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J JAYALALITHAA, AMMA TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN TAMIL NADU, IS NO MORE

After over two months in hospital with multiple ailments and more than 24 hours since she suffered a cardiac arrest, doctors of the Apollo Hospitals declared that the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu could be not revived despite the best efforts of expert doctors. The end came at 11.30 pm Monday night, according to a bulletin issued by the hospital.

It could be said of J Jayalalithaa that she lived and reigned on her own terms regardless of whether she was in power or not, bending to no wind and resolutely executing the mandate people gave to her and the purpose she set for herself. As she said in select interviews, she was conditioned by a difficult childhood and developed fortitude to endure the rough and tumble of politics, more so being a woman.

In more than one sense, her passing is the end of an era. Having fought back each time from adversity, Jayalalithaa said she had grown stoic but had duties to fulfill to the people. As she said in a candid interview some years ago, if she had the freedom, she would become a ascetic and retire to the Himalayas.

Having chosen to take the AIADMK baton from her mentor, the late M G Ramachandran, it was no easy path for Jayalalithaa as she faced resistance from within the party and suffered humiliation from political rivals. Yet, notwithstanding the ups and downs in her long political career, spanning over three decades, Jayalalithaa displayed the tenacity and resolve to strengthen the party to such a level that the Opposition was sometimes virtually decimated in elections.

Both by admirers and critics alike, Jayalalithaa was seen as unequalled in the history of Tamil Nadu politics, often dictating the course of national politics without ever losing focus of her own state. If she made a lasting impression with her first address in the Rajya Sabha in the early 1980s, her subsequent foray into state politics saw her genuinely earn the popular adulation. Her charming personality apart, every stint of hers as the Chief Minister saw her coming up with schemes and programmes meant to benefit ordinary people whose love she truly earned. "Her connect with the people will be an inspiration," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

Minutes after the demise of Jayalalithaa was announced, reactions poured in from across the country. If some of her peers described her as an iconic personality, others said she was a woman of real courage and a powerful voice of the weak. But the one common reaction that stood out was that Jayalalithaa's death has left a huge void in Tamil Nadu politics.

ALONG WITH THIS ISSUE: AN 8-PAGE SPECIAL EDITION ON LIFE AND TIMES OF J JAYALALITHAA

I'm human like everyone else. I do experience emotions and I wouldn't be normal if I didn't experience feelings of anger and other emotions – Jayalalithaa

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