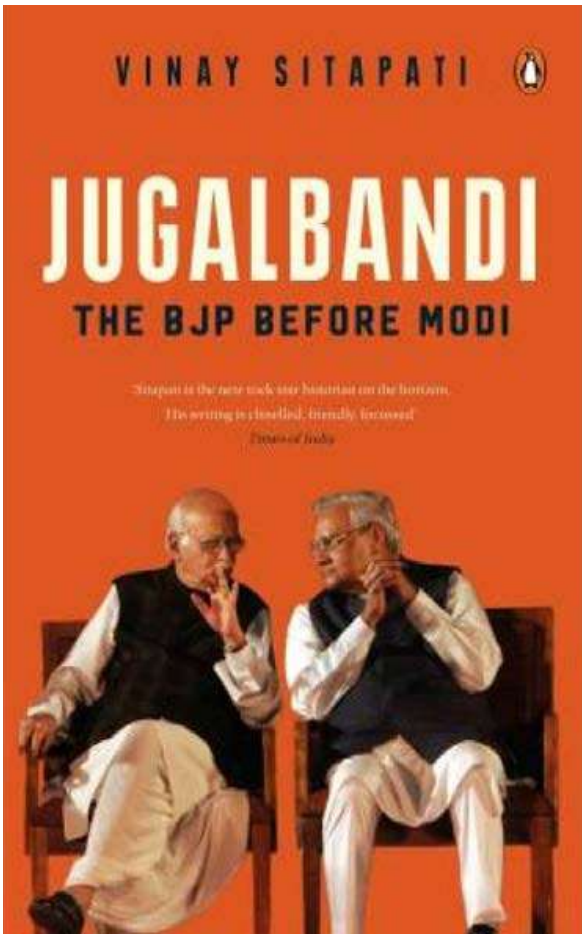
Book Review

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Jugalbandi: The BJP Before Modi

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JUGALBANDI
The BJP Before Modi

Author
Vinay Sitapati

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Penguin Viking

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INR 521 (on Amazon)

'Jugalbandi: The BJP before Modi' by Vinay Sitapati is well investigated chronicle of Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) foundation and its pioneer duo Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani.

The story of comradeship between '6-A Krishna Menon Marg' and '30-Prithviraj Road', is marked with saffron chroma and colours ranging from hope to glory, is well

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documented in the book. Post-independence history cannot be imagined without the contribution of both former Prime Minister and all -time parliamentarian late Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, a Pakistani refugee, Sangh *pracharak* and deputy Prime Minister, in the Indian politics. Their journey is not less than a classic saga which sustained for five decades.

This book is a historical volume explaining the rise of *Jan Sangh* and BJP and then the emergence of BJP as a national party in the Indian political landscape. The book published by Penguin Random House India in three volumes containing 16 chapters in more than 400 pages has the power to hook the readers till the last. The author narrated different stories starting from 1920's, a year marked by the birth of Vajpayee in Hindi heartland of Gwalior into *kanyakubja* Brahmin family and Advani in western province of Sindh. Atal-Advani throughout their political journey worked on the foundation of keeping all the Hindus united. Book highlighted that both these political leaders were aware of the fact that Hindus were defeated in the past because they lacked unity. Sitapati repeatedly points about the grooming of both the leaders under the aegis of RSS banner. They attended *shakhas* and received justification of Hindu failure through the disenchantment among Maratha clans in third battle of Panipat.

In the first chapter titled, 'Hindu Fevicol', Sitapati highlights myriad interpretation of Hinduism and explains British rule and its push towards a representative state which gave birth to parochial and identity politics. The book throws light on contemporary voice of Hindutva and nationalism as he writes, 'in contrast to thinkers like Vivekananda and Aurobindo, the atheist Savarkar was less concerned with 'what is Hinduism'? rather 'Who is a Hindu?'. The first two chapters narrate the partition story and wave of Hindu identity against divided Pakistan however book also says, 'all that changed at 5:17 pm on 30th January 1948 when a Hindu Mahasabha member who had worked with e RSS pumped three bullets into Mohandas Gandhi's chest'. Another chapter titled, 'In Nehru's Shadow' highlights an incident where Nehru introduced Vajpayee to visiting soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev and had said, 'this is one of our future prime ministers'.

Jugalbandi, in its most part, focuses on partnership-cum- competition between Vajpayee and Advani with layers of commitment for the organization. For instance, Vajpayee once asked by RSS to leave his studies to set up a Hindi newspaper in united provinces and he proceeded with immediate effect while Advani completed his third officer's training camp in Nagpur and took over as city secretary in Karachi Division of RSS. Sitapati rightfully catches the woes and worries between the party and the RSS. The book details the 'if' and

'but' of Ayodhya incident also. Italian strategist, Machiavelli, once said 'a philosopher is mirror of his times' and this seems true in Sitapati's case. The book forces readers to have different perspectives to view Indian political developments during the tenures of both the leaders. The last chapter of the book unfolds the paradigm of 2002 Godhra incident where the than Home Minister Advani balanced the reluctance of cadre and *Raj Dharma* of the then Gujrat CM. Sitapati based his work not just on the scholarly articles but included all sort of conversation he had with inner circle of patron. This book portrays same as the book contains number of quotes by bureaucrats and public personalities associated with both the leaders.

The author's art of writing style and his scholarly training made his biography of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, *Half Lion*, so readable and a best-seller, and it is this that makes Jugalbandi also so readable. It will, presumably, also be a best-seller.

Vinay Sitapati's strength as a writer is that, on one hand he is journalist which make him a good writer that is a reason his book contains anecdotes, incidents and stories which further make the book an interesting read and on other hand his scholarly training as lawyer. The book very well highlights that fact that the writer knows the importance of research and has a knowledge of political science. The book entails how ideology and politics could make a balanced form of governance. Jugalbandi is one of brilliant piece for political readers as both protagonists have a legacy of leadership who contributed their life to party and national politics. Book rightly forecasts their commitment and principle-based vision for party and democracy.