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All about the legacy of Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Two years after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh had not received the recognition due to him for having donated land for Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), and promised to construct a university in the same city in his name, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 14 laid the foundation stone of the university.*

Details:

- Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh was a freedom fighter, revolutionary, writer, social reformer, and internationalist who entered Lok Sabha as an Independent candidate from Mathura in 1957, in an election in which Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh came fourth.
- Mahendra Pratap established a “Provisional Government of India” in Kabul in the middle of World War I in 1915 and, as the British government targeted him for his activities, based himself in Japan. In 1932, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- The Raja finally returned to India a year before Independence, and immediately began work with Mahatma Gandhi. In free India, he diligently pursued his ideal of panchayati raj.

The legacy of Mahendra Pratap Singh

- He was not a political figure. He was more of a reformer who promoted education. He gave his own residence to establish the first technical school of the country.
- He was well versed in eight different languages, he practised different religions, he founded the world federation, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize, he set up a Provisional Government of India in Afghanistan, but still, very few know about him
- Now that the government has decided to establish a university after him, Dadaji’s legacy will be known to people. They would like to know about him and his contributions.

Mahendra Pratap’s early life and travels

- Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh was born into the ruling Jat family of Mursan estate in Hathras in 1886. In 1907, the young Raja proceeded on a world tour with his wife, who was Sikh.
- On his return, the Raja gave up his own residence in Mathura to be converted into a technical school named Prem Mahavidyalaya in 1909. It is said to have been the country’s first polytechnic.

Connection with Aligarh Muslim University

- After studying at the Government School in Aligarh, Raja Mahendra Pratap went to the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, which later came to be called Aligarh Muslim University.
- Although he was unable to complete his graduation from the institution, Raja Mahendra Pratap’s name is counted among the prominent alumni of the university.
- As prominent notables of the area, Mahendra Pratap’s father and grandfather were close to the educationist and reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh Muslim University.
- Like many others in the region, the family contributed to Sir Syed’s efforts to set up the university. The family is said to have given land to AMU, some parts of which were donation, while other parts were granted on lease. Raja Mahendra Pratap too, gave land to various educational institutions.
- AMU has agreed to name its City School after Mahendra Pratap, he said. The land for the school had been given on lease by his family in 1929, Charat Pratap said.

Contribution to the Freedom Struggle



- Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh is said to have left his estate in 1914 to plunge into India's struggle for independence. \
- On December 1, 1915, he proclaimed the first Provisional Government of India outside India at the historic Bagh-e-Babur in Kabul. He declared himself president, and his fiery fellow revolutionary Maulana Barkatullah of Bhopal, prime minister, of the Provisional Government.
- Mahendra Pratap subsequently travelled to various countries to gather support for the revolutionaries fighting for independence in India. He went to Germany, Japan, and Russia, and met the political leaders of those countries. He is said to have met Vladimir Lenin in 1919, two years after the Bolshevik Revolution.

Nomination for the Nobel Prize for Peace

- In 1929, Mahendra Pratap launched the World Federation in Berlin. He was nominated for the 1932 Nobel Peace Prize by the Swedish doctor N A Nilsson, who was a member of the Commission of the Permanent International Peace Bureau.
- The nomination described the Raja as a "Hindu patriot", "editor of the World Federation", and "unofficial envoy of Afghanistan". The motivation for the nomination read:
- Pratap gave up his property for educational purposes, and he established a technical college at Brindaban. In 1913 he took part in Gandhi's campaign in South Africa.
- He travelled around the world to create awareness about the situation in Afghanistan and India. In 1925 he went on a mission to Tibet and met the Dalai Lama.
- He was primarily on an unofficial economic mission on behalf of Afghanistan, but he also wanted to expose the British brutalities in India. He called himself the servant of the powerless and weak.
- Charat Pratap Singh said it was "mainly due to his (Mahendra Pratap's) contribution to the education sector and launching the World Federation that later became the force behind the United Nations, that he was nominated for the Nobel Prize".

Return to the country and political career in India

- After almost 32 years of exile, Mahendra Pratap Singh finally returned to India in 1946.
- In 1957, Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh contested the Lok Sabha election from Mathura, and was elected Member of Parliament after he defeated Chaudhary Digambar Singh, the Jat leader of the Congress, and the young Vajpayee. Mahendra Pratap Singh won over 40 per cent of the votes in that election.

India and the world in the years after 9/11

(Source: [Indian Express](http://www.indianexpress.com))

Context: *As the 9/11 attacks sent shockwaves across the world, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote to United States President George W Bush on September 11, 2001: "We stand ready to strengthen our partnership in leading international efforts to ensure that terrorism never succeeds again."*

Details:

- On October 2, then Minister of State (External Affairs) Omar Abdullah — speaking after the October 1 terror attack outside the J&K state Assembly for which Jaish-e-Mohammed had claimed responsibility — called Pakistan "the fountainhead of terrorism in this region, in Afghanistan and in India".
- At a time when the democratic world has formed a broad and determined coalition against terrorism, India cannot accept such manifestations of hate and terror from across its borders. There is a limit to India's patience," Omar said.



- And, on October 11 — four days after the US launched Operation Enduring Freedom, its global war on terror — External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said: “There is now increased focus on the future structure in Afghanistan, so as to bring lasting peace and stability to this war-torn land, also to ensure that Afghanistan as both a training ground and a sanctuary for terrorists, also as the centre of narcotics trade, once again becomes a country, a society that does not radiate extremism and fundamentalism.”
- He articulated India’s vision for Afghanistan: “India has always supported an independent, broad-based, multi-ethnic government in Afghanistan. We are working with the international community towards this end.”
- These three statements essentially captured India’s position on the post-9/11 world, some of which holds true to this day. Some choppy waters had to be navigated along the way; this is how the strategic game unfolded from India’s point of view.

Ties with the United States

- One of the major shifts in the subcontinent in the new millennium was the strengthening of ties between India and the US.
- The relationship, which had suffered a setback with the nuclear tests in Pokhran, was on the mend after the Jaswant Singh-Strobe Talbott talks leading to President Bill Clinton’s visit in March 2000; it grew stronger in the years and decades that followed.
- The Bush years led to the Indo-US nuclear deal, which elevated ties to a higher strategic trajectory. The financial crisis hit in the final months of Bush’s term, and soon afterward, Pakistani terrorists attacked Mumbai on 26/11.
- New Delhi-Washington ties stayed the course under President Barack Obama who became the only US President to visit the country twice — he hosted both Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi in the White House during his term in office.
- Obama considered a drawdown in Afghanistan, but ended up increasing troop levels after discussions with his top officials. His major victory came with the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011.
- President Donald Trump saw the war on terror as a liability, and he decided to withdraw troops and officially started the peace process with the Taliban.
- Under President Joe Biden, Indo-US ties have continued at the same rhythm, especially on the Indo-Pacific strategy. But the chaotic American exit from Afghanistan has left New Delhi vulnerable at a time when it faces challenges on two of its borders.
- “India’s relationship with the US has been the most comprehensive association the country has had since independence...this is truly a relationship forged in crisis,” Carnegie India head Rudra Chaudhuri wrote in his book, *Forged in Crisis: India and the US since 1947*.

Dehyphenation with Pakistan

- 9/11 was a told-you-so moment for many Indian diplomats and officials. India had suffered terror from the 1980s onward — the Khalistan militancy and the LTTE had claimed the lives of two Prime Ministers and many other Indians — and the militancy in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s had shown the brutal face of Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism.
- While New Delhi’s concerns were always drowned out by Islamabad’s counter propaganda, 9/11 brought home to the west, especially the US, the threat of terrorism emanating from the South Asian region.
- 9/11 gave Washington the vocabulary to challenge Pakistan on the core concern of terrorism. The attacks forced a dramatic shift in US policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Coincidentally, ISI chief Lt Gen Mahmud Ahmed was in Washington DC at the time of the attacks, having been sent there by Gen Pervez Musharraf a couple of days earlier to persuade the Bush administration to engage with the Taliban.
- On September 12, Mahmud was summoned to the State Department for a meeting with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. According to the account of the meeting in Srinath Raghavan’s ‘The Most



Dangerous Place: A History of the United States in South Asia', Armitage told him: "Pakistan faces a stark choice... Either it is with us or it is not; this was a black-and-white choice with no grey." Pakistan had "no manoeuvring room", Armitage said.

- While Musharraf yielded grudgingly and half-heartedly, the Parliament attack in December 2001 gave ballast to the Indian argument.
- While terror attacks kept happening through the years that followed — from the blasts on Mumbai's trains to the markets of Delhi — what elevated counter-terrorism cooperation to the front and centre of the relationship with the US was the attacks of 26/11.
- "The Mumbai attacks lost Pakistan the Bush administration's sympathy for good", journalist-turned-diplomat Hussain Haqqani wrote in his book, 'Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the US and an epic history of misunderstanding'.
- "US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told then Pakistan NSA Mahmud Durrani that there were continued contacts between LeT and ISI. 'There is material support to LeT and the LeT has just recently killed six Americans'," Haqqani, then Pakistan's envoy to the US, wrote.
- ISI chief Shuja Pasha visited the US for a meeting with CIA director Michael Hayden. He admitted that the planners of the Mumbai attacks included some "retired Pakistani Army officers". According to Pasha, the attackers had ISI links, but this had not been an authorised ISI operation," Haqqani, said.
- The trust deficit widened after Bin Laden was found and killed in Abbottabad — it was a clear reminder that Pakistan was not playing straight with the Americans.
- President Donald Trump, who followed Obama, was angry at Pakistan's duplicity, which he expressed through the New Year's tweet in 2018. But he soon realised that Pakistan was key to the peace process in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan conundrum

- America's chaotic exit from Afghanistan last month underlined the limitations to the strategy of the war on terror.
- Washington, which had been extremely dependent on Pakistan for the outcomes in Afghanistan, came back to Rawalpindi in 2017-18 for the peace process with the Taliban. For New Delhi, the alarm bells started ringing as soon as Pakistan became the key broker.
- Over the last four years, a fait accompli has unfolded. New Delhi watched with concern as the US moved towards exiting Afghanistan, leaving behind chaos.
- In his book 'Descent Into Chaos', Ahmed Rashid, author of 'Taliban', summed up Pakistan's approach towards Afghanistan: "The Pakistan Army has to put to rest its notion of a centralised state based solely on defence against India and an expansionist, Islamist strategic military doctrine carried out at the expense of democracy.
- "Members of the Afghan elite need to appreciate the opportunity to be born again as a nation, a chance they were given by foreign intervention in 2001 and international aid since then...the international community has to do far better than it has done to defeat the Taliban."
- After the raid on bin Laden's compound, the Navy Seals collected computers, stacks of documents, and scores of hard drives from the house. One of the key takeaways from that stash was that Bin Laden was planning a bid to unite the disparate factions fighting the US-led coalition in Afghanistan into a grand alliance under his leadership.
- Writing on this in the book 'The 9/11 wars', journalist Jason Burke said this would have been the al-Qaeda leader's most ambitious attempt to appropriate a local struggle for his own global one.
- According to Burke, many felt that once the soldiers left, aid and attention would disappear too. He wrote about a conversation he had around 2014 with Fatima Karimi, a 29-year-old teacher. "It will be chaos. It will be civil war. Everything we have gained will go," she told him.
- Many diplomats have suggested that now is the time for New Delhi to stay engaged. There should be "minimal engagement", former Indian ambassador to Afghanistan Gautam Mukhopadhyaya said recently.



And the connections with the “freedom-loving” people of Afghanistan has to be maintained through liberal visa regime, he said.

Beijing waiting in the wings

- China’s rise over the last three decades has been acknowledged as perhaps the most consequential development of the 21st century.
- And with China’s rise — which has coincided with the US and the West’s dominance being challenged — India has found itself in a difficult spot.
- Beijing’s aggressive assertion of power has led to contestations with countries around the world, from the US to Australia, Japan to India. And one of the post 9/11 world’s biggest geopolitical challenges has been to work out a strategy to deal with China.
- New Delhi had seen this coming, and US administrations had ignored the warning signs until Obama started talking about the concept of “Pivot”. But it was not until Trump that the US clearly spelt out China as a strategic threat and a rival. This framing has continued under President Biden.
- With the exit of the US, Beijing’s stock in the region — especially in Pakistan-Afghanistan — has risen. This has been one of the unintended consequences for New Delhi and the world. And the Quad has been resurrected as part of the new vocabulary to deal with the Chinese challenge.