



SPEAKS SERIES

PRIME POINT SRINIVASAN:

DIGEST OF VOICES AND VIEWS

PRIME POINT FOUNDATION

***“Let Parliamentarians heed the call
for Zero Disruption and work
together to ensure that the voice of
the people is heard loud and clear
in the heart of our democracy. It is
time to put aside their differences
and work towards a Parliament that
truly represents the will of the
people. For when Parliament
works, the nation works. Let us
make it so.”***

- Prime Point Srinivasan

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



10, Rajaji Marg
New Delhi-110011

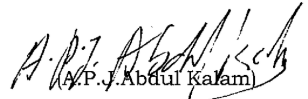
FOREWORD

I am very happy to know that the PreSense monthly ezine published by Prime Point Foundation is bringing out a book based on some of the unique articles, interviews and events published in its editions so far since from March 2006. The 100 issues of the publication have gone through an eventful journey, focusing on knowledge capture and important knowledge dissemination. I recollect my direct association with PreSense in July 2008, when I launched the cartoon character, 'Prince', created exclusively for PreSense.

I see PreSense continuing in its journey under the mentorship of Prime Point Srinivasan, maintaining its status as a must-read ezine, in the fast moving and evolving world of communication, knowledge and connectivity.

I congratulate the Editorial Team of PreSense for bringing out the 100th Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28th May 2015


(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)



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Publishing date Aug 2025

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ISBBN 978-93-91803-62-9

Pages 148

Price Free distribution

Publisher Prime Point Foundation, 14,
Vasan Street, T Nagar, Chennai
60005

Printer Adyar Students Xerox P Limited,
Triplicane, Chennai 600005

WWebsites www.primepointfoundation.org
www.corpezine.com
editor@corpezine.com

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Introduction

Dedication



*To **Lord Sri Krishna**, the Almighty, my eternal guide and strength. Like the flute that sings only through His touch, this book flows through His divine will. May it serve as an offering at His feet and illuminate minds with wisdom and purpose.*

🙏 **Jai Shri Krishna!** 🙏

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The PreSense100

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



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New Delhi-110011

FOREWORD

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28th May 2015

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

Authors Profile

K. Srinivasan, popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan, is a distinguished former banker turned communication pioneer and social entrepreneur. At 74, he continues to champion positive journalism and democratic values across India.



After taking voluntary retirement from banking, Srinivasan established his communication consultancy and founded Prime Point Foundation in 1999. Under his visionary leadership, the Foundation has been publishing *PreSense*, an acclaimed eMagazine dedicated to positive journalism, continuously since March 2006—a initiative inspired by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

Building on Dr. Kalam's guidance, Srinivasan launched the prestigious Sansad Ratna Awards in 2010 to recognize outstanding Indian Parliamentarians. Dr. Kalam himself inaugurated the first award ceremony, cementing its significance in Indian democratic discourse.

A prolific institution builder, Srinivasan has founded several impactful organizations: the Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI), Next Gen

Political Leaders (NGPL), and the Education Loan Task Force (ELTF)—all dedicated to empowering India's youth and strengthening democratic institutions.

As a respected digital journalist and author, Srinivasan has penned numerous books, which he distributes freely in digital format to ensure wide accessibility. His work has earned him recognition and respect from parliamentarians and professionals nationwide, establishing him as one of India's most influential voices in communication and civic engagement.

Prime Point Foundation: 25 Years of Empowering India's Youth



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Since 1999, Prime Point Foundation has been helping young Indians become better leaders and communicators. Founded by Shri K Srinivasan, a former banker turned digital journalist, this non-profit organisation has grown into one of India's most respected youth development platforms.

What We Do

The Foundation runs five key programmes that make a real difference:

eMagazine PreSense - Started in 2006 following Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's suggestion, this digital magazine promotes positive journalism. With 221 editions published till July 2025 and recognition from India Book of Records, it includes the popular cartoon character Prince, which Dr Kalam himself launched in 2008.

Sansad Ratna Awards - Since 2010, these prestigious awards honour India's best-performing MPs and Parliamentary Committees. Dr Kalam inaugurated the first ceremony, and over 15 years, 143 Awards have been presented. The India Book of Records acknowledges this as the largest parliamentary award programme run by civil society.

Next Gen Political Leaders - This programme trains young people who want to enter politics, connecting them with experienced Ministers and MPs through workshops and mentoring sessions.

Education Loan Task Force - Helping students and families understand education loans since 2010. The team has answered over 30,000 questions and helped resolve 5,000 serious complaints with banks.

Digital Journalists Association of India - Training journalists to adapt to the digital age, including AI through workshops and seminars with industry experts.

All programmes are run by passionate volunteers and entirely focus on helping young people to succeed. Prime Point Foundation proves that dedicated efforts can create lasting change in the Indian democracy and society.

Author's Note

This collection, *Prime Point Srinivasan: Digest of Voices and Views*, is a compendium of my reflections on some of the most pressing issues confronting India today. The articles cover a wide spectrum, from political developments and social challenges to reflections on cultural and religious dynamics, all with the intent to provoke thought, spark dialogue, and seek a more harmonious and progressive path forward.

At the heart of this work lies a deep concern for the state of our democratic institutions, societal values, and the governance structure. We explore moments of national pride, such as the culmination of the Ayodhya dispute and the Ram Temple consecration, which stand as symbols of faith, unity, and the long road to resolution. Yet, we also face grim realities, including the unabated violence against women and the disarray in our Parliament, which seem to chip away at the fabric of our democratic ideals.

A key theme that emerges throughout this book is the balance between tradition and modernity. As we celebrate achievements such as the Women's Reservation Act, we also grapple with the challenges of creating an environment that nurtures capable women leaders who can lead effectively in India's political future. Similarly, while progress in various social sectors has been made, questions around

accountability, transparency, and governance continue to dominate public discourse. These challenges are made all the more complex by the intersection of politics with religion, secularism, and vote-bank strategies.

We cannot ignore the necessity of reforming existing structures to address systemic flaws. Whether in our handling of Waqf properties, the role of the Lok Sabha, or the creation of policies that can balance the growth of modern India while respecting its cultural roots, this book advocates for thoughtful dialogue, informed actions, and reforms that benefit all citizens. My observations seek to highlight the need for a political and social landscape where decisions are not clouded by short-term gains or narrow ideologies but are instead focused on lasting progress and justice for all.

In closing, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Ramesh Sundaram, Joint Managing Editor of *PreSense*, and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor of *PreSense*. Their unwavering support, insightful feedback, and dedication to this project have been invaluable in shaping these reflections into a book. Their contribution has been instrumental in helping this collection see the light of day, and for that, I am sincerely thankful.

This book is not merely a record of past reflections, but a call to action for all of us to shape a future where India thrives in unity, understanding, and justice. May it inspire readers to think critically, engage in dialogue, and play their part in building a more inclusive and progressive nation.

Prime Point Srinivasan

Prime Point Srinivasan: Digest of Voices and Views

“Let Parliamentarians heed the call for Zero Disruption and work together to ensure that the voice of the people is heard loud and clear in the heart of our democracy. It is time to put aside their differences and work towards a Parliament that truly represents the will of the people.

For when Parliament works, the nation works. Let us make it so.”

- Prime Point Srinivasan

From Dispute to Harmony - Resurgence of Ayodhya

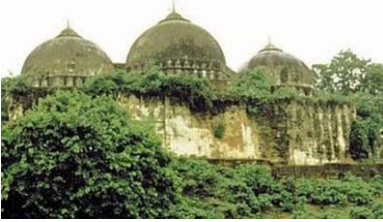
(Ayodhya's historic Ram temple consecration, ending a 500-year dispute, signifies India's communal harmony and economic potential.)



On January 22, 2024, the world witnessed the grand consecration ceremony and 'Pran Prathista' rituals of the Lord Sri Ram temple in Ayodhya, broadcasted through various television and digital channels. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was observing an 11-day Vritha, was present and offered the first prayers. The entire country commemorated this 'historic' event. The Ayodhya dispute, which had lasted nearly 500 years, ended on a happy note. Soon, Muslims will also have a grand mosque in Ayodhya, transforming this town into a symbol of communal harmony.

Brief History

Ayodhya is considered one of the six holy places in India for Hindus and is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram. Ayodhya is mentioned in the Valmiki Ramayana and various other Indian literatures of all languages, including Kamba Ramayanam. Lord Ram is an invisible spiritual force



that resonates within the minds of Hindus worldwide, similar to how Christians and Muslims each hold their spiritual beliefs in their hearts. It is reported that Babar, the first Emperor of the Mughal regime, visited Ayodhya in

1528 and constructed a mosque, demolishing the Ram temple that existed there. This temple is believed to be the birthplace, or Janmasthan, of Lord Ram by Hindus over centuries. This triggered the Hindus in that locality to restore the temple. It is reported that 76 wars took place between 1528 and 1850 when the British started ruling the country. It is also reported that during these wars, thousands of people died on both sides. Due to the continued struggle to recapture the Janmabhoomi temple, the mosque was not completed as per Islamic tradition. At the time when Babar demolished the temple to construct the mosque, one Pandit Shyamananda Maharaj was believed to be in charge of the temple, and he removed the Ram Lalla idol from the temple and kept it in a safer place. During this period, Namaz was not held regularly in the mosque. On the other hand, during Akbar's period, Hindus were allowed to use a portion of the area for their Bhajan.

Struggle during the British Period

In 1858, one year after the First War of Independence, Mahant Baba Ram Charan Das, a highly respected Hindu Sadhu, and Maulvi Amir Ali, another highly respected Muslim scholar, discussed and decided to end the war between Muslims and Hindus and bring communal harmony. They signed an agreement that since the mosque was not regularly used by the Muslims, both communities decided to end their fight and permit Hindus to use this site for their worship. In all the ancient records and the revenue records of the British period, this site was mentioned as 'Janmasthan'. Later it was known as 'Janmasthan – Babi Masjid'. Since Ram Janamasthan is a sacred place for Hindus, in 1858 both communities came forward to amicably settle the issue.

Unfortunately, the British Government was not interested in allowing them to settle the issue and wanted the 'divide and rule' policy by making both communities fight against each other. The British Government arrested Mahant Ram Charan Das and Maulvi Amir Ali under false pretexts and hanged them on a tamarind tree. The tree became a symbol of communal harmony, and both communities made this tree a monument and wanted to erect statues for their revered leaders. The British Government removed the tree. Even some of the civil suits filed in the Faizabad court at that time were not taken up.

Post-Independence Era

In 1949, suddenly a Ram Lalla idol was placed inside the mosque. This created a significant law and order problem in the city between Hindus and Muslims. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru advised Chief Minister GB Pant to remove the idol from the place. However, District Magistrate KK Nair refused to obey the orders. KK Nair was suspended for his refusal to obey orders. Despite this, the idol remained in the mosque, and the site became a point of contention between Hindus and Muslims. The government declared the area as disputed and locked the gates, allowing neither Hindus nor Muslims to enter. Only the priests were allowed to perform rituals.



Turning Points

In 1985, a Constitution bench of five judges ruled in the 'Shah Bano' case that Muslim women were entitled to maintenance from their husbands after divorce under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Although the Rajiv Gandhi Government initially welcomed the judgment in Parliament, it later diluted the judgment by limiting its maintenance through an Act under pressure from various Muslim leaders. This action was criticized as yielding to fundamentalists by amending the CrPC, a secular law, to

favour religion, while the Constitution was in favour of the Uniform Civil Code.



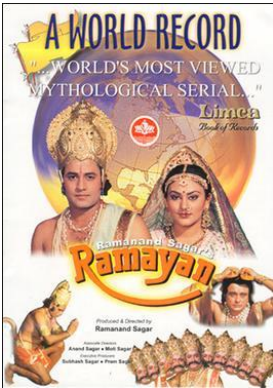
Umesh Chandra Pandey

Originally, the Ayodhya Ram Mandir movement was locally managed and confined to that district. However, after the Shah Bano case, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu organization, took up this issue. In January 1986, Umesh Chandra Pandey, a lawyer and journalist, filed a plea before the District Magistrate to unlock the Janmasthan – Babri Masjid site for worship. The site had been under lock since 1949. Under pressure from Hindu leaders, as he had already yielded to Muslim leaders, Rajiv Gandhi unlocked the site. The Janmasthan site was unlocked and opened to the public on February 1, 1986, through a Court order.

Meanwhile, the VHP launched a nationwide campaign in favour of building a large Ram temple on the same site. "Vaheem Banayenge" was the main slogan.

In 1987, a Ramayana serial was telecast every Sunday morning on Doordarshan. To date, that serial holds a record for the largest viewership. Every week, 650 million people used to watch that serial. At 9 am every Sunday, the whole country would come to a standstill, like our lockdown days. In many places, when Rama's character appeared on the

screen, people used to perform 'Mangala Aarthi' and offer



fruits and flowers. Readers can imagine the frenzy and check with the elders in the family on how that serial had an impact on the whole country.

The Ramayana serial also helped the VHP to create awareness about the Ram temple. Meanwhile, many suits were filed in the courts for restoring the site.

Rajiv Gandhi permits Shilanya



1989 Shilanya

The VHP wanted to conduct a 'Shilanya' (the foundation ceremony) for the new Rama Temple. The Rajiv Gandhi Government permitted the Shilanya in 1989 to be performed in the adjoining site of the disputed area. Rajiv

Gandhi deputed Buta Singh, then Home Minister, to participate in the Shilanya. Rajiv Gandhi started his Parliament election campaign from Ayodhya in 1989, promising 'Ram Rajya'. Seeing the influence of Ram among the electorate, all the political parties wanted to take advantage. The BJP passed a resolution in its National

Executive Meeting to involve itself in the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute.

During the 1989 elections, Rajiv Gandhi started appeasing both minorities and Hindus simultaneously without clarity. The Congress, which had more than 400 MPs in the 8th Lok Sabha, came down to 197 seats in the 1989 elections. The BJP improved its tally from 2 seats in the 8th Lok Sabha to 85 seats in the 9th Lok Sabha. The Ram temple issue was also one of the major vote catchers for the BJP.

Advani's Rath Yatra and Demolition of Babri Mosque



In 1989, VP Singh formed the Government with the support of the BJP and the left parties. In 1991, then BJP President LK Advani started his Rath

Yatra from the Somnath temple to Ayodhya to create awareness about the Ram temple at the disputed site. The Rath Yatra was stopped by Lalu Prasad Yadav, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, when it entered the State, and Advani was arrested. Narendra Modi, the present Prime Minister, was the coordinator of that Yatra. Earlier, the VP Singh Government introduced Mandal Commission reservations for backward classes. A section of the people opposed this decision, which led to clashes. Those days

were turbulent days with Mandal and Masjid clashes. Advani's arrest provoked more Hindus to enter Ayodhya in large numbers. Around 2 lakh people were reported to have entered Ayodhya. Advani's arrest led to the withdrawal of support by the BJP to the VP Singh Government.

The Legal Battle

The legal battle for the site began in earnest in 1950 when Gopal Singh Visharad filed a suit in the Faizabad court seeking permission for Hindus to offer prayers at the site. Over the years, several other suits were filed by different parties, both Hindu and Muslim, staking claim over the site. The legal battle continued for decades, with the Allahabad High Court finally pronouncing its verdict in 2010. The court ruled that the site should be divided into three parts, with one-third going to the Sunni Waqf Board, one-third to the Nirmohi Akhara, and one-third to the party representing 'Ram Lalla'

Supreme Court Verdict

None of the parties accepted the verdict, and all appealed to the Supreme Court of India. The Constitution bench, consisting of five judges chaired by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, including a Muslim judge, heard the case in detail. In 2019, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the mosque was built after destroying a Hindu temple, relying on the ASI survey and other evidence presented by the

Hindu group. The Court also observed that the Muslim side did not prove that regular Namaz was held in the Babri Mosque. However, they condemned the demolition of the Masjid by the Hindu group. Finally, the Court ordered that the disputed site be handed over to Ram Lalla, the deity. They instructed the Indian Government to create a Public Trust and hand over the site to them for the construction of the Ram temple. Simultaneously, they also ordered the Government to allot 5 acres to Muslim groups for the construction of a Mosque.

The Indian Government created a Trust and handed over the site. They also allotted 5 acres to the Sunni Waqf Board.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone in August 2020, and the Pran Prathishta was conducted on January 22, 2024, in the presence of the Prime Minister.

It is also reported that a grand mosque would be constructed shortly and inaugurated.

Political and Economic Implications

Before the 1980s, the Ram Temple movement was confined only to Ayodhya and the neighbouring districts. After the VHP and BJP took over this issue in the 1980s, it became a national movement. Ram is an invisible spiritual force behind the entire country. In North India, people used to greet 'Ram Ram', instead of 'Good morning'. In the name of 'secularism', many political parties started ridiculing the

movement and rejected the ASI findings. At one stage, during Dr Manmohan Singh's regime, the Government submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court saying that 'Ram was an imaginary character', against the strong belief of Hindus. In the process, they ended up displeasing the majority of the country and embarrassed even the minorities. The Supreme Court based its verdict relying on the evidence produced by ASI and on the 'faith' that the people had that the site was the Janmastan of Lord Ram. The stand of the Congress to appease Muslims and Hindus alternatively did not go well with the sentiments of the people. They got reduced from 400 plus seats to less than 50 in Lok Sabha. Even now, during Pran Prathishta, the Congress boycotted the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir, accusing the BJP was politicizing the Ram temple. Rajiv Gandhi first started his campaign from Ayodhya in 1989 promising 'Ram Rajya'. In a way, all the parties were politicizing this issue either in favour or against the Ram temple to suit their convenience. Many of the Congress leaders did not like this boycott decision, as they would be facing the public for elections soon. The Ram Mandir issue was also one of the main factors for the BJP's growth from 2 seats in the 8th Lok Sabha to 303 seats in the 17th Lok Sabha.

Various economic reports indicate that Ayodhya would attract nearly 10 crore people every year as tourists. When the Mosque gets inaugurated, the numbers will grow.

According to K T Jagannathan, a Senior Economics Journalist, this would boost the economy of the district and UP very well, benefiting all the communities. According to Professor K Prabhakar, Former Vice Chancellor and senior economics professor, the temple economy in India is more than 3 lakh crores in the GDP. Ayodhya is likely to generate immediately more than 25,000 employment opportunities in different segments. He also added that Ayodhya and UP would attract more than 300 billion dollars in investment.

Lessons to be Learnt

The British regime believed in a 'divide and rule' policy to stabilize their rule. Unfortunately, even after Independence, many of the political parties adopt the same 'divide and rule' policy in the name of protecting secularism and disrespecting the invisible sentiments of the people across the nation. The Indian Constitution ensures that all citizens are treated equally. Instead of triggering a 'divide' through false narratives, the political parties in India should focus on unity and communal harmony with the economic development agenda. Ridiculing and hurting the sentiments of the popular faith of the people will be always counterproductive. It is to be remembered that the people who opposed the Ram temple, created more awareness among the silent majority, than the people who supported it. They should keep in mind that our traditional mantra

"sarve janaha sukino bhavanthu" ("May all beings be happy") is always the tagline.

Conclusion

The Ayodhya dispute, which had been a source of contention for centuries, finally found its resolution. The peaceful resolution of the dispute and the subsequent construction of the Ram temple and the proposed mosque, stand as a testament to India's secular fabric and the spirit of mutual respect and harmony that characterizes its diverse society. As we move forward, it is hoped that Ayodhya will continue to symbolize unity in diversity, serving as a beacon of communal harmony for the rest of the country.

(Jan 2024 edition)

Unlocking the 17th Lok Sabha: Triumphs and Challenges

(Assessment of 17th Lok Sabha: mixed results, minimal sittings, legislative shortcomings, highlighting wins, and addressing challenges for future parliamentary efficiency.)



The 17th Lok Sabha functioned between June 2019 and February 2024 and has completed its full term. The Election Commission has announced the schedule for electing the 18th Lok Sabha. General elections will be held across the country in 7 phases during April and May 2024. The 18th Lok Sabha will be constituted in the first week of June 2024.

Despite the successful completion of the full term by the 17th Lok Sabha, there is a notable lack of discussion, both

among the public and in the media, regarding its performance and the contributions made by the elected Members. Analogous to how we review the performance of our children monthly to improve their education, it is essential to assess the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Lok Sabha upon completion of its term. Before casting our votes, it is imperative to scrutinize the performance of the completed Lok Sabha and its Members.

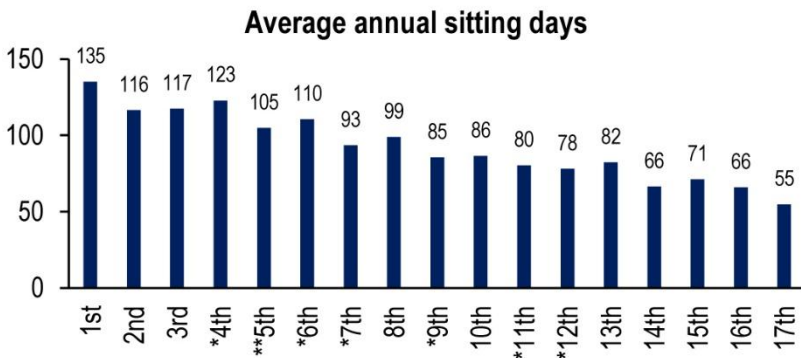
In this editorial, we will evaluate the performance of the Lok Sabha from the Government's perspective, as they are responsible for running the Parliament. We will also examine the role of the Opposition in effectively running the Parliament. Additionally, a separate article in this edition will review the performance of MPs based on factors such as State, gender, party affiliation, and age.

Role of Parliament

Though the role of Parliament is not explicitly defined in any law, conventionally, it encompasses four main functions: (1) passing legislation, (2) approving the finance bill, (3) supervising the executive, and (4) discussing and finding solutions to problems related to constituencies, States, and the nation. Members are equipped with tools such as debates, Private Members' Bills, and questions to fulfil these functions. Through effective participation and under the guidance of the Speaker, Parliament serves the people

effectively. As the largest democracy globally, the role of Parliament is paramount in ensuring smooth governance.

Sittings and Legislative Business



Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

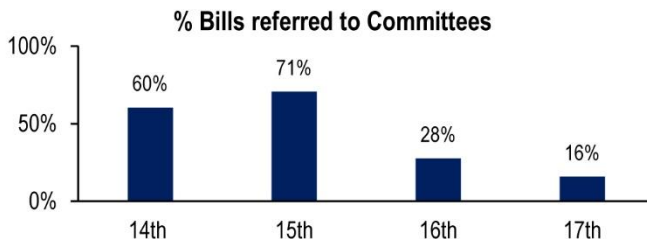
The 17th Lok Sabha functioned for 88% of its scheduled time, holding 274 sittings over five years. This Lok Sabha set a record for the "least number of sittings among the full-term Lok Sabhas" in the post-Independence era. Out of the 15 sessions held, 11 were adjourned earlier than scheduled, resulting in the cancellation of 40 scheduled sittings. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, 33 sittings were held. There is a significant gap of 57 sittings between the 16th and 17th Lok Sabhas. This decrease in sittings is reflected in the total participation of Members. Additionally, disruptions caused by opposition parties also contributed to the loss of time in Parliament, with 206

instances of MPs being suspended across both the Houses.

During the 17th Lok Sabha, 179 bills (excluding finance and appropriation bills) were passed. Of these, 58% were passed within two weeks of introduction, and 35% were passed with less than one hour of discussion. Remarkably, 80% of budgets were passed without any discussion, with the entire budget for 2023 being passed without debate. Several important bills, including new criminal laws, were passed in the absence of opposition members who were under suspension. In September 2023, a Special Session was held in the New Parliament House making the beginning of future Sessions.

Role of Committees

Less than 20% of Bills referred to Committees



Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

Parliamentary Committees play a vital role in the legislative process. Members from all parties thoroughly discuss subjects and reach consensus decisions. Bills are referred to Committees for examination and refinement. However, in

the 17th Lok Sabha, only 16% of bills were referred to Committees, compared to 60%, 71%, and 28% in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Lok Sabhas respectively. Examination by Committees and thorough discussions in Parliament are crucial to perfecting bills and withstanding scrutiny from the Supreme Court. The then Chief Justice of India, Justice N V Ramana, noted that when bills were passed without scrutiny and discussion, it strained the court.

Private Members Bills (PMB)

Private Members' Bills allow Members to introduce legislation of national interest without permission from their party leadership. During the 17th Lok Sabha, 729 PMBs were introduced, with only 2 being discussed. This is the highest number among all the Lok Sabhas, except the 16th Lok Sabha, where 1116 PMBs were introduced. Additionally, only 3 out of 11 Private Members Resolutions were discussed during this Lok Sabha. PMBs often receive less priority due to their discussion typically being scheduled for Friday evenings. It is suggested that the Business Advisory Committee of the 18th Lok Sabha should consider moving PMB discussions to weekdays.

Questions

A total of 101,999 questions were raised during the 17th Lok Sabha, with an average of 195 per Member. Starred Questions receive oral answers from Ministers, while

Unstarred Questions receive written replies. During the Question Hour, 60% of the scheduled time was used for oral responses, with 24% of listed questions being answered.

Election of Deputy Speaker

As per Article 93 of the Indian Constitution, the Deputy Speaker should be elected as early as possible. However, no Deputy Speaker was elected during the 17th Lok Sabha, making it the only Lok Sabha without one in the post-Independence era.

Conclusion

The 17th Lok Sabha, with its minimal sittings and lack of a Deputy Speaker, faced challenges in effectively conducting legislative business. Many significant Bills were passed without discussion, and only a fraction of the Bills were referred to Committees for scrutiny. Furthermore, disruptions by opposition parties added to the inefficiency. Both the Government and the opposition leaders must collaborate and strategize effectively to utilize Parliament's time for the nation's benefit.

Data courtesy: PRS Legislative Research, Delhi
(March 2024 edition)

A Decade of Modi's Rule: Achievements, Criticisms and Tasks Ahead

(Modi's likely third term is anticipated amidst BJP's achievements like economic growth, and infrastructural development, but criticised for polarization, lack of communication, and neglect of democratic institutions.)



Amidst great expectations, Narendra Modi was elected as the Prime Minister of India in 2014 when the BJP secured a vote share of 31% with 282 seats. In 2019, he was elected for a second term with an increased vote share of 37.3% and 303 seats. As the nation gears up for the 18th Lok Sabha elections, pollsters predict that Modi will return for a

third term. With no visible anti-incumbency mood against Modi, akin to what was seen in 2004, Modi would likely secure another term. The opposition parties in INDIA Alliance are unable to cobble together a unified force to counter Modi, and they fail to project any single leader as the Prime Minister candidate. This lack of cohesion adds strength to the Modi camp.

To write this Cover Story, PreSense conducted a quick online survey to understand the perceptions of people across India regarding Modi's achievements, failures, challenges, and tasks ahead if he is elected for a third term, etc. The Editorial team also spoke to many political leaders, media persons, and the general public to understand their perspectives. In this story, we refrain from quoting anybody but will present general views.

Achievements of the Modi Regime

Almost everybody, including opponents of Modi, admires the digital mode of payments, including payments to farmers and others through bank accounts and the use of QR codes even in small shops. The IMF has appreciated this new digital revolution in India, especially as advanced countries are still facing troubles.

Even the Communist leaders admit that there is economic growth, taking advantage of the global economic environment. When Modi took charge in 2014, India was

ranked 10th globally in terms of the economy, and now it has reached the 5th rank. He has promised to elevate it to the 3rd rank during his next term.

India's relationships with foreign countries, including Islamic nations, are appreciated by all. India has shown courage in countering comments by the US, interfering in India's internal matters.

The infrastructure development across the nation, the Women's Reservation Bill, Various Schemes to benefit the people and the New Education Policy are also considered great achievements.

Moreover, people generally perceive the abrogation of Article 370, the introduction of CAA pending since Independence, the stabilisation of GST, the abolition of Triple Talaq, and scientific achievements as important accomplishments of the Modi Government. Many people also perceive that since the Modi Government took over, the borders are relatively safe, portraying a strong government. The management of the COVID-19 pandemic period with minimal inconvenience and free ration, brave steps for vaccination, against criticism by opposition parties, is considered one of the top achievements.

The construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya and the renovation of the Varanasi temple, including the cleaning of the Ganga have strengthened the cultural fabric of this

nation. Generally, people perceive that the Modi Government gives importance to Indian culture and Nationalism.

Criticisms

Though the Government boasts of being the 5th largest economy in the world, there is a general perception that it is not helping the poor. They experience inflation, unemployment, price rises, etc. After the Modi Government came to power, concessions given to senior citizens like railway concessions and other benefits have been withdrawn. Even insurance facilities are not readily available to senior citizens. Senior citizens share their grievances about the reduction in bank interest and increased cost of living. Unfortunately, none of the Ministers or MPs seem to listen to their pleas.

When PreSense spoke to minority community members, they felt that the BJP was polarizing the country along communal lines, leading to sporadic attacks on minority communities. Political analysts believe that communal polarization occurs due to the demands of minority communities and institutions claiming exclusive privileges, quoting the Constitution, and the appeasement of minorities by opposition parties. Like opposition parties enjoying the patronage of minorities, the BJP tries to take advantage of this situation to get the support of the majority community. This issue can be resolved only through dialogues at the

local level, with both communities respecting each other's sentiments. "More appeasement, more polarization," said a senior political analyst.

A senior opposition leader said that in the past 10 years, the Modi Government did not respect democratic institutions. He cited examples of vacancies for Constitutional bodies like the Judiciary, Election Commission, Deputy Speaker, etc., remaining unfilled or delayed. An Opposition MP mentioned how Bills were passed in Parliament without reference to Standing Committees or discussion in the House. He also cited the example of the Farm Law Bill, enacted hurriedly and withdrawn after a protest.

Even among the BJP party workers, there is a feeling that MPs and Ministers are unreachable and out of touch with the ground reality, except for a few leaders. Party workers silently admit that some leaders and their private secretaries behave arrogantly and do not help when approached with problems. This is also reflected in the recent list of BJP candidates released by the party that shows the dropping of over 100 sitting MPs, including Ministers.

Though the Modi Government has implemented many schemes to benefit large sections of people, they have not been communicated effectively to reach the people. In South India, Hindi names are used instead of local

languages, distancing the party from the people. PreSense has been pointing out for the past 10 years that the BJP Government or party fails to communicate when needed and communicates wrongly when not needed. The arrogant and loose talks by MPs and Ministers are not favoured by the people.

Generally, people perceive BJP as the political wing of RSS, a disciplined social organization, that respects ethics and values. Unfortunately, in the recent past, many leaders accused by the BJP of corruption have been inducted as members or alliance partners. Even in casual conversation, this phenomenon is referred to as the 'washing machine' to purify persons accused by the BJP of corruption. At the same time, many ED, CBI, NIA, and IT raids are happening to opposition leaders, including arrests. A common citizen doubts the government's intentions, though the reasons may be genuine. "Doing the right actions at the wrong time and wrong actions at the right time are disastrous", said a Professor at a University. Although raids are happening, no known corrupt persons have been punished by the Government.

The entire political campaign is run by Modi and he shoulders all the responsibility. In Karnataka, we have seen how the party workers were lethargic and with the overconfidence that Modi would get votes, lost the Government. BJP has not developed or allowed any leader

to mobilise votes like Modi. Many party workers fear that it may affect the party in the future.

Tasks Ahead

PreSense has been advocating Electoral Reforms for the past 10 years, highlighting the need for substantial funding to contest elections. This discourages educated and enthusiastic youngsters from contesting elections due to financial constraints. Nirmala Seetharaman, the Finance Minister, openly stated that she could not contest elections due to lack of funds. The Finance Minister's statement proves that an ordinary person may not be able to contest elections. As T S Krishnamurthy, former Chief Election Commissioner suggests, only Public funding should be considered. Sadly none of the political parties have included Electoral Reforms in their Manifesto. The new Government should start debating the Electoral Reforms to enable candidates with poor backgrounds to contest elections.

Though the Government attempted judicial reforms, it failed to achieve them in the past. After the 18th Lok Sabha is constituted, the Government and the Judiciary should collaborate to finalize judicial reforms.

Climate change which has become a global threat and environmental protection are also important issues to be addressed by the new Government.

There are media reports that some of our Indian political leaders are in clandestine relationships with foreign countries and agencies to destabilise the sovereignty of our nation. The Government should be more vigilant about this and take suitable action.

Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) are the backbone of a developing nation like India. During the Vajpayee regime, more focus was given to small industries, which generated a lot of employment opportunities. Industry leaders say that a large number of small and medium industries have been shut down due to Demonetisation, COVID16 and GST. With lots of criticism about increasing unemployment, the new Government should work on urgent priority to strengthen the MSME sector.

PreSense has been pointing out for the past 10 years that the Modi Government has not given importance to Education Loans to deserving students. In the past ten years, education loan disbursements have come down drastically. Education loans are the investments for the future. The new Government should review the Education loan segment and increase its share with a reduction in interest rate.

The Government and political parties should conduct workshops and seminars for newly elected MPs on effective participation in the House. MPs and Ministers should realize that they represent the people and should deal with them with humility, not arrogance.

There are many misconceptions about the Uniform Civil Code, Citizenship Amendment Act, etc. among minorities. The Government should effectively communicate with the people to counter the wrong narratives set by vested interests.

Opposition parties should effectively utilise Parliament time to discuss and debate problems concerning the people to find solutions. Engaging in disruptions sends the wrong signal to the younger generation.

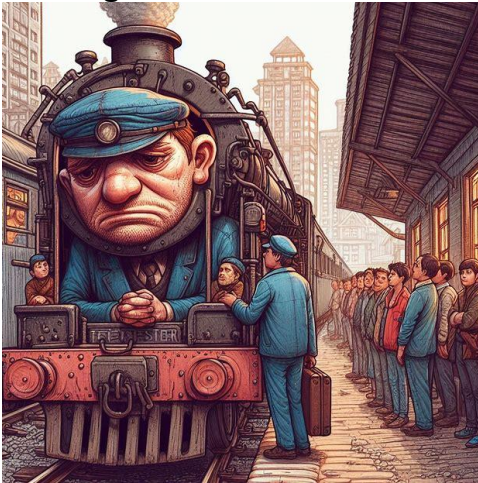
Ruling and opposition parties should come together and serve the nation with mutual understanding. Only then we can feel proud of being the largest successful democracy in the world.

(March 2024 edition)

Behind the Engine: The Loco Pilots' Desperate Battle for Dignity and Onboard Toilets

(Indian Loco Pilots, responsible for the lives of 2000+ passengers in each train, despite being crucial for Indian Railways' operations and safety, face health issues due to long hours, lack of toilets, and rest.)

Unsung Heroes



Train journeys, with their massive engines and the thrill of travel, have always fascinated people of all ages. However, few are aware of the challenges faced by the engine drivers, or Loco Pilots, who ensure our safe travel,

often at the expense of their health. It may come as a surprise to many that these Loco Pilots lack even basic amenities, such as facilities to answer nature's call while on duty. This forces them to suppress their needs for hours, leading to various health issues. The struggles faced by female Loco Pilots, especially during their menstrual cycles, are indescribable. Regrettably, the grievances of these

unsung heroes and heroines often fall on deaf ears of the Railway Administration.

Indian Railways at a Glance

Indian Railways is one of the largest railway networks in the world, with a route length of over 68,426 km. It operates about 22,593 trains daily, which includes 13,452 passenger trains and 9,141 goods trains. These trains cover around 7,325 stations in the country. The Indian Railways carries more than 24 million passengers daily and transports 3 million metric tonnes of goods. They maintain a fleet of over 14,800 locomotives, which includes both electric and diesel locomotives.

The railway network is managed by more than 1.2 million employees, making it the biggest employer in our nation. This mind-boggling operation of the Railways depends on nearly 96,000 Loco Pilots (Engine drivers), who remain as unsung heroes, braving all challenges and hardships.

Long Working Hours, Lack of Toilet Facilities

For writing this editorial, PreSense spoke to many current and retired Loco Pilots, including women Loco Pilots and Trade Union Leaders. Though we get excited over the gigantic engines and coaches, the personal lives of Loco Pilots are highly challenging. The Ministers and the Board do not give importance to their grievances, which borders on human rights violations.

Though as per the norms, their working hours are limited to 10 hours, they are often forced to work up to 14 or 16 hours without rest, citing staff shortages. Nowadays, the Indian Railways have introduced a large number of Express and Superfast trains like Vande Bharat, Shatabdi, Tejas, etc. They have to run at a speed of 130 Km per hour in a majority of sections. That means on average, the Engine is crossing one signal post (kept at every Km) every 28 or 29 seconds. The Loco Pilots have to be alert always during their duty time watching the signal. Crossing the danger signal may lead to an accident at that speed. Loco Pilots are issued notices when they cross the red signal, attracting punishment.

Besides, these Loco Pilots, including women pilots, have no washroom (toilet) facility in their engine cabin. They are unable to attend nature's call when the train is running continuously at high speed for long hours.

"The Loco Pilots should not be given night duties for more than two consecutive days. Unfortunately, due to shortage of pilots, they are asked to run for four or five consecutive nights. They do not get adequate rest. They are away from home on duty for several days. This leads to various health issues like varicose veins, kidney problems, etc.," says R. Elangovan, Former Vice President of Dakshin Railway Employees Union (DREU) and presently, the President of Dakshin Railway Pensioners Union. He also cited the

example of a Loco Pilot, who had a 22 mm kidney stone removed through surgery. The Doctors informed the patient that holding the urine for such a long time without discharge may create more kidney problems.

Generally, all employees avail a weekly holiday or rest. But Loco Pilots in Indian Railways have only 'Periodical Rests' once in 7 to 10 days. According to Elangovan, they can avail 30 hours of rest for 4 times or 22 hours of rest for 5 times in a month to stay with their family. This is the only time they are with the family. Elangovan adds, "While Western countries give 36 hours of work per week for the Loco Pilots, Indian Railways extract a minimum of 54 hours of work per week, leading to physical and mental strain and health issues. This inadequate sleep gets accumulated, resulting in 'sleep debt' and 'microsleep' (dosing for a few seconds) causing more health and safety issues."

In 1973, there was a nationwide strike by loco-running staff under the banner of All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) demanding 8 hours of duty. On August 14, 1973, the then Railway Minister announced on the floor of Parliament that Members of Loco Running Staff would not be required to work for more than 10 hours at a stretch from 'Sign On to Sign Off'. Even after the completion of the 50th anniversary of the announcement, in 2024, the agreement remains dishonoured. Even the present rule of

11/12 hours is not implemented and in practice, Loco Pilots are being forced to work more than 14 hours at a stretch.

Way back in Sep 2004, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways chaired by Basudev Acharya MP, recommended that more than 8 hours of duty at a stretch should not be extracted from the Loco Running Staff. Even after 20 years, no action has been taken by the successive Governments.

A High Power Committee set up in 2013 by the Indian Railways recommended that the Running Staff should be given a periodical rest of 16 hours + 24 hours (Calendar day) i.e. 40 hours 4 times in a month. Unfortunately, the Railway Board has not issued any circular to date to implement this recommendation.

Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD)

Sometimes loco pilots jump the 'danger signal' due to physical and mental strain and fatigue. This is known as SPAD (Signal Passing at Danger). Accidents happen due to this SPAD. The Task Force set up in 2017 found that the majority of such SPAD incidents in the Railways happened after 'home rest' at the residence of the loco pilot. "This is because quality rest is missing during such long home station rest as the loco pilot is preoccupied with attending to personal and family matters," the Task Force observed. Elangovan says that only because of the refusal of eligible

leave, these loco pilots are forced to use 'home rest' periods for their domestic work.

Another important issue is the refusal of eligible leave to loco pilots, citing shortage of manpower. According to K. Parthasarathy, Joint General Secretary, All India Loco Running Staff Association, Southern Zone, as against the sanctioned strength of 1,28,793 Loco Pilots and Assistant Loco Pilots, there is a vacancy of 16,373 as of the end of December 2023, amounting to a staggering 13% vacancy.

Acceptance by Authorities

The Chairman of the Railway Board, deposing before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways in December 2016, which examined the issues of railway safety and security, stated there were 17,016 vacancies for loco pilots and Assistant Loco Pilots. It may be noted that the Indian Railways continues to maintain the same level of vacancies even after 7 years.

"Generally, they should maintain around 30% of the strength for leave reserve and change of duties. Indian Railways never maintains the leave reserve. Instead, they refuse 'leave' to the pilots and extend their working hours, without realising that it has safety implications as well as human rights violations. The Chairman of the Railway Board himself has admitted before the Parliamentary Committee that with these vacancies, they were not

sanctioning the leave to the extent that people would have desired.” Elangovan added.

Railway Accident Enquiry Commission headed by Justice Venkatachalaiah -1995 and Railway Safety Review Committee headed by Justice H.R. Khanna -1998 have recommended a comfortable cab seat, ergonomic design of Loco cabin and better working conditions for Loco Pilots.

Moreover, Railway Board Circular No RBE 04/2004 admits the hardships of the Loco Pilots. “The element of stress combined with uncertain hours of work entailed in the performance of running duties over a long period tend to have a deleterious psychosomatic effect on their health. There is slowing down reflexes with the passage of time making them vulnerable to operational lapses.”

The High Power Committee set up in 2013 observed, “The noise level inside the cab is also as high as 88.4 decibels as against the limit of 90 decibels laid down by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Regulations which says that if anyone is exposed to this noise level for more than 08 hours per day, there is a risk of hearing loss for him. The instruments, operating levers and other equipment inside the cab are also not ergonomically designed. All these features aggravate the stress of working and enhance the fatigue levels.”

Since the Loco Pilots are working in high-stress conditions, many of them are getting medically de-categorised before the superannuation age. It means as per railway medical standards Loco Pilots should fit in the A-1 category which is the highest medical standard. “During the periodical mandatory medical examination, many of them get de-categorised to B1, B2 or C1 and they are moved to those jobs that can fit in that category. This is also the main reason for the shortage of pilots. The de-categorisation happens in large numbers due to poor working conditions of the Loco Pilots,” says Parthasarathy.

Parthasarathy adds that recently the Railway Ministry replied to an RTI activist that they have built 120 toilets in the new locomotives. He also adds that he has not seen any one of them running.

“While presenting the Railway Budget in 2016, then Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu openly admitted in the Parliament about the plight of Loco Pilots and assured that toilet facilities would be provided in engines. To date, I have not seen any new design for engines with a toilet or any budget allocation. “ Elangovan adds.

One more new committee – Delaying Justice

Though there were agreements, announcements and several Committee Reports in the past that identified the problems of Loco Pilots and advised the Railway Board to

implement solutions, the Ministry of Labour has set up another High Power Committee on April 18, 2024 (when we are writing this article), to implement ILO Convention C001 Article 8 for providing time intervals for food and for attending calls of nature. They have given one year time for this High Power Committee to submit its report. Ironically, this Committee was set up after a delay of four years after a petition raising industrial dispute by trade unions in 2020. The decision that could have been made within a week, is now allowed to drag on for years, at the cost of the safety of the passengers. Strangely, if a Private company had not provided a 'time interval for food and for attending calls of nature', to their employees, the owner would have been prosecuted and jailed.

"When I was in the Rajya Sabha, I discussed the hardships of loco pilots with Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu and also spoke in the Parliament. These bureaucrats, sitting in comfortable air-conditioned rooms with attached toilets, taking food in time and enjoying the royal saloon facilities, continuing from the British days, do not understand the difficulties of the engine drivers running for long working hours without toilet facilities and timely food, in a bad working condition. They will only realise when they travel in the engine continuously for 3 to 4 hours. The Railway Authorities should realise that they are playing with the safety of lakhs of passengers travelling in train daily, by not improving the working conditions of loco pilots," says T K

Rangarajan, a former Rajya Sabha MP for 12 years, with great pain and sorrow.

Possible Solutions

As we are writing this Editorial, the Ministry of Railways has issued a circular on March 21, 2024, to explore the possibilities of providing waterless urinals in Electric Locomotives. Though it is a positive step with a 'ray of hope', its implementation is to be watched.

**Decades of Delay:
Unfulfilled Recommendations for Loco Pilots' Working Conditions**

Year	Recommendations
1973	Railway Minister assures 10 hour of duty to Loco Pilots in the Parliament
1995	Justice Venkatachalaiah recommends comfortable seat and working conditions
1998	Justice H R Khanna recommends improvement of working conditions
2004	Parliamentary Committee on Railways recommends 8 hours duty to Loco Pilots
2004	A Railway Circular admits the hardships of Loco Pilots, leading to health issues.
2013	High Power Committee recommends 40 hours of rest 4 times in a month
2013	High Power Committee observes high decibel noise level in the cabin causes health issues and suggests a suitable design for equipments to reduce the noise level
2016	Railway Board Chairman admits before the Parliamentary Committee on Railways about the huge vacancy of Loco Pilots and refusal of leave to Loco Pilots due to the vacancies
2016	Railway Minister during his Budget speech assures to provide toilet facilities to Loco Pilots
2017	Task Force observes that SPAD occurs in large numbers after the 'Home Rest' of the Loco Pilots, who utilise the rest time for family duties
2024	One more High Power Committee is formed to recommend time interval to Loco Pilots for food and for attending calls of nature. One year time granted to High Power Committee to submit the report.

The main grievances of the Loco Pilots are (1) lack of toilet facilities during running time leading to health issues, (2) long working hours beyond the stipulated time, (3) lack of sufficient rest leading to fatigue, sleep debt and microsleep (4) high noise level in the Cabin, (5) huge accumulated vacancies for years without recruitment and (6) refusal of leave facilities quoting shortage leading to denial of

opportunities to attend to domestic responsibilities and commitments, etc.

The working conditions of the loco pilots have to be improved without violating human rights. The All India Loco Running Staff Association has been demanding for a long time to provide a toilet facility at the important stations at the designated engine stops. This would enable the loco pilots to use the toilet quickly while the passengers are boarding, temporarily resolving the issue.

Addressing the concerns of our loco pilots is not just a matter of employee satisfaction, but a critical factor in ensuring the safety of the countless passengers who entrust their lives to the Indian Railways each day. The safety of every passenger is intrinsically tied to the well-being of our loco pilots.

The persistent vacancies in the loco pilot cadre, left unfilled by the Indian Railways, result in our pilots being stretched beyond their limits, often at the expense of their health both physically and mentally. This is not just an issue of workforce management, but a ticking time bomb that could compromise the safety of our passengers.

The Indian Railways, as one of the largest employers in the world, should set an example by prioritising the comfort, rest, and well-being of its loco pilots, instead of appointing committee after committee to delay justice. These are the

individuals who bear the immense responsibility of safely transporting more than 2000 passengers at a time. It's high time we recognise their invaluable silent contribution and treat their grievances with the urgency and importance they deserve.

PreSense hopes that Narendra Modi, when he assumes office as Prime Minister for the third time, will address this issue in the first 100 days.

(April 2024 edition)

Modi 3.0: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

(PreSense congratulates the Election Commission and BJP on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, emphasising on high voter turnout, BJP's challenges, and democracy's prospects.)



Three Cheers to the Indian Election Commission

PreSense congratulates the Indian Election Commission for successfully conducting the 2024 General Elections to elect 543 Members of the Lok Sabha. The Election Commission deployed 1.8 million Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) across 1.1 million polling booths

nationwide. Around 11 million officials, including security personnel, were involved in the election process. The elections were held in seven phases across the country, with 670 million voters participating, resulting in a turnout average of 62%.

The counting of votes was conducted transparently on June 4, 2024, with live telecasts of the results. Within four hours, the nation saw a clear trend emerge, and the final results were declared by the end of the day. India takes great pride in its dynamic democracy, which saw the largest number of voters turning out in person to elect their Parliament.

BJP's Hat-Trick Victory

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made history as the first non-Congress party to form the government at the Centre for the third consecutive time since Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure. The BJP alone secured 240 seats, while the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) headed by the BJP secured 293 seats, 21 seats above the majority mark of 272. In 2019, the BJP had secured 303 seats, but this time it fell short by 63 seats.

Analysing the BJP's Performance

In 2019, the BJP secured 22.9 crore votes with a vote share of 37.3%. In 2024, despite a slight drop in vote share to 36.6%, the BJP polled 23.6 crore votes, which is higher than in 2019. However, the number of seats dropped from

303 in 2019 to 240 in 2024. The Indian National Congress (INC) increased its vote count from 11.9 crore in 2019 to 13.7 crore in 2024, resulting in a vote share increase from 19.5% to 21.2%. Consequently, the INC increased its seats from 52 to 99 in 2024. The main reason may be that the entire opposition which was fragmented in LS 2019 elections unified to form a single alliance now. All the opposition votes were transferred to this unitary alliance. This caused an increase in its vote share.

Unemployment and rising prices were significant issues affecting the common man, which Prime Minister Modi did not address adequately in his campaign. Opposition parties highlighted these issues prominently. Additionally, Modi's communal rhetoric



against Muslims and the hype around the Ram Mandir failed to garner the expected support. The narrative of fear created among minorities, particularly Muslims, led to a consolidated vote against the BJP.

Conversely, Hindu votes did not consolidate as expected. A classic example is the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency where the Ayodhya Ram Mandir is situated. The BJP thought the Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya would consolidate Hindu votes. But it did not happen. The

Samajwadi Party candidate defeated the BJP candidate comfortably in Faizabad.

The extreme heatwave in north India led to low voter turnout. This also worked against BJP.

The entire burden of the campaign rested on the 74 year old Prime Minister Modi with no alternate leaders stepping up. Many competent leaders within the party were not utilized effectively for the campaign.

Over the past decade, many BJP Ministers and their secretaries were reported to be unapproachable and unhelpful, even to party workers and the general public. Many displayed arrogance, refusing to meet visitors or delaying meetings. This attitude frustrated dedicated BJP workers and the general public alike.

During this election, it was reported that Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the parent body of the BJP, did not actively take part in the campaign. RSS has been an invisible strength to BJP in all elections. BJP President Nadda also openly declared that BJP did not require the support of RSS and they had enough strength to manage the elections. These type of arrogant speeches of senior leaders distanced the committed cadre. It may be noted that in the post emergency election, Indira Gandhi was defeated only because of the RSS. Even in 2014, Modi was made Prime Minister only with the sustained support of

RSS. The absence of RSS in the campaign, infighting within BJP, ego among the leaders coupled with arrogance and apparent over confidence have cost them heavily.

BJP should appoint a high-power committee to study in detail the omissions and commissions they made, which lead to this unhappy situation. However, BJP should be happy that people have given them mandate to rule for third time, albeit with the support of the alliance partners. This works as checks and balances for the governance.

Challenges Ahead for the BJP

With the BJP securing 32 seats lower than the majority mark of 272, forming a government will require the support of pre-poll allies like TDP, JDU, JDS, and others. At the time of writing this editorial, the NDA has accepted Narendra Modi as the Prime Ministerial candidate and will be claiming to form the government.

Narendra Modi has previously managed the Gujarat Government and the Central Government with an independent majority, allowing him to make decisions independently. This time, he will face the challenges of handling alliance partners and their demands, similar to what Vajpayee experienced in 1998. Modi will find it difficult to implement all his promises independently and without consulting partners. Sensitive bills, like the Uniform Civil Code, will need to be discussed with partners before being

introduced in Parliament. Modi will likely need to draw up a 'Common Minimum Programme' in consultation with alliance partners. Both Modi and Amit Shah have to adapt their functioning and body language to suit the new political environment.

PreSense has consistently highlighted the need for an effective opposition in a democracy. With the INDIA alliance securing 233 seats, they can function effectively in the House.

During Vajpayee regime, when it faced a similar situation with its coalition partners, George Fernandes, a senior leader of the alliance party and acceptable to all the partners, was the convenor. He managed all the crisis and disputes within partners, through dialogue. Now BJP should identify another 'George Fernandes', who can handle alliance partners with comfort. This will ensure the smooth governance of the country.

Strengthening Democracy

One of our main concerns in the 17th Lok Sabha was the lack of discussion on bills and the Budget. Bills were not referred to Standing Committees for scrutiny. Another major concern was not filling up the constitutional positions like Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, Members of the Election Commission, Governors, Members of various Statutory and Constitutional bodies, etc. in time. Either they were not

filled up or filled up after undue delay. PreSense is confident that with a larger opposition presence in the 18th Lok Sabha, the new Lok Sabha will effectively discharge its duties, thereby strengthening Indian democracy.

PreSense once again congratulates Modi and his new team. We are confident that they will serve the nation with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

(May 2024 edition)

Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of India's 18th Lok Sabha

(The 18th Lok Sabha, featuring a BJP-led majority and a strong opposition, presents a dynamic mix of challenges and opportunities for governance and reform.)



The 18th Lok Sabha has now been constituted, with nearly 900 million people participating in the electoral process.

India proudly holds the title of the world's largest democracy with a mature electoral system. PreSense congratulates the Election Commission and the newly elected Members of Parliament of this 18th Lok Sabha.

PreSense is also proud that 16 Sansad Ratna Awardees who contested have returned to the Lok Sabha, with three becoming Ministers in the Modi Cabinet. Pro-Term Speaker Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, a recipient of the Sansad Ratna Award for the 16th and 17th Lok Sabhas, administered oath of office to all MPs. As we write this editorial, the Hon'ble President has addressed the joint session of both Houses, setting the stage for proceedings. This distinctive Lok Sabha features a majority ruling alliance alongside a strong

opposition, which places added responsibilities on both sides. The mix of opportunities and challenges they face will undoubtedly make this 18th Lok Sabha dynamic.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Ruling Alliance

Led by Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies have secured 294 seats, just 22 seats above the halfway mark of 272. This time, the BJP won only 240 seats, falling 32 seats short of a majority on its own, but managed to form the government with support from its allies. Several sitting Ministers were also defeated; even Narendra Modi won by a reduced margin. Various factors contributed to these outcomes, including the perceived authoritarian attitude of the ruling party leaders, their disconnect with the populace, an unhelpful demeanour broadly observed among leaders, rising unemployment, and escalating prices. The BJP must view this as a chance for introspection and rectifying the past decade's mistakes.

In the last ten years, the BJP has introduced numerous welfare schemes and reform processes, including a digital revolution. Now, in government, again, they should review these initiatives and enhance them. However, it's also noted that many schemes haven't effectively reached those most in need at the grassroots level, which calls for a thorough assessment.

Previously, with a weak opposition in the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, the BJP managed parliamentary procedures lightly, often passing crucial bills without adequate discussion or in the absence of opposition members, sometimes designating them as finance bills without the usual committee referrals. Now, with a stronger opposition, such tactics are unlikely to continue. Additionally, the BJP faced internal challenges, including discontent from its own allies and the RSS, which reportedly scaled back its campaign efforts due to disagreements with the BJP leadership. Maintaining a harmonious relationship with the RSS will be crucial for the BJP as it prepares for future elections. Moreover, if the BJP fails to address widespread economic issues like price hikes and unemployment effectively, it could face significant backlash in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Opportunities and Challenges for Opposition Parties

After a decade, the Indian National Congress (INC) has secured 99 seats, qualifying it to appoint a Leader of the Opposition (LoP). Rahul Gandhi has donned this role. The INDI Alliance has a total of 230 seats. Despite forming an alliance, in States like Kerala and West Bengal, the partners contested against each other without a coordinated strategy. The INC and other opposition parties now have substantial opportunities to voice their opinions within the Lok Sabha and to oversee government operations. During

the previous term, Congress and others often resorted to shouting and boycotting sessions over trivial matters.

Dr. Sudarsana Nachiappan, a senior Congress leader and former Minister in the UPA Government, feels that the opposition's approach during the last term, which included staging protests inside and outside the House and at the Gandhi Statue for minor issues is not constructive. He advises that the Congress, under Rahul Gandhi's leadership, should prepare thoroughly and engage constructively in parliamentary discussions. He suggests that Rahul Gandhi should consider forming a shadow cabinet similar to those in the UK Parliament to enhance the party's effectiveness.

Though Rahul Gandhi had the opportunity to assume a significant role in the UPA government, he declined any such responsibilities. His attire and public behaviour have led to perceptions of him as a 'non-serious politician' for over a decade. It seems he lacks senior advisors and mentors who could adequately brief him on historical contexts. On several occasions, Rahul Gandhi was embroiled in controversies for misstating information at public events, contradicting his party's established policies and decisions. Occasionally, these missteps required him to issue apologies in court. Lacking effective mentorship appears to be a recurring issue. Now that he holds the position of Leader of the Opposition, equivalent to a Cabinet

Minister, the country will be observing his actions with keen interest. This period presents Rahul Gandhi with a significant opportunity to establish himself as a prime ministerial candidate, especially given that his allies did not nominate him as a PM candidate for the 2014, 2019, and 2024 elections.

Unfortunately, the opposition parties caused a commotion in both Houses, resulting in adjournments even on the first day of sitting after the President's Address. Although protocol requires prioritising the 'Motion of Thanks' to the President, the opposition demanded a discussion on the NEET issue, despite the Government's promise to address it after the Motion of Thanks. Or the Opposition could have used the 'Motion of Thanks' itself to talk about NEET issues. The opposition parties should remember that the people elected them in large numbers to discuss their problems in the House, not to create a disturbance.

Democracy Prevails

The 2024 elections have once again underscored the strength of Indian democracy. The 900 million voters have sent a clear message to both ruling and opposition parties, mandating them to govern responsibly. PreSense is optimistic that both sides will collaborate effectively to utilise public resources wisely and foster national development.

(June 2024 edition)

A Grim Reality - The Unabated Crime Against Women in India

(The editorial discusses ongoing crimes against women in India, worsened by poor responses from authorities. It urges major reforms to tackle the root problem and achieve justice.)



The recent horrific rape and murder of a doctor at a Kolkata hospital has once again brought the issue of women's safety in India into the national spotlight. This incident, which has triggered widespread protests across the country, is yet another grim reminder of the vulnerability that

women face daily. What makes this case even more alarming is the casual attitude of the West Bengal Government, which has been criticised for its inadequate response to the situation. In a surprising twist, the very opposition parties that disrupted Parliament seeking justice for Manipur women have remained silent on this issue, raising questions about selective outrage for political gains. Sadly, this West Bengal incident is followed by the reported rape and murder in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The Hema Committee report on the sexual harassment of women in the film industry in Kerala has also shocked the entire nation. President Droupadi Murmu has also expressed her outrage about the rising incidents of crime against women.

Apathy and Political Silence

The political dynamics surrounding crimes against women in India often highlight a troubling trend of selective outrage. While political parties readily jump into the fray when it serves their interests, including vote bank politics, they tend to remain conspicuously silent when the issue doesn't fit their narrative. The stark silence of opposition parties in the wake of the Kolkata case is a case in point. This selective outrage not only undermines the seriousness of such crimes but also sends a disheartening message to victims that their plight is secondary to political expediency.

State of Affairs: Top 5 States in Crime Against Women

India has witnessed a disturbingly high number of crimes against women over the years, and certain States have consistently topped the charts in this grim statistic. The following table provides a snapshot of the top 5 States in India for crimes against women, including conviction rates and the national average:

State/Category	2002-2011 (Avg per year)	2012-2022 (Avg per year)	2002-2011 Conviction Rate (%)	2012-2022 Conviction Rate (%)
National Average	186,500	324,750	22.4%	24.7%
Uttar Pradesh	32,500	66,000	18.5%	20.1%
Rajasthan	26,000	54,000	23.6%	26.4%
Madhya Pradesh	21,000	47,000	20.7%	23.2%
Maharashtra	28,500	51,000	24.1%	26.7%
West Bengal	24,500	48,000	21.9%	23.5%

Data Source: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

Please note that these are all the reported crimes as per the NCBR records. More than 90 per cent of cases are not reported for various reasons. Rajasthan consistently ranks

as the State with the highest number of reported crimes against women cases, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Delhi. Despite numerous initiatives and legal reforms, these States have seen little improvement in reducing crime rates or improving conviction rates.

Global Position: Where Does India Stand?

The following table indicates the top 10 countries (195 countries indexed) with high Women's Danger Index levels (2023) and conviction rates. Women's Danger Index reflects the overall danger level for women in these countries, considering factors like violence, discrimination, and legal protections.

Rank	Country	Women's Danger Index	Conviction Rate (%)
1	South Africa	771.82	5-10%
2	Brazil	624.28	11%
3	Russia	592.71	3%
4	Mexico	576.05	8%
5	Iran	553.11	2%

Rank	Country	Women's Danger Index	Conviction Rate (%)
6	Dominican Republic	551.32	10%
7	Egypt	546.91	4%
8	Morocco	542.75	6%
9	India	541.25	23%
10	Thailand	533.22	12%

India ranks No 9 under the women's danger index level, with a conviction rate of 23%.

Out of 195 countries indexed for the women's danger index, 5 countries are at the bottom.

Rank	Country	Women's Danger Index	Conviction Rate (%)
1	Norway	220	70-80%
2	Sweden	230	65-75%
3	Denmark	240	60-70%

Rank	Country	Women's Danger Index	Conviction Rate (%)
4	New Zealand	250	55-65%
5	Finland	260	60-70%

Sources: World Population Review, Data Pandas, UN Women Data Hub

These countries with lower scores indicate safer environments for women, ranking among the safest globally due to strong gender equality and protective measures. The higher conviction rates in these countries show the effectiveness of their legal systems. The global comparison reveals that India's crime rate against women is alarmingly high, and the conviction rate is far from satisfactory.

Root Causes: Why Are Crimes Against Women So Rampant?

The reasons behind the high incidence of crimes against women in India are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of the country. Here are some of the key factors:

1. **Patriarchal Social Structure:** Deep-rooted patriarchal norms continue to perpetuate gender inequalities, with women often being seen as subordinate to men. This

mindset not only leads to violence against women but also normalises it within society.

2. **Cultural Stigma:** The cultural stigma associated with reporting crimes, especially sexual crimes, discourages many women from coming forward. This allows perpetrators to act with impunity, knowing that their victims are unlikely to seek justice.
3. **Poor Law Enforcement:** Inadequate policing, corruption, and investigation delays further embolden criminals. The lack of swift and decisive action against offenders often results in the perpetuation of violence against women.
4. **Judicial Delays:** The slow pace of the judicial system, with years-long delays in securing convictions, weakens the deterrent effect of the law. Justice delayed is justice denied, and this is particularly true in cases of crimes against women.
5. **Economic and Social Dislocation:** Rapid urbanisation, migration, and the breakdown of traditional community structures have led to increased social tensions and vulnerability for women.
6. **Lack of Education and Awareness:** Insufficient education on gender equality and a lack of awareness about women's rights contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence.

Solutions: A Multi-Faceted Approach

Tackling the issue of crimes against women in India requires a comprehensive approach that addresses cultural, legal, and systemic issues. Here are some key solutions:

1. **Strengthen Law Enforcement:** Police forces must be better trained and sensitised to handle crimes against women. Strict law enforcement and immediate action on complaints can be a strong deterrent.
2. **Fast-Track Courts:** Establishing more fast-track courts specifically for crimes against women will ensure swift justice. Reducing the time taken for trials and convictions can enhance the legal system's deterrent effect.
3. **Enhance Public Awareness:** Nationwide awareness campaigns focused on gender equality, legal rights, and breaking societal stigmas are crucial. Education on respect for women should begin at a young age through school curricula. Family elders should ensure that their children follow values and ethics in society.
4. **Promote Women's Economic Empowerment:** Encouraging and supporting women's participation in the workforce and entrepreneurship can reduce their

vulnerability to abuse and give them the confidence to report crimes.

5. **Improve Urban Infrastructure:** Enhancing public safety through better street lighting, CCTV surveillance in public places, and creating safer public transport options for women is essential.
6. **Tougher Penalties for Repeat Offenders:** Stricter penalties for repeat offenders and surveillance after release can help prevent further crimes.
7. **Engage Men in Gender Equality Efforts:** Involving men and boys in gender equality discussions and initiatives is crucial in changing male attitudes towards women.
8. **Accountability for Government Initiatives:** Ensuring that government schemes for women's safety, such as the Nirbhaya Fund, are properly utilised is essential. Regular audits and accountability measures can help improve the effectiveness of these programs.

Role of Civil Society and Government

Both civil society and the Government have crucial roles to play in combating crimes against women. Civil society, including the media, can drive awareness, support victims, and hold authorities accountable. The Government, on the other hand, must ensure that laws are enforced effectively and that justice is delivered promptly. Together, these

efforts can create a safer environment for women across India.

Conclusion

The recent tragedy in Kolkata is a stark reminder that crimes against women in India remain a national crisis. While public protests and judicial interventions are important, they must be accompanied by sustained efforts to address the root causes of violence against women. Political will, effective law enforcement, and societal change are necessary to make India safer for women.

The time for selective outrage is over – what India needs now is collective action.

(This article was co-authored by Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor of PreSense. She is an Advocate in Supreme Court of India)

(August 2024 edition)

A Turning Point in Waqf Management: The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024

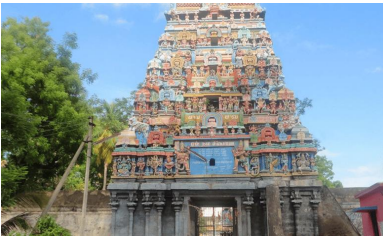
(The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 aims to overhaul Waqf property management in India, sparking debate over transparency, governance, and religious autonomy)

The Indian Parliament recently witnessed the introduction of the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024, a significant legislative measure aimed at overhauling the management of Waqf properties across the country. The bill, which has stirred both support and opposition, is a response to longstanding issues of alleged mismanagement and encroachment of Waqf properties. While the government justifies the need for this amendment on the grounds of transparency and accountability, various opposition parties and Muslim organizations have raised concerns about its potential implications.

The Need for the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024

According to an estimate, India's Waqf Boards own 8.7 lakh properties across 9.4 lakh acres, with an estimated value of Rs 1.2 lakh crore. This makes them the third-largest landholders in the country, after the Railways and the Defence Department.

Waqf properties in India represent a vast pool of assets dedicated to religious, charitable, and social purposes within the Muslim community. However, these properties have long been plagued by encroachment, mismanagement, and inadequate governance issues. Despite its amendments, the government has argued that the existing Waqf Act of 1995 has been insufficient to address these challenges. The new bill aims to rectify these issues by introducing stricter governance mechanisms and expanding the powers of authorities overseeing Waqf properties.



1500 years old Shiva temple at Tiruchendurai (Tamil Nadu) claimed by the Waqf Board as their property

The urgency for reform was further highlighted by a recent incident in Tamil Nadu, where Waqf authorities laid claim to an entire Tiruchendurai village, shocking its residents. The claim included a 1,500-year-old Shiva temple, triggering a heated debate nationwide. Minister Kiren Rijiju referenced this incident during the bill's introduction, as it underscored the need for clear legal frameworks to prevent such controversies and ensure that Waqf's claims are transparently and justly managed. This case has highlighted the potential for disputes between Waqf authorities and local communities,

emphasising the necessity for a stronger regulatory framework.

Key Features of the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024

The proposed amendments introduce several key changes to the Waqf Act 1995:

1. **Shift in Survey Responsibility:** The role of the Survey Commissioner, whom the State Government previously appointed, is now transferred to the District Collector. This move will streamline the survey process and ensure more accurate and timely documentation of Waqf properties.
2. **Changes in Waqf Board Composition:** The bill mandates the inclusion of two non-Muslim members on Waqf Boards, which has sparked significant debate. The government justifies this change as a step towards inclusivity and better representation. Two women members are also included in Waqf Boards.
3. **Restriction on Declaring Government Property as Waqf:** The amendment restricts the declaration of government property as Waqf, aiming to prevent disputes over land ownership between the state and Waqf authorities.
4. **Mandatory Verification of Waqf Properties:** To ensure transparency, the bill introduces a mandatory verification process conducted by district authorities.

This is seen as a measure to prevent wrong claims and misuse of Waqf properties.

5. **Expansion of Legal Recourse:** The amendment allows for legal suits to be filed up to two years after a Waqf Tribunal's decision, providing a broader window for contesting rulings on Waqf property disputes.

Judicial Influence on Waqf Legislation

BILL SEEKS TO VERIFY PROPERTY CLAIMS	
➤ The Wakf Act, passed in 1954 and replaced with a new version in 1995, is meant to regulate 'auqaf' (assets donated and notified as waqf) by a wakif, the person who dedicates a property for any purpose recognised by Muslim law as religious or charitable ➤ Govt proposes to amend Act, make verification mandatory for claims on properties by waqf boards ➤ This will also apply to	properties on which claims and counter-claims have been made by waqf boards and individual owners ➤ Currently, waqf boards enjoy powers to tag any property as waqf asset. Around 8.7 lakh properties spanning 9.4 lakh acres are under jurisdiction of waqf boards in the country ➤ Bill also proposes changes in composition of waqf boards, it is learnt

Over the years, the Supreme Court of India has delivered several landmark judgments highlighting the need for amendments to the Waqf Act. For instance, in the *Board of Muslim Wakfs, Rajasthan v. Radha Kishan (1979)*, the Court emphasised that Waqf Boards have the authority to

recover properties illegally occupied. This ruling reinforced the need for Waqf Boards to have stronger enforcement powers, a principle reflected in the current amendments, which aim to empower these boards further.

In another significant judgment, *Punjab Wakf Board v. Gram Panchayat (2000)*, the Supreme Court ruled that once a property is declared as Waqf, its status cannot be challenged except through proper legal channels. This judgment underscored the importance of protecting Waqf properties from unauthorised encroachments, a concern that the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 seeks to address through stricter verification and proper mechanisms.

These judgments and others have paved the way for the amendments proposed in 2024, which aim to close legal loopholes and strengthen the framework for managing Waqf properties. Including provisions that enhance the legal recourse available to Waqf Boards and expand their powers to recover properties directly reflects the judiciary's call for more robust protections for these assets.

Objections from Opposition Parties and Muslim Bodies

The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 has faced significant opposition from various quarters:

1. **Inclusion of Non-Muslims on Waqf Boards:** Critics argue that this move undermines the religious autonomy of Muslim-managed charitable endowments.

They question whether non-Muslim participation is necessary, given that similar inclusivity is not mandated for other religious communities' endowments.

2. **Centralisation of Control:** There are concerns that the bill centralizes too much control over Waqf properties by government-appointed officials, particularly District Collectors. Opponents fear this could reduce community control over these assets.
3. **Potential for Misuse of Power:** The expanded powers granted to district authorities to oversee Waqf properties have raised concerns about potential misuse, particularly in regions where Waqf lands are highly valuable.
4. **Legal and Constitutional Concerns:** Some argue that the bill may infringe upon constitutional guarantees of religious freedom by imposing state control over religious properties. Opposition parties have voiced concerns that the bill could set a precedent for further encroachments on religious autonomy.

Comparative Legal Frameworks in Other Countries

The management of Waqf properties varies significantly across the world. In Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Pakistan, Waqf management is deeply integrated into the legal framework, with dedicated ministries or councils overseeing their administration. For example,

Saudi Arabia has aligned its Waqf operations with national development goals under Vision 2030, emphasising transparency and accountability. Similarly, the UAE has a robust Waqf system supported by federal laws that ensure the proper management of Waqf assets.

In contrast, non-Islamic countries like the UK, USA, and Germany manage similar charitable trusts under broader charity and trust laws. These countries do not have specific Waqf legislation, but Islamic charities operate within the framework of general trust laws, ensuring some degree of regulation while allowing religious autonomy.

The Role of the Joint Parliamentary Committee

The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) headed by Jagadambika Pal, a Senior Member of Parliament, for further scrutiny. The JPC has 31 members across all parties. This move reflects the government's intent to build consensus and address concerns raised by stakeholders. The JPC's role will be crucial in examining the bill's finer details, balancing the need for reform with the protection of religious rights.

Conclusion

The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 represents a significant step towards reforming the management of Waqf properties in India. While the government's intentions to enhance transparency and accountability are commendable, the

concerns raised by opposition parties and Muslim organisations cannot be ignored. A balanced approach that respects religious autonomy while ensuring effective governance will be key to the bill's success.

One truth remains constant in the ever-evolving governance landscape: *change is inevitable*. There is broad consensus that Waqf properties must be shielded from unauthorized claims. However, recent controversies have spotlighted significant gaps in transparency and procedural integrity when declaring Waqf properties. In a democracy like India, no entity is beyond the reach of law, and all actions must align with the nation's legal framework. For the sake of communal harmony and to ensure transparent, accountable management of Waqf assets, reforms in the current legislation are necessary. Simultaneously, political parties must refrain from exploiting the Muslim community for electoral gains. The Joint Parliamentary Committee is responsible for refining this bill with the nation's best interests at heart, ensuring that the final legislation balances reform and justice.

(August 2024 edition)

Secularism or Vote Bank Politics? India's Dilemma

(The Editorial discusses the misinterpretation of secularism in India, leading to political appeasement of minorities and divisive policies.)



In recent years, the topic of secularism in India has become a frequent subject of public discourse. Many now believe

that the concept of secularism is often misinterpreted to appease minorities for vote-bank politics, while Hinduism is depicted in a negative light, hurting the sentiments of the majority.

A recent statement by a Tamil Nadu Minister calling for the 'eradication of Sanatana Dharma like mosquitoes' sparked a nationwide debate and led to legal challenges. There have been numerous instances where leaders who claim to be 'secularists' mock Hindu practices and mantras while addressing minority communities. Though minority community leaders do not object to such comments, many feel uncomfortable and embarrassed by these incidents. These so-called 'secular' leaders enthusiastically extend greetings to festivals celebrated by minority communities. However, it is unfortunate that they often neglect to do the same for the festivals celebrated by majority Hindu community.

In the early 1990s, Kashmiri Pandits were driven out of their homes, becoming refugees in neighbouring States within their own country. Unfortunately, political parties that claim to be "secular" did not raise their voices against this brutal incident, including the killings of Pandits. These parties often remain silent when the majority community is under attack, ostensibly to protect "secularism." There have been several such instances where those parties that profess

secularism turn a blind eye to violence against the majority community.

In 1986, under Rajiv Gandhi's regime, the Supreme Court's judgment in the Shah Bano case was nullified to appease the minority community. This action led to further complications and unrest in the country, including the resurgence of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

Often, in the name of secularism, these political groups provoke minority communities by spreading false information, creating divisions among people. The recent protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were largely based on false fears instigated by these groups, even though the CAA has nothing to do with Indian minorities.

While Dr B.R. Ambedkar strongly opposed and did not support Article 370, secular parties continued to defend it, which denied reservations to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Similarly, Dr. Ambedkar advocated for implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). Yet, these parties now oppose the UCC, which could help bring legal uniformity among the people. Ironically, all of them claim to be followers of Dr. Ambedkar.

These actions do not reflect true secularism; instead, they create divisions between Hindus and minorities, making

Hindus feel alienated. This is far from the vision India's founders had for the nation.

Dr Ambedkar's Views on Secularism

Dr Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution, firmly believed in the principle of secularism, not as a form of atheism, but as the state's religious neutrality. His goal was to ensure that no religion dominated or influenced the functioning of the state, particularly given India's history of caste-based oppression and religious conflict. In his view, secularism meant that the state would neither favour any religion nor interfere in religious practices, as long as these practices did not violate public morality or infringe upon individual rights.

Despite clearly understanding secularism, Dr Ambedkar did not push for including the word "secularism" in the Constitution's Preamble. One of the main reasons for this was his belief that the principles of secularism were already embedded within the Constitution, especially in the provisions related to fundamental rights and non-discrimination on the grounds of religion. He believed that the Constitution inherently guaranteed a secular framework without the need to use the term explicitly.

Dr Ambedkar once said, "What should be the state's policy? The policy of the state should be neutral in the matter of religion. The state should not impose any particular religion

upon the rest of the people. This is the essence of secularism.”

Dr. Ambedkar believed that secularism was sufficiently implicit in the constitutional framework, and there was no need to declare it overtly in the Preamble. He was wary that narrowly defining secularism or making it a constitutional slogan could invite unnecessary controversy or conflicts over its interpretation. Furthermore, by not explicitly including secularism in the Preamble, he avoided reducing it to a political tool for exploitation by parties or groups.

Scholar Christophe Jaffrelot, a noted commentator on Ambedkar's ideology, argues:

"Ambedkar preferred a substantive secularism based on equality before the law and the non-interference of the state in religious matters over a declaratory secularism that might lead to political posturing."

Constitutional Provisions

Ambedkar ensured that Articles 25 to 28, under the chapter on Fundamental Rights, explicitly guaranteed freedom of religion and equality before the law, irrespective of religious identity.

- **Article 29** protects the rights of citizens to preserve their distinct language, script, or culture.

- **Article 30** gives minorities the right to establish and administer their own educational institutions.
- **Article 25** provides religious freedom to all, though in practice, it has sometimes been interpreted in ways that afford certain privileges to minorities, such as personal laws for Muslims and Christians.

These provisions are inherently secular. Dr. Ambedkar believed the Constitution already protected secular values by allowing individuals to practice their religion freely while ensuring the state's neutrality.

Adding 'Secular' to the Preamble

During the Emergency in 1976, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi included the word "secular" in the Preamble of the Constitution through the 42nd Amendment. After this amendment, some argue that secularism began to be misinterpreted to appease minorities for vote-bank politics. However, India has practised secularism since ancient times, with a history of respecting different faiths.

Ancient India's Secular Ethos

A well-known mantra in Hindu rituals is "Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavantu" (Let all people be prosperous). The *Rig Veda* states, "Let noble thoughts come from everywhere," and also quotes "Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava" (treat all faiths equally). Ancient Indian rulers supported Christianity and Islam when they arrived in India, allowing them to

preach their beliefs. Buddhism and Jainism originated in India, reflecting a longstanding tradition of religious tolerance. The distortions we see today began only after the invasions of the British and Mughals. Secularism and tolerance are part of the very fabric of Indian society.

Challenges in the Present Day

Today, it has become fashionable for political parties to claim they are 'secular' while appeasing minorities and ridiculing the rituals of the majority community. Sadly, even knowledgeable and educated minority leaders do not object to this trend.

While leaders of all communities, including Hindus, greet minority communities during their festivals, Hindus rarely receive reciprocal greetings for their own festivals. Moreover, there are allegations that minority institutions enjoy more privileges than those of the majority community in areas such as education, recruitment, and the teaching of religious texts. These privileges are not extended to institutions run by the majority.

While the Government manages Hindu religious institutions like temples, they allow the religious institutions of minorities to be run by their own leaders. While the students of minority communities get scholarships and interest subsidies, their Hindu counterparts do not get any such support. Such discriminations happen in the name of

protecting 'secularism', though the Constitution prohibits discrimination.

As a result, many feel that in India, under the guise of secularism, the majority population is being treated as second-class citizens, even though the Constitution guarantees equal rights without discrimination to all.

Over the years, this has led to growing resentment among the majority population, further fuelling division. Political parties exploit this situation in the name of secularism to advance their vote-bank politics.

The Way Forward

All political parties must cease using the secularism card to appease minorities while taking an anti-Hindu stance. They must learn to treat all citizens equally, without discrimination. Media and Civil society, including leaders from both the Hindu and minority communities, cannot remain silent spectators to these trends. Minority community leaders should condemn the derogatory statements made about Hinduism by political leaders during their meetings. They should recognise that such leaders are disrupting communal harmony.

In the name of Secularism, moral instruction classes have been dispensed with at the School Level. A recent study reveals that this lack of moral instruction is generating bad habits and also promoting juvenile offenders.

As desired by Dr Ambedkar, the Uniform Civil Code should be implemented in consultation with all religious groups. Political parties should not mislead minority communities with false information for their political gains.

India, that is, Bharat, should continue to be a secular nation as it was in ancient times, with mutual respect for all faiths.

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चिद् दुःखभागभवेत्॥

May all be happy; May all be free from illness; May all see what is auspicious; May no one suffer in any way; Om, Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1.4.14)

(The co-author of this Editorial, Priyadharshni Rahul (Editor, PreSense, is an advocate practising in the Supreme Court of India)

(September 2024 edition)

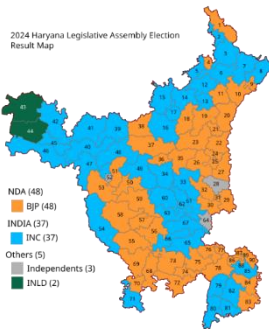
2024 Assembly Elections: Surprises, Strategies, and Lessons for Political Parties

(The 2024 Haryana and J&K elections reveal key lessons for political parties on strategy, leadership, and voter outreach.)

The 2024 assembly elections in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir were events filled with surprises, reversals, and important lessons for political parties, particularly the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Early pre-poll surveys indicated a significant victory for Congress in Haryana. However, the situation changed drastically during the elections, resulting in a surprising victory for the BJP. In Jammu & Kashmir, the results highlighted the enduring strength of the National Conference (NC) and the struggles of both the Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). This editorial examines the reasons behind these outcomes and explores the implications for upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

A Review of Haryana Elections

In Haryana, the BJP defied all poll predictions to secure a third consecutive term, winning 48 out of 90 seats. Pre-election surveys had predicted a comfortable victory for the Congress, which seemed poised to capitalise on anti-



incumbency sentiment. However, the BJP's strategic adjustments changed the electoral tide in its favour.

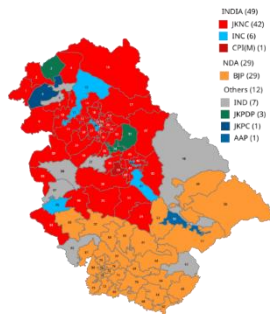
Several factors contributed to this unexpected BJP victory. First, the party successfully expanded its appeal to non-Jat communities, including the OBCs and Scheduled Castes. This outreach proved crucial, as Congress had heavily relied on its Jat vote bank and the leadership of Bhupinder Singh Hooda, sidelining other important communities like the Dalits. The Congress's decision to neglect leaders such as Kumari Selja, a prominent Dalit leader, proved costly. In contrast, the BJP's choice to replace incumbent Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini, an OBC leader, helped the party mitigate anti-incumbency feelings and widen its appeal.

Despite Congress getting a vote share (around 39.1%), the BJP emerged victorious with a marginal increase of vote share of approximately 39.9%. The collapse of the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP), which failed to secure any seat, with a 13% vote share decline, further demonstrated a shift in voter preferences. Congress's over-reliance on traditional Jat leadership, internal divisions, over-confidence by not adding alliance parties, and lack of a

broad-based strategy ultimately allowed BJP to capitalise on the situation, reversing pre-election expectations.

A Review of Jammu & Kashmir Elections

In Jammu & Kashmir, the elections were held for the first time after the abrogation of Article 370, making them a historic event. The National Conference (NC) and Congress alliance won 48 seats out of 90, marking a strong comeback for NC, which secured 42 seats alone. Meanwhile, the BJP dominated the Jammu region, securing 29 seats, but struggled to make any significant impact in the Kashmir Valley.



Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Election 2024

The BJP's focus on development and security resonated with voters in Jammu, where it retained a strong foothold. However, in Kashmir, regional identity and the post-Article 370 political landscape overshadowed other issues, limiting the BJP's reach. The Congress fared poorly, with just six seats, down from its previous showing. The PDP, once a dominant force in Kashmir, collapsed, winning only three seats. This decline can be attributed to the disillusionment of its voter base following the abrogation of Article 370 and the party's failure to adapt to the changing political dynamics.

Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah's leadership in the NC managed to tap into the sentiments of Kashmir's electorate, positioning the party as a defender of Kashmiri identity. The BJP, on the other hand, secured its base in Jammu but found it difficult to penetrate the stronghold of the NC in the Valley.

Lessons Learnt by Political Parties

The results of these elections offer important lessons for both the Congress and BJP as they prepare for future elections, especially in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

First, a broad voter base is essential. The BJP's success in Haryana was largely due to its strategy of expanding its appeal beyond its traditional base by reaching out to non-Jat communities. Similarly, in the 2024 general elections, BJP's confidence in securing 360 seats—Modi himself predicting 400—led to complacency among party workers. As a result, the opposition gained ground. The Congress now finds itself in a similar situation in Haryana. Relying too heavily on traditional support from the Jat community and neglecting others, Congress became complacent, while BJP and the RSS worked together efficiently, focusing on non-Jat votes.

Second, the importance of internal unity cannot be underestimated. Congress's internal divisions in both Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir weakened its ability to

present a strong, cohesive front. This lack of unity not only diminished the party's effectiveness but also created opportunities for the BJP to consolidate its support.

Third, local leadership and regional issues matter. In Jammu & Kashmir, the BJP's inability to make inroads into the Kashmir Valley, despite its national appeal, showed that regional issues and leadership are crucial in sensitive areas. Similarly, in Haryana, the Congress's over-reliance on Bhupinder Singh Hooda and its neglect of other communities led to its defeat. Political parties must remain responsive to regional dynamics and provide local leadership that resonates with voters.

Impact of this Result on Maharashtra and Jharkhand

The results in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir will have a ripple effect on the upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. In Maharashtra, where coalition politics and regional concerns dominate, the BJP's success in managing diverse voter bases in Haryana may prove beneficial. However, Congress's experience in forging strong alliances, as seen in its collaboration with the NC in Jammu & Kashmir, may offer a blueprint for opposition parties to form similar coalitions.

In Jharkhand, where local leadership and community outreach are crucial, both the Congress and BJP will need to adapt their strategies. Congress, in particular, will need

to broaden its appeal and ensure that it addresses local issues effectively, avoiding the complacency that led to its downfall in Haryana.

The political landscape is continuously shifting, and the lessons learned from these Assembly elections will undoubtedly shape the strategies of both the major parties in future elections.

Conclusion

The 2024 Assembly elections in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir have provided critical insights for India's political parties. For the Congress, these elections were a reminder of the dangers of over-reliance on traditional leadership and support bases. For the BJP, they underscored the importance of broadening appeal and the challenges of gaining ground in sensitive regions. As the parties look ahead to elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, these lessons will likely to guide their campaigns. The results from Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir suggest that success will require careful attention to regional dynamics, effective leadership, and a broad-based approach to voter outreach.

(October 2024 edition)

Rising Divorce Rates in India: Unveiling the Emotional Toll on Families and Children

(This cover story explores rising divorce rates in India, highlighting family conflicts, their impact on children, and the importance of mediation)

Conflicts are inevitable in human interaction, arising at various levels of society. On a global scale, nations engage in disputes over resources, ideologies, and territorial boundaries, often leading to wars and strained diplomatic relations. Conflict of ideologies and personal ambitions within political parties can disrupt governance and destabilise systems designed to serve the public. Even on an individual level, disagreements occur in various settings, affecting personal relationships, business partnerships, and communities. These conflicts, regardless of scale, influence how people interact, fostering division and mistrust.

A more intimate and personal realm lies at the heart of these broader tensions: family conflicts, particularly between husbands and wives. If unresolved, these disagreements often lead to separation or divorce, with children bearing the brunt of the emotional fallout. This cover story delves into the dynamics of such conflicts and the impact on familial bonds and explores ways to mediate disputes in the interest of protecting the well-being of children.



Conflict to Resolution



Rising Divorce Rates: A Global and Indian Perspective

According to recent data, 13 out of every 1,000 Indian marriages end in divorce, a significant increase compared to 10 years ago when the rate was only 1 in 1,000. The divorce rate is much higher in developed countries like the US, UK, Germany, France, and Australia, though India still fares better due to various cultural factors. However, even in India, particularly in states such as Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, the number of divorce cases has steadily increased over the past decade.

For instance, even in a traditionally conservative city like Chennai, family courts have risen from three to ten over the last ten years. This trend is alarming. PreSense spoke to advocates, counsellors, and children from separated families, and in many cases, 'ego' is identified as a major factor leading to separation.

Key Reasons for Conflict in Marriages

“Ten years ago, couples with around 5 to 7 years of marriage typically approached family courts for divorce. Now, we see couples filing for divorce after only one or two years of marriage,” says V. Kannadasan, Hon'ble

Member of the State Human Rights Commission, Tamil Nadu and former President of the Family Courts Advocates Association, Chennai.

In April 2024, a Supreme Court bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and P.S. Narasimha observed, "We are amazed to see what kinds of marriages are taking place today. They marry in 2021, by 2022 or 2023 they are filing cases against each other, and by 2024, we have transfer petitions before us."

A.S. Fathima Muzaffer, a Lawyer and a Senior family Counsellor, notes that this trend is most prevalent among the urban, educated middle and upper-middle classes, cutting across regions and castes. "Economic independence of women, infertility, infidelity, and incompatibility are major reasons why couples prefer divorce. Domestic violence and drug or alcohol addiction are also significant factors. In some cases, parents or extended family members exert undue pressure, worsening the situation," adds Fathima.

Changing Social Dynamics

Generally, couples in the 25 to 35 age group are more prone to conflicts, with women filing for divorce more often than men. Fathima explains the generational shift in expectations between husbands and wives.

In the first generation of grandparents, grandmothers were less educated and fully dedicated to managing the household. In the second generation, men, having seen their mothers devote themselves entirely to domestic responsibilities, expected their wives to do the same. However, second-generation women, being more educated, often took up jobs, balancing both career and family life. Husbands in this generation were still largely uninvolved in domestic duties.

In the third generation, men, having seen their mothers juggle both roles, now expect their wives to do the same. But today's women, better educated and more career-focused, expect their husbands to share household responsibilities. This mismatch in expectations often leads to conflict. "Parents should educate their sons about modern gender dynamics before marriage to ensure smoother relationships," suggests a young married woman in her 30s from Mumbai.

The Impact on Children

Kannadasan highlights the trauma experienced by children who are brought to court during their parents' divorce proceedings. "The judicial system follows the law, not emotions. Unfortunately, in their ego battles, parents often overlook the emotional trauma their children endure," he explains. "Indian laws do not adequately address the needs of children from separated families. We need more effective

legislation to safeguard their well-being,” adds Kannadasan. Fathima agrees and confirms that there are no proper guidelines for advocates when the children are examined in the courts.

Fathima notes that a recent American study reveals that many juvenile offenders in the US come from families of separated parents. “Parents often forget the trauma they inflict on their children when they go to court for divorce. Their focus tends to be on themselves,” she adds.

One woman, who was separated from her father at the age of 13 due to her parents' divorce, recalls the emotional void she felt during her teenage years. “Thankfully, a family friend mentored me, offering the emotional support I missed from my biological father. Every day, I would call him at 8 p.m. to share my day's routine. He listened patiently, advised, and encouraged me. A biological father is very important for a child during their formative years,” she says with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Case Study: Resolving Conflict in a Public Sector Bank

A public sector bank in a major metropolitan city, with more than 40 officers spread across three adjoining buildings and four floors, experienced a series of conflicts and strained relationships between the management and employees. This tension affected customer service, leading to

complaints. Despite the issue persisting for over a year, no action was taken to understand and resolve the problem.

The author of this article, who was the President of the Officers' Association in that region, was invited by the management to mediate. A meeting was convened with all officers, including the branch head, immediately after office hours. Each participant was given a blank piece of paper and asked to write down their top three grievances anonymously. Two members of the audience then tabulated the responses during the meeting itself.

Surprisingly, almost all participants highlighted two common grievances: the lack of drinking water and the absence of attendants to move documents between buildings during office hours. These were relatively minor issues that could be resolved quickly. With the branch head present, the grievances were addressed on the spot, and from the next day onwards, the branch functioned smoothly.

This exemplifies how a seemingly insignificant issue can escalate into a major conflict if left unaddressed.

In conflicts, whether within organisations or between individuals, a core issue often underpins the disagreements. Identifying this core issue is key to resolving the conflict effectively.

Conflict Resolution in Families

Seven Quick Tips for resolving conflict
Stay calm – Keep your composure to prevent emotional escalation
Control your anger – Anger worsens conflicts, so maintain control
Use careful language – Avoid words that can harm or escalate tensions
Take a break if needed – Step away briefly if emotions are too high
Address the root cause – Focus on the deeper issue rather than the immediate one
Protect children from conflict – Avoid arguments and bashing the spouse in front of them
Value the relationship – Focus on the long-term health of the relationship, not just "winning"

A few decades ago, joint families were more common, and elders would step in to resolve minor disputes within the family. Without ego, everyone compromised to some extent in the interest of the family and children. However, with the rise of nuclear families, where only the husband, wife, and children live together, younger, educated generations tend to believe they "know everything" and avoid seeking guidance from elders.

Often, family conflicts arise from a lack of communication and ego clashes. Infidelity and infertility are becoming increasingly common sources of grievance. Medical experts point out that lifestyle changes and junk food consumption have contributed to rising infertility rates. Even two Chief Ministers have expressed concern over the low birth rate this week.

Medical experts suggest that couples undergo thorough medical check-ups before marriage to avoid future conflicts related to health issues.

The Path Forward

Divorce doesn't just tear apart two lives; it fractures entire families, leaving scars that often take a lifetime to heal. Children caught in the crossfire lose the sense of security and love that every child deserves. We must reflect on our parents, partners, and community members' roles in fostering understanding and empathy as a society. Conflict is inevitable, but resolution requires humility, compromise, and communication. Let us remember that love, patience, and forgiveness can rebuild what ego and pride tear apart. For the sake of our children and future generations, we must learn to heal, not harm.

Always remember: It's better to lose an argument and strengthen the relationship than to win and weaken it

(October 2024 edition)

Breaking Barriers: Empowering Women Leaders in India's Political Future

(India's Women Reservation Act reserves one-third of Legislative seats for women by 2029. However, challenges remain in developing capable women leaders through training, mentorship, and breaking cultural barriers.)

India recently passed a historic constitutional amendment — the Women Reservation Act — which reserves one-third of women's seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies by 2029. This step towards gender equality in politics is an important milestone, showing India's commitment to empowering women. However, while this policy brings progress, a significant challenge remains: not enough women in India are ready to take on political leadership roles.



As we implement this reservation, we must realize that it is only part of the solution. India's political scene is still largely male-dominated, and real empowerment for women means

more than just increasing numbers. It involves creating an environment that nurtures and develops capable women leaders.

The Challenge of Gender Inequality in Politics

Despite women making up almost half of India's population, their political representation remains very low. Women hold fewer than 15% of the seats in the Lok Sabha, a figure that has not changed significantly over many years. This gap is due to deep-rooted social, cultural, and institutional barriers. From childhood, many girls are raised in environments where politics is considered a male domain. Leadership positions are often seen as jobs for the powerful and outspoken qualities that are unfairly associated with men.

Women also face systemic obstacles, such as a lack of support structures, limited access to political networks, and the challenge of balancing family life with political ambitions. Political parties often give women less influential roles, relegating them to ceremonial positions. As a result, women are vastly underrepresented in key political positions at both national and state levels.

The Women Reservation Act: A Step Forward, but Not Enough

The Women Reservation Act is a positive move. By reserving one-third of the seats for women in Parliament

and State Assemblies by 2029, it acknowledges the historical exclusion of women from political decision-making. This law has the potential to reshape India's political landscape, giving women a greater voice in shaping policies that affect their lives and the future of the country.

However, this law is not enough on its own. While it guarantees more seats, it does not ensure that these women will have the skills or qualities needed for effective leadership. Political participation should not only be about numbers; it must also focus on the quality of leadership. We need to help women develop the knowledge, experience, and confidence to lead the country effectively.

The Need for More Women Political Aspirants

At present, only a handful of women — such as Sonia Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee, and Mayawati — hold prominent positions in Indian politics. These women have broken through barriers in a male-dominated environment, but there is an urgent need to identify, mentor, and support a new generation of women leaders.

Training women for leadership is not just an option; it is necessary. While the Women Reservation Act may increase the number of women in Parliament, we need to provide proper leadership training to ensure they can succeed. This training should include skills such as public

speaking, political strategy, policy analysis, and grassroots mobilisation.

A key part of political leadership is understanding the concerns of the electorate and representing their needs. Women leaders should be trained to understand the socio-economic issues that particularly affect women, such as healthcare, education, safety, and employment. Political training should not only focus on technical skills but also help women develop their own voices and perspectives.

Breaking Barriers: Empowering Women to Lead

To create a supportive environment for women in politics, we must break down the cultural and institutional barriers that have historically kept them out. This means promoting inclusion at every level — within political parties, civil society organisations, and the media. Political parties must not only reserve seats for women but also provide opportunities for women to take on leadership roles. This includes encouraging women to participate in local governance, manage campaigns, and take part in decision-making.

The media also plays an important role in shaping public opinion about women in politics. Too often, women in politics are portrayed based on their appearance or family background rather than their abilities and achievements.

The media must emphasise women's competencies and contributions to society, not just their gender.

Moreover, building support networks for women in politics is essential, including mentorship programmes and platforms where women can share their experiences and advice. Encouraging more women to enter politics will require a collective effort from the government, civil society, educational institutions, and the media.

Training the Next Generation of Women Leaders

Political parties, schools, universities, and civil society organisations must work together to identify and train young women who have the potential to lead. From student bodies in schools and universities to local political forums, young women should be encouraged to take on leadership roles. These early experiences will build the skills, confidence, and networks necessary for a successful political career.

Several organisations are already making strides in this area. Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) aim to prepare both young women and men for political leadership. These programmes provide training in political strategy, governance, public policy, and communication. By developing the political skills of young women, these initiatives can help create a steady flow of female leaders.

It is crucial to involve women in local governance at the grassroots level. Elections to panchayats, municipal

councils, and State Legislative Assemblies provide opportunities for women to gain experience and build political credibility. These roles serve as stepping stones to higher positions and offer a platform for women to better understand their communities' needs.

Conclusion: A Vision for the Future

The passage of the Women's Reservation Act is a major victory for women's rights in India, but it is only the beginning. The Act may increase the number of women in Parliament, but it is up to all of us — society, political parties, Media, and institutions — to ensure that these women are well-equipped to succeed. We must create an environment where women can break down barriers, lead effectively, and contribute to the nation's progress.

To truly empower women in politics, we must go beyond quotas. We must invest in leadership training, mentorship, and grassroots political engagement. The time to act is now, so that the women who will lead our future are ready and capable of shaping India's political landscape.

(Nov 2024 edition)

The Ruckus in Parliament: A National Shame

(Parliament's Winter Session 2024 exposed a national disgrace, marked by disruptions, low productivity, and lost public trust in democratic governance)

The recent behaviour of Members of Parliament, especially opposition members, during the Winter Session 2024 of the Indian Parliament has cast a shadow of disgrace over the nation. Such conduct erodes the public's trust in the democratic system and leaves the younger generation, aspiring for greater opportunities, deeply disillusioned with the functioning of this vital institution.

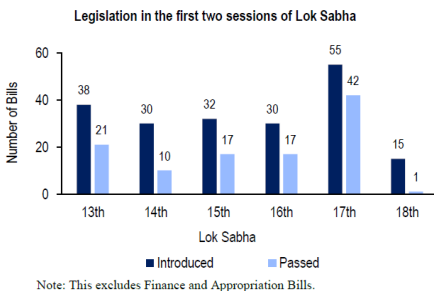
The Winter Session of Parliament, held from 25 November to 20 December 2024, saw Lok Sabha functioning for only 52% of its scheduled time and Rajya Sabha for a mere 39%. Week-on-week productivity figures reveal a dismal performance (Courtesy: PRS Legislative Research).

Parliament functioned for about half of its scheduled time

Lok Sabha							Rajya Sabha					
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Nov 25 - 29	2%		4%	4%	6%		Nov 25 - 29	9%		4%	4%	4%
Dec 2 - 6	4%	123%	133%	24%	3%		Dec 2 - 6	5%	100%	103%	85%	38%
Dec 9 - 14	2%	6%	62%	123%	136%	146%	Dec 9 - 13	20%	7%	5%	12%	15%
Dec 16 - 20	153%	99%	3%	1%	1%		Dec 16 - 20	151%	153%	8%	6%	5%

■ 0%-30%
 ■ 30%-60%
 ■ 60%-90%
 ■ 90% or more

Tragically, only one Bill was passed in the first six months of the current Lok Sabha—the lowest in the past three decades.



While one notable achievement was the extensive discussion on the Constitution (16 hours in Lok Sabha and 17 hours in Rajya Sabha), key parliamentary tools like

Half-an-Hour Discussions, Private Members' Bills, and Question Hours were not utilised effectively. Instead, repeated disruptions, primarily by the opposition demanding a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Adani issue and later protesting remarks by the Home Minister Amit Shah about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, dominated the session.

For civil society, it appeared as though opposition leaders, particularly Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were not serious about the sanctity of parliamentary proceedings. Their approach often seemed more reminiscent of college-level antics than mature statesmanship. Disturbingly, there were physical altercations at the entrance of the House, culminating in an FIR against Rahul Gandhi for allegedly assaulting a senior BJP member. Concurrently, the BJP highlighted alleged connections between the Gandhi family and George Soros, further fuelling tensions. The opposition also filed a no-

confidence motion against the Rajya Sabha Chairman, an unprecedented move in independent India's history.

A Failure of Leadership and Vision

PreSense strongly condemns this irresponsible behaviour. Opposition parties' actions hinder the functioning of Parliament, disillusion the public, and alienate the youth from democratic institutions. As Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi must seek guidance from senior party leaders to address critical public issues such as inflation, unemployment, law and order, GST, and education. Shouting about tangential matters like Adani and selectively citing historical grievances serves no one and risks alienating the electorate further.

The opposition's campaign against Amit Shah's remarks on Dr Ambedkar has inadvertently backfired. Shah's speech highlighted how Congress historically sidelined Dr Ambedkar, prompting widespread public interest in the lesser-known aspects of his struggles. Articles have surfaced detailing the Congress's treatment of Dr Ambedkar, including his defeat in the first general elections, the humiliation he faced during his lifetime, and the indifference shown to his family after his demise. It is worth noting that Dr Ambedkar was eventually elected to the Rajya Sabha with the support of Jan Sangh, BJP's predecessor, countering Congress's efforts to thwart him.

Shared Accountability for Parliamentary Functioning

While the opposition's immaturity is evident, the ruling party must also bear responsibility for ensuring Parliament functions effectively. The BJP, during its years in opposition, too disrupted proceedings and now seems content with the chaos, as it deflects attention from pressing national issues. By exploiting the opposition's lack of strategy, the ruling party escapes accountability on critical matters.

A Call for Collaborative Governance

PreSense appeals to both the ruling and opposition parties to rise above partisan politics and work together to restore faith in India's democratic institutions. Parliament must function as a platform for constructive dialogue and meaningful debate, addressing the nation's aspirations and concerns. The onus is on our leaders to inspire confidence, particularly among the youth, and to uphold the dignity of the world's largest democracy. Let us hope that the lessons from this dismal session catalyse a renewed commitment to responsible governance in the sessions to come.

Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

(Dec 2024 edition)

Humility in a World of Temporary Triumphs

(Success and power do not last forever, like temple flowers that are replaced daily. True greatness comes from humility, kindness, and valuing relationships over temporary fame.)



It was a quiet morning at the grand temple, the air filled with the lingering fragrance of fresh jasmine and roses. Devotees streamed in, heads bowed, hearts whispering silent prayers. Just outside, a worker carefully removed the garlands that had adorned the deity the previous day, placing them gently into a basket before discarding them into the waste bin. Those very flowers, which had been the

centre of reverence just a few hours ago, were now forgotten, their purpose seemingly over.

This simple act, repeated every day, carries a profound lesson — one that many fail to recognise. The flowers, once revered, now lay discarded, making way for new ones. In much the same way, life elevates people to positions of power and influence, only to replace them in time. Yet, how often do those who rise to prominence understand the fleeting nature of their glory?

In our daily lives, we see individuals ascend rapidly — whether in corporate boardrooms, political offices, or social circles. Like the temple flowers, they bask in admiration and praise. But power has a way of clouding humility. Many begin to believe in the permanence of their position, distancing themselves from friends, well-wishers, and those who once stood by them. They become unreachable, their words tinged with arrogance, their actions fuelled by entitlement. The more they climb, the more they alienate, mistaking temporary adulation for eternal reverence.

But time is relentless. Just as new flowers replace the old in the temple, new faces inevitably take their place. The moment of reckoning arrives, often without warning. One day, they are revered; the next, they find themselves alone, struggling to understand where it all went wrong. By then, the damage is done. True relationships, built over years, have withered. The support they once took for granted has

disappeared. They stand at the edge of irrelevance, discarded like yesterday's flowers, watching as others step into the spotlight.

This cycle repeats endlessly, yet so many fail to grasp its



inevitability. For fleeting success, they sacrifice lasting bonds. For temporary power, they neglect timeless virtues.

It is a pattern we witness time and again, in history, in society, in the world around us.

Yet, there are exceptions — rare souls who, despite standing at the pinnacle of success, never let go of their humility. One such extraordinary individual was Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Rising from humble beginnings to become the President of India, he remained grounded, always accessible, always kind. Power never altered his essence. He understood that positions come and go, but the way one treats people is what truly endures. Even today, long after he has left this world, he lives on — not in the grandeur of titles, but in the hearts of those who admired his humility.

Life is transient, and so is the honour it bestows. Let us learn from the flowers of the temple. Let us embrace success with grace and relinquish it with dignity. Above all, let us remember that it is not our position but our character that determines our true legacy.

(Jan 2025 edition)

India's Forgotten Senior Citizens: The Case for a Dedicated Ministry

(India's senior citizens face neglect, financial insecurity, and healthcare challenges. A dedicated ministry is essential to address their needs, ensuring dignity, security, and policy-driven support.)

In a country where the youth, minorities, and children have dedicated ministries to champion their causes, India's senior citizens find themselves relegated to a small division under the Social Justice Ministry. This division, tasked with coordinating the needs of the elderly across a dozen ministries, operates without a specific budget allocation. It starkly contrasts the focused attention given to other demographic groups. Recognising this glaring oversight,

Year	Children (0-14 years)	Senior Citizens (60+ years)
1991	37.2%	6.8%
2001	35.3%	7.4%
2011	30.8%	8.6%
2021	25.7%	10.1%
2031	21.8%	13.2%
2036	20.2%	15.0%

Priyadharshni Rahul, editor of PreSense, took a bold step. She filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India, advocating for establishing an exclusive ministry for senior citizens. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, acknowledging the gravity of the issue, advised her to submit a representation to the Government of India for consideration. Following this guidance, Priyadharshni has presented her case directly to the Hon'ble Prime Minister. This move highlights a critical gap in India's governance structure. As the country's population ages rapidly, the need for a dedicated ministry to address the unique challenges faced by senior citizens has never been more pressing. Priyadharshni's action brings to the forefront a long-overlooked issue: the necessity of giving our elders the same level of governmental focus and resources that other segments of society receive.

The Silver Tsunami: A Global and Indian Perspective

The world is experiencing an unprecedented demographic shift, with the elderly population growing remarkably. This 'silver tsunami' is particularly pronounced in India, where the number of senior citizens is projected to surge dramatically in the coming decades. According to the India Ageing Report 2023:

- In 2022, there were 149 million persons aged 60 years and above in India, comprising 10.5% of the country's population.

- By 2050, this share is expected to double to 20.8%, with the absolute number reaching a staggering 347 million.
- This demographic transition is further illustrated by the narrowing gap between the population of children (0-14 years) and senior citizens:

By 2050, it is projected that one in every five Indians will be a senior citizen, a demographic reality that demands immediate and focused attention from policymakers.

The Plight of Our Elders: Challenges and Inadequacies

Despite their growing numbers, senior citizens in India face many challenges, many of which stem from inadequate governmental support and societal neglect. The current institutional framework, which relegates senior citizens' issues to a mere division under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, is woefully inadequate to address their multifaceted needs. Some of the key challenges include:

1. **Healthcare Access:** There is limited access to specialised geriatric care, especially in rural areas. Insurance companies charge huge premiums to senior citizens. This coupled with the GST of 18% have become a heavy burden on senior citizens who have very little source of income. There is also an age restriction for taking insurance. Many hospitals do not accept the recent Insurance Scheme of the

Government of India for 70 years and above, forcing senior citizens to dig into their already meagre source of income and personal savings.

2. Financial Insecurity: Inadequate pension schemes and a lack of financial products tailored for the elderly.
3. Social Isolation: The breakdown of traditional family structures leads to loneliness and neglect.
4. Lack of Infrastructure: Insufficient senior-friendly public spaces and housing options.
5. Abuse and Exploitation: Inadequate legal protection against elder abuse.
6. Travel concessions: The Railway concessions for senior citizens were withdrawn during COVID time and is yet to be restored.

Perhaps most alarmingly, there is a significant lack of awareness and utilisation of existing schemes meant for senior citizens. The India Ageing Report 2023 reveals:

- 45% of senior citizens are unaware of the Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme
- 56% are unaware of the Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme
- A staggering 88% are unaware of the Annapurna Scheme

Even among those aware, utilisation rates are dismally low:

- Only 28.4% of the elderly are aware of any concessions across the country
- Merely 15% have availed concessions for train and bus travel
- Utilisation of other concessions like Income Tax Rebate (1.4%), Special Interest on Bank account or loan (3.3%), and telecommunication services (1%) is negligible.

The recent Medical Insurance Scheme for persons above 70, is yet to get popularised.

These statistics paint a grim picture of a vulnerable population left to fend for themselves despite the existence of various welfare schemes.

The Need for a Dedicated Ministry: A Moral Imperative

Establishing a dedicated Ministry for Senior Citizens is not just a bureaucratic necessity; it is a moral imperative for a nation that prides itself on its rich cultural heritage and respect for elders. As Priyadharshni poignantly states in her representation: "If India fails in accommodating, addressing and appreciating the welfare of senior citizens, we will fail in our culture, we will fail in our morals, we will fail in our tradition, and we will fail in our history and we will fail as a country."

A dedicated ministry would provide:

1. Focused Approach: Undivided attention to the unique needs of senior citizens.
2. Comprehensive Policy Formulation: Development and implementation of integrated policies for senior care.
3. Efficient Resource Allocation: Ensure adequate budgetary provisions for senior citizens' welfare.
4. Improved Coordination: Act as a nodal agency coordinating efforts across various departments.
5. Enhanced Awareness and Accessibility: Improve outreach and utilisation of welfare schemes.
6. Tailored Solutions: Develop strategies catering to different segments of the elderly population.

Global Best Practices: Learning from International Models

Several countries have recognised the importance of dedicated institutional mechanisms for elderly care:

- Japan: Has a dedicated Elder Care Bureau
- Norway: Operates a specialised Elder Care Division
- Singapore: Has a ministry focusing on ageing planning

These countries have implemented comprehensive long-term care insurance systems, universal healthcare with specialised services, and action plans for successful ageing. With its rapidly ageing population, India can ill afford to lag in this crucial area of governance.

The Way Forward: A Blueprint for Change

The proposed Ministry for Senior Citizens could be structured with the following departments:

1. Department of Health and Wellness
2. Department of Financial Security and Pensions
3. Department of Social Integration and Community Services
4. Department of Housing and Infrastructure
5. Department of Research and Policy Development
6. Department of Legal Affairs and Rights Protection

Key functions would include policy formulation, scheme management, healthcare coordination, ensuring financial security, promoting social integration, infrastructure development, research, legal protection, awareness campaigns, and international cooperation.

A Call to Action: Honouring Our Elders

As India stands at the cusp of becoming a global superpower, it cannot afford to neglect its elderly population. Establishing a dedicated Ministry for Senior Citizens would address the pressing needs of this vulnerable group and reaffirm India's commitment to its cultural values of respecting and caring for the elderly. In the words of Priyadharshni, "We do not need a 'Ministry for Loneliness' like in Japan and the UK. We need a Ministry for Senior Citizens, making ourselves global leaders and

respectfully handling seniors who have relentlessly spent 60 years of theirs in raising this country and their people.”

"The time has come for India to take this bold step to create an institutional framework that ensures our elders can live their twilight years with dignity, security, and purpose. It is not just a matter of policy but a testament to our values as a nation. As we look to the future, let us not forget those who have brought us this far. Creating a Ministry for Senior Citizens would be a fitting tribute to their lifelong contributions and a beacon of hope for future generations.”

(Jan 2025 edition)

Bloodshed in Paradise: Pahalgam Attack Exposes Pakistan's Terror Strategy

(The Pahalgam terror attack exposed Pakistan's ongoing support for cross-border terrorism, demanding India's united political, military, and societal response to defend national security.)



The horrific terrorist attack at Pahalgam's Baisaran Valley on 22 April 2025 has once again exposed the fragility of peace in the region and Pakistan's continued support for cross-border terrorism. As India mourns the loss of 26 innocent lives, this tragedy serves as a stark reminder of

the persistent threat posed by Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and the urgent need for national unity in the face of such barbaric acts. The attack, deliberately targeting Hindu tourists in one of Kashmir's most picturesque locations, has reignited tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbours and demands a unified response from all sections of Indian society.

A Historical Pattern of Aggression: Pakistan's Terror Campaign Since 1947

The Pahalgam attack represents yet another chapter in Pakistan's long history of aggression against India. Since the partition in 1947, Pakistan has consistently used terrorism as a state policy to destabilise India. The first Kashmir War of 1947-48 began when Pakistan feared Kashmir would accede to India and sent tribal forces to occupy parts of the princely State. This pattern of aggression continued with the 1965 war, following Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar, designed to infiltrate forces into Jammu and Kashmir to precipitate an insurgency.

The 1971 war, precipitated by the political crisis in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), saw Pakistan launch Operation Chengiz Khan, bombing Indian airfields. However, India's military prowess led to Pakistan's humiliating defeat and the creation of Bangladesh, with approximately 90,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendering to Indian forces.

In subsequent decades, Pakistan shifted its strategy towards proxy warfare, supporting terrorist groups to wage a "thousand cuts" against India. The 1989 uprising in Kashmir saw Pakistan capitalising upon the resistance movement to undermine Indian control. The 1999 Kargil War, 2001 Indian Parliament attack, and the 2008 Mumbai siege, which killed 166 people, including 6 Americans, all bear Pakistan's fingerprints, with the latter attributed to Lashkar-e-Taiba, a militant group with alleged ties to Pakistan's intelligence agency.

The February 2019 attack on Indian paramilitary forces in Pulwama, claimed by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed, killed at least forty soldiers and led to Indian air strikes on terrorist camps within Pakistani territory. This historical record demonstrates Pakistan's unwavering commitment to using terrorism as a strategic tool against India.

The Pahalgam Massacre: Religious Targeting and Cold-Blooded Execution



The Pahalgam attack stands out for its brutality and explicit religious targeting. On 22nd April 2025, five terrorists armed with M4 carbines and AK-47s entered the tourist spot of Baisaran Valley, surrounded by dense pine forests

and accessible only on foot or horseback. The attackers, wearing military-style uniforms, deliberately singled out Hindu tourists in a meticulously planned assault.

Survivors recounted how the terrorists asked for the names and religions of the victims before shooting them. Some tourists were forced to recite the Islamic verse of *Kalima* to segregate them by religion. Men were forced to remove their trousers to check for circumcision before being shot at point-blank range. Video footage captured scenes of panic with injured victims pleading for help and bodies strewn across the ground.

Of the 26 people killed, 25 were tourists and one was a local Muslim pony operator named Syed Adil Hussain Shah, who heroically tried to protect the tourists by wrestling a gun from one of the attackers before being shot. The remaining victims included tourists from 15 different Indian States and Nepal, demonstrating the nationwide impact of this tragedy. The attackers even took selfies with dead bodies, displaying a disturbing level of depravity.

The Resistance Front (TRF), believed to be an offshoot of the Pakistan-based UN-designated terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, initially claimed responsibility before retracting their statement four days later. Intelligence reports suggest the same terror module was also responsible for killing six labourers and a doctor in 2024.

India's Decisive Response and Escalating Tensions

The Indian government's response to the Pahalgam attack has been swift and multi-pronged. India accused Pakistan of supporting cross-border terrorism and implemented several retaliatory measures:



- Suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, potentially restricting Pakistan's water supply
- Expulsion of Pakistani diplomats and closure of borders
- Severing diplomatic ties and suspending visas for Pakistani nationals

Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that the "perpetrators and conspirators" of the Pahalgam attack will be "served with the harshest response". He asserted that the armed forces have "complete operational freedom" to decide on the mode, targets, and timing of India's response. As Modi stated, "it is the national resolve to deal a crushing blow to terrorism".

Border skirmishes between Indian and Pakistani forces began along the Line of Control on 24th April 2025, and India closed its airspace to Pakistani airlines on 30th April.

These developments have led to what many analysts describe as the most significant bilateral confrontation since 2019.

Politics Over National Security: Opposition Opportunism Amid Crisis

Even as the nation grapples with this tragedy, certain opposition elements have unfortunately chosen to politicise the issue for electoral gain. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge criticised Prime Minister Modi for not attending an all-party meeting on the Pahalgam attack, questioning why Modi was addressing an election rally in Bihar instead. This criticism comes despite Modi giving the armed forces "complete operational freedom" to respond to the attack.

While Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi appropriately stated that "those responsible for the Pahalgam terror attack must pay the price" and that the Government has the opposition's "100 per cent support", his party colleagues have been less united in their stance. Such political point-scoring during a national security crisis inadvertently provides Pakistan with propaganda material to deflect blame and sow division.

Pakistan routinely quotes Indian opposition leaders' criticisms in international forums to claim that even Indians don't support their Government's position. This weakens

India's diplomatic offensive and emboldens our adversaries.

It may be recalled that during the 1971 Indo-Pak War and again in 1991 during economic crisis, then opposition leaders Vajpayee and Advani stood with the Government during the crisis without giving adverse comments for their political gains. Sadly, some present-day opposition leaders lack that maturity.

Religious Unity in Crisis: The Need for Stronger Condemnation

While several Muslim organisations have condemned the terror attack, with the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) pausing its protest programmes against the Waqf law for three days in solidarity with the victims' families, a more forceful rejection of Pakistan's terror tactics is needed.

Imam Umer Ahmed Ilyasi, head of the All-India Imam Organisation, announced that imams of more than 5.5 lakh mosques would give a strong message against terrorism during Friday prayers. He rightly stated that "killing innocent people based on religion is not only against Islam, but against humanity".

However, these condemnations must explicitly name Pakistan as the sponsor of terrorism to counter the narrative that seeks to divide Indians along religious lines. The terrorists' deliberate targeting of Hindus aims to create

communal discord within India, a strategy that can only be defeated through unequivocal condemnation from all religious communities.

Elections and Security: The Governance Challenge in Jammu and Kashmir

The Supreme Court's December 2023 directive to hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir by September 2024 came despite the Government's concerns about security readiness. Following the August 2019 revocation of Article 370 and the region's special status, Kashmir had witnessed relative calm and development progress until the recent elections.

The Legislative Assembly elections held between 18 September and 1 October 2024 resulted in the INDIA alliance winning a majority, with the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) emerging as the single largest party. However, this political transition has coincided with a resurgence in terrorist activity.

While law and order in Jammu and Kashmir now falls primarily under the purview of the State Government, opposition parties have focused their criticism exclusively on Prime Minister Modi for political gain, rather than holding the Chief Minister accountable for local security failures.

International Media: Whitewashing Terror

The Western media's coverage of the Pahalgam attack has been problematic, with major outlets like the New York Times, BBC, CNN, Reuters, and the Guardian referring to the perpetrators as "militants" or "gunmen" rather than terrorists, and describing the massacre as a "shooting". This semantic softening downplays the ideological and religious motives behind the attack.

The US government's House Foreign Affairs Committee publicly rebuked the New York Times, replacing "militants" with "terrorists" in bold red in an edited version of their headline, declaring that this attack was "unequivocally a terrorist act".

The Path Forward: Unity Against Terror

In this moment of national crisis, India must stand united against terrorism. The government should pursue a multi-dimensional strategy:

1. Maintain diplomatic pressure on Pakistan while building international consensus against state-sponsored terrorism
2. Strengthen security apparatus in Kashmir without compromising on development initiatives
3. Engage constructively with all political stakeholders in Jammu and Kashmir

4. Counter radicalisation through community outreach and education

Political parties must prioritise national security over electoral considerations. Opposition criticism, when necessary, should be constructive rather than divisive. Religious leaders from all communities must vociferously condemn terrorism sponsored by Pakistan and promote interfaith harmony.

The Pahalgam attack is not merely an assault on tourists; it is an attack on India's sovereignty and pluralistic ethos. As Prime Minister Modi stated, the perpetrators will face "the harshest response". However, the most effective response will be a united India that refuses to be divided along religious or political lines, precisely what the terrorists and their sponsors hope to achieve.

In the words of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, "The Prime Minister has to take action. Action has to be clear and strong". On this principle, all Indians must stand together, transcending political differences in the face of this grave national security challenge.

(April 2025 edition)

A Call for Zero Disruption: Anguish of a Common Man



Disruption Denies the Common Man's Right to Be Heard

In the hallowed halls of India's Parliament, where the voices of millions of citizens should be amplified and represented, there is a growing crisis that threatens the very foundation of our democracy: **disruption**. A practice that has, unfortunately, become a regular feature of parliamentary proceedings, depriving the common man of their right to be heard and denying hardworking Parliamentarians the chance to fulfil their duty. This behaviour, primarily driven by the self-interest of a few, is a direct blow to the democratic process. It not only undermines the very

essence of our system of governance, but it also strips away the dignity of the people we have sworn to serve.

During the 15th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards ceremony, we have been vocal in our call for a **Zero Disruption** in the 18th Lok Sabha. Our words resonate deeply with the aspirations of the people, reminding everyone that Parliament is not a stage for political theatrics, but a forum where the welfare of the nation. The issues of the common man should take centre stage there. Our assertion that **“Question Hour belongs to the common man”** captures the crux of the matter. For the ordinary citizen, this is their only avenue to directly question the government through their MPs, raise issues that affect their daily lives, and hold their elected representatives accountable. However, when disruptions occur, this essential mechanism is rendered meaningless.

Disruption Hinders the Performance of MPs and Paralyzes Parliament

The repercussions of such disruption extend far beyond the immediate chaos in the House. As Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju, aptly pointed out, **when Parliament is disrupted, it is not just the ruling party that loses**, but also the Opposition. The most significant damage is borne by those who work diligently to raise pertinent questions, participate in debates, and push for meaningful change. For these Parliamentarians, the

disruptions deny them the **opportunity to perform**—to fulfil their duty towards the people who entrusted them with the responsibility of representing their interests.

Parliamentarians who work tirelessly to contribute to the nation's development, are often silenced in these turbulent times. Despite their best efforts, the *momentum* of their contributions is lost when the House proceedings are cut short by constant disruptions. These dedicated individuals—who, by the way, are the **true performers**—find themselves at a disadvantage. Their work goes unrecognised, and their potential for receiving accolades like the **Sansad Ratna** is hindered. But, who are we really doing this for? The few who use Parliament as a playground for their petty interests, or the countless citizens whose voices deserve to be heard?

The Need for Unity and Responsibility to Honour the People's Mandate

This practice, rooted in self-interest and often fuelled by personal or political agendas, harms the very fabric of our democracy. Disruptions often stem from leaders more focused on furthering their own causes than addressing the nation's concerns. But what about the 1.3 billion people for whom Parliament exists? These are the men and women who, with their blood, sweat, and tears, keep the wheels of the country turning. They send their representatives to the House with one simple expectation: **to ensure that their**

concerns are addressed, their problems are solved, and their voices are heard.

Every time the proceedings are halted, an invaluable opportunity to discuss, debate, and find solutions is lost. This is an abuse of power, an affront to the democratic process, and a slap in the face to the very people whom Parliament is supposed to serve. These interruptions do not solve anything; they only create **more barriers** between the people and their elected officials.

A Call for Zero Disruption and a Restored Focus on Public Service

Zero Disruption is not just a request—it is an urgent demand from the people of India. The **common man** wants Parliament to function. He wants his issues discussed; he wants his leaders to deliberate, debate, and most importantly, **deliver solutions**. They don't want their representatives to be caught up in petty squabbles, wasting time on disruptions that go nowhere. Every session that is adjourned due to such disruptions is a lost opportunity for progress, a lost chance to improve the lives of millions.

It is time for all Parliamentarians to rise above self-interest and **take responsibility for the collective well-being of the nation**. As leaders, they should set aside their differences and work towards making Parliament a space where constructive dialogue thrives. We must put an end to

the cycle of disruption and create an environment where every voice is heard and every issue gets the attention it deserves. The performance of our Parliamentarians should be measured not by the number of times they disrupt proceedings, but by their **commitment to work for the people**—through action, not obstruction.

Our call for a **Zero Disruption 18th Lok Sabha** must not fall on deaf ears. Parliamentarians must come together to honour their duty to the people and the nation, and to restore the dignity of our Parliament. Disruption may seem like a momentary expression of discontent, but its long-term consequences are far-reaching. It undermines the faith of the people in our democratic system, robs Parliamentarians of their chance to make a real difference, and ultimately harms the very people we are here to serve.

Let Parliamentarians heed the call for **Zero Disruption** and work together to ensure that the voice of the people is heard loud and clear in the heart of our democracy. It is time to put aside their differences and work towards a Parliament that truly represents the will of the people. For when Parliament works, the nation works. Let us make it so.

(July 2025 edition)

Our Publications



Some of our Publications



Prime Point Foundation has published more than 80 books in digital and print format. All books are distributed free of cost. The books can be downloaded from the following link.

<https://tinyurl.com/PPFpublication>

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About this book

This book is the compilation of Editorials and Cover stories authored by Prime Point Srinivasan in the eMagazine PreSense during 2024 and 2025. These articles are on varied subjects ranging from politics to social relevance.

About the Author



K. Srinivasan, also known as Prime Point Srinivasan, is a former banker turned communication pioneer and social entrepreneur. At 75, he advocates for positive journalism and democratic values across India. After retiring voluntarily from banking, he founded Prime Point Foundation in 1999 and launched the eMagazine *PreSense* in 2006, inspired by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. In 2010, he established the Sansad Ratna Awards to honour outstanding parliamentarians, with Dr. Kalam inaugurating the first ceremony. Srinivasan also founded impactful organisations such as Digital JournLists Association of India (DiJAI), Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) and Education Loan Task Force (ELTF), empowering India's youth and strengthening democracy. A prolific author and digital journalist, his books are freely available to ensure wide accessibility, earning him respect from parliamentarians and professionals alike.

He can be reached at editor@corpezine.com