

H. N. Bahuguna I Knew

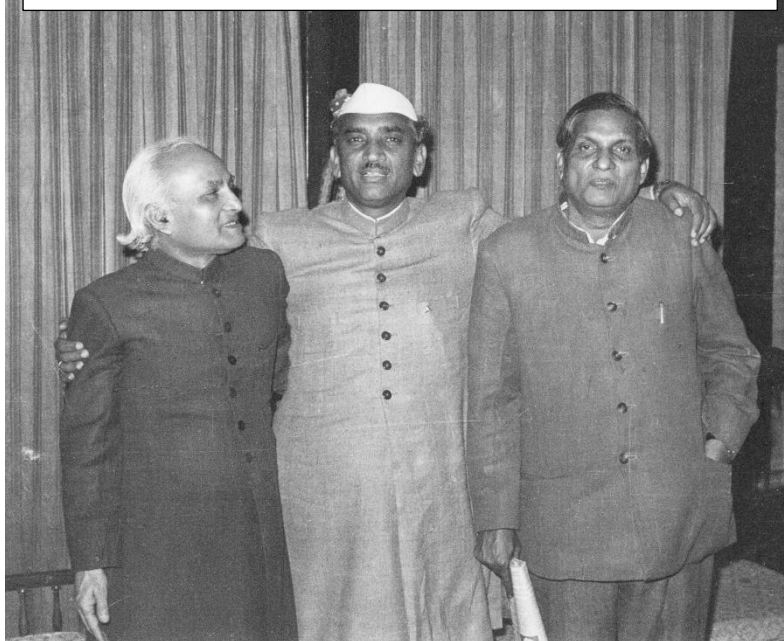
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[Shri. Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna](#) (H. N. Bhauguna) was an important political leader of India. He was a Union Minister and former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.). On 25 April will be his 102nd birth anniversary.

He started his career from Allahabad and would have become the Prime Minister of India had he not changed parties so often. Some of his critics called him Natwar Lal Bahuguna!

L-R: Ratan Lal Joshi, H.N. Bahuguna, Jagdish Rajvanshi



He and my father [Jagdish Rajvanshi](#) were close friends and Bahuguna ji was like an uncle to me. They started their career together as students in Allahabad University and went to jail together during the 1942 independence movement. Both were rising young leaders. My father told me that

[Narayan Dutt Tiwari](#) (N D Tiwari), who was Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh three times, used to go on a bicycle in Allahabad with a loudspeaker advertising that Shri. Jagdish Rajvanshi and H. N. Bahuguna were going to give street corner talks.

After coming out of the jail they always remained in touch and later on my father was very actively involved in helping him become the Chief Minister of U.P. in 1973. He did this by canvassing with some of the most influential people in Delhi (Indira Gandhi's advisors). Plus, his regular editorial articles in Daily Hindustan (Hindi Paper) regarding Bahuguna's dynamism also helped.

My father also told me that he helped raise money for H. N. Bahuguna's marriage. In those days Bahuguna was not well off so my father raised Rs. 5000/- for his marriage. In 1940s that was a particularly good amount of money.

I first met Shri. H. N. Bahuguna in 1972 when he had come to IIT Kanpur to give a talk or inaugurate something (I forget now). He was the state minister for communication in the Central Government. I met him briefly after his talk but am not sure whether he recognized me.

In 1973 Bahuguna was sent by Indira Gandhi to become the Chief Minister of UP. I feel she and her advisors wanted to get rid of him and felt that Bahuguna would easily be defeated in the upcoming 1974 UP Assembly elections. There was a general resentment against Cong (I) in the country (this was just before [Jayaprakash Narayan](#) movement) and so her advisors must have felt that UP assembly elections will be Bahuguna's Waterloo and a death blow to his political career.

My father told me that Bahuguna being a very dynamic leader got into the election campaign with a gusto. My father accompanied him many times in his helicopter for election rallies and meetings and said that the response to Bahuguna's speeches was really amazing.

Consequently, the election result was astounding and Bahuguna got a simple majority and became the Chief Minister in his own right. This was a major jolt for Mrs. Gandhi and her coterie. So, within a week of the election,

her henchman [Yashpal Kapoor](#) came to Lucknow and pitched his tent to start fomenting trouble among the elected Congress (I) MLAs.

This was politics at its lowest level. Every move of Mr. Bahuguna was questioned, and the UP Government was remotely controlled from the Prime Minister's Office in Delhi.

My father also told me that after the election the list of cabinet members was made in our Lal Bagh house and my father's name was in it. The cabinet list also had [Sunder Lal's](#) name. However, Mrs. Gandhi overruled most of them since they were all Bahuguna loyalists. It took Bahuguna ji almost a year before he could induct my father into his cabinet.

Before my father was admitted to Bahuguna's cabinet I had already left for U.S.A. in December 1974. So, the emergency and [Janata Party drama](#) all took place in my absence. After emergency, my father had joined Bahuguna's Janata Party and was for a short time spokesperson of the UP Janata Party.

In 1980 I came back from U.S.A. to India to see and explore where I would be working on my return the next year. I was interviewed by Lucknow newspaper National Herald and a [half page article on me was published in it](#). The focus of the article was that I was leaving a very lucrative career in U.S.A. to come to India. Bahuguna ji read the article with great interest and wanted to meet me. So, I met him for dinner at his house in Delhi and spent a pleasant 3-4 hours with him discussing about renewable energy and what can be done in India. I was impressed by his grasp of energy issues and gave him a list of good books on Solar energy to read.

In late 1981 after my permanent return to India from U.S.A., I met him many times and had many meals in his house in Delhi. He was a fascinating man to be with. He was full of energy, quick learner and very curious about issues and technological developments in the world.

We used to correspond regularly, and I have a thick file of our correspondence. He very graciously replied to all my letters. I would regularly keep him updated about our work in our institute NARI and met him anytime I went to Delhi. He raised many starred questions in the Parliament regarding our work.

The last time I met him was in Delhi in December 1986 in Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital where he was admitted for his heart ailment. He was cheerful and as usual we discussed many issues on energy and the books I had sent to him.

I also spoke to him 15 days before he died. My father had taken me to his party office in Lucknow in 1989 and the office had booked a call to the Cleveland hospital in U.S.A. where he was admitted for coronary bypass surgery. I just wished him speedy recovery - little knowing that within 15 days he would be no more.

Bahuguna ji had a zest for life and used to immensely enjoy non-vegetarian food. Many times, he came to our house in Lucknow for lunch or dinner. He ate butter chicken with gusto and would put the bones in my father's plate!

Later, on doctors' advice he gave up the non-vegetarian food and only ate boiled vegetables. Many times, he lamented to me "look what has come to pass when I have to eat this food and that too without any salt".

Bahuguna ji had sixth sense. Both my father and Bahuguna were wanted by British Police and a reward of Rs. 5000/- was announced for their capture. My father used to tell me that many times in Allahabad they would leave somebody's house immediately after Bahuguna complained that his nose was itching! Invariably the police descended on that house after they had fled.

Similarly, he told my father that one of his family astrologers had predicted long ago that if he crossed 70 years of age then he will become the prime minister of India. Unfortunately, he died one month before his 70th birthday.

Once during my meeting with him in Delhi he told me that his long political career has given him some insight into people's character. So, he predicted that I would do something wonderful with my life. I jokingly told him "Uncle you become the Prime Minister of India and I will certainly do something wonderful". Unfortunately, his soothsaying regarding me did not come to pass.

On his death in 1989 I lost a father figure and India lost a very dynamic and remarkable leader.

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