



SPEAKS

Cover Stories 2024

**Compiled by
R Nurullah
Consulting Editor**

**Prime Point Foundation
Chennai**

PreSense Speaks: Cover Stories 2024

First published January 2025

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ISBN 978-93-91803-76-6

Pages 131

Price: Free distribution

Printer: eBook

Publishers: Prime Point Foundation
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Introduction

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

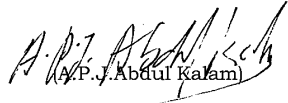
FOREWORD

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


Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones

- Dec 1999 Launch of Prime Point Foundation, Publisher of the ezine.
- Feb 2006 Launch of ezine, PreSense online by Dr Y S Rajan.
- Aug 2006 Integration of Podcast with the ezine contents.
- Aug 2007 Introduction of Guest Editors.
- Feb 2008 Second Anniversary Edition with Dr Abdul Kalam's exclusive interview. Masthead changed.
- Apr 2008 First ezine to become 'Media Partner' for a global event held at London.
- July 2008 Introduction of cartoons – Cartoon Character 'Prince' launched by Dr Abdul Kalam.
- Sep 2008 Change in layout, introducing photographs on the cover.
- Jan 2010 Ezine's new initiative 'Education Loan Task Force' (ELTF) launched to create awareness among students and parents.
- May 2010 Ezine's second initiative to honour top performing Parliamentarians, with the *Sansad Ratna* Award launched. Golden Jubilee (50th) Edition launched.
- Feb 2011 Diamond Jubilee (60th) Edition.

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

- Apr 2012 Ezine resumed in a new format of contents. The tag line changed from

PreSense Speaks: Cover Stories 2024

	'Communicate the Communication' to 'Spreading Positive Vibrations.'
Apr 2013	Tamil Nadu Governor launched a special edition on the Indian Parliament, coinciding with the <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Awards.
Jun 2013	Platinum Jubilee (75 th) Edition launched by the youth at three places simultaneously, across the nation.
Jun 2015	100 th Edition - PreSense 100 released in print format.
Mar 2016	Ezine's third initiative 'Digital Journalists Association of India' (DiJAI) launched.
Jun 2016	Second edition of PreSense 100+ released in print format
Dec 2017	Ezine's fourth initiative 'Digital Security Association of India' (DiSAI) launched.
Mar 2018	Third edition of Digest PreSense130 released in print format.
Aug 2019	Fourth edition of Digest PreSense150 launched in pdf format.
May 2021	PreSense Speaks Series – First volume released on Communication (compilation of articles published earlier)
Sep 2021	Fifth edition of Digest PreSense175 in 6 volumes released.
Jul 2022	PreSense Speaks Series – Second volume released compiling the Editorials published between 2020 and 2022
Aug 2022	PreSense Speaks Series – Third volume launched – Compilation of articles on Indian freedom fighters
Aug 2023	Compilation of articles on Freedom fighters Part II launched

PreSense Speaks: Cover Stories 2024

- Aug 2024 Compilation of articles on Freedom Fighters – Third edition launched
- Nov 2024 PreSense Speaks – Review of 17th Lok Sabha released
- Nov 2024 Brochure on 25 years journey of Prime Point Foundation's "Empowering Vision" launched
- Jan 2025 Books "PreSense Speaks – Cover Stories 2024" and PreSense Speaks – Editorials 2024" launched.

The Journey Continues.....

Editorial Board – January 2025

Publisher and
Managing Editor

K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)

Joint Managing
Editor

Ramesh Sundaram,
Senior Journalist, Ex The
Hindu

Editor in Chief

C Badri, Former General
Manager, Canara Bank and
CVO, IOB, Chennai

Consulting Editor

Editor

R Nurullah, Senior
Journalist

Priyadharshni Rahul,
Advocate, Supreme Court of
India, New Delhi

Cartoon Editor

Triambak Sharma, Editor,
Cartoon Watch, Raipur



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives

Prime Point Foundation, a Non-Profit Trust and NGO, was founded in December 1999 by Shri K Srinivasan (popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan), a former Senior Banker, digital Journalist, and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. The foundation is associated with many eminent persons.

In the past 25 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication, and digital journalism.

The Foundation has formed 5 initiatives to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. They are non-commercial and focussed on youth.

PreSense: The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till Nov 2024, the **PR**SENSE**** Foundation has published 213 editions. This is a digital-only magazine. Digests containing select articles, up to 150 editions of the eMagazine, have so far been published. Dr Abdul Kalam has written the foreword for the Digest

of articles up to 100 editions. PreSense publishes the cartoon character Prince, which was launched by Dr Abdul Kalam in 2008. PreSense has published a Digest of select articles published up to 175 editions in 8 volumes.

India Book of Records has recognised PreSense for publishing maximum number of digital only eMagazine since 2006 through voluntary efforts. .

Sansad Ratna Awards: This is a flagship initiative started in 2010 to honour top performing Parliamentarians every year, based on various performance parameters, and selected by a Jury Committee of eminent Parliamentarians. Dr Abdul Kalam himself inaugurated the first edition of the Awards event in May 2010. Till 2024, the Foundation has conducted 14 editions and presented 125 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner up to the 9th Edition. 10th Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11th, 12th and 13th Editions were held at New Delhi.



India Book of Records (IBR) has recognised Sansad Ratna Awards for maximum number of Parliamentary Awards (86) given and maximum number of award events (12) by the civil society based on the performance in consecutive years.

Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) is an off-shoot of Sansad Ratna Awards. This is a registered NGO operating since 2018. NGPL has organised several workshops online and offline, for young political



leaders and aspirants. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and retired constitutional authorities have participated and shared their views. NGPL will shortly be instituting Awards for young promising politicians.

Education Loan Task Force (ELTF) was started in 2010 to create awareness about education loans, among students and parents. More than 30,000 queries have been responded to, through email, and more than 5000 serious complaints have been taken up with the top management of the banks concerned, for redressal. Many policy issues have been taken up by Sansad Ratna Awardee MPs, in the Parliament for solution. ELTF does not facilitate loans.



Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI):



DiJAI is an independent NGO founded in 2017 to raise public and journalist awareness of digital journalism and its implications. DiJAI conducts several online and offline workshops and seminars with panels of domain experts.

Download all our publications free from the link
<https://tinyurl.com/PPFpublication>

Please click this link and subscribe to our Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/c/PrimePointFoundation/>

Publisher's Note

We are delighted to announce the release of the 48th publication from the Prime Point Foundation, titled **"PreSense Speaks: Cover Stories 2024"**, as part of our *PreSense Speaks* series. This remarkable edition is a comprehensive compilation of all the cover stories featured in the *PreSense* eMagazine throughout 2024.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Shri R. Nurullah, Consulting Editor, for his dedicated efforts in meticulously compiling these articles into this exceptional book and eBook.

I sincerely appreciate Shri Ramesh Sundaram, Joint Managing Editor, and Shri C. Badri, Editor-in-Chief, for their invaluable guidance and unwavering support in bringing this publication to fruition. I would also like to commend the contributions of Smt. Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor, and the entire Editorial Team, whose steadfast commitment made this endeavour possible.

With warm regards,

K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)

Founder & Chairman,
Prime Point Foundation

Cover Stories 2024

From Dispute to Harmony: Resurgence of Ayodhya

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Jan 2024)

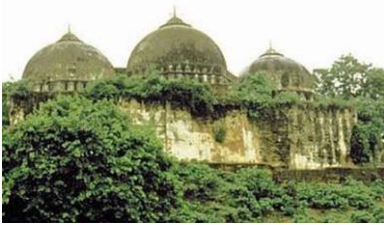
(Ayodhya's historic Ram temple consecration, ending a 500-year dispute, signifies India's communal harmony and economic potential.)



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 'Janmastan'. Later it was known as 'Janmastan – Babri Masjid'. Since Ram Janamastan 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

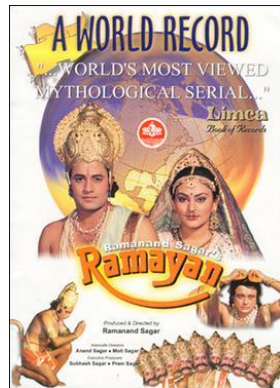
In 1985, a Constitution bench of five judges ruled in the 'Shah Bano' case that Muslim women were entitled to maintenance from their husbands after divorce under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Although the Rajiv Gandhi Government initially welcomed the judgment in Parliament, it later diluted 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.

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. Rajiv Gandhi unlocked the site under pressure from Hindu leaders, as he had already yielded to Muslim leaders. 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 Janmasthan 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 always be counterproductive. Remember that the people who opposed the Ram temple created more awareness among the silent majority than those who supported it. They should keep in mind that our traditional mantra "sarve Janata suki no bhavan" ("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.

14th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards - A Report

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Feb 2024)

 PRIME POINT
Foundation

 Sansad Ratna®
Awards Committee

 PROSENSE

 NEXT GEN
POLITICAL LEADERS
TECHNOLOGICAL FUTURE

Śaṅṣād Rātnā Awards 2024

Śaṅṣād Utkṛiṣht Māhā Rātnā



Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab Smt. Supriya Sule Shri Shirang Appa Barne

Śaṅṣād Māhā Rātnā



Shri N.K.Premachandran Shri Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato Dr. Heena Vijaykumar Gavit

Śaṅṣād Māhā Rātnā - Committees



Dr. Jayant Sinha (Finance) Shri Gaddi Gowdar (Agriculture) Shri Vijaysai Reddy (Transport, Tourism and Culture) Shri T.G.Venkatesh

Śaṅṣād Rātnā



Dr. Sukanta Majumdar Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma Shri Sudhir Gupta Shrikanth Eknath Shinde Dr. Amol Ramsingh Kolhe

Saturday, 17th February 2024 - New Delhi

The 14th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards event was held at New Maharashtra Sadan, New Delhi on Saturday, February 17, 2024. Shri Hansraj Ahir (Chairman, National Commission for Backward Classes), Dr Smt. Tamilisai Soundararajan (Governor, Telangana and LG, Puducherry), Ajay Mishra (Minister of State, Home Affairs), and Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) were the Chief Guests. 12 Individuals and 3 Parliamentary Committees were honoured with the Sansad Ratna Awards.

This Awards event is the last of the 17th Lok Sabha. An eminent Jury Committee chaired by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Minister of State, Law, and Parliamentary Affairs) and T S Krishnamurthy (Former Chief Election Commissioner of India) selected the awardees based on the data provided by PRS Legislative Research, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha websites. The performance of the Members / Committees covering the entire 17th Lok Sabha was taken into account.

Three categories of Awards, Sansad Ratna, Sansad Maha Ratna, and Sansad Utkrisht Maha Ratna Awards were presented on behalf of civil society. After the Awards ceremony, all the awardees had a photo session with the Hon'ble President of India and the Hon'ble Vice President of India.

Photo Session with Hon'ble President of India



Photo Session with Hon'ble Vice President of India



Photo Session during the Awards function



Sansad Utkrisht Maha Ratna Awards (Presented once in 10 years)

This Award is given to those who have received the Sansad Maha Ratna Award in the previous 16th Lok Sabha and continue to show consistent performance in the current 17th Lok Sabha from the first sitting. Initiated debates, private members bills and questions are taken into account.

Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJD, Odisha), Smt. Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra) and Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra) received this Award.

Sansad Maha Ratna Awards – Individuals (Presented once in 5 years)

This Award is presented based on the consistency of performance from the first sitting in the 17th Lok Sabha. Initiated Debates, Private Members Bills, and Questions are taken into account.

Shri N K Premachandran (RSP, Kerala), Shri Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (INC, West Bengal), Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato (BJP, Jharkhand) and Dr Heena Vijayakumar Gavit (BJP, Maharashtra) were honoured with this Award.

Sansad Maha Ratna Awards – Committees (Presented once in 5 years)

This Award is presented based on the consistency of performance in the 17th Lok Sabha. The number of sittings and Reports presented to the House are taken into account. For Rajya Sabha Committees, the period coinciding with the 17th Lok Sabha is considered.

Finance Committee (chaired by Shri Jayant Sinha, BJP, Jharkhand), Agriculture Committee (Chaired by Shri Gaddi Gowder, BJP, Karnataka) and Transport Committee (Chaired earlier by Shri T G Venkatesan, BJP, Andhra Pradesh and Dr Vijay Sai Reddy, YSR Congress, Andhra Pradesh) received this Award.

Sansad Ratna Awards – Individuals (Presented Annually)

This Award is presented based on the top performance of the Members from the first sitting of the 17th Lok Sabha till the end of Winter Session 2023. Initiated Debates, Private Members Bills, and Questions are taken into account.

This award was received by Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma (INC, Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Shri Sudhir Gupta (BJP, Madhya Pradesh), Dr Amol Ramsing Kolhe (NCP, Maharashtra), Dr Srikant Shinde (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra), and Dr Sukanta Majumdar (BJP, West Bengal).

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

***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor
(March 2024)***

(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, they would likely to 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 and not with 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.

Review of 17th Lok Sabha – Bird’s Eye View: How Members Performed?

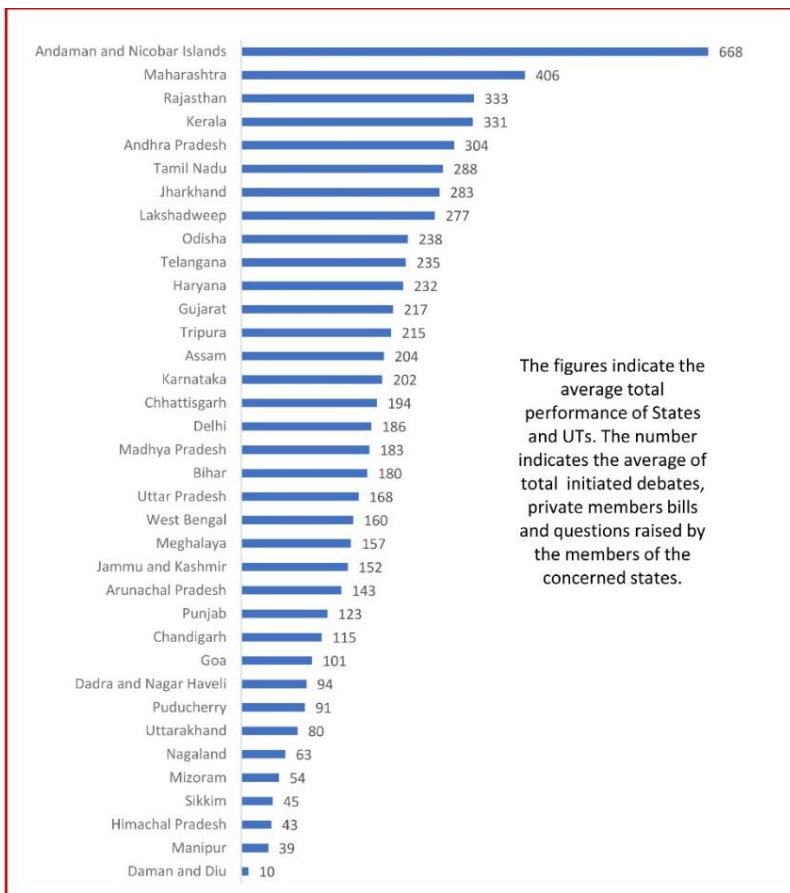
***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor, PreSense
(March 2024)***

The 17th Lok Sabha held sessions between June 2019 and February 2024. During this time, Lok Sabha held 274 sittings, the lowest among all previous full-term Lok Sabhas. About 15% of MPs in this Lok Sabha are women. 50% of MPs in this Lok Sabha are below 60 years of age. In this review, we will analyse the performance of MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha, Statewise, partywise, agewise, etc.

Data courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

In this analysis, we are comparing the total tally of initiated debates, private members bills introduced, and questions raised by the MPs. Associated debates are excluded from the analysis. We are excluding Ministers and Speaker who do not participate in debates, introduce Private Members' Bills, and raise questions. Ministers represent the Government during the debates and questions. On average, about 5%-7% of members of Lok Sabha act as Ministers at any point in time.

Performance of MPs Statewise – Maharashtra tops among the States



The National Average of the total tally of initiated debates, Private Members' Bills and questions for the entire Lok Sabha is 230 per MP for the entire 5 years.

With this, readers can compare the performance of all the States and UTs.

9 States and 2 UTs are above the National Average of 230.

Among the large States, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Kerala have shown good participation.

Among the UTs, Andaman and Nicobar Island has shown good performance.

9 States and UTs have shown poor performance in the 5 years, with less than 100 points.

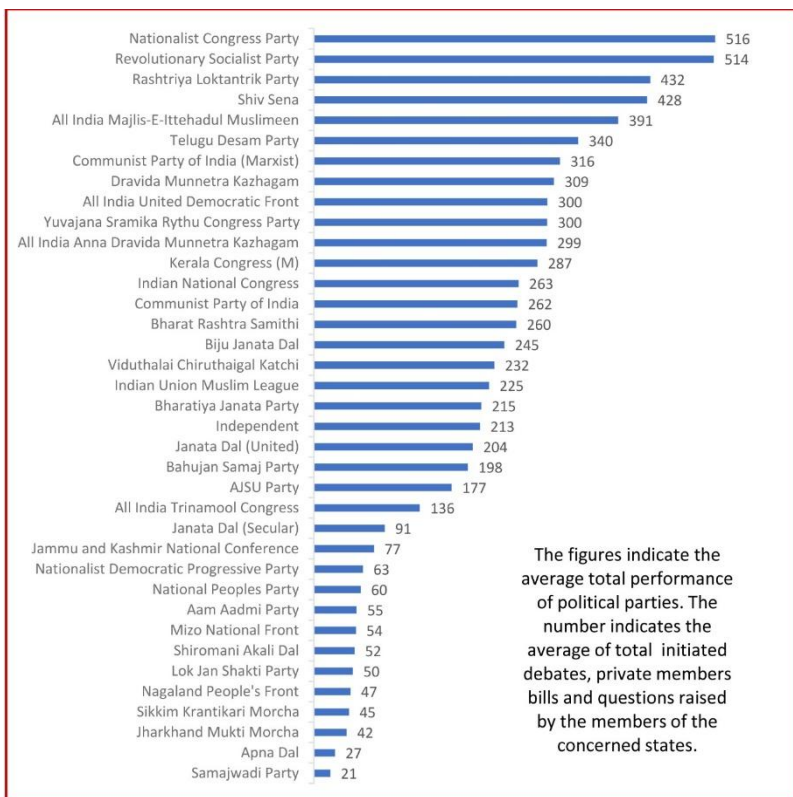
Performance of MPs Partywise for Total tally – NCP tops the list

17 parties have shown performance above the National Average for a total tally of 230. Smaller parties like NCP, RSP, RLP, Shiv Sena have shown higher performance. That means they have participated in the proceedings effectively.

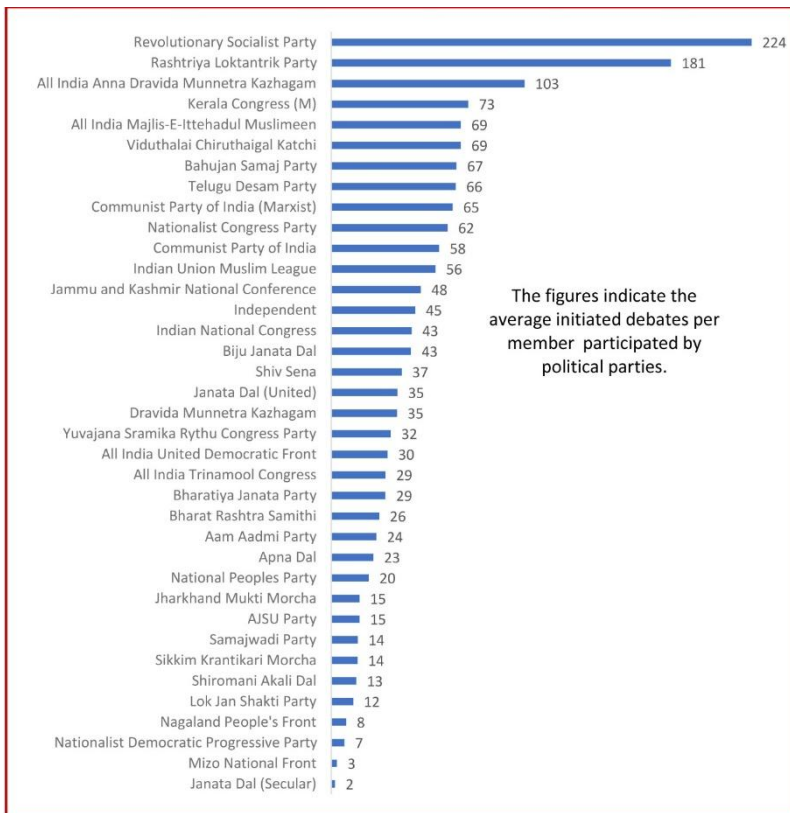
Indian National Congress, being the main opposition party has got 263 points. The Ruling Bharatiya Janata Party with more than 300 members has got 215 points.

Parties like JMM, Apna Dal, and Samajwadi Party have not participated effectively.

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Performance of MPs Partywise for Initiated Debates – RSP Leads the list



The National Average for Initiated Debates (Associated Debates excluded for our analysis) is 34. 19 parties have crossed the National Average of 34. The Revolutionary Socialist Party tops the list with 224 points. That means, the party has effectively utilized the Parliament time with full participation. Indian National Congress has obtained

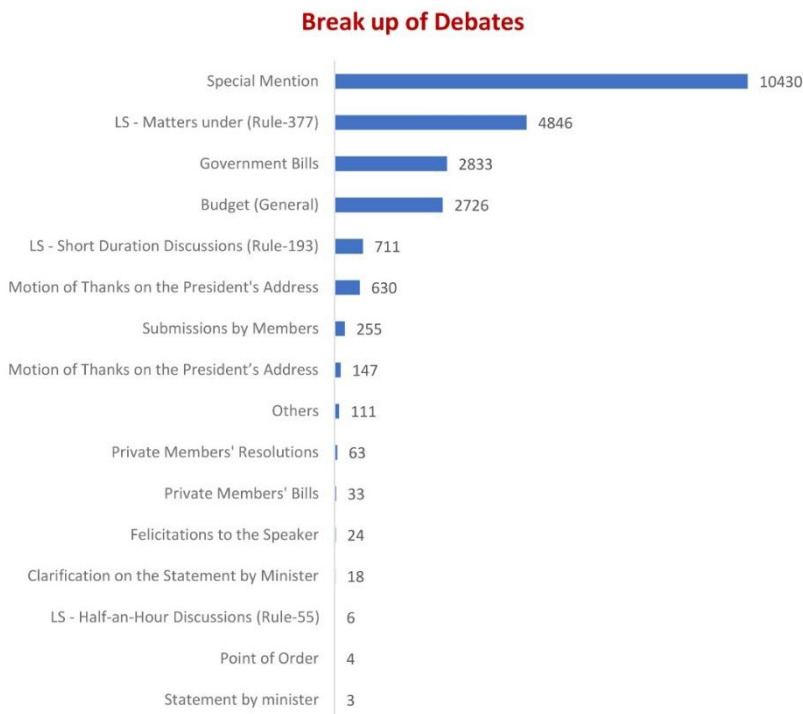
43 points and Bharatiya Janata Party has secured 29 points. This indicates that opposition parties have taken advantage of the Parliamentary proceedings with more participation. There are four parties, including JD(S) with single-digit participation.

Performance of MPs Partywise for Questions – NCP Leads the List



The National Average for Questions during the 17th Lok Sabha is 195. 16 parties have shown performance above the national average. NCP leads the list with 450 points. JMM, Samajwadi Party, and Apna Dal have not shown good performance. Indian National Congress has shown an average of 218. The ruling BJP is at 185.

Break up of Debates – A Quick View

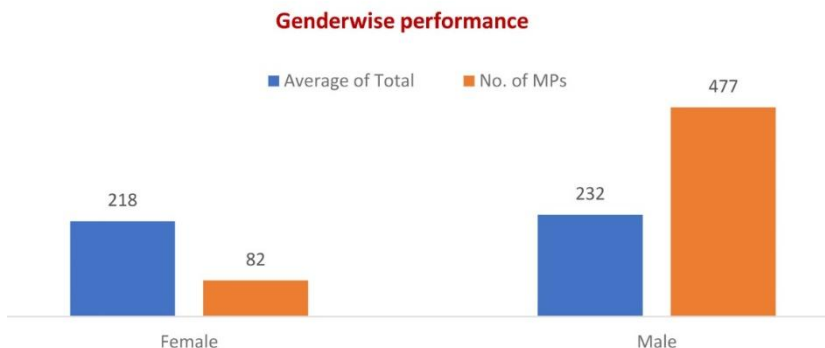


Many readers may not know the components of Debates. This Table indicates the various components of Debates, including Special Mention, Matters under Rule 377, Discussion over Government Bills, Discussion over Budgets, Short Duration discussions, etc.

Through these various opportunities, Members of Parliament can bring to the knowledge of the

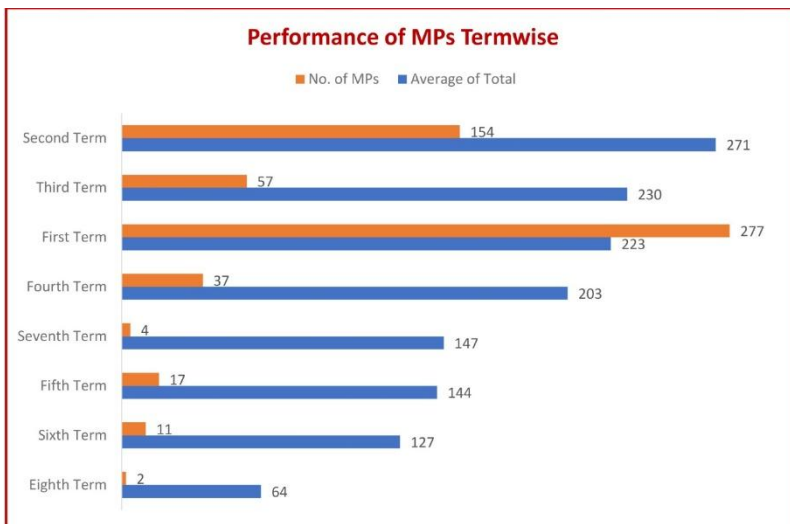
Government and to Parliament, the various issues facing the Constituency, State and Nation.

Performance of MPs - Genderwise

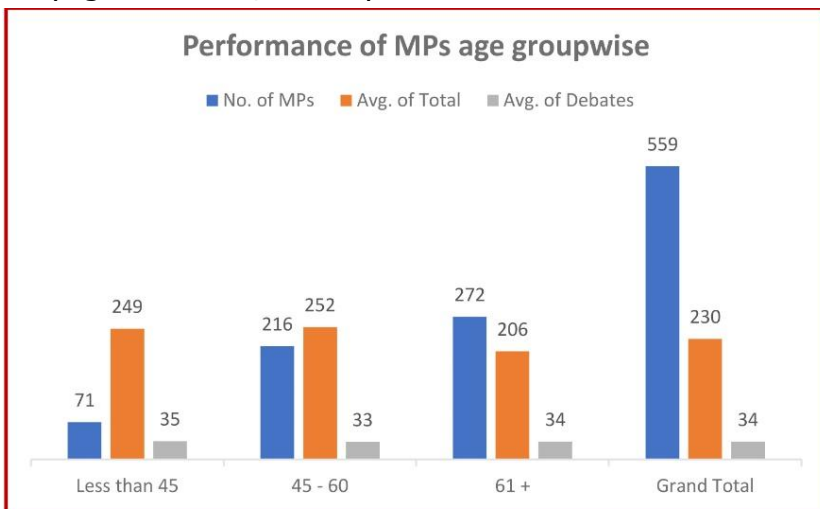


As against the National Average of 230 for the Total Tally of Initiatd Debates, Private Members Bills, and Questions, the Male MPs have crossed the National Average, while Female MPs have secured only 218. With less than 15 percent of Members in the Lok Sabha, and with fewer opportunities provided by the parties, the Female MPs could not show better performance. Political parties should give more opportunities to Female Members.

Performance of MPs - Termwise



Nearly 50 per cent of the MPs are First Term MPs. When they get elected, it may take some time for them to



understand the procedures of the Parliament. Nearly 28 percent of the MPs are in the Second Term. When they come to the Second Term, they are already familiar with all the procedures and rules of the Parliament. The Second Term MPs top the list with 271 points for the total tally, as against the National Average of 230. The performance and participation come down after the fifth term. Only a very few MPs in the sixth term or seventh term actively participate.

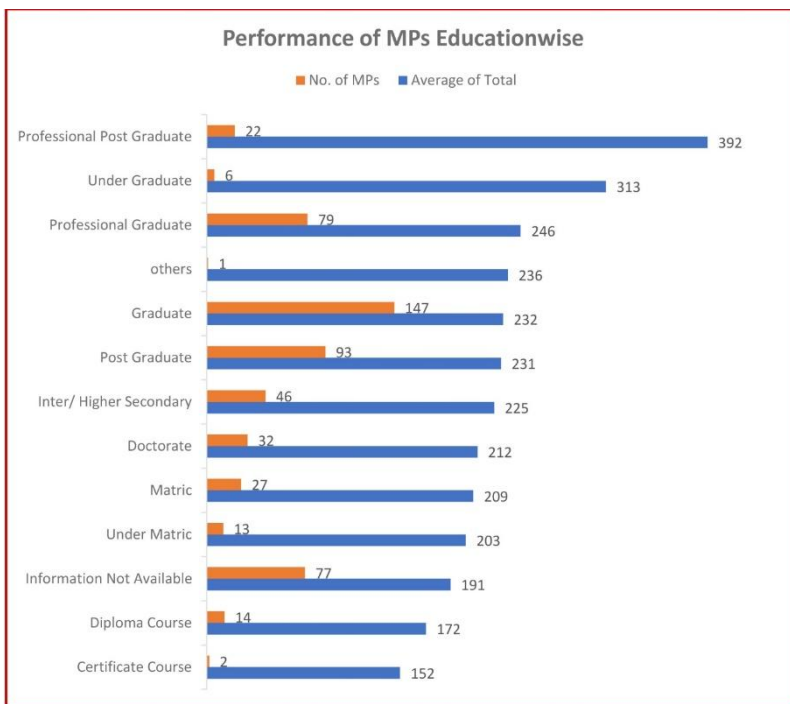
Performance of MPs - Agewise

The Members in the age group of 45 to 60 have shown better participation over others securing 252 points for the total tally, as against the National Average of 230. More than 50 percent of MPs are in the age group of 61

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plus. Around 40 percent are in the age group of 45 to 60. Only around 10 percent are less than 45.

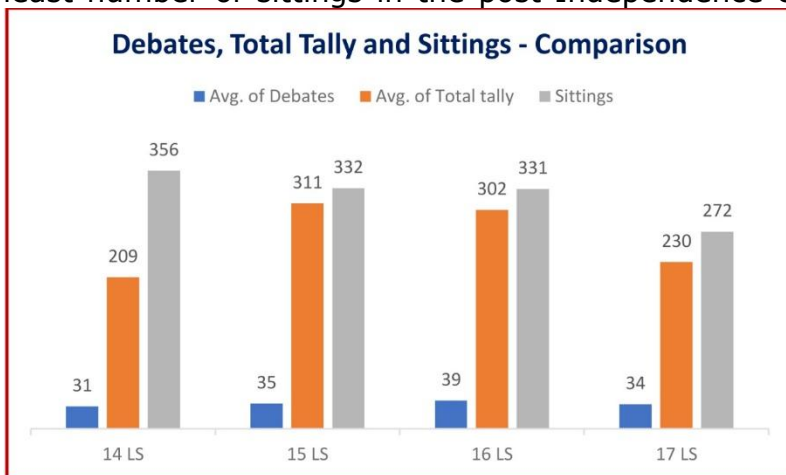
Performance of MPs – Education wise



Members with Professional Post Graduate Qualification have participated effectively securing 392 points as against the National Average of 230. The Members with lesser qualifications have shown poor participation.

Comparing Previous Lok Sabhas with the 17th Lok Sabha

After analyzing the performance of the Members of the 17th Lok Sabha, we may now compare the performance of MPs in the past four Lok Sabhas (from 14th LS to 17th LS) over the Total tally of initiated debates, private members bills and questions, and also the initiated debates, including the Sitzings. Members of the 15th Lok Sabha scored an average of 311 for the total tally, as against the current 17th LS performance of 230. The average of Debates in the 16th Lok Sabha was 39 as against the average of 34 in the 17th Lok Sabha. The 17th Lok Sabha held 272 Sitzings in all five years, as against more sittings in the previous Lok Sabhas. During 2020, only a limited number of sittings were held due to COVID pandemic. Notwithstanding this, the 17th Lok Sabha has created a record as the Lok Sabha with the least number of sittings in the post-Independence era.



Top 3 Performers of 14, 15, 16 and 17th Lok Sabha

Name of the MP	Total tally of debates, private members bills and questions			
	14 th LS	15 th LS	16 th LS	17 th LS
Anandarao Adsul, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra	1290	1304		
Dr S K Kharventhan, Indian National Congress, Tamil Nadu	1287			
Shivaji Adalrao Patil, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra	1260			
S S Ramasubbu, Indian National Congress, Tamil Nadu		1236		
Gajanan D Babar, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra		1200		
Supriya Sule, NCP, Maharashtra			1321	823
Rajeev S Satav, Indian National Congress			1255	
Shrirang Appa Barne, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra			1245	738
Bidyut Baran Mahato, BJP, Jharkhand				716

We have listed the top 3 performers of the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, based on the total tally of initiated debates, Private Members Bills, and questions. Shri Anandarao Adsul (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra) ranked No. 1 both in 14th and 15th Lok Sabhas.

Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra) ranked No. 1 in both the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha. Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra) was in the top 3 in both the 16 and 17th Lok Sabha.

Our Observations

Due to the COVID pandemic, the 17th Lok Sabha could not run the sittings fully. In view of this, the Average tally per Member has also come down. The Second-term Members and those in the age group of 46 to 60 have

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shown better participation. Political parties need to encourage women MPs to participate more. They should encourage and appreciate the top-performing Members of their party. This will motivate others. PreSense congratulates all the performers.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling: A Dialogue with Successful Women Leaders

By Editorial Team (April 2024)

(Successful women leaders discuss career challenges, societal expectations, and strategies for empowering women in the workplace.)



Despite possessing high levels of skill, many women in India often turn down senior management positions in both the private and public sectors. The significant conflict of balancing family responsibilities with a demanding career continues to be a prevalent issue. To delve into these challenges and explore potential solutions, PreSense facilitated a discussion with four successful women via Zoom.



Srimathy Sridhar

Srimathy Sridhar, who recently retired from her position as the Executive Director of the Indian Overseas Bank after a 38-plus year-long banking career, was invited to share her experiences as a successful career woman. Srimathy Sridhar began her journey at Andhra Bank as a Clerk and moved to Canara Bank as a Probationary

Officer. She ascended to the position of General Manager. She was deputed by the Government to serve as the Chief Vigilance Officer of NABARD, Bank of Baroda, New India Assurance Company Ltd., and State Bank of India. Subsequently, the Government appointed her as the Executive Director of the Indian Overseas Bank, from which she retired.

Joining the conversation were Susan Koshy, a former General Manager of IDBI Bank and former Editor-in-Chief of PreSense, and Priyadharshni Rahul, a Supreme Court Advocate, Chairman of the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee, and current Editor of PreSense.

The discussion was moderated by Suparna Gangal, an international video journalist based in Pune and the Associate Editor of PreSense. Here are some excerpts from their enlightening conversation:

Suparna Gangal: The PreSense team is happy that three successful career women, Srimathy, Susan, and Priya, have joined this conversation. Though Susan and Priya are part of our PreSense team, their views are essential as career women who have shown excellence. Let's discuss the issue in three parts: (1) the current trend, (2) why performing women are hesitant to accept higher responsibilities, and (3) how to motivate them. Before I start the conversation, I request Srimathy madam to share her career journey.

Srimathy: I joined as a Probationary Officer (PO) in Canara Bank. In those days, for women, it was the most sought-after job. Within two years of my probation, I

underwent several transfers. I got married after my confirmation. The support I got from my husband and my family was enormous. That's why I was able to grow in my career, braving all challenges. They encouraged me and also were proud of my achievements.

Suparna: You served in the top management of a leading public sector bank. How do you see the performance of women employees?

Srimathy: I can confidently say that women employees, wherever I have worked, are doing extremely well, even better than men, breaking the glass ceiling and raising the bar. The question remains as to why women are not coming forward to occupy the top management positions. I have seen the functioning of women for nearly 40 years in many institutions. I feel present-day women are doing better than the earlier generation of women. I have observed that women in the Southern States do better than those of the women in Northern States, for various reasons, including literacy.

Suparna: What do you think are the hurdles for women in accepting higher positions in their careers?

Srimathy: Generally, it is the mindset of women. Resistance to mobility due to their family needs and the modified lifestyle as working women are the major factors. Also, there is social pressure to live up to the sole responsibility as a wife and mother. Society accepts if the husband is busy at work, but not the wife. During critical times, it would be difficult to face the challenges without the support from the family.

Susan: I agree with Srimathy. But now, society's attitude towards working women has changed over decades. Earlier, the question was 'Is she working?'. Now, the question is 'Where is she working?'. The question is not whether women should be working and climbing up the career ladder. The question should be 'Are men/partners/family giving support at home?' Self-conviction – due to conditioned upbringing and societal norms, there could be a constant feeling of 'guilt' about career women doing justice to family and homefront care. If the partner participates, there is 'gratitude' as though he is doing a favour.

Srimathy: We (those who are above 60) were in the transitional period, where it was accepted that we were solely responsible for taking care of the family and home, even as a working woman. Today, the mindset has changed, and spouses are expected to participate in the care of the family and home. However, as today's generation is able to start higher in the third or fourth gear in their career, do the women of today get burnt out fast?

Priya: (Referring to Susan's opinion about gratitude), I differ in opinion. Women are natural nurturers. Therefore, 'expecting' a partner to participate could end up in competing with each other. Feminism is not underrating men. It is about being heard on equal terms. Therefore, there should be humility and gratitude.

A 2009 analysis shows that only 15% of women are in top positions. There may be various reasons for this low

percentage, one of them being men not accepting women in top positions.

Srimathy: There is an uneasiness in the work front about women in top positions. They do adjust but are uneasy. They are okay if women are in the second or third rung, but the top position is still a point of uneasiness.

Susan: (Clarifying Priya's comment) Men's role in the home should be complementary, not as a favour. One should be grateful as a universal attitude and mindset, but not for a 'favour'. If this is the approach, there could be a subconscious tendency to participate as a favour and not as equal responsibility. Participation with responsibility is complementary and this mindset can be nurtured, not impossible.

Suparna: How can we motivate women to climb the career ladder?

Srimathy: More than motivating, support is essential. For example, in a banking career, there is constant anxiety over physical dislocation through transfers, and long working hours. I suggest flexible working hours and knowing the plans for the next few years makes women better prepared for what is in store for them by way of transfers. Besides, institutions should be open to taking career women back after a sabbatical. Then there will be self-motivation. I always say that one successful woman inspires hundreds of women to achieve.

Susan: The woman needs to be self-convicted about her career and be mentally ready to face and deal with any challenges. For example, women study, score high but end up only in marriage. She must realise that life can be more than that. Along with marriage and family life, a career too could be a focus and given prominence.

Suparna: Can Srimathy Madam narrate a situation where a challenge was met with success in the end after a solution?

Srimathy: Please read Arundhati Bhattacharya's autobiography titled "Indomitable: A Working Woman's Notes on Work, Life and Leadership". A woman officer on promotion and transfer came to me with a request to cancel the promotion, as she was not interested in transfer. I convinced her to accept the promotion and transfer. I assured her to get her back if she was feeling uncomfortable after six months. Her family also supported her. Now, she is not interested to come back, but she is getting more promotions.

Priya: The system in the government sector was conducive to working women. What about the private sector?

Susan: Such a conducive system can be in the government and private sector, just as an adverse approach can be in either sector, depending on how the management works around or despite conducive policies which are already in place. I have also seen the management adopting 'Show me the person, I will show you the rules'.

Priya: I have seen many academically highly qualified and brilliant women choose not to work, wasting human resources?

Srimathy: Making use of your talent is the key. Many women in the unorganised sector work without compensation. Homemakers contribute enormously with their talent and skill in various activities. The key is utilising your talent and skill in life.

Suparna: Thank you all. We had a wonderful conversation. To conclude, the talents of women should be used for the benefit of the nation productively and there should be a support system from the family and the organisation to encourage them.

From Vedic Wisdom to Modern Classrooms: The Arya Samaj and DAV Legacy

By Ramesh Sundaram, Editor-in-Chief (May 2024)

(The Arya Samaj and DAV Group of Schools merge Vedic teachings with modern education, fostering holistic growth and national spirit.)

The Arya Samaj and DAV Group of Schools stand as enduring pillars of holistic learning and spiritual enrichment in an era of rapidly evolving educational paradigms. With a legacy that traces back to the visionary reformist Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arya Samaj has championed the cause of Vedic teachings and progressive education for over a century. They aim to spread spiritualism with nationalism, seamlessly blending traditional values with contemporary pedagogy. Arya Samaj focuses on spiritual activities to preserve Indian culture and the Vedas, while the DAV Group of Schools provides modern education to nurture children into good citizens of India. At the heart of this national movement, the DAV Group of Schools in Chennai exemplifies this harmonious integration, nurturing generations of students into well-rounded individuals.



Vikas Arya

In an exclusive interview with Ramesh Sundaram, Editor-in-Chief of PreSense, Vikas Arya, the dynamic secretary of Arya Samaj and DAV Group of Schools, delves deep into the rich history, expansive educational initiatives, and the spiritual ethos that defines their mission. He also shares an inspiring vision for the future, ensuring that Arya Samaj's timeless principles continue to illuminate the path for many more generations. Excerpts:

Can you kindly trace the history of Arya Samaj and DAV Group of Schools at the national level?

Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. He felt that the Hindu religion was misinterpreted in the name of the Vedas, with many unethical practices being attributed to them. Born in a Gujarati Brahmin family, he learned under various Gurus and realised that Vedic mantras were secular and did not advocate caste discrimination. Education was given equally to all. In 1886, Arya Samaj was set up in Lahore, and Lala Lajpat Rai and Mahatma Hansraj were key figures in establishment of DAV. After the Partition, the Lahore unit moved to Delhi, now encompassing 900 schools and over 100 colleges.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati founded Arya Samaj to interpret the Vedas correctly. "Arya" means noble, and "Samaj" means group of people. He recommended that members add "Arya" as a second name. Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) was started by his followers in 1886. This was the first formal school system in India after the dismantling of Gurukulam by the British. The DAV

system integrates 'Para Vidya' (Vedic knowledge) and 'Apara Vidya' (non-spiritual and contemporary knowledge).

The DAV system, established in 1886, spread across North India. Arya Samaj members moved to different countries, establishing the Arya Samaj movement. Prominent freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai were members.

How was Arya Samaj involved in the freedom movement?

Swami Dayananda Saraswati played an important role in the first war of independence in 1857. He focused on spirituality and nationalism and went underground during that time. Currently, a film is being shot about his contributions to the freedom movement. Arya Samaj played a significant role in the liberation of Hyderabad in 1947 and 1948. It is a socio-spiritual movement where spirituality and nationalism go hand in hand.

When was the Arya Samaj started in South India, particularly in Chennai? When was the DAV Group of Schools started, and who were the founders?

Arya Samaj was set up in 1940s by great visionaries and followers of Dayananda Saraswati who migrated from Pakistan. DAV was established in 1971 in Chennai. It started at Gopalapuram under a banyan tree. While Arya Samaj focuses on the 16 samskaras and preserving Vedic tradition, DAV focuses on modern education blended with our tradition.

What are the activities of DAV in Chennai?

DAV Chennai owns 10 schools and manages 6 schools for others, with over 20 associate schools.



We are expanding into colleges, starting with managing the first college from June 2024 under the DAV model. We also provide teacher training and are bringing education to tier 2 and tier 3 towns, sharing best practices at an affordable cost.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

We have started a new initiative to train youngsters for civil service examinations. In the first batch, two persons have cleared and are IAS officers now. Our publications division focuses on textbooks and Vedic books to develop values among children. The Gurukulam, where students learn Vedic slokas as part of their curriculum, is open to all. CBSE emphasizes value education, but it is up to the schools to implement it, as it is not part of the board examinations.

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More than 40,000 students are studying in our schools currently, with over 3,000 teachers and support staff in our organization.



Lala Indersain Ji



Shri Satyadev Ji



Shri Jaidev Ji



Shri Balakrishna Joshi Ji



Shri Ram Kalia Ji



Shri Surendra Kumar Ji



Shri VN Bajaj Ji



Shri Balakishan Goenka Ji



Shri DC Malhotra Ji



Shri SD Nangia Ji

The pillars of DAV Chennai

What is your vision for the future?

We aim to run social institutions globally, aspiring to become a multinational organization. Our vision aligns with 'HEAL' - Health, Education, Animal Welfare, and Livelihood. Beyond Tamil Nadu, we manage schools across the nation, providing excellent management that people seek now.

The Gurukulam provides both 'para' and 'apara' vidya. In regular schools, children stay for only 6 hours, with 2 hours dedicated to para vidya, which is insufficient. In the Gurukul, children stay 24x7, with an equal split between para and apara vidya. This unique combination offers a judicious mix of Vedic knowledge and modern education. In the 5-year program, students receive both

Vedic knowledge and modern education under the CBSE curriculum, preparing them for JEE and NEET after their school education. This is a unique form of education.

Echoes of Humility: Hanuman's Lessons for Modern-Day Leaders

***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor
(June 2024)***

(This article explores Hanuman's humble yet effective communication style in ancient scriptures, drawing lessons for modern leadership, governance, and diplomacy.)



(Hanuman met Rama disguised as Brahmin. Picture drawn by ChatGPT as described in Valmiki Ramayana)

India's ancient scriptures, including the Vedas, Ithihasas, and Puranas, are not mere spiritual documents but also great textbooks for governance, management, and communication techniques. Rarely do we study in depth the relevance of these techniques in modern-day governance.

While we worship Hanuman and celebrate him as the greatest devotee of Lord Rama, we should also recognise him as the greatest communicator with humility. His strength lays in his humility combined with communication expertise. This helped him build trust and function as a diplomat. In this article, we will briefly study how he communicated when he met Lord Rama, Sita Mata, and Ravan for the first

time in different environments. We will also discuss the relevance to modern-day governance.

Hanuman Meeting Lord Ram

When Rama and Lakshman were roaming in Kishkinda forests in search of the kidnapped Sita, Hanuman met Rama in disguise as a Brahmin on Sugriva's instructions. Since this was their first meeting, Hanuman wanted to learn more about Rama and Lakshman. His opening words demonstrated astute diplomacy:

"कौ युवां वृषभस्कन्धौ महाबाहू महाबलौ।

कथं प्राप्तावितं देशं दुर्गं गिरिवनायुतम्॥"

(Kishkindha Kanda, Sarga 3, Shloka 16)

Translation: "Who are you two with shoulders like bulls, mighty-armed and greatly strong? How have you reached this impenetrable region, filled with mountains and forests?"

This opening gambit showcased Hanuman's skill in gathering information while maintaining a respectful tone. He complimented their appearance while subtly questioning their presence, demonstrating tact and intelligence. Hanuman gradually revealed his true identity and purpose as the conversation unfolded, building trust through measured and insightful responses. During the conversation, Hanuman gathered information about Rama and Lakshman and the purpose of their visit and also conveying a message from Sugriva. In this process, Hanuman exhibited a high level of communication skills with diplomacy.

After this conversation, Rama was highly impressed with Hanuman's eloquence and communication skills and praised him in Lakshman's presence.

Rama specifically praises Hanuman in Kishkindha Kanda, Sarga 4, Slokas 33-36. Here, Rama comments on Hanuman's speech, noting its impeccable clarity, brevity, and fluency.

Rama appreciated his brevity, saying, "Neither too short nor too long, neither too elaborate nor too concise has your speech been; you have omitted no important point."

Rama further praised, "Your speech is apt and pleasing, clear and well-connected, faultless, letter-perfect, knowledgeable of meanings, and free from envy. What you have not expressed and what you have expressed are both proper." Rama also appreciates Hanuman's voice modulation and his use of appropriate words. Rama describes the conversation as pleasant like music.

This praise from Rama, coming immediately after their first interaction, set the tone for Hanuman's pivotal role in the epic's events.

First Meeting with Sita

Hanuman's encounter with Sita in Ravana's Ashoka grove garden is a masterclass in empathetic communication. Aware of Sita's vulnerable state, he approached her with utmost caution and respect. First,

he sang the glory of Rama and narrated the incidents that happened in the forest in a mild voice, sitting on the tree above Sita. Sita's attention was drawn, but she suspected that this vanara might be Ravana's attempt to deceive her. The shrewd Hanuman started his conversation with Sita to create trust. Hanuman shared details of private conversations between Rama and Sita, as recounted by Rama, to build trust. He presented the ring worn by Rama as a token of identity:

"दूतोऽहं कोसलेन्द्रस्य रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः।

रामनामाङ्कितं चेदं पश्य देवि महीयकम्॥"

(Sundara Kanda, Sarga 35, Shloka 2-3)

Translation: "O noble lady, I am a messenger of Rama, the Lord of Kosala, whose deeds are unblemished. Behold, O Goddess, this signet ring marked with Rama's name."

Hanuman's words were carefully chosen to provide immediate comfort and establish trust. He presented Rama's signet ring as proof of his identity, skillfully using non-verbal communication to support his verbal claims. His gentle approach and gradual revelation of information demonstrated deep emotional intelligence and situational awareness.

After Hanuman's return from Lanka, he narrated his experiences in Lanka and his conversation with Sita to Rama. Rama immediately appreciated him effectively:

"न वायुः न अन्तकः न च इन्द्रः न वरुणः न च यमः।

त्वया तुल्यं हि पश्यामि वानर त्वं हि दुर्जयः॥"

(Yuddha Kanda, Sarga 1, Shloka 2-3)

Translation: "Neither Wind (Vayu), nor Death (Antaka), nor Indra, nor Varuna, nor Yama do I see as equal to you, O Vanara. Indeed, you are invincible."

This praise highlighted Hanuman's physical prowess and intellectual and communicative abilities. Rama recognised that Hanuman's success in his mission was as much due to his diplomatic skills as his strength and courage.

Confronting Ravana

Hanuman's encounter with Ravana showcased his ability to adapt his communication style to different audiences. When brought before the demon king, Hanuman spoke with confidence and diplomacy:

"दूतोऽहं कोसलेन्द्रस्य रामस्य विदितात्मनः।

श्रूयतां चैव वचनं मम पथ्यमिदं प्रभो॥"

(Sundara Kanda, Sarga 51, Shloka 11-12)

Translation: "I am an envoy of Rama, the self-controlled Lord of Kosala. O master, listen to my words, for they are meant for your benefit."

Even while delivering a stern message, Hanuman maintained decorum, addressing Ravana with respect, befitting his status as a king. This demonstrated

Hanuman's ability to balance assertiveness with diplomacy, a crucial negotiation and conflict resolution skill.

Views of Commentators

Govindaraja, a 12th-century commentator on the Ramayana, noted: "Hanuman's humility is not false modesty, but a genuine recognition of his role as a servant of the divine. This makes his words all the more powerful and trustworthy."

Kamban, in his Tamil version of the Ramayana, portrayed Hanuman as a master of language and diplomacy. In his rendition of Hanuman's meeting with Sita, he wrote (translated from Tamil):

"His words were like nectar to her ears, soothing her grief and dispelling her fears. With eloquence divine and rare, He spoke of Rama's love and care."

Tulsidas, in his Ramcharitmanas, frequently praised Hanuman's communication skills. When describing Hanuman's meeting with Rama, he wrote:

**"बोलत बचन नीति अति पावन।
मधुर मनोहर अति सुखदावन॥"**

Translation: "He spoke words of supreme and pure wisdom, Sweet, charming, and extremely delightful."

These commentators highlighted various aspects of Hanuman's communication expertise, including his

mastery of language, his ability to adapt his style to different audiences, the soothing and persuasive quality of his speech, and his capacity to express profound ideas in simple terms.

Lessons for Modern Governance, Politics and Leadership

Many modern-day leaders and aspirants in politics and corporations lack communication skills. They should emulate the following qualities from Hanuman's communication style:

1. **Humility:** Humility combined with communication, despite Hanuman's enormous strength, ability, and knowledge.
2. **Adaptability:** Adapting messages to deliver to different audiences.
3. **Emotional Intelligence:** Hanuman's interactions are marked by a keen awareness of others' emotional states. He knows when to be forceful and when to be gentle.
4. **Balancing Confidence and Humility:** Hanuman demonstrates that one can be both confident in one's abilities and humble in one's demeanour.
5. **Clear and Purposeful Communication:** Every word Hanuman speaks serves a purpose. In an era of information overload, the ability to communicate clearly using appropriate words and purposefully is more important than ever.
6. **Building Trust:** Through his words and actions, Hanuman quickly establishes trust with those he encounters. In an era of increasing political and

corporate cynicism, the ability to build genuine trust is invaluable.

7. Diplomacy in Adversity: Hanuman's interaction with Ravana demonstrates how to maintain diplomacy even in hostile situations. This skill is crucial in today's often polarised political environment and competitive business world.

In an era of rapid communication and social media, where words can be amplified and misconstrued easily, Hanuman's thoughtful, measured approach is a valuable model.

In a political or corporate landscape, leaders can approach communication with Hanuman's blend of clarity, empathy, and purpose. Such an approach could help bridge ideological divides, foster more productive dialogue, and ultimately lead to more effective governance and business practices.

Moreover, Hanuman's example reminds us that true communication is not just about speaking but also about listening and observing. His success in his mission was as much due to his ability to gather and interpret information as it was to his skill in conveying messages.

Hopes and Hurdles: Decoding the Middle-Class Perspective on Budget 2024

By Ramesh Sundaram, Editor-in-Chief (July 2024)

(The 2024 Union Budget offers mixed outcomes for India's middle class. It provides some tax relief and investment in key sectors while failing to address inflation and cost-of-living concerns.)



The Union Budget 2024-25, presented by Ms Nirmala Sitharaman on 23 July 2024, has been the focal point of many discussions. This cover story delves deeply into a brief analysis of the Budget, specifically referring to its positive and negative impact on middle-

class families across various sectors.

The first expectation of the middle class is whether the Budget has provided any Income Tax relief for them. In fact, the minuscule 2.2 per cent of IT taxpayers contribute more to the economy than through corporate tax. They are the main contributors to the economy

through Income Tax payments. The middle class bears the brunt of manifold pressures like taxation, unemployment, and a rise in the cost of essential services and goods, and hence naturally expects the announcement of substantial IT relief in the Budget. They are disappointed by the minuscule IT relief given.

People generally believe that the Government will not provide great relief, knowing that it gets the maximum revenue through this segment only. In a lighter vein, the Government won't kill this Golden Goose (IT payers, aka middle class). But despite all the fiscal difficulty, this Budget has attempted to give some relief to the middle class, though it may not have been up to the expectations of the aam aadmi.

The Positive Side:

Income Tax Relief: The introduction of different tax slabs compared to previous Budgets and raising Standard Deduction from 50,000 to 75,000 have offered reasonable benefits of up to Rs 17,500 to the middle class, leading to an increase in their disposable income.

Income (Rs)	Tax rate FY 2023-24	Income (Rs)	Tax rate FY 2024-25
0-3 lakh	Nil	0-3 lakh	Nil
3-6 lakh	5%	3-7 lakh	5%
6-9 lakh	10%	7-10 lakh	10%
9-12 lakh	15%	10-12 lakh	15%
12-15 lakh	20%	12-15 lakh	20%
Above 15 lakh	30%	Above 15 lakh	30%

IT payers get more benefits in the present Budget. These include: a) an increase in the Standard Deduction limit, b) rationalising IT slabs. This rationalising of the IT slabs will reduce the IT payment of middle-class as seen from the table above. For an example the tax rate of a person earning upto Rs. 7 lakh was 10% but now it is 5%. So the present Budget for 2024-25 is more beneficial than the 2023-24 Budget.

Housing Sector: There is a sharp focus on affordable housing. This will help many middle-class people realise their dream of owning a house. The budgetary allocation for this sector is Rs 10 lakh crores with Central assistance of Rs. 2.2 crore for the next five years under PM Awaas Yojana-Urban 2.0 to address the housing needs of one crore urban poor and middle-class families. The Budget has also extended the additional deduction of Rs 1.5 lakh under Section 80EEA for home loans taken for affordable housing. The Government also plans to promote transparent rental housing markets with enhanced availability.

Infrastructure Development: The Budget has focused on more investment in infrastructure development. The Government expects more job creation because of this, which will further improve the standard of living of the common man. In this regard, around Rs Eleven lakh and eleven thousand crores (Rs. 11,11,000 crores) for capital expenditure have been allocated. This is 3.4 per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). The Budget also envisions a collaborative effort with State Government and multilateral development banks to promote urban infrastructure projects.

Employment: The Budget has allocated Rs 2 lakh crores for job creation over the next five years and three new schemes for employment generation. These include a scheme to provide one-month wages to freshers entering the workforce in all sectors, an internship scheme in 500 top companies that is likely to provide opportunities for one crore youth in the coming five years, and Rs 3,000 per month for employers for two years as Employment Provident Fund contributions for each new employee.

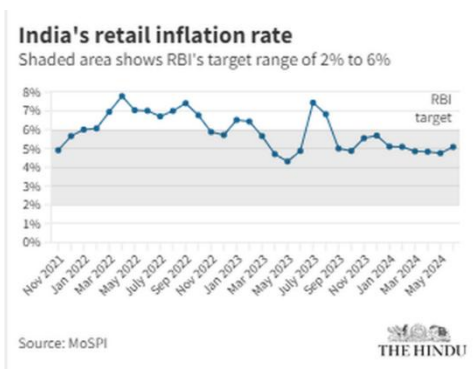
Education: The Budget's increased allocation for education will improve its quality. This will certainly benefit the middle class, which spends a major part of their income on education. In this regard, the Budget has allocated around 2 lakh crores to education and Rs 5,300 crores for teacher training.

Healthcare: The Budget increases the allocation for healthcare, which is sure to improve the affordability and access of healthcare to the middle class. The Budget has increased allocation for healthcare to Rs. 90,657 crores, a marked increase of 12.9% over the previous year. Three cancer treatment drugs are exempted from Customs Duty. Out of the total allocation, Rs. 90 crores have been earmarked for the National Tele Mental Health Programme, while AIIMS has been apportioned Rs. 4523 crores. The Budget has also mooted the expansion of the National Health Mission. This, too, will immensely benefit poor and middle-class families

Benefits for Startups: The Angel Tax was levied on private concerns for receiving excess amounts on shares beyond fair market value. Its abolition, announced in the Budget, will immensely benefit startups. An extension up to March 31, 2025 has also been given to Eligible Startup date to claim profit-linked tax holiday deductions. Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) to e-commerce has been reduced from 1% to 0.1%. This will encourage new entrepreneurs from middle class to start a business.

The Negative Side:

Income Tax: Very marginal Income Tax relief has been given. This has disappointed the middle class. They expected more relief as they are the bulk contributors to the economy in terms of income tax. They contribute around 19% of Gross Total Revenue (GTR). Naturally, they expect more relief, and it is right also. The Government should seriously consider their plea for the reduction in Income Tax. The only thing that can be said is that the present Budget has not lived up to the aam aadmi's expectations as for Income Tax relief is concerned. There is and will be a gap between expectations and actuals. The irony is that income tax contribution is more than Corporate Tax contribution to the revenue



Inflation: Rising inflation is sure to erode the income, saving, and purchasing power of the aam aadmi. The inflation rate is currently 5.08 per cent, against a predicted 4.80%. This is attributed to food inflation, which now stands at a whopping 9.36%.

Fuel Prices: The prices of most fuels are very high. Petrol prices are around Rs 100 per litre, while diesel prices are around Rs 90. This not only increases transportation costs but also has a cascading effect on the prices of goods and services. This has definitely cut into the budget of a middle-class family.

Unemployment: The unemployment rate is high, jumping to 9.2 per cent in June 2024 from 7 per cent in May 2024, causing a dent in the incomes of middle-class people. The Budget has attempted to provide solutions to this. Let us see how this works out.

Cost of Living: The food inflation now stands at a high of 9.32 per cent. This has also eroded the value of the rupee. Goods & Services Tax rates are maintained at the same level with the exception of a hike in GST for luxury goods. This decision not to reduce GST on essential items like food and household goods has not given any relief to the middle class from inflationary pressures due to the increasing cost of food and essential commodities and services. This will certainly make a hole in the pocket of middle-class people. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate stood at 6.2% in June 2024, which again adversely affects middle-class people.

Education: There is no direct relief in GST on educational services or school and college fee subsidies. This should be juxtaposed with the cost of higher education in private institutions, which ranges from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakhs depending upon the course and the institution.

Income Inequality: India's richest people (1 per cent) earn a whopping 22.6 per cent of national income, while only 15 per cent is earned by the bottom 50 per cent. This is an all-time high. A serious effort is needed to address this rising income inequality issue.

Investment Securities: The term 'security' includes many financial investments like bonds, stocks, notes, debentures, investment contracts, etc. The tax levied on transactions in securities is known as the Securities Transaction Tax (STT). This STT has increased from 0.0625% to 0.1%. For Futures Trading, the STT is proposed to be hiked from 0.0125% to 0.02%. Though this seems to be marginal, it will impact the middle-class people who deal with these. The share price index dropped immediately after the announcement but has since then increased to a new high. This means players in the market have reconciled to it but are investing more because of other positive factors of the Budget.

Capital Gains Tax: The Long-Term Capital Gains Tax is now 12.5 percent. Earlier, the LTCG was 20% with indexation. But now the indexation has been done away with. The contention here is that LTCG will actually be 14.5 percent due to removal of indexation. Some experts feel because of this there will be a manifold increase in tax payment. They also feel that it will generate more

black money and undervaluing of a property. This is a serious issue and has to be analysed further. At the same time, the tax exemption limit for LTCG has been raised to Rs 1.25 lakhs from Rs 1 lakh. Short-Term Capital Gains Tax has been increased from 15% to 20%. Naturally, the small and the medium investors from the middle class bear the brunt of this increase. This may mean that the Government favours long-term investments over short-term investments.

Housing and Real Estate: Rising real estate prices in urban areas are a source of concern. The average cost of housing has increased by 8 to 10 percent year-on-year, which is a big challenge for the middle class who aspire to own their own home.

Senior Citizens: The elders are a silent majority and they have absolutely no say. They suffer silently. The cut in interest rates on bank deposits has terribly affected their income. Furthermore, there was a mention in the Presidential Address of an insurance scheme for Senior Citizens who are above 70. But this has not found a place in the Budget. The Government has to clarify. The increased cost of living has also dented senior citizens' income. The payment of Employment Provident Fund arrears, on which there is a Supreme Court judgment, is put in cold storage citing various reasons. The people affected are the retired middle-class employees who depend on their pension. The Government should act decisively in this regard.



The Opposition alleges that the Budget favours only the States where alliances of BJP are ruling. This may be due to political compulsions, they allege. The Government says that though other States are not mentioned in the Budget, they also get a fair share of the Budget allocation.

Conclusion: The Union Budget 2024-25 presents a mixed outlook for India's middle class. While there are commendable steps towards easing the tax burden and promoting economic growth, it does not address vital areas like inflation, healthcare costs, and educational expenses. This is a serious concern for the middle class, which has to face these hurdles. The Budget has received both brickbats and bouquets from all class of people.

Finally, it is pertinent to mention here that Warren Buffett said that political pressures should not be mixed with investment decisions.

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

***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor
(August 2024)***

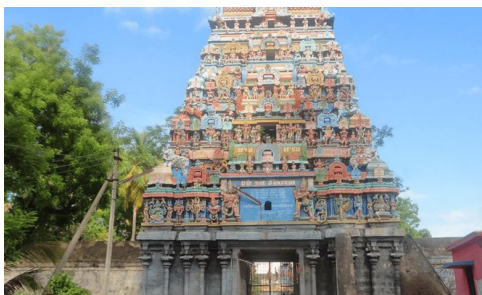
(The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 aims to overhaul Waqf property management in India, sparking debate over transparency, governance, and religious autonomy)

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.

Taxation, Growth & the Common Man

By Ramesh Sundaram, Editor in Chief (Sep 2024)

In an exclusive interview with Ramesh Sundaram, Editor-in-Chief of *PreSense*, S. Mohan, the newly elected



S Mohan (centre) addressing the General Body after being elected as President. Swaminathan (left), Vice President and Anusha Srinivasan, Outgoing President (right), looking on

President of the 90-year-old 'Society of Auditors,' an institution with over 2,000 practising Chartered

Accountants, shares his insights on India's economic growth. He highlights gaps in how this growth benefits the common man, especially the middle class and senior citizens. Mohan also

discusses the 2024 Budget, recent changes in capital gains tax, and the ongoing confusion surrounding GST implementation. Additionally, he advocates tax reforms and improved welfare measures for the elderly. S Mohan is a practising Chartered Accountant for nearly 50 years.

Excerpts from the interview:

Can you describe the history and journey of the Society of Auditors, including its objectives and achievements?

The Society of Auditors in Chennai is India's oldest professional body for accountants and attesters. It predates nearly by a generation even the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). Established in 1932, it played a pivotal role in nurturing the accounting profession in southern India and the country as a whole. Many leading figures in the Indian accounting profession were instrumental in forming the Society and ensuring its steady growth. In fact, the Society's influence extended beyond its immediate work — it was a precursor and trendsetter for similar organisations to emerge across India.

Notably, the Society was also a persuasive force behind establishing the ICAI under an Act of Parliament in 1949. This achievement remains one of the Society's greatest contributions to the profession.

What is your assessment of the current Indian economy? Are the benefits of economic growth reaching the common man?

While the Indian economy is robust and growing steadily, I believe the benefits have not fully reached the common man, particularly those at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum. A significant portion of the population still lives below the poverty line, and the focus of government policies should shift more towards uplifting these individuals. While the growth numbers might look good on paper, they are not necessarily improving the lives of a large population segment, especially those most vulnerable.

What are your thoughts on the 2024 Budget? What impact does it have on taxpayers, particularly the middle class?

There is a general sense of disappointment within the middle class regarding the 2024 Budget, particularly because many hoped the basic exemption limit for income tax would be raised, but that did not happen. Middle-class individuals earning below ₹12 lakh annually contribute a significant portion of their income to direct and indirect taxes. These taxpayers, in my view, deserve more consideration, especially in the form of tax relief.

In addition, changes to capital gains tax calculations have caused concern. Previously, individuals selling properties could benefit from indexation, which accounted for inflation in property prices. However, from July 2024 onwards, these benefits will no longer apply, meaning individuals will face higher tax burdens on property sales. Although the long-term capital gains tax rate has been reduced from 20% to 12.5%, the removal of indexation means individuals selling older properties will still pay more in taxes. Furthermore, two years ago, the government placed a cap on reinvesting capital gains into new properties, adding further limitations for taxpayers. Overall, these changes represent a retrograde step.

There is a lot of confusion among taxpayers, particularly the middle class, regarding the new income tax scheme. Has it benefited them?

The new tax regime was introduced two years ago as an alternative for individual taxpayers, and it has now become the default scheme. This regime offers a higher

exemption slab of up to ₹7.50 lakh, compared to ₹2.50 lakh under the old scheme. However, the main difference is that taxpayers in the new regime cannot claim deductions for savings, such as life insurance premiums or contributions to the provident fund. This results in a lower tax rate up to a certain threshold, but it discourages long-term savings, especially among younger taxpayers. Under the old scheme, a deduction of up to ₹1.5 lakh was allowed, which encouraged saving for the future. The removal of these incentives in the new regime may hurt long-term financial security.

Another major concern is the loss of deductions for charitable donations, which were previously allowed under the old scheme. Public charitable trusts have already begun to feel the impact as donations have started to dry up. In my view, this creates a societal imbalance as the support for charitable institutions that provide vital services is diminished.

As for the number of middle-class taxpayers, while the government has not provided specific figures, we do know that individual taxpayers contributed more to the tax pool than corporations in 2022-23. Most individual taxpayers, it is fair to assume, are from the middle class.

Much discussion has been on the Goods and Services Tax (GST). How has the country benefitted from it since its introduction in 2017?

The intention behind GST was good — unifying India's indirect tax structure under a single umbrella. However, its implementation has left much to be desired. GST's complexity has hit small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) hardest. There is still confusion among

taxpayers, even among well-educated individuals, regarding the applicable tax rates for various commodities. The government issues notifications almost daily, making it difficult for even experienced chartered accountants to keep up. This leads to non-compliance, not due to intentional evasion, but because taxpayers are overwhelmed by the constantly changing rules.

The digitalisation of tax filings and the complexity of online forms have also added to taxpayers' frustrations. The system was introduced hastily, and even after seven years, much of the confusion has yet to be resolved.

The Hotel Owners' Association in Coimbatore recently raised concerns about GST on food items. What is your perspective on this issue?

As I mentioned earlier, confusion regarding GST rates is widespread, and the concerns raised by the Hotel Owners' Association are valid. In the hospitality sector, different items are taxed at different rates, and additional distinctions are made based on whether the restaurant is air-conditioned or not. Most countries with a GST system usually have one or two standard rates. In India, however, the rates range from 0% to 28%, which is too complex. This creates a significant compliance burden and leads to unintentional non-compliance by many taxpayers.

What steps do you suggest to rectify the anomalies in GST?

The government should consider setting up a committee composed of taxpayers, chartered accountants, and tax advocates to study and rectify the anomalies in the GST

system. The government must change its approach of viewing all taxpayers as potential defaulters. Based on mutual respect, a more collaborative relationship between tax collectors and taxpayers would improve compliance and reduce grievances.

Has the merger of public sector banks achieved its objectives?

Through mergers, India reduced the number of public sector banks from 27 to 11 to create stronger, more robust institutions. For example, the State Bank of India merged with its associate banks, significantly boosting its strength and size. This move was necessary, as Indian banks were fragmented, and consolidation has given them more financial muscle.

However, the mergers also brought challenges. Each bank had its legacy and culture, and merging banks from different regions caused cultural clashes. Customers and staff of a particular bank may find it difficult to adapt to the bank's practices with which it merged. Overstaffing in one bank could also be imposed on another, creating inefficiencies. These issues are likely to be temporary, but they have disrupted services in the short term.

Senior citizens face challenges with taxation and GST on medical insurance. What improvements can be made to their welfare?

Senior citizens deserve better care, as they have contributed to the country in their working years. While the government has provided some tax relief to seniors, more can be done. For example, income up to ₹10 lakh should be exempt from tax for senior citizens, ensuring they are not unduly burdened in their retirement years.

GST on health insurance premiums is also a significant concern, as it adds to the financial strain on seniors. However, there is hope, as a working group of ministers has been set up to study these issues and recommend solutions. I am optimistic that much-needed relief will be provided soon.

Additionally, many seniors, especially those who worked in the private sector or ran small businesses, do not receive pensions like their counterparts in government roles. These individuals need more support. A recent positive step in this regard is the government's announcement of medical insurance for all citizens over 70, with coverage up to ₹5 lakh annually, regardless of income. This is a welcome relief for seniors who often struggle to get adequate insurance.

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

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Oct 2024)

(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

**Please listen to the AI-generated
Podcast conversation on this Cover Story.**

Courtesy: NotebookLM of Google.

Please watch this link.

<https://youtu.be/KR3xe-8GBGk?si=r2oo7zs3GJ48MI7I>



25th Anniversary of Prime Point Foundation: A Legacy of Innovation, Service, and Leadership

By Editorial Team (November 2024)

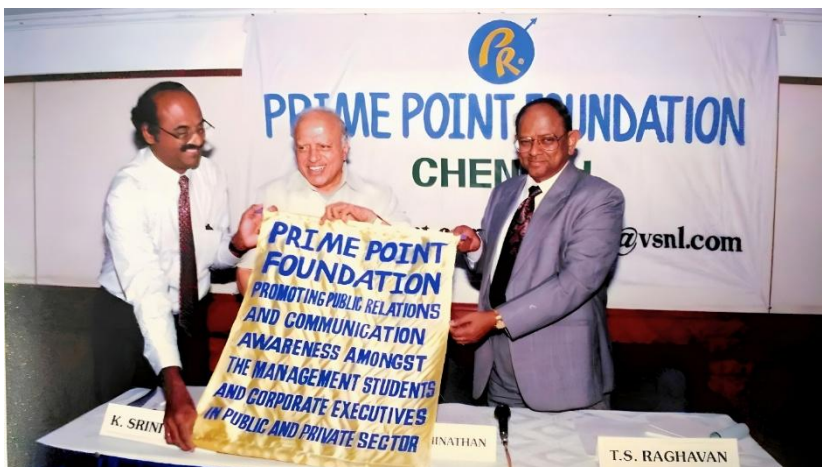
(Prime Point Foundation celebrates 25 years of fostering innovation, serving communities, and showcasing leadership to create lasting societal impact.)

In an exclusive interview with Ramesh Sundaram, editor-in-chief of PreSense, Prime Point Srinivasan, Founder and Chairman of Prime Point Foundation, explains the foundation's 25-year journey with five initiatives. Excerpts:

Ramesh Sundaram: Prime Point Foundation's 25th anniversary is a significant milestone. To start, can you tell us how the Foundation's journey began and what inspired you to establish it?

Prime Point Srinivasan: Thank you, Ramesh. The idea of Prime Point Foundation began in 1998, when I took VRS from a public sector bank to start my own communication consultancy. At that time, I realised there was a need for a platform that could empower individuals, foster leadership, and make a tangible social impact through communication techniques. I was particularly inspired by the words and guidance of Dr. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, who strongly believed in the power of positive communication and leadership. With this vision in mind, the Foundation was

born in Dec 1999. The eminent agricultural scientist Dr M S Swaminathan and then Indian Bank Chairman T S Raghavan launched the Foundation. Our aim has been to inspire change, support the community, and bring forward initiatives that could serve the greater good.



Launch of Prime Point Foundation in Dec 1999. (L to R) K. Srinivasan, Dr M S Swaminathan (eminent agricultural scientist) and T S Raghavan (then Chairman & Mg. Director, Indian Bank)

Ramesh Sundaram: The foundation has grown to encompass five distinct initiatives over the years. Could you elaborate on each of these and their significance?

Prime Point Srinivasan: Yes, absolutely. Over the years, we've crafted initiatives that align with our mission of creating a positive societal impact. Here are the five initiatives:

1. **eMagazine PreSense:** Launched at the suggestion of Dr. Abdul Kalam, *PreSense* was founded with the vision of promoting positive journalism. Dr. Kalam felt strongly about creating a platform that would focus on the constructive aspects of society, highlighting stories of progress, innovation, and social good. Since its inception, *PreSense* has grown into a respected eMagazine, offering a variety of content ranging from current affairs and social issues to inspiring stories of leadership and change. We have also published more than 40 books, which are downloadable free of cost.
2. **Sansad Ratna Awards:** This initiative was also inspired by Dr. Kalam, who launched the first Sansad Ratna Award event in 2010. The award honours the outstanding contributions of Indian Parliamentarians. It is a unique recognition for those who have demonstrated exemplary performance in the Parliament. In February 2024, the President and Vice President of India invited the awardees of the 17th Lok Sabha for a photo session, underscoring the significance of this recognition. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also took to Twitter in 2023 to congratulate the awardees, which further elevated the status of the awards. We are deeply proud of this initiative and its continued success.
3. **Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL):** This initiative focuses on preparing future political leaders who will steer India towards its vision of development. Through NGPL, we provide a platform for young and aspiring leaders to engage in leadership training, policy discussions, and strategy building. The aim is

to nurture the next generation of politicians committed to public service, transparency, and the nation's welfare.

4. **Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI):** In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, there was a need for a platform to raise awareness among journalists about the impact and challenges of digital journalism. DiJAI was created to equip journalists with the skills to navigate this space responsibly. DiJAI has contributed to improving digital journalism standards across India through workshops, seminars, and collaborations with media houses.
5. **Education Loan Task Force:** One of the most significant barriers for students pursuing higher education in India is access to affordable education loans. The Education Loan Task Force was established to create awareness about the loan processes and help students overcome the financial hurdles they face. We have conducted numerous awareness campaigns and seminars, and our work has helped thousands of students realise their academic dreams. Through our Sansad Ratna MPs, we have also taken up some of the crucial issues in Parliament and found solutions.

These initiatives reflect the Foundation's commitment to fostering leadership, empowering youth, and ensuring positive societal change.

Ramesh Sundaram: The Sansad Ratna Awards have certainly garnered much attention over the years, especially with the involvement of key political figures.

Could you share more about its significance, particularly the recent events in 2024?

Prime Point Srinivasan: The Sansad Ratna Awards have evolved into a prestigious recognition. Dr. Abdul Kalam's vision of honouring outstanding parliamentarians has been realised through these awards. The photo session with the President and Vice President of India in February 2024 was an incredible moment for us, as it acknowledged the contributions of these parliamentarians at the highest level of government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tweet in 2023 also highlighted the importance of these awards and the recipients' commitment to public service. The awards continue to encourage parliamentarians to strive for excellence in their work, and we are deeply honoured to be part of this process.

Ramesh Sundaram: Prime Point Foundation has certainly made an impact, but a new leadership team is now in place. Could you tell us about the transition and the foundation's future?

Prime Point Srinivasan: Absolutely. After 25 years of leading the Foundation, it was time to pass the mantle to a new generation of leaders. Priyadharshni Rahul, an advocate practising in Supreme Court, has been with the Foundation and other initiatives for several years and has demonstrated exemplary leadership qualities, is now the President of Prime Point Foundation. I have complete confidence in her and the new team. The next phase of the Foundation's journey will be driven by fresh perspectives, energy, and a deep commitment to our

mission. I'm excited to see how they will take the Foundation to even greater heights, continuing to serve society and make a lasting impact. I will continue to mentor the team.

Ramesh Sundaram: How do you see the Foundation's role in the future, especially given the changing social and political landscape?

Prime Point Srinivasan: The world is changing rapidly, and the Foundation's role will continue to evolve with it. The next generation of leaders will need to be equipped with traditional leadership skills and the ability to navigate technological advancements, digital communication, and global challenges. We will continue preparing tomorrow's leaders through initiatives like NGPL, DiJAI, and our social impact programmes. Additionally, we are focusing on expanding our digital presence and using technology to amplify our reach and influence. The future of Prime Point Foundation is very promising, and I believe the new leadership will rise to the occasion, driving impactful change.

Ramesh Sundaram: You've spoken about the new team and the Foundation's future direction. How do you feel about the legacy of Prime Point Foundation, and what message would you like to leave for the next generation?

Prime Point Srinivasan: The legacy of Prime Point Foundation is not just in its achievements but in the lives it has touched, the leaders it has nurtured, and the positive changes it has generated. I feel immense pride

in what we have accomplished together. My message to the next generation is simple: Stay committed to your mission, be adaptable, and always serve with integrity. Leadership is not just about power or recognition; it's about making a meaningful difference in the lives of others. I am confident that the new team, led by Priyadharshni Rahul, will continue this journey with even greater passion and determination.

Ramesh Sundaram: Thank you, Mr. Srinivasan, for sharing your vision, reflections, and insights with us. Congratulations once again on the 25th anniversary, and we look forward to seeing how Prime Point Foundation continues to make a difference in the future.

The Leadership Legacy: India's Challenges

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Dec 2024)



(Unveiling India's leadership odyssey, this story bridges ancient wisdom and modern challenges to groom visionary leaders shaping tomorrow)

As India positions itself to lead global economic growth, there is an urgent need to develop strong leaders in both corporate and political spheres. Leadership has always been a decisive factor in determining the success of nations and organisations. The journey of grooming leaders, from ancient times to the modern era, offers invaluable lessons for today. In this Cover Story, we explore India's ancient leadership development traditions, the imperatives of modern leadership, the challenges in identifying potential leaders, and the crucial role of mentorship in building tomorrow's leaders.

Ancient India's Leadership Legacy

Ancient India offers a treasure trove of insights into leadership development. The Gurukul system is an unparalleled education model in which students lived with their mentors and underwent comprehensive training in diverse areas such as statecraft, philosophy, ethics, and warfare. This form of learning transcended academics, focusing on character building and practical knowledge, equipping students to lead with wisdom and integrity.

The relationship between Chanakya and Chandragupta Maurya exemplifies ancient India's approach to leadership grooming. Under Chanakya's guidance, Chandragupta mastered the intricacies of governance, military strategy and diplomacy, eventually establishing one of India's greatest empires—the Mauryan Empire. The Ramayana and Mahabharata and Chanakya's Arthashastra serve as comprehensive treatises on

governance, ethics and leadership, offering frameworks that resonate even in today's complex world.

Leadership in the Digital Age

The demands on modern leaders have grown exponentially. Corporate and political entities require leaders who can navigate rapid technological advancements, inspire diverse teams and make data-driven decisions with foresight. In this era of volatility and complexity, leadership transcends mere authority; it demands adaptability, empathy and innovation.

In the corporate world, leadership succession planning has become critical. Organisations risk chaos during transitions without proper grooming, jeopardising stability and growth. Several Indian companies have faced challenges due to inadequate succession planning, resulting in periods of uncertainty and operational inefficiency. Similarly, political parties that fail to groom leaders often face instability, as evidenced by struggles in leadership transitions that lead to policy paralysis and governance vacuums.

The absence of leadership grooming in the modern age can lead to stagnation. Today's leaders must possess domain expertise, a firm grasp of technology, emotional intelligence, and a vision for the future. The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, big data and digital platforms demands continuous learning and adaptation. The inability to keep pace with these changes can render even the most seasoned leaders obsolete.

The Art of Identifying Future Leaders

Identifying potential leaders is a nuanced and multifaceted process. While many aspire to don leadership roles, not all possess the required skills, attitude, or mindset. Effective leaders often exhibit qualities such as resilience, empathy, vision, and the ability to inspire others. However, spotting these traits requires a structured and discerning approach.

In the corporate sector, organisations like Infosys, TCS, Wipro and ICICI employ modern techniques such as leadership assessments, 360-degree feedback and mentorship programmes to identify high-potential individuals. These processes help uncover both technical competencies and essential soft skills.

In politics, leadership identification often begins at the grass-roots level, where individuals demonstrate their ability to connect with people and address their concerns. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, L.K. Advani, and K. Kamaraj successfully identified and groomed potential leaders for national roles. Narendra Modi's journey from modest beginnings to becoming India's transformative Prime Minister underscores the importance of early recognition and nurturing leadership potential.

As Saint Thiruvalluvar wrote 2,000 years ago in Thirukkural:

*"இதனை இதனால் இவன்முடிக்கும் என்றாய்ந்து
அதனை அவன்கண் விடல்"*

(Entrust the task to the person after carefully evaluating how they would accomplish it and with what methods.)

The Mentor's Dilemma

Mentors' reluctance to take on this crucial role is a significant barrier to leadership grooming. This hesitation often stems from fears of losing power, authority or influence. Some mentors worry that their protégés might surpass them, disrupting the established hierarchy or diminishing their standing. This mindset, though pervasive, ultimately hinders the development of future leaders.

This reluctance contrasts sharply with the approach of legendary mentors like JRD Tata, who exemplified selflessness in leadership grooming. JRD mentored Ratan Tata and prepared him to take over the reins of the Tata Group. Despite initial scepticism from stakeholders, Ratan Tata's leadership ushered in an era of unprecedented growth and global recognition for the conglomerate. Similarly, Narayana Murthy mentored corporate leaders like Nandan Nilekani, while in politics, leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Kamaraj and Advani created numerous national leaders.

Bridging Generational Divides

The process of grooming leaders faces unique challenges in today's rapidly evolving environment. The generational divide presents a significant hurdle. Younger generations, including millennials and Gen Z,

bring fresh perspectives, technological prowess and a strong sense of purpose to leadership roles. However, they may lack the patience or long-term vision required for sustained leadership. Conversely, older mentors may struggle to connect with the values and expectations of younger mentees, creating a disconnect that impedes effective mentoring.

The Power of Reverse Mentoring

Overcoming these challenges requires a collaborative and adaptive approach. Modern organisations like Infosys, TCS and Wipro have embraced reverse mentoring, where younger employees provide insights into



technological trends and innovations. This two-way exchange fosters mutual learning and helps bridge generational and technological divides.

Interestingly, reverse mentoring, though considered a modern management concept, has roots in ancient India. At South India's Swamimalai temple, one can find a unique representation of Lord Shiva learning from his son Lord Kartikeya in a sitting posture with reverence — a powerful symbol of our ancestors' understanding of bidirectional learning thousands of years ago.

The Katha Upanishad tells the story of Nachiketa, a young boy who, through his unwavering pursuit of truth, becomes a teacher to his own father. This story is also being shown in the light and sound show at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Charting the Path Forward

Building strong leaders requires a comprehensive strategy involving mentors, mentees, organisations and institutions. Mentors must approach leadership grooming with a growth mindset, viewing it as an opportunity to contribute to a lasting legacy. They need to prioritise open communication, build trust and remain committed to their own continuous learning.

Mentees (aspiring young leaders) must demonstrate a willingness to learn, accept constructive feedback, and persevere through challenges. Leadership development is not a one-time effort but a continuous journey requiring dedication and adaptability. Aspiring leaders must actively seek mentorship opportunities, cultivate relationships, and remain open to diverse perspectives while learning from their mentors' wisdom and experience.

Organisations and political entities play a pivotal role in fostering leadership. They must invest in structured succession planning programmes, leadership development workshops, and inclusive policies that encourage diverse leadership pipelines. By creating an ecosystem that values and prioritises leadership

grooming, organisations and institutions can ensure sustainable growth and resilience.

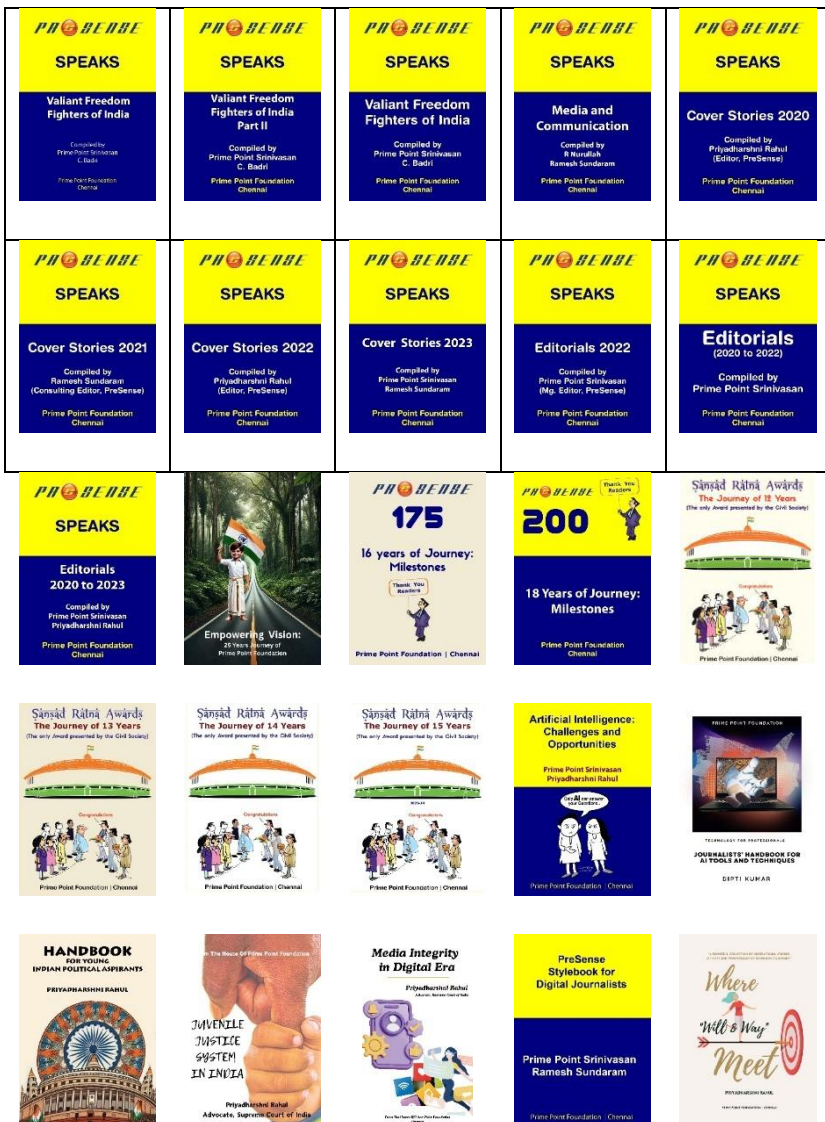
Conclusion

India's rich history and contemporary examples demonstrate that grooming leaders is not merely a choice but an imperative. The wisdom of ancient practices, combined with modern tools and methodologies, provides a roadmap for building a robust pipeline of leaders capable of steering corporates and politics towards a brighter future. By embracing mentorship, addressing challenges and fostering a culture of continuous development, we can ensure that the next generation of leaders is equipped to navigate the complexities of our rapidly changing world.

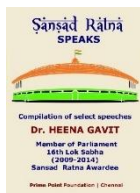
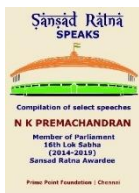
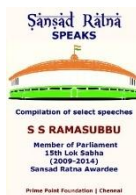
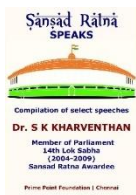
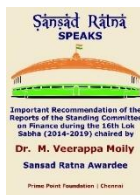
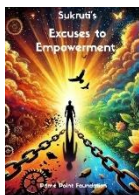
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