(I) headquarters at 24, Akbar Road tomorrow and around 10 a.m. it will leave by a special plane to Gwalior. The body will lay in state for two days at the Jai Vilas Palace to enable the people to pay their respects. The funeral will take place on Thursday. Ms. Gandhi and other party leaders are expected to attend.

## R. K. NARAYAN, 1906-2001

40-12  
1675

AS A NOVELIST, R. K. Narayan defies easy definition. On the face of it, his novels seem to be insulated from history, circumscribed by a limited geography, lacking in ambition and replete with small everyday detail. But his brilliance, as those who have learnt to love and admire his work over the years know, cannot be gauged by the usual yardsticks used to measure literary prowess. In many ways, Narayan was one of a kind. He may not have charted new trails in fiction writing but he possessed a wonderful ability to convey a feel of the people and the social context he wrote about. As a storyteller, he was a natural, picking at the bedrock of everyday existence to uncover the barest truths and tease out the bald facts of life. Not surprisingly, comparisons have been drawn between Narayan and William Faulkner, whose novels were grounded in a compassionate humanism and celebrated the humour and energy of ordinary life.

Faulkner set most of his novels in Yoknapatawpha county, an imaginary region with a mixed or varied population — a sort of fictional scale model for the American South. Similarly, Malgudi, the small imaginary South Indian town, provided the fictional setting for most of R. K. Narayan's works ever since he wrote the first sentence about it: "The train arrived in Malgudi station." Narayan invested this mythical place with a life-like intensity which is immediately recognisable — a place where Graham Greene thought you could traverse "into those loved and shabby streets and see with excitement and a certainty of pleasure... the cinema, the haircutting saloon, a stranger who will greet us, we know, with some unexpected and revealing phrase that will open the door of yet another human existence". It is a place, the English novelist wrote, that is "more familiar than Battersea or the Euston Road".

Narayan's friendship with Greene began in 1934 when he came across a manuscript of *Swami and Friends* and was impressed enough to pass it on to a British publishing house. It was also the beginning of a correspondence between the two writers which lasted until the death of the extraordinary English novelist whose works grappled with complex moral issues in the context of varied political settings. Greene regarded Narayan as one of the finest writers in English of his time, an extraordinary commendation for a man who never moved far from his social origins and who wrote largely about people in a small South Indian town in a prose that was simple and unadorned.

But it is this very simplicity that was the source of Narayan's genius — his English was personal and spontaneous, never mannered or measured, free from all artifice. Hardly a word rings false and, unlike many other Indian writers in English, Narayan's prose seems to emerge directly from the culture he was brought up in. It is this unpremeditated quality in his writing which lends it that special candour, which makes it to speak directly to the reader and which invests his rooted and microcosmic world with an expansive and universal character. Unlike many other writers, Narayan was no follower of literary mores, was no retailer of exoticism and wrote in a manner that seemed to come straight from the heart. In his seven-decade career as a prolific novelist and short story writer, he held the attention of generations of readers with his modest humour and his gentle, compassionate and almost self-deprecating irony. He was the grand old man of Indian letters and his passing away, at the grand old age of 94, represents the loss of a literary voice which was wholly idiosyncratic, wholly his own.

THE IDU

1975

DEVI LAL/1914-2001

## Tau evolved a new political style

558  
714  
So frail that he had to be assisted to his seat by two members of the watch and ward staff, Devi Lal last came to the Rajya Sabha two days before the Tehelka expose. Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was replying to the debate on the motion of thanks for the President's address to both Houses of Parliament. "Devi Lal has come", was the whisper that circulated through the galleries. People craned their necks to see him. *Tau* sat there for some time and quietly left.

That was the last time he was seen in public. The former deputy prime minister, perhaps, wanted one more "feel" of the political stage which he once dominated, albeit for a short period, when his thousands of rustic supporters would lay siege to the capital at will. After all, a Haryanvi was holding the number two position at the Centre, after narrowly missing the top slot. Something which former Prime Minister Mr Chandra Shekhar always maintained was the result of his unwittingly playing into the hands of Mr VP Singh, and for which he always held him guilty.

The National Front had come into power and *Tau* was the moving force behind it. Nobody doubted it. He also evolved a new and hitherto despised political style. Riding on Devi Lal's blessings, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav became Bihar chief minister, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav followed in Uttar Pradesh



Devi Lal

and another protege Mr Sharad Yadav became Union textile minister about whom *Tau* had later remarked that *Usko kapra mantri bana diya jise kapra pahan ne ke liye nahi tha.*

His only weakness then was his favourite son, Mr Om Prakash Chautala. A decade later, Mr Chautala proved his credentials and came into power with an overwhelming majority. Chaudhary (as he was referred in Haryana), had once again proved his political clout and popularity.

Nobody could undermine his position for those 11 months of the National Front government.

Not even then Prime Minister Mr VP Singh. It was in fact the famous proposed kisan rally by Devi Lal that prompted the Raja of Manda to come out with the Mandal formula which in turn changed the polity and society.

THE STATESMAN

7 APR 2001

# A parliamentarian par excellence

OBITUARY/ INDRAJIT GUPTA (1919-2001)

He has been a member of every Parliament since 1961 except the one formed after the post-Emergency election in 1977. His active participation in Lok Sabha discussions as a top-ranking debater brought him the first Govind Vallabh Pant Award for best parliamentarian in 1992. Everything he said was carefully argued and clearly articulated. One of his best speeches was delivered after Bangladesh's liberation.

Over the decades, Indrajit Gupta witnessed a radical change in Parliament's character. It used to be a "propaganda" place. Lawyers dominated the earlier Houses, education levels were higher, strict decorum was maintained, debates between the government and Opposition were serious and informed. All that changed, "perhaps reflecting better the country's realities", he would say.

In an interview with *The Economic Times* in 1994 Gupta said, "It's an effort to stay involved (in Parliament). People ask you why you are no longer raising any questions, so you do try. But Parliament today is a waste of time. It all depends on the attitudes of the ruling government, whether they are interested in the Opposition's opinions."

"Sometimes I wish I was a professional. I could be a Communist and still be practising any profession, and may be I would have contributed more to society." He insisted that he "never was a very ambitious fellow."

A fine sportsman with a keen intellect and a strong sense of humour, Gupta was well-read and widely travelled. He authored *Capital and Labour in the Jute Industry*, and *Self-Reliance in National Defence*.

Born in Kolkata on 18 March 1919, Gupta did his graduation from St Stephens' College, Delhi and King's College, Cambridge. Instead of following his father and his brothers into the civil service, he became a Communist under the influence of socialists Rajni Palme Dutt, Ben Bradley and JBS Haldane.

After returning to India in 1940, he started his political career as a trade unionist. Later, he became the president of workers' unions, including those of jute mills, textile units, port and the dock. Gupta was vice-president of the

World Federation of Trade Unions since 1982 and became the AITUC general secretary in 1980. He was president of the jute industry's Central Wage Board and general secretary of the National Trade Union Congress. He had been a member of the ITF council since 1990.

Gupta went underground during 1948-50 and was arrested thrice — in 1950, 1953 and 1959 — under the Preventive Detention Act. He was a member of the CPI's National Council. During the war, the party sent him to work among the jute and engineering industry labourers in Kolkata. He did so till 1960 when a by-election from Kolkata's south-west (Alipore) Lok Sabha seat marked his entry into Parliament. "I was a reluctant contender but the party needed a candidate."

Gupta's involvement in party work was so intense that he married at 62. "I thought it would interfere with the party work."

He would say revolution in the classical sense isn't possible any more but Marx "will remain useful as long as there is poverty and conflict, as an aid to understanding class conflict and social transformation."

At a convention of jute workers in 1972, Gupta suggested that Bangladesh and India evolve a common marketing policy for raw jute and jute goods.

A polyglot more fluent in Urdu and English than his native Bengali, Indrajit aka Sunny, had a rational mind, capable of understanding the new without rejecting the old, according to columnist Nikhil Chakraborty, an old friend. The ambience in Delhi shaped his political vision. He had also received the Outstanding Social Scientist Award for best parliamentarian. Gupta was a member of various parliamentary committees and the chairman of the Standing Committee on Defence in 1995-96. He quit the post in protest against the Narasimha Rao government's inaction in the Purulia arms-drop case.

Gupta became the CPI deputy general secretary in 1989 and replaced Mr C Rajeshwar

Rao as general secretary the next year.

In 1992, Gupta suggested a merger of the CPI-M and the CPI at a rally in Hyderabad. But, Mr Harshen Singh Sajeet rejected the idea. In 1995, he criticised the CPI-M for keeping its partners in the dark about its industrial policy. He suggested that the Basu government define areas and norms of foreign investment. He stressed that export obligation should be imposed on foreign investors.

Gupta reminded the Left Front at an AITUC rally in 1999 that it had been formed to look after the neglected class's interests and accused the state government of devouring the salary of labourers of the unorganised sector. This didn't go down well with his peers, but he didn't give a damn when it came to speaking his mind against exploitation.

He himself was accused of taking unilateral decisions within the party and giving priority to electoral considerations rather than mass activities. But Gupta was adept at resolving differences within the party and stayed clear of groupism. Despite his reluctance to stay on as party chief for health reasons, he was elected for a third term in 1995. He was appointed pro tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha in 1996.

Gupta was in favour of supporting the Deve Gowda government from the outside. He justified the CPI entry into the United Front government, saying, "We joined to strengthen (it) and keep the government going". He played a crucial role in the front's formation.

Gupta was the first Communist leader to be sworn in as Cabinet minister in June 1996. The same year he gave up his post as CPI general secretary in favour of Mr AB Bardhan. But, Gupta continued to be a heavyweight in the party's central secretariat, central executive committee and the national council.

Summing up his situation as home minister, he had said "he was a prisoner in the hands of the bureaucracy," wasting most of his time on transfers, postings and promotions when there was pressing need to look into electoral re-

forms, stop criminalisation of politics and prevent the entry of hoodlums into Parliament.

Delhi police had reason to remember him as minister. After 13 years of increasing layers of security for politicians and bureaucrats, it was Gupta who identified the fake protectees and began scaling down security for New Delhi's 1,500-odd VVIPs. He was the first home minister who refused to have his security upgraded to the Z category.

He sought a report on the working conditions and wages of paramilitary forces, something that hadn't been done for years.

In 1997, the home minister showed characteristic candour when he said: "The largest state (UP) is heading towards anarchy, chaos and destruction". He admitted the Centre's helplessness in coping with the truth. Uttar Pradesh was under President's rule at the time. The United Front top brass saw red. He said the depths to which UP had sunk was "not a matter of reaction but something on which all of us have to come together."

Eight months after being in office, Gupta had serious problems with the Prime Minister but soldiered on for his party's sake despite his desire to quit. He went on record saying all leaders must disclose their annual income.

Gupta announced that all parties must declare they will not nominate anyone with criminal links. His real achievement was conducting near-peaceful Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir in 1996. He was the first home minister in a long time to return from Kashmir without a strike to mark his visit.

Gupta will be remembered for sending back the Delhi Finance Bill to the state government, saying it need not seek the ministry's clearance. Even the BJP was forced to applaud.

Age had slowed his walk but he did not lose the razor-sharp edge to his tongue. The grumbling visage was a mask for a man who took his Communism seriously and was at home with intellectuals and the proletariat alike. He will leave a vacuum in Parliament and the common man will miss a forthright leader who could make the powers that be squirm in their chairs.