

# Lal Bahadur Shastri

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Lal Bahadur Shastri's contributions to public life were unique in that they were made in the closest proximity to the life of the common man in India. Though he is sometimes called a "Forgotten Prime minister", the legacy he has left behind due to his morality is worth cherishing.

**In news:** October 2nd marks the birth anniversary of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

**Placing it in syllabus** History – Important personalities

**Static dimensions**

- Role in pre independence period
- Role in post independent India
- Achievements as prime minister
- Indo-Pak war of 1965 and his role

## **Content:**

### **Role in pre-independence period:**

Lal Bahadur Shastri was born on October 2, 1904 in Mughalsarai, United Provinces (today's Uttar Pradesh). In 1915, a speech of Mahatma Gandhi changed the course of his life and decided to actively participate in India's freedom struggle.

He compromised even with his studies in order to participate actively in the freedom movement. In 1921, during the non-cooperation movement, he was arrested for demonstrating defiance against the prohibitory order. In 1928, he became an active and mature member of the Indian National Congress at the call of Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1930, he became the secretary of the local unit of the Congress party and later the president of the Allahabad

Congress Committee. He played a crucial role during Gandhi's 'Salt Satyagraha'. He led a door-to-door campaign, urging people not to pay land revenue and taxes to the British.

In 1937, he was elected to the UP Legislative Assembly. In 1940, he was sent to prison for one year, for offering individual Satyagraha support to the independence movement. He was imprisoned by the British Government in 1942 during the Quit-India struggle.

### **Role in post independent India:**

- After Independence, he became the Minister of police in Uttar Pradesh.
- His recommendations included the **directions for using "water-jets" instead of lathis to disperse the unruly mob.**
- Impressed with his efforts in reforming the state police department, Jawaharlal Nehru, invited Shastri to join the Union cabinet as Minister for Railways.
- He was widely known for his ethics and morality.
- In 1956, Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned from his post, following a train accident that killed around 150 passengers near Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu.
- He returned to the Cabinet in 1957, first as the Minister for Transport and Communications, and then as the Minister of Commerce and Industry.
- In 1961, he became the Minister for Home and **formed the "Committee on Prevention of Corruption" headed by K. Santhanam.**

### **Achievements as prime minister:**

After the death of Nehru, due to the role of then Congress Party president K. Kamaraj, Shastri became Prime minister on 9 June, 1964.

## ***Domestic policies:***

He **was a Nehruvian socialist**. He appointed Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. His tenure witnessed the Madras **anti-Hindi agitation of 1965**. To calm the situation, Shastri gave assurances that **English would continue to be used as the official language as long the non-Hindi speaking states wanted**.

## ***Economic policies:***

- He promoted the **White Revolution** – a national campaign to increase the production and supply of milk – by supporting the **Amul milk co-operative of Anand, Gujarat**.
- In an effort to replicate this model to other parts of the country for improving the socio-economic conditions of farmers, the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** was established at Anand in 1965.
- Due to chronic food shortages across the country, Shastri urged people to voluntarily give up one meal so that the food saved could be distributed to the affected populace.
- He went on air to appeal to his countrymen to skip a meal a week. In response to his appeal many parts of the country observed the **“Shastri Vrat”**.
- He motivated the country to maximize the cultivation of food grains by ploughing the lawn himself, at his official residence in New Delhi.
- Underlining the need to boost India’s food production, Shastri also **promoted the Green Revolution in India in 1965**.
- He selected C. Subramaniam, one of the most efficient statesmen, as minister of agriculture who in turn was assisted by excellent scientists like M. S. Swaminathan (Father of Indian Green revolution).
- The revolution led to an increase in food grain production, especially in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar

Pradesh.

- The **cereal imports fell from 10 million tonnes in 1966-1967 to 3 million tonnes by the early 1970s** and India became self-sufficient in food grains.
- His government passed the **National Agricultural Products Board Act** and was responsible for setting up the **Food Corporation of India** (FCI) under the Food Corporations Act 1964.

### ***Foreign policies:***

- Though he continued Nehru's policy of non-alignment but also built closer relations with the Soviet Union.
- In the aftermath of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 his government decided to expand the country's defence budget.
- In 1964, Shastri signed an **accord with Sri Lankan** Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike regarding the status of Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka known as the **Sirima-Shastri Pact or the Bandaranaike-Shastri Pact** (Under the terms of this agreement, 600,000 Indian Tamils were to be repatriated, while 375,000 were to be granted Sri Lankan citizenship).
- India's relationship with Burma had been strained after the 1962 military coup followed by the repatriation of many Indian families in 1964 by Burma. In December 1965, Shastri made an official visit with his family to Rangoon, Burma and re-established cordial relations with the country's military government of General Ne Win.

### **Indo-Pak war of 1965 and his role:**

- Laying claim to half the Kutch peninsula, the Pakistani army skirmishes with Indian forces in August 1965.
- During the 22-day war with Pakistan in 1965, On 19 October 1965, Shastri gave the seminal '**Jai Jawan Jai Kisan**' ("**Hail the soldier, Hail the farmer**") slogan at Urwa in Allahabad that became a national slogan.

- He gave the slogan to enthuse the soldiers to defend India and simultaneously cheered farmers to do their best to increase the production of food grains to reduce dependence on imports.
- India sent its forces across the Ceasefire Line (now Line of Control) and threatened Pakistan by crossing the International Border near Lahore as war broke out on a general scale.
- Indian forces captured the key post at Haji Pir in Kashmir, and brought the Pakistani city of Lahore under artillery and mortar fire.
- The Indo-Pak war ended on 23 September 1965 with a United Nations-mandated ceasefire.
- After the declaration of ceasefire with Pakistan in 1965, Shastri and then President of Pakistan Ayub Khan attended a summit in Tashkent (former USSR, now in modern Uzbekistan), organized by Alexei Kosygin.
- On 10 January 1966, Shastri and Ayub Khan signed the Tashkent Declaration.

### **Tashkent declaration:**

- The parties agreed to withdraw all armed forces to positions held before Aug. 5, 1965;
- To restore diplomatic relations;
- To discuss economic, refugee, and other questions.
- To repatriate their prisoners of war

The agreement was criticized in India because it did not contain a no-war pact or any renunciation of guerrilla aggression in Kashmir.

### **Mould your thought:**

1. Explain the economic and foreign policies of Lal Bahadur Shastri during his tenure as Indian Prime minister.

### ***Approach to the answer:***

- Introduction
- Write about his economic policies
- Write about his diplomatic relations with foreign countries
- His role during Indo-Pak war
- Conclusion