

Mani Shankar Aiyar was born on April 10, 1941, in Lahore, British India. He is a politician and a former career civil servant and diplomat, associated with the Indian National Congress Party.

His birthplace, Laxmi Mansions in Lahore, later became the residence of the renowned Urdu writer Saadat Hassan Manto. Aiyar received his education at Welham Boys' School, The Doon School, St. Stephen's College (Delhi), and Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge. While at Cambridge, he was an active member of the Marxist Society. Notably, Rajiv Gandhi was his junior both at Doon School and Cambridge.

Aiyar joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1963 and served as India's first Consul General in Karachi (1978-1982). From 1985 to 1989, he worked in Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Office (PMO). In 1989, he resigned from the IFS to pursue a career in politics and media.

He was elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) from Mayiladuthurai, Tamil Nadu, in 1991, 1999, and 2004 but faced defeats in 1996, 1998, 2009, and 2014. He served as a Cabinet Minister in the UPA Government and was India's first Minister of Panchayati Raj. Later, he became a Rajya Sabha Member.

Currently, Aiyar is a special invitee to the Congress Working Committee. He is also a well-known political columnist and the author of several books, including *Pakistan Papers* and *Remembering Rajiv*. Additionally, he has edited a four-volume work titled *Rajiv Gandhi's India*. His areas of interest include grassroots democracy, Indian foreign policy (especially with neighboring countries and West Asia), and nuclear disarmament.

In 1973, he married Suneet Vir Singh, a Sikh. They have three daughters and six grandchildren.

The book being discussed today is the second volume of his memoir.