



SPEAKS

Editorials

(2020 to 2022)

Compiled by
Prime Point Srinivasan

Prime Point Foundation
Chennai

About Prime Point Foundation



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

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 and a Digital Journalist and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. Very eminent persons are associated with the Foundation.

In the past 23 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 started 5 initiatives viz. eMagazine PreSense, Sansad Ratna Awards, Next Gen Political Leaders, Digital Journalists Association of India and Education Loan Task Force, to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. These initiatives are non-commercial, and focussed on youth.

About eMagazine PreSense



PreSense: The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till June 2022, the Foundation has published 184 editions. 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.



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PreSense Speaks | Editorials (2020-22)

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Introduction

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The First Edition PreSense100

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



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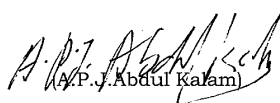
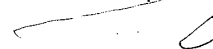
FOREWORD

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 <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Award launched. Golden Jubilee (50 th) Edition launched.
Feb 2011	Diamond Jubilee (60 th) Edition.

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

Apr 2012	Ezine resumed in a new format of contents. The tag line changed from 'Communicate the Communication' to 'Spreading Positive Vibrations'.
Apr 2013	Tamil Nadu Governor Dr Rosaiah launched a special edition on the Indian Parliament, coinciding with the <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Awards.

PreSense Speaks | Editorials (2020-22)

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

The Journey Continues.....

Editorial Team – July 2022

Publisher and Managing Editor	K. Srinivasan (Prime Point Srinivasan)
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Technology Advisor	Srinivas Gopal, Technology expert



**PRIME POINT
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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 and a Digital Journalist and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. Very eminent persons are associated with the Foundation.

In the past 23 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. These initiatives 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 June 2022, the Foundation has published 184 editions. This is a digital-only magazine. Digests, containing select articles upto 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 2022, the Foundation has conducted 12 editions and presented 86 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner up to the 9th Edition. 10th Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11th and 12th Editions were held at New Delhi.



India Bank 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 create awareness about digital journalism and its implications, among the public and particularly among the journalists. DiJAI conducts several online and offline workshops and seminars, with panels of domain experts.



Preface to Second Edition of PreSense Speaks series

On behalf of the Editorial Team of PreSense, we present the second edition of 'PreSense Speaks' Series. The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India, for positive journalism. In March 2022, PreSense completed 16 years. We have published 183 editions till May 2022.

As readers are aware, we have published digests of select articles up to 100, 110, 130. 150 and 175 editions. We had the unique privilege of carrying Foreword from Dr Abdul Kalam himself for the 100th edition.

The first edition of PreSense Speaks series was released by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Mos, Parliamentary Affairs in May 2021. The first edition was the compilation of articles on communication. This second edition of PreSense Speaks Series contains the Editorials published by us in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

I thank all the Editorial Team members for the excellent support and cooperation provided by them for release of every issue of PreSense.

I am confident that this edition will be useful for all our readers.

K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)
Publisher and Managing Editor
PreSense
www.corpezine.com
2nd July 2022

Our Cartoon Character Prince



Editorials Published in PreSense (2020, 2021 and 2022)

Every Challenge Comes with an Opportunity – The Coronavirus Challenge Will Make India Stronger

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (March 2020)

The nationwide lockdown to fight against Coronavirus is unprecedented and is 'first of its kind' in known history. During the World Wars, countries fought against each other. But in this war, nearly 200 countries are fighting a battle against an invisible enemy which has affected more than seven lakh (700,000) people and killed more than 33000 people across the world until 31st March 2020. In India, around 1200 people have been affected, with a death toll of 30. According to medical reports, the people have been affected through their contact with people with foreign travel history. So far, community spread is not detected. The Government of India has taken timely steps by imposing a nationwide lockdown to prevent outdoor movement of the people and to reduce social contact and infection. During this challenging time, we, the people, should cooperate with the Government and follow the medical advisory by quarantining ourselves in our homes. We need to put up this inconvenience to save our own and others' lives. Some of the countries like Italy, Spain, and USA which did not heed the restrictions are now facing serious problems.

It is challenging for us to confine within the house for three weeks. This may even cause mental strain. We should learn to convert this challenge into an opportunity to read, practise Yoga and Pranayama, listen to music, watch movies, etc. It is a great opportunity to spend more time with family members as well as learn new skills like cooking, music and such art. One of our team members is using this quarantined time to write an eBook on the Parliamentary procedures. The inconvenience should be converted into positive energy and creativity.

Interestingly, this lockdown seems to have done nature and the environment good. Animals and birds that had disappeared from sight have now re-emerged near the human habitat. Air and noise pollution across India has come down drastically.

Under the pretext of 'freedom of expression', some of the telecasting channels and the social media are spreading negative and wrong information, misleading people and causing panic. Some of the television channels indulge in debates that criticise each and every action of the Government. This is not the time for such armchair criticism. This is the time for cooperation with the authorities. If the people do not cooperate and quarantine themselves voluntarily, it would be difficult to control the pandemic and this may warrant an extension of the lockdown period.

The Coronavirus crisis is bound to create a negative impact on the already strained economy. The Government of India has announced some economic relief packages. The Government of India should now constitute a committee of economic experts, who have handled similar crises in the past, and work out a plan for reviving the economy.

India has overcome several challenges in the past successfully and emerged stronger than what it was before. This Coronavirus challenge can also be converted into an opportunity, but it is possible only with the full cooperation of all the citizens by strictly complying with the Government guidelines.

Suspension of MPLads Will Affect Rural People – An Appeal to the Government to Reconsider Decision

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (April 2020)

Recently, the Indian Government decided to implement a 30% salary cut for all Members of Parliament (MPs), and also to suspend MPLads (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) for two years. Through suspension of MPLads, the Government of India would get Rs.7900 crores. While the Opposition parties have welcomed the salary cut for MPs, they have objected to the suspension of MPLads.

Coronavirus fight: Cabinet passes ordinance to suspend MPLADS fund till 2022

Union minister Prakash Javadekar said the fund from MPLADS scheme will go to Consolidated Fund of India to address the challenges in fight against COVID-19

[BusinessToday.in](#) New Delhi Last Updated: April 6, 2020 | 17:27 IST

Since many people are not aware of how MPLads works, there are few discussions about it in the mainline media. Some intellectuals have welcomed the Government's move without understanding the concept, due to their misconception about politics and politicians.

Many people are under the wrong impression that the MPs are given Rs.5 crores cash for their expenditure. As per the guidelines of MPLads, the Lok Sabha MPs can utilise the amount only for their parliamentary constituency. The Rajya Sabha MPs can use the funds for the state from where they are elected. The MPs cannot directly spend the money themselves. They can only recommend approved projects to the District Collector / District Magistrate for creation of capital assets against the allocation from MPLads. The District Authorities will implement the projects and claim funds from the Central Government allotment.

Generally, the MPs recommend projects for the construction of toilets, buildings, and water tanks in schools and hospitals owned by the Government. They can also recommend the purchase of ambulances and medical equipment for the government hospitals within their constituency. They can allocate the funds for providing equipment to physically disabled persons. Even link roads connecting villages can be built using this fund. Community centres can be built to benefit cluster villages. By and large, MPLads has so far benefitted the rural people.

In order to gain the goodwill of the public, MPs would follow up with the district officials for speedy implementation of the projects recommended by them. It would be difficult for the District Collector or the State Governments concerned to execute such projects without MPLads or MLALads funds.

Suspension of MPLads for two years will definitely slow down development projects in the rural areas. Besides a slowdown for at least two years in the post lockdown era, this move would further deprive them of development projects for another two years.

Instead of suspending the entire 10 crores (for two years), the Government of India could have taken Rupees one or two crores per year for the health projects, and permitted the utilisation of the balance amount by the MPs for constituency-specific health and education related projects. The existing guidelines could have been modified accordingly for this purpose.

PreSense appeals to the Hon'ble Prime Minister to reconsider this decision.

The Ignored Plight of Our 'Migrant' Workers

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (May 2020)

On 22nd March 2020, when India first went into total lockdown to deal with the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was fear, paranoia, puzzlement, and even ridicule. Soon, reports emerged from the deserted streets across the country. That was when we began to be aware of a section of 4 crore (40 million) of our people who have always been part of our lifeline without our noticing it – the 'migrant' workers who worked in tea shops, restaurants, construction sites, sanitary departments, security of apartments and offices, factories, etc.

These people belong to the unorganised sector and depend on their daily earnings to make their livelihood. These people, when out of work as has happened during lockdown, are immediately deprived of their basic means of survival – '*roti, kapda aur makaan*' (food, clothing and shelter). This migrants' crisis happened because their employers did not pay them their wages during the lockdown period. And the migrants starved.

Towards the conclusion of the initial 21-day lockdown period, there was anticipation by hard-hit companies and entrepreneurs about economic reliefs from the government. But all that these 'migrants' wanted was to go home. Unfortunately, there was no mention about them or any relief for them as the government announced the next phase of the lockdown.

That was when they took matters into their own hands and set out on their long, arduous journey to their hometowns, some homes too far to reach, some travellers too ill-equipped in

health, stamina or conveyance to complete their journey. But grit and the longing for home pushed them to their outer limits of tolerance, some making it, several literally falling short in exhaustion, and some in death. Yet, there was no clear respite from the Government for them.

By the third announcement of lockdown, there were vague hints about getting them home. And then started the vulgar negotiations between the central government and the states, between contractors and state-level administrators, and between transporters and the travellers. The migrants were the hard-hit victims in all these situations. They continued to suffer, walk long miles, fall with hunger and thirst. And India became the butt of insensitivity both to its own society and to the world.

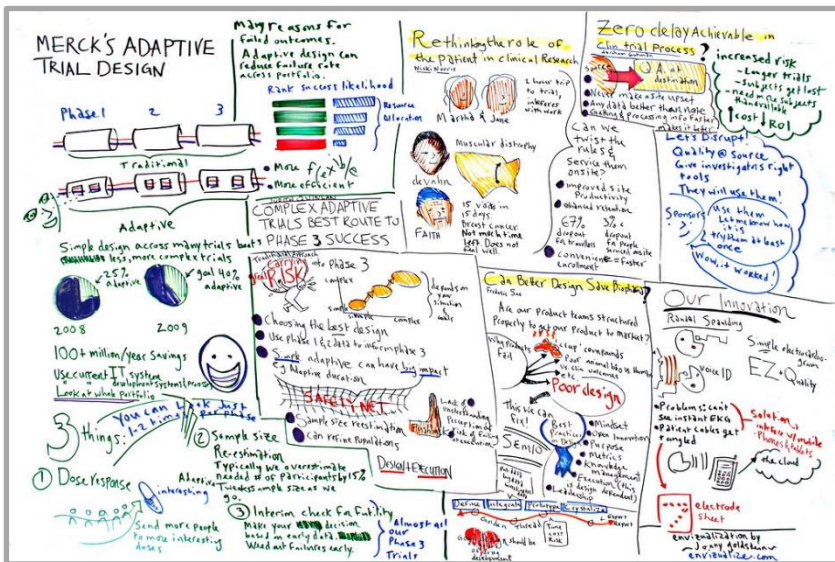
However, considerable relief did come in the form of random Good Samaritans along the way, who brought food and water to these migrant travellers, who facilitated and arranged transportation for them, who pooled money to help them, who coordinated with people in the respective destinations to reach them. These are the people who worked hard but silently, to help these desperate and helpless fellow citizens in their plight. While we applaud their generosity and selfless service, we need to look inward to what we have contributed to make the burden of these hapless people a little lighter.

Has the lockdown really taught us any lesson in humanity? Have we learned to be less selfish? Have we become aware and empathetic towards the people around us, who have so far been invisible but been struggling to stave off starvation and despair? If not, we must. A Biblical verse states: *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* This challenging question is worth reflection and introspection. We need to be more than human beings. We need to be human.

Government Should Improve the Ecosystem to Encourage Innovation

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (June 2020)

The latest Innovation Index for 2019 indicates that India is in the 52nd position among 129 countries on the basis of 80 indicators measuring various aspects of innovation. Even Singapore (ranked 4) and China (ranked 14) are above us. Although it can be argued that we have improved our ranking from 81 in 2015 to 52 in 2019, we need to understand that unless the Government comes out with a concrete policy to encourage innovation, it would be difficult for India to improve the position further.



There is a general feeling among the people that Indians do not have enough competencies to compete at the global level

and innovate products. It is not so. For thousands of years, Indians have been recognised as highly knowledgeable, and have been experts in various domains like mathematics, chemistry, medicine, astronomy, engineering, architecture etc. Where did the knowledge go? Why are Indians not able to bag Nobel Prizes?

Many people are not aware that more than 928 multinational companies (MNCs) have hired nearly four lakh professionals within India to do Research and Development (R&D) Projects. Many leading MNCs like IBM, Microsoft, Google, Oracle, Adobe, etc. hire talents within India and also outsource to Indian companies like Wipro, HCL, Dr Reddy's Lab, etc. These MNCs spend more than 40% of their global spending on R&D within India. This clearly indicates that Indian professionals are highly competent to match the global standards. It is also said that IBM has more than 60% of its employees as Indians. Indians are heading Microsoft and Google. Our Indian professionals develop products for the foreign companies and they market them under their brand name. India is buying these products at high costs.

In spite of Indian professionals creating world class products, India does not have software or hardware products which are marketed globally under an Indian brand. When we interacted with several renowned academicians across the country, they all admitted that notwithstanding the assurance by Prime Minister to increase the scope for innovation, the ecosystem is not conducive to the potential innovators.

It is estimated that around 1 lakh crore of rupees is spent annually on Research and Development in India. Of this, 55% is consumed by the Central and State Governments. 38% is used by the private sector. 4% is used by the higher education institutions. The Government spends the amount on defence, space, and electricity related research projects. The private sector uses it mainly for pharma and transportation projects.

Many academicians feel that the 4% spent by higher educational institutions is poor, when compared to developed nations.

A former Vice Chancellor of a University and scientist said that there was no point in increasing the funds, unless the quality of the teachers and education in higher education institutions is improved. He added that prior to the 1980s, persons passionate about education used to join the teaching job. Nowadays, many of those who cannot get better jobs get into teaching. Indian researchers in educational institutions bring out a large number of articles for journals, but most of them are of poor quality. He added that in order to improve the quality of students, an all-India entrance examination must be initiated for engineering too, like NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) for medical stream, so that future projects of India, in all disciplines are handled by quality people. He hoped that the new education policy planned by the Government would address this issue.

Another senior professor of Indian Institute of Technology said that he had submitted 8 documents for patenting some of his innovations. The authorities took up the examination of one product after four years. The remaining 7 products are pending with the authorities for the past five years. Even the competence of the examiners is highly questionable. Many innovators prefer to file in India for patents as it is cheaper to do so. But the inordinate delay and the incompetent examiners discourage them from filing their documents in India. The professor added that he has advised some of his students who work in USA to file their patent documents there itself even though it is costlier. They get the approval within six months. Unless the Government improves the ecosystem, many of our innovators may not be comfortable about filing their patents in India. Filing them in USA is not practical for most of the innovators.

In 2015, Prime Minister gave a call to all PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) to collaborate with high-end institutions for innovation. It is not known to what extent this has become successful. The incubation centres in IITs and NITs are successful. This can be doubled to accommodate more innovations.

In India, we are not in the habit of celebrating the great scientists, as we do with film stars and politicians. An Indian scientist, who was not found eligible for a tutor's job by an Indian University, went abroad and became a Nobel Laureate. Today, we laud him as an Indian. Do we have any moral right to take credit for his success? All Indian-born Nobel Laureates were supported by foreign countries to achieve their goal. We have the history of driving them out of our country, citing various rules. It is suggested that we can name or rename some of our Universities after some of the Indian Nobel Laureates and other great Indian scientists, so that present Indian youth are inspired.

PreSense appeals to the Government of India and the Standing Committee on Science and Technology to examine the urgent need for improving our ecosystem in order to motivate young Indian innovators to develop products for India.

Managing Success with Right Attitude to Avoid Failure

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (July 2020)

Over the past ten years, there has been a great change in the attitude of many youngsters who attain small and early success. They behave as if they have achieved a great deal in life. This attitude is reflected in their arrogant and insensitive behaviour. This attitude is especially noticeable in those working in such domains as the Media, Entertainment, IT (Information Technology) and Politics. With the sudden inflow of money, or a spurt of popularity, or proximity to people in power, these youngsters display this unhealthy attitude, failing to realise that this attitude would only distance themselves from their well-wishers, and eventually lead to disaster and failure.

There have been debates about how to counsel these youngsters and mentor them on managing their initial success in a mature manner, for their sustained growth. In July 2020, NGPL (Next Gen Political Leaders), one of the initiatives of PreSense, organised a Webinar on this subject and had invited two young MPs to share their views on the topic.

We also contacted Dr A V Srinivasan, a world-renowned neurologist for his views on why such behaviour happens and how to prevent such unhealthy attitude. He concurred that many youngsters these days are unable to manage their initial success like money, fame, and status in a mature way. They tend to become arrogant and insensitive to others, and then they encounter their own downfall due to their attitude.

He explained that when success occurs, people can choose to experience either pleasure or happiness. Pleasure is emotional and short-lived. When the person relates his

success to his ego, the experience is 'pleasure'. It is like intoxication. This mode puts pressure on the individual to achieve more, like going back for more doses, as success goes to the head. That is why these people behave in an arrogant manner.

When people connect their success to a feeling of selflessness and relate it to the society's benefit (not personal ego), it becomes happiness. The people in the happiness mode have a good attitude, and mature behaviour and character. That makes them achieve more and more but with a selfless yearning. While pleasure is short-lived, happiness is long lasting.

Dr Abdul Kalam always related his success to the society. He is therefore still revered by the people. On the other hand, although Hitler conquered almost the whole of Europe, he resorted to 'pleasure killing' of the Jewish community. That led to his downfall. Had he not resorted to 'pleasure killing', he would have been remembered as one of the celebrated leaders. Similarly, King Alexander wanted to conquer the world for his individual pleasure. But he died due to mental stress at a young age. On the other hand, King Raja Raja Cholan conquered many countries 1000 years ago. But he dedicated his success to his people and built the great monument of 'Tanjore Temple'. He is still celebrated after 1000 years.

Successful youngsters should relate their achievements to happiness and not pleasure. For this, they should develop the right, healthy attitude. They should seek the guidance of mentors, if necessary, to develop and nurture the right attitude. It would be a great loss to the nation, if these youngsters fail to be groomed in the initial stage of success, and then face failure due to their unbecoming attitude.

Ban Political Activism in Educational Institutions

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (August 2020)



Image Courtesy: www.edexlive.com

During India's pre-independence struggle, the extraordinary circumstances in the country lured students to participate as freedom fighters and patriotic protesters against British rule in India. The students joined Indian political parties and groups in their united struggle against the British administration. If we look around in the world and even in India, the student fraternity has been a strong, powerful and influential force to reckon in any nation-wide movement.

During the academic years in college, students vie for positions in student unions and communities. These positions are therefore often fiercely contested by talented and

competent student candidates who display qualities of leadership. Winning and serving in positions in student communities is a bonus credit to the student, fortifying his prospects in the career market. Holding such positions of power also wins power and respect among the students and the teaching fraternity of the institution. Students are also naturally ambitious to seize such privileges, working hard for them.

But an unfortunate trend has crept into the higher educational institutions over the years in post-independent India. Student unions and leaders are affiliated to opposing political parties, thus blemishing the sanctity of student activity in the campus that was intended for holistic development of the student through extracurricular activities, and learning outside the classroom. Political parties exploit the ambitious enthusiasm of the youth and lure them into adorning political flagships to the associations they belong.

According to a former student leader of a renowned city college, who won the college elections purely on the merits of his capability and leadership traits, this trend of political affiliations has become especially pronounced in the past decade. What used to be a battle of talents and skills to win a college election, has turned out in most higher education colleges, including reputed ones, to be a political battle as the contesting student candidates are often backed by political parties. Thus, college elections in the student community become a contest of political might rather than personal competence.

This unhealthy practice has polluted the atmosphere in the corridors of the institutions. Students are misled to believe that political power and affiliation is more important than value-based skills and character development. Such students forget the reason they are in college, which is to learn, be educated and leave the corridors as a young adult ready to

start his life in the working world. Instead, they involve themselves in political activities, shirk their studies, exploit their political contacts in order to continue in the college beyond their eligible tenure, enjoying the subsidised facilities and other perks as a student even though they are not entitled to them. Unfortunately, the administrative authorities of the institutions turn a blind eye to these 'student politicians' because of the bullying influence of the political parties they belong to.

A reputed senior and experienced educationist who had headed leading educational institutions across the world, said that educational institutions in developed countries as USA, UK and those in Europe do not have this trend of political affiliation and interference in their universities and colleges and their student communities. The students and the teaching administration as well as the respective local governments are explicit about the role and objective of the students who join colleges and universities for higher studies. The students' focus there is on completing their academic course on time, earning as many credits as they can, and their extracurricular activities and student unions are opportunities for wholesome development of their personalities. He also said that the trend of political affiliation of student unions was prevalent only in developing countries where the system of governance and administration is flawed and corrupt. Another senior and experienced professor, who used to be leader of students' unions abroad, said, "In Europe and USA, there is activism but the laws hold individuals and organisations responsible."

The recently released National Educational Policy 2020 spells out ways and means for the holistic development of the students to produce responsible, conscientious young citizens of integrity. The Policy recommends value-based education to achieve this objective. The Policy should have strongly recommended a ban on political interference, activity and affiliation in educational institutions and student communities,

thus enabling students to accomplish their main purpose of enrolment – to study, gain knowledge and groom their personalities, and leave the institution promptly after the prescribed academic tenure. As young and individual adults, they are free to pursue their political ambitions – outside the purview of educational institutions, and with their own time and money.

The educational institution is the Temple of Knowledge. It earned that prestigious title from the traditional education system of ancient India. These temples were centres of learning. True patriotism, which is what politicians and political aspirants generally profess, begins with respecting our heritage and respecting our Temple of Knowledge, and not contaminating it with the colours of political fervour and interference.

Do Political Parties Follow Democratic Norms in the Parliament?

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (September 2020)

The Monsoon session of the Parliament was held for 10 days from 14th September 2020 to 23rd September 2020 even though it was originally scheduled for 18 days. Around 68% of the Members of Parliament (MPs) participated in the session. Both the Houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) made appropriate arrangements for the MPs, to ensure maintenance of physical distancing protocols due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

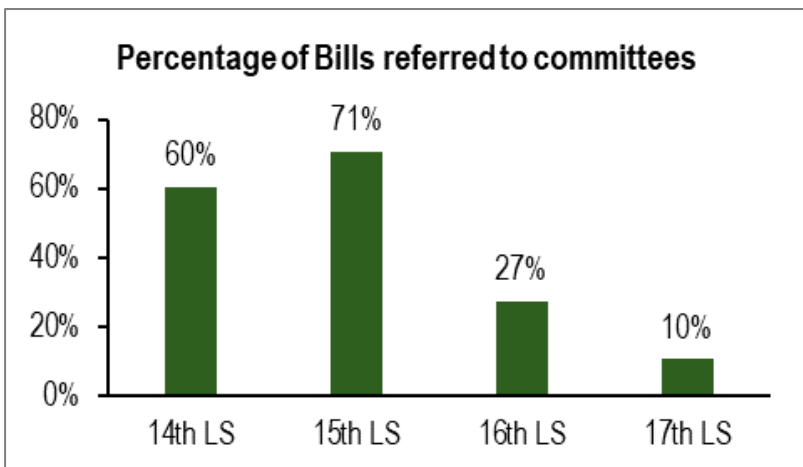
During the session, the Parliament functioned in two parts, with one House sitting in the morning and the other, in the afternoon. However, the session was curtailed because of a public health emergency when several MPs were diagnosed with Covid-19. The Parliament adjourned *sine die* on 23rd September 2020, after functioning for 10 days. **Lok Sabha worked 145% of the scheduled time of the sitting days; Rajya Sabha, 99%.** Both the Houses of **Parliament met after a gap of 175 days – six days ahead of the constitutional requirement of a maximum gap of six months between sessions.**

Legislative Business

In the Monsoon session, 20 new Bills were introduced (excluding the Appropriation Bills). Of these, eleven Bills were to replace Ordinances. These include three Bills related to agriculture trade and contract farming, one to expand RBI's regulation of cooperative banks, and three relating to Labour Codes on Social Security, Industrial Relations, and Occupational Safety.

Twenty-five Bills were passed by the Parliament (excluding the Appropriation Bills). On an average, Lok Sabha discussed a Bill for 1.5 hours, and Rajya Sabha discussed a Bill for about an hour, before passing it. Lok Sabha discussed and passed the three Labour Codes within three hours, and Rajya Sabha passed them after 1 hour 45 minutes of discussion. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

Allegations Against the Government



Political observers and Opposition parties blame the Government for hurriedly passing the Bills without detailed discussions in the Houses. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

In spite of the negative growth of GDP, there was no discussion on the current economic situation, in both the Houses.



Ruckus in the Parliament
(Photo courtesy: indianexpress.com)

There is also a general feeling amongst experts that the present Government does not give enough importance to the Standing Committees as they do not refer the Bills to the Committees for scrutiny. In earlier years, Bills were

referred to the Committees, where they get fine-tuned to the best interest of the public. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, only 10% of the Bills introduced so far have been referred to Committees. It is much lower than the 14th (60%), 15th (71%) and 16th (27%) Lok Sabha.

Another criticism against the ruling Government is that they take unduly long time to elect the Deputy Speaker. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, even after 464 days after the commencement of the first session, the Deputy Speaker is not yet elected. This is the longest period in the history of Lok Sabha, to go without a Deputy Speaker. In the 16th Lok Sabha, the Government took 70 days to elect the Deputy Speaker. Previously, this period was highest in the 12th Lok Sabha (269 days). Otherwise, the Deputy Speaker is normally elected within a short time of less than a month.

Criticism against Opposition

While the Opposition blames the Government for not following the Parliamentary norms, they are guilty of creating ruckus in the House and misbehaving before the Chair in the Rajya Sabha, leading to suspension of 8 Members. They boycotted the sessions too. This enabled the Government to pass the Bills without serious discussions. Creating a ruckus in the House, and stalling the proceedings have become a trend in

the past 15 years. Stalling the proceedings is against the principles of democracy.

The Opposition may have genuine reasons for drawing the attention of the nation on any issue. But creating a ruckus and stalling the proceedings are against the interests of the people. They have to adopt different methods, like the mature democracies in UK and USA.

The people elect the Members to the Parliament to take care of the interest of the people and the nation and to frame suitable policies. Unless the ruling and opposition parties respect and value the traditions of the Parliamentary practices, our democracy cannot be successful. The

After over 70 years of Independence, the least the citizens can expect from the Government and the Opposition is a high level of maturity by following the democratic and defined norms in the Parliament.

The ruling and the Opposition parties should instil confidence among the citizens by respecting and adhering to democratic and Parliamentary norms.

After over 70 years of Independence, the least the citizens can expect from the Government and the Opposition is a high level of maturity by following the democratic and defined norms in the Parliament.

(Data and graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research)

Ban Online Gambling and Related Advertisements to Save Youth

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (October 2020)

Youth commits suicide after losing Rs 15 lakh in online gambling game in Mancherial

 **Roja Mayabrahma**
Hans News Service | 12 July 2020 9:24 AM IST

HIGHLIGHTS

A 24-year-old youngster committed suicide after he lost Rs 15 lakh to the fraudsters in an online gambling game Dafabet.



News - Mirror Now - Crime - Chennai: 20-year-old student ends life after losing savings in online gambling; suicide note recovered

Chennai: 20-year-old student ends life after losing savings in online gambling; suicide note recovered

 **Mirror Now Digital**
Updated Jun 26, 2020 (23:01 IST)

ANDHRA PRADESH

Gambling addiction on the rise among youth

 **Rajulapudi Srinivas**

VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 21, 2020 23:01 IST
UPDATED: JUNE 21, 2020 23:01 IST

Man, 28, loses money in online rummy, ends life

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: The city police are investigating the death of a 28-year-old man who hanged himself in Sembium allegedly after losing money while playing rummy online.

The deceased was identified as M Kumarasan. A native of Adhanur in Villupuram district, he was working in the city as a collection agent for a private bank.

His roommates found him hanging around 11pm on Tuesday night. Personnel from Sembium police station rushed to the scene and took Kumarasan to the Government Stanley Hospital, where he was declared 'brought dead'.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the deceased was addicted to online gambling and would stay awake till early hours of the day playing rummy.

His family members told investigators that he never sent any money home. His monthly salary was about Rs 18,000 and he had borrowed Rs 1 lakh from his father, recently which he lost while gambling. Sembium police have registered a case and are investigating, police said.

Shocking recent media reports

The recent shocking reports in the media about the suicide of many youngsters after losing money in online gambling is highly disturbing. The unregulated screaming advertisements on television and other online media inviting people to play rummy add more serious concern. It is reported that many youngsters have become addicted to internet gambling.

Gambling in India is governed by The Public Gaming Act of 1867, The Madras Police Act of 1888 and the Tamil Nadu Gaming Act of 1930 in the state. Gambling is listed in the List II of the Seventh Schedule of Indian Constitution and the

States are empowered to enact laws to regulate gambling. Goa, Sikkim and Nagaland have permitted gambling online and offline. In the majority of the other States, gambling is permitted in specific places which are called 'Gaming Houses', after taking permission from the authorities concerned.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has permitted gaming activities like rummy with stakes, which has been described as a game with "preponderance of skill over chance". When these cases were decided, online gambling was not prevalent. Today, a situation has arisen where online gambling has become popular but has neither been specifically prohibited nor permitted. A grey area exists which needs to be addressed expeditiously. In the online Rummy gambling, a person uses the internet to play the game. Cards are dealt virtually and the player does not know whether he plays with a machine or a real human being. Any fraud committed in the physical domain can be detected, but any fraud committed in the virtual domain is almost impossible to detect. Every game could be a 'fixed match'. 'Match fixing' is illegal in India.

Our ancient scriptures like Rig Veda and Mahabharata describe the evils of gambling. In Arthasastra, Chanakya has laid down some stringent conditions for operating Gaming Houses. If there was any violation, the gaming house owner and players were penalised heavily.

All card games, lotteries, IPL betting, commodity trading by unrecognised exchanges, currency trading by unauthorised people are freely available online in India.

Some of the major challenges arising out of online gambling:

- Unlimited losses will ruin the family of the player.
- It will lead to a rise in crimes on the streets.

PreSense Speaks | Editorials (2020-22)

- Most of the money gets transferred outside India through the hawala channel. Technical manipulations seem to be taking place to circumvent the Money Laundering Act by the game operators. It is also reported that the money is used for drug trafficking and terrorism activities.
- Already people are addicted to the internet. Gambling is more addictive. These two reinforce each other. This will lead the player to pick up other addictions like drugs and alcohol.
- It is also reported that several gaming sites use crypto currencies as a medium of transaction and this will damage the nation's economy, because of unregulated currency flow.
- Through TV and online advertisements, children and housewives are targeted and encouraged to play.
- Personal information is taken, mostly in an unauthorised manner, by the game operator and he uses this information to profile the player and to sell the data to others.

PreSense appeals to the Government of India to immediately address this issue without delay and consider the following suggestions:

- To pass laws to ban or at least regulate such online gaming/gambling websites and permit only restricted access to identified persons (KYC regulated) with strict surveillance over the transactions, limiting betting amounts and monitoring operation of such sites;
- To sensitise the public on the dangers of gambling on the same lines and issue statutory warnings in a similar manner as is done for tobacco users;
- To put in place strict guidelines like antecedent verification, player admission screening, profiling etc before granting admission and creating and maintaining databases of such people after granting access; and
- To consider putting in place rules and guidelines for such practitioners including possible issue of licenses to practice the profession.

Shri S N Ravichandran, a Cyber Security Expert and Social Worker from Coimbatore has filed Public Interest Litigation in the Madras High Court seeking the intervention of the Hon'ble High Court to address the issues urgently. The Court has taken up the case for hearing and issued notices to all concerned.

Provide Siddha System of Medicine The Status It Deserves

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor and Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (November 2020)

The world has been going through a chronic COVID-19 crisis since early 2020. Researchers and scientists have been spending money and time and concerted efforts in finding relief from the new virus that has taken over the world.

While the World Health Organisation (WHO) and similar health organisations have been promoting research in the allopathic system of medicine, back in India, traditional medicine, especially Siddha, has been making inroads in successfully arresting infection by the COVID virus.



Siddha medicine is one of the oldest traditional systems of medicine practised in the southern part of India, mostly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Siddha means 'perfection'. It has a holistic approach and covers the physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being of an individual in the medical pursuit of combatting infections in the body.

Siddha is based on the principles relating to the elements and humours (*Vaadham, Pitham* and *Kapham*) of the human body, which when imbalanced, result in diseases and adverse medical conditions.

To understand the role of Siddha medicine in dealing with the current medical crisis, your eMagazine's Editorial Team talked to various Siddha doctors and researchers.

In the 2015 Chennai floods that threatened an epidemic of water-borne diseases, '*Nilavembu Kudineer*', a *Siddha* polyherbal formulation, was widely distributed and administered among the local people, and this move successfully averted any threat of an epidemic. PreSense understands that hospitals in Tamil Nadu state had co-administered *Siddha* medicine to COVID patients, and about 800 of them were taken up for research to find out the effectiveness of *Siddha* medication. These selected patients had shown moderate/severe symptoms of the COVID infection. Post-*Siddha* medication to them, the mortality, symptomatic severity and recovery time were relatively lower in these cases than in those who were not given *Siddha* medication. Further 30,000 COVID patients were treated in exclusive *Siddha* care centres and 98% of the patients recovered fully, while 2% of the patients were referred to a modern medical facility for oxygen support.

In the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu, a closed group of 40,000 people were administered *Siddha* medicine as a preventive measure, and the results were successful with no case of COVID infection reported in the group. This experience has been documented by the medical team.

With the experiences and the results so encouraging, it is puzzling why *Siddha* has not found due recognition and status it deserves. The Editorial Team ascertained the following reasons for this lacuna:

- *Siddha* originated in Tamil Nadu. *Siddhar Agasthiyar* is considered the founding father of this medical system. Therefore, all the literature relating to this system of medicine is documented in Tamil. Little effort in translation is done to promote it among the people in other parts of India, such as North India.

- The local and national-level administrators and governments have not been giving due recognition to the traditional medicines, including Siddha. Therefore, Siddha researchers and practitioners have little motivation and incentive to promote its virtues, especially as preventive medicine and supplement.

PreSense proposes the following immediate steps be taken by AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) Ministry of the Government of India to deal with these inhibitors, and promote Siddha to the status and utility it deserves in the field of preventive medicine and treatment:

- Translate the literature and texts relating to Siddha, which are currently in Tamil, to other Indian languages, especially Hindi to reach North India, and English to promote it abroad.
- Provide Central Government funding for state-level development of Siddha welfare centres and research.
- Introduce Siddha welfare centres at all state capitals and metropolitan cities of the country, including the Parliament House.
- Initiate MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the government of those countries where the South Indian population (which is generally familiar with the Siddha system of medicine) is predominant, to enable the diaspora to avail Siddha medication and treatment.
- Initiate scientific validation of Siddha System, to make the system acceptable globally. It may be recalled that it was only after Johns Hopkins Hospital in the USA and Stanford Hospital under Stanford University validated some Yoga exercises scientifically, that Yoga became internationally acceptable. The AYUSH Ministry should

encourage the National Institute of Siddha (NIS) to undertake 'original' research (*ie.* identifying the problem and finding a solution to it) on Siddha system, and publish research papers in internationally reputed journals with good 'Impact Factor' (a measure of the importance of a journal).

- From our conversation with various Siddha Practitioners and Faculty members of NIS, we observed that they are not aware of the methods of scientific validation of the system and submission of Research Papers to Journals with good 'Impact Factor'. An immediate awareness programme is to be undertaken by National Institute of Siddha.

It is understood that six research papers under Siddha are expected to be published within the next three months. This is a good initiative in the way forward to develop and promote Siddha which is a holistic and wholesome alternative for healthy living and treatment of medical conditions. But much more needs to be done. Incidentally, the High Court of Madras, in a case filed by a Siddha doctor, had raised questions on why Siddha medicine was not being given due allocation of funds by the Central Government.

The Editorial Team appeals to the Central Government and the AYUSH Ministry to provide specified budgetary allocation and promote initiatives to develop and recognise Siddha, just as it did to promote our indigenous Yoga to the world.

The Year Gone By. The Year Ahead

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (December 2020)

The Year Gone By



The year 2020 has passed. We hear sighs of relief. Are these sighs too soon? Time will tell.

The year 2020 began like almost any other year. Along with the New Year greetings, we were

informed about an uncommon occurrence in an unfamiliar place called Wuhan in China, where a local virus was infecting the people and taking their lives in an epidemic. That news was treated as a localised incident and life continued normally, for the rest of the country and the world.

Within three months, the virus crossed the borders, to infect the whole world like a wild forest fire. People began dying within days of infection. The spread of the virus was speedy and highly contagious. Doctors, scientists, governments were at a loss about how to deal with, and arrest this pandemic. The mask, what Michael Jackson adorned in the 2000s as a fashion statement, became a symbol of protection against the infection.

Life and lifestyle changed for the whole world. We have lost loved ones and known people untimely, because of the virus. People who were gainfully employed, were suddenly threatened with debts and no income because of the impact of the virus on business and the economy. We know enough about the changes without having to go into the details.

We are yet to see the last of the pandemic, as a new wave of a mutant virus takes over the European continent, and is spreading.

There were strong speculations about the depletion of natural habitat being the reason for the bizarre occurrence. In the last week of December 2020, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that *"history tells us that this will not be the last pandemic, and epidemics are a fact of life."* But more importantly, he said, *"The pandemic has highlighted the intimate links between the health of humans, animals and the planet. Any efforts to improve human health are doomed unless they address the critical interface between humans and animals and the threat of climate change that is making our earth less habitable."* Food for serious thought and resolved action?

Lessons to Learn from 2020

Therefore, what must the lessons be, to be learned from this traumatic experience, as we step into the new year? To enumerate them, let us look at the positives among a series of negatives in the year.

- The pandemic forced families to stay together, giving the opportunity to connect, revive relationships and understand one another. Those who failed to leverage on this God-sent opportunity, lost out in divorces and intolerance. Their loss.
- The lockdown taught us that every challenge is an opening for a new opportunity through an invention or a discovery – in this case, virtual connect in place of physical. We learnt to work, live and manage, using man's latest greatest invention, Technology.

- We exercised new flexibility in work-home time management.
- We realised that there is life beyond fast cars, traffic, multiplexes and late-night parties.
- We learnt to look around, notice, and be aware of other lives – of other people, animals, vegetation. An invisible but vital segment and lifeline in our working society – the unorganised migrant working community who were worst hit by the lockdowns, emerged in the visibility of the society.
- People, who were so far, content to be ordinary people, became Good Samaritans. People learnt to be more generous, more sensitised, more aware of the importance of the Universe, eco-balance and care, as critical elements for our own survival and health.
- For a change, we were able to enlist things to be grateful for, rather than be unhappy about shortfalls. We were thankful to be alive and healthy, as also for our loved ones.

The Year Ahead

The new year comes with hopes and apprehensions about the COVID vaccine. We must not compromise on hygiene and social distancing for a while more. We still have uncertainties about new job opportunities, the new office environment moving from physical to mostly WFH (Work-From-Home), and classes shifting from school buildings to virtual screens, as the new normal. Whatever the change, humans are wired to adapt. So, there is hope.

What we still need to do, is change our inherent attitude and approach as exploiters of Mother Earth, to preservers of Nature, and fellow survivors with the flora and fauna.

When our popular indigenous music group, the Shillong Chamber Choir, released their latest album last week, singing carols in local and traditional languages, the founder of the Choir, Neil Nongkynrih explained, *"Most of us have a very westernised way of viewing the festival. We associate it with Santa, reindeers and Christmas trees. But actually, it is all about Jesus Christ's humble birth in a desert in the Middle East. We want to share that spirit through our songs."* And so, the music album was aptly titled, "Come Home Christmas".

Similarly, we need to take a break, if we have not done it yet, and make a refreshed New Year resolution (for sincere implementation), to look beyond a dog-eat-dog lifestyle, beyond workaholism, beyond selfish indulgence. Instead, we need to regard Mother Earth and our natural co-inhabitants with care, preserve our familial relationships, and reinforce our core value system to promote cooperative co-existence.

Are we asking too much of ourselves? Only we ourselves have the answer. If there is a will, there is a way. We are in dire need of peace and goodwill, health and well-being on Earth. Let's make it happen, working together!

Unsung Heroes, Like Sung Heroes, Are Heroes

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (January 2021)

Recently, the Indian Cricket Team won the Test Series 2-1, against Australia in Australia, in a 4-match series.

This is not the first time that India has won a Test Series, and again not the first time India has won against Australia, and in Australia. Even then, the latest win stirred much emotion, passion and patriotism, both within the team and within India. What drew these emotions was the way the victory was clinched. After winning a match each, India drew the third match, which seemed almost sure to go Australia's way. The final deciding match was won at the Brisbane Cricket



Ground called Gabba – the Fortress because no foreign team had won a match there in over three decades. India broke that spell by winning convincingly, to take the Trophy back home. The highlight – the win was steered by six debutantes, for whom playing in an international test match was a new experience. They became overnight icons, national idols and success stories.

Sung Heroes

This article is not about their successes, but what went into making them success stories, against all odds. For example, we have among them, a player who grew up in a village in Tamil Nadu State, to parents who were from a low economic

background. Even though he enjoyed playing cricket and showed promise, he had to discontinue as his family could not afford his classes. Fortunately, a mentor who could convince his family, got him into a city school for better coaching opportunities. He made the best of the opportunities, relying on his commitment and personal efforts, even as he could not afford suitable kits and shoes for the game. At a relatively old age of 29 years for a debut, he was immediately acknowledged as a legend, even by the Australian team.

Another player hailed from a remote locality in North India, where again his father earned a low income and life was a struggle for him. Here again, passion and commitment helped him strive against all odds to make it to the national playing team. And when his father died at the beginning of the Australian tour, he prioritised his father's dream of seeing him win, over quitting the tour to attend the funeral. When he visited his father's grave after his return, he had a proud moment to share in his father's memory, at his grave.

During the Australian tour, key players were rested for injuries and no one expected India to win, only draw, if possible. But these debutantes relied on their commitment, self-belief and team motivation, to face the aggressiveness of the opposing team. They lived up to the famous motto, 'Yes, We Can!', and proved it, inspiring aspiring young sportspersons across India. And the entire nation now basks in ecstasy over the landmark win.

Unsung Heroes

But success stories do not always come gift-wrapped, with rich rewards and overwhelming home-coming receptions back home. Success stories also come in little acts that make a difference, silently but surely, to someone who needs it, or for the world or the Universe. There is no dearth of ideas and opportunities to make a difference in life, and it is possible

once one realises that there is wealth, not just in physical assets, but also in virtuous deeds, including random acts of care. We have such unsung success stories, right here in India. We have one such success story of a Karnataka State-based 105-year-old woman who planted and nurtured nearly 400 banyan trees over her lifespan, in place of own children she could not have, and thus contributed to creating a greener environment. She converted her disappointment to an opportunity for a better world.

Another success story is that of an 85-year-old woman in Tamil Nadu State. She sells *idlis* for breakfast at just Rupee one (as against the normal price of at least Rupees five or more) for the past three decades, because the customers who visit her little shop, including migrant workers, are from economically backward families, and she did not want to tax them.

We have a transgender lady who adopts abandoned children, and is mother to eight such orphaned children today.

We have innumerable such unsung heroes who make a difference, by comforting a desperate soul, helping someone up, caring for the other species living with us in nature, so that the world becomes a better place to live in. If we look around, we might notice them – coming in different shapes, sizes, economic backgrounds, genders, ages, orientations.

Let us applaud the unsung heroes who silently make a difference. Let us also celebrate the unsung heroes amongst our soldiers who fight the bitter cold, and the enemies at the borders, even as we celebrated the 72nd Republic Day of India on 26th January 2021.

Celebrating Negativity – Quo Vadis?

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (February 2021)

In the recent years, India has been seeing a trend, where a section of the public and the media celebrate negative news, without any reservation. In many states of the country, convicts and criminal offenders who are released from jail after serving their period of imprisonment, are hailed as heroes and received in grandeur. Anti-hero characters who feature in films, social media and television serials, are hero-worshipped. Hanged terrorists are given grand funerals, with large crowds turning up. In the process, genuine heroes of our nation are not recognised, and are often side-lined.

In the recent violence caused by miscreants in the garb of farmers' support, at the time of the Republic Day celebrations at



Delhi, some senior journalists tweeted some fake news against the police. These promoters of the fake news were hailed by a section of media and some intellectuals, in defence of 'freedom of speech and expression'.

Recently, the arrested young girls who were allegedly associated with some international separatist organisations, were hailed, again in defence of 'freedom of speech and expression'. Whatever be the legal position, any association with international groups that work against the sovereignty of India, must not be tolerated and must be condemned. Unfortunately, if anyone dares to condemn these activities, he

is silenced and shamed by a powerful lobby of the social media and the traditional media.

The Silence of Concerned Citizens

People who are concerned about the welfare of their nation, are afraid to speak against the celebration of negativity, for fear of being shamed by its supporters. Even though the supporters of negativity are few in number when compared to the larger number of silent, concerned citizens, these negative people are extremely vocal in the media, especially in the social media, drowning the silence of the people.

The author spoke to a cross section of intellectual people from different professional backgrounds. While they deplored this new trend, they were reluctant to share their views publicly.

Freedom of Speech is Not Absolute

With the emergence of the social media, it is generally assumed that 'freedom of speech and expression' is absolute. This is incorrect. The Indian Constitution provides 'freedom of speech and expression' as a fundamental right under section 19(1)(a). However, under Article 19(2), the Indian Constitution empowers the State to enact laws that impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said article 19(1)(a), "in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence". In India, there are enough laws to impose reasonable restrictions. In the United States, even though their Constitution provides for absolute freedom of speech and expression, this freedom is restricted through various judgements. No country in the world enjoys absolute freedom of speech and expression.

Sadly, the people who advocate 'freedom of speech' do not educate the youngsters about the reasonable restrictions. When the author spoke to one of the senior professors of journalism of a reputed university, the professor questioned the right of the police to arrest any person who violated the restrictions. Surprisingly, this professor was ignorant of the reasonable restrictions and even the fundamental duties enshrined in the Constitution. Thousands of students who are taught by this professor, are likely to be misinformed by him, and therefore, they run the risk of breaking the law, out of ignorance.

Why This Trend?

During the conversation with various people about why this trend has emerged in the recent years, many observed that there was polarisation of right and left across the world with extreme views on both sides, and both finding fault with each other. This polarisation has affected India too.

An internationally reputed neurologist opined that some adverse economic developments, rising unemployment and even some of the good but lenient reform measures introduced by the Government, has caused insecurity and fear among the youngsters, and they tend to react with anger. Out of their lack of awareness about the restrictions and the law, they tend to overstep their right of expression, to vent their frustration. This results in such untoward behaviour and trends.

Inadequate communication from the ruling establishment, and lack of concerted efforts to educate the people about the various useful economic initiatives and reforms, coupled with the 'chest-beating' arrogance of some of the followers of the ruling establishment, have infuriated even the politically unbiased and apolitical people of the country.

Role of Political Parties and the Media

It is a dangerous and unhealthy trend to see youngsters violating the law of the land, using the social media, to the embarrassment for our nation. It is also a dangerous trend that political parties, instead of guiding and checking the youngsters, encourage them, in their pursuit of short-term political gains. Tweets against the sovereignty and integrity of the nation are often hailed by some political parties. The traditional media like print and television, instead of playing a positive role, fuel such acts, to up their TRP ratings.

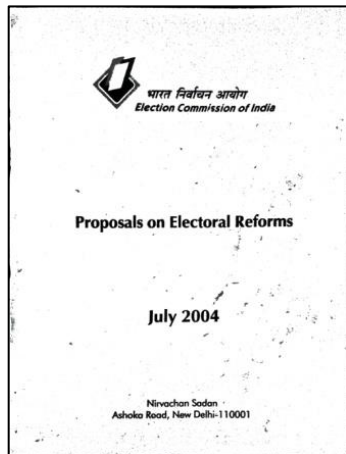
Differentiate between Government and Sovereignty of the Nation

Critics of the ruling establishment should differentiate between the Government and the sovereignty of the nation. In the pretext of opposing the Government, these 'activists' collude with national enemies, to protest against the nation's sovereignty. If the political parties and the media realise the dangers of this trend and act in a responsible manner, we can protect and uphold the sovereignty of the country and its legitimate citizens.

Urgent Need for Electoral Reforms in the 75th Year of Independence

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (March 2021)

In the midst of the State Assembly Elections in five States, Prime Point Foundation and your eMagazine PreSense organised the 11th edition of Sansad Ratna Awards at New Delhi on 20th March 2021. Shri Sunil Arora (Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India), Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs), and Justice Shri A K Patnaik (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) were the Chief Guests. Around 20 Hon'ble Members of Parliament were present during the event. On behalf of the civil society, an appeal was made in the welcome address, to all the authorities concerned, to expedite the Electoral Reforms.



Although the first official consolidated proposal for Electoral Reforms was made in June 2004 to the then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, by the then Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri T S Krishnamurthy, to date nothing noteworthy has happened. Any major reforms that have taken place like NOTA, declaring criminal cases in election affidavit by candidates, and disqualification of membership for convicted MPs/MLAs, have happened only through judicial orders from Supreme Court of India.

Although the Law Commission and the Parliamentary Standing Committee have suggested reforms, so far, there has been no

political will to legislate such reforms. Without the major electoral reforms, our democracy cannot be strengthened.

The Election Commission is one of the 'Pride Institutions' of India. They deserve appreciation for their free, fair and transparent management of the Indian elections, the world's biggest event. They have derived the power to frame some rules only through the issue of judicial orders. They still need more power to disqualify candidates who violate the rules. There have been instances when elections were cancelled, when a candidate was caught distributing money during elections. However, the same candidate contested again and won when the new date of elections was notified. The Election Commission is helpless in such situations, as they do not have the power to disqualify a person who violates the rules.

In the past 20 years, political parties have been spending huge amounts of money, even in Assembly elections, not to speak of Parliamentary elections. In spite of all the checks and controls, money gets distributed to the voters. Surprisingly, in one of the surveys conducted by a media house in Tamil Nadu, when voters were asked about the factors that they considered for selecting a candidate like political party, leader, candidate, manifesto, and so on, nearly 10% of the voters responded saying that they voted for 'money'. This situation prevails in some of the states. This is an alarming signal.

Another important matter of concern is the 'Opinion Polls'. Even though the Election Commission had once wanted to ban opinion polls before the elections, the Supreme Court held that it could not be banned on the grounds of 'freedom of speech and expression'. In India, many of the offenders seek protection under the garb of 'freedom of speech'. Exploiting this privilege, many opinion polls are released with the nexus of political parties and the media and poll agencies. These surveys are not transparent as they do not indicate the methodology and the sample size of the survey and the

results. Since many of the media houses are owned by political parties or are in alliance with some parties, their views are unreliable. In the past elections, none of the surveys has proved right. The Election Commission can impose restrictions like minimum sample size, transparency of methodology, etc. If there is any legal provision, the Election Commission can permit survey results till the announcement of election dates, without infringing on the freedom of speech. Voters should decide based on their own perceptions. We need to draw the line between 'free and fair election' and 'freedom of speech' in the name of opinion polls.

In the current Assembly Elections, some of the prospective parties have released manifestoes promising 'the moon and the heaven'. They have not declared their source of funds to meet their impractical promises. One party has promised 'government jobs' and washing machines to all the ration cardholders. Many parties have promised monthly pensions to all cardholders, free gas cylinders, free houses, writing off of all education and agricultural loans, etc. Although there are guidelines from the Election Commission, they are violated, while misleading the voters. Unfortunately, the Election Commission does not have enough power to control them.

While on one side, the civil society and vibrant youngsters take initiatives to clean up the electoral system, they are unable to enter politics and contest elections due to the dominance of persons with criminal background and great ill-gotten wealth to fund. During the selection of candidates by many political parties, the first question asked is "how much money can you spend". The highest bidder is allotted the seat, and not the person who is loyal and committed to the party and the welfare of the society.

In the past four General Elections, none of the parties has promised in their manifesto to bring about 'Electoral Reforms'. As the nation prepares to celebrate its 75th year of

independence, it is time for all political parties to join together to clean up the electoral and societal system and bring in legislation for Electoral Reforms, including Public Funding through National Election Fund for Funding of Elections as proposed by Former Chief Election Commissioner of India Shri T S Krishnamurthy, and provide opportunities to enthusiastic and committed youngsters to be part of the legislature. PreSense appeals to all authorities to enact a separate comprehensive law to regulate all political parties, as recommended by Justice Venkatachaliah Constitution Review Committee.

Cash-for-Votes in Recent Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections –Helpless Election Commission: A Quick Survey

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (April 2021)

While the efficiency of the Indian Election Commission in the smooth conduct of Parliament and Assembly Elections, is widely appreciated, the Commission appears helpless in curbing cash-for-votes. Recently, the Election Commission (EC) had announced State Assembly Elections in five states, including West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. At the time of writing this Editorial, the election process is not completed and results not announced.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections held on 6th April 2021, will go down in the annals of history for the unprecedented distribution of cash-for-votes in most of the constituencies. The Election Commission had appointed a large number of observers, and deployed security forces to seize and curb the movement of cash. They seized around Rs. 428 crores worth of cash, gold and liquor in transit in Tamil Nadu alone. Interestingly, many of the seizures were from vans carrying cash for ATM Machines of banks, gold jewellers moving to their shops, and small businessmen carrying cash for their business purposes. The team that seized them, went on to deposit the cash and the gold in the Treasury, recorded the increase in tally of seizure and announced it proudly on all TV media.

On the other hand, it was an open secret that the major political parties in Tamil Nadu distributed cash ranging from Rs.500 to Rs.5000 per voter, in most of the constituencies, three days before the elections. Strangely, the authorities reportedly did not receive any complaint from anyone, and the distribution was completed without any hassle. In some

constituencies, people staged *dharna* on the highways, for non-receipt of the cash. From the conversation *PreSense* had with several political workers of all major parties, it is speculated that around Rs.5000 to 6000 crores might have been distributed to voters and booth agents before the elections. *PreSense* understands from the political workers that there was a power shutdown in some centres in the midnight, to enable the parties to distribute the cash. A case was reported that one candidate bribed an entire police station of staff openly and when it became big news, the DGP (Director General of Police) ordered a CBCID (Crime-Branch Crime Investigation Department) investigation.

Some of the candidates issued tokens to voters, to avoid being caught in cash disbursement. Interestingly, one candidate issued tokens to voters to collect Rs. 2000 worth of provisions from a store, and people began crowding that shop. The shop had to put up posters, disowning responsibility for the tokens issued by the candidate.



***Tokens
bundled and
kept ready***



***Token to collect
provisions worth
Rs.2000/-***



***Poster put up by
the shop,
disowning
responsibility
for tokens
issued by
candidate***

During the entire operation by the political parties, the Election Commission could not do anything as they do not have enough

powers to ban the candidate or the political parties, violating the rules. The authorities and the people will forget these incidents once the results are announced, and discussions about them will be revived during the next General Elections.

PreSense had repeatedly pointed out that Electoral Reforms were urgently needed to be put in place, to curb illegal money flow during the elections. For selection of candidates, some political parties allot seats only to the 'highest bidder', who can spend more for the campaign

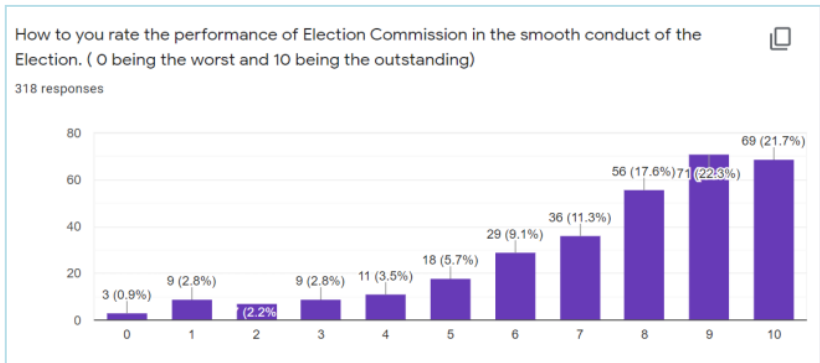
Many vibrant young political leaders with great vision but without enough money, get disillusioned, and move away from the political system, leaving the space open for moneyed and corrupt candidates.

and the elections. Many vibrant young political leaders with great vision but without enough money, are disillusioned by this, and move away from the political system, leaving the space open for moneyed and corrupt candidates.

A Quick Online Survey

After the completion of the single-phase elections on 6th April 2021 in Tamil Nadu, *PreSense* conducted a quick online survey to understand the perception of tech-savvy (users of the internet) voters, living in Tamil Nadu. 318 people responded within 3 days. 85% men and 15% women responded, representing all the districts and various age groups of Tamil Nadu. Youngsters and those under 40 years of age, who participated in this survey, represented only 21%. The respondents were requested to remain anonymous for the survey, and not disclose their identity. The responses revealed high level of maturity.

Rating of Election Commission



When asked how they rated the Election Commission (EC) for the conduct of the elections on a scale of 0 to 10, the respondents gave an average rating of 7.4 out of 10. Sixty percent of them gave a rating of more than 8 out of 10. From the comments given by the respondents, it is felt that the people were not happy about the 'inaction' of the Election Commission, on the violators of rules (cash-for-votes and Covid norms). We feel that this factor has pulled down the rating to 7.4, in spite of best efforts by EC to conduct the elections smoothly.

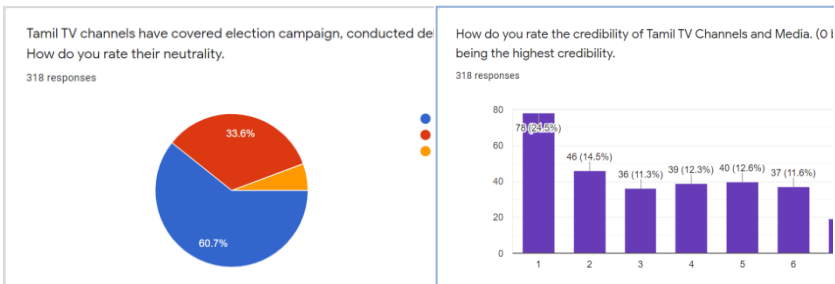
Plus and Minus

When asked to specify one major item that irked them about the elections, the respondents enlisted three main aspects, viz. (1) Indecent and hate speeches by leaders (40%), (2) Cash disbursal to voters (27%) and (3) Election Commission not taking action against violators (22%).

On the positive side, the main aspects were (1) Use of social media during the campaign, (2) Limited acts of violence, and (3) Leaders talking about achievements and developmental schemes during the campaigns.

Rating of Media

When the respondents were asked to rate the media, 94% perceived the media as completely or partially biased (61% felt the media was totally biased and one-sided). When the respondents were asked to rate the media credibility on 0 to 10 scale, the average rating came to 3.7 out of 10. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents rated it below 4.



PreSense has been insisting on several platforms, that there should be some regulation in the broadcast / publication of opinion polls before the elections. Many of these opinion polls are done in secret collaboration with political parties, and they are not done scientifically. These biased opinion polls, when aired frequently, tend to influence the voters too. *PreSense* has always been insisting that the right to 'freedom of speech and expression' as provided in the Indian Constitution, is being misused, to benefit the wrong people. It is also worth mentioning that on 23rd April 2021, Justice Shri Bobde, Chief Justice of India on the day of his retirement, mentioned that freedom of speech was the most abused right at present.

While *PreSense* appreciates and salutes the Election Commission for their excellent task, to protect and uphold the Indian democracy, they should not remain helpless observers,

If the Government does not have the willingness to introduce the Electoral Reforms, EC itself should find out the provisions and rules available in the Act and the Constitution, just as EC under former Chief Election Commissioner, T N Seshan did, to curb money power in politics, and discipline the political system.

when political parties and candidates violate the rules. If the Government does not have the willingness to introduce the Electoral Reforms, EC itself should find the provisions and rules available in the Act and the Constitution, just as EC under former Chief Election Commissioner, T N Seshan did, to curb money power in

politics, and discipline the political system.

Media and Politicians Should Not Create Panic Among People, for Their Self Interest

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (May 2021)



There is a perception in the minds of people that more people die out of panic than from Covid. Whether this statement is right or wrong, today, many of the print, television and social media create panic in the minds of the people, by spreading fearful information about Covid and deaths, rather than create confidence in the minds of the people to overcome this challenge. Recently, all the channels, including regional and national media, telecast the burning of dead bodies and funeral processions. Many, especially children and elderly people, became mentally disturbed. Shamefully, some of the senior journalists defend this action as modern journalism and freedom of speech. A new coinage, 'vulture journalism' is floating around on the social media platforms for the first time.

Another serious matter of concern is the behaviour of some of our political leaders. They too indulge in 'vulture politics', making politics out of the agony of the people and dead bodies, in order to gain political mileage. They spread wrong information on the various aspects of Covid management, without realising that their political statements might create more panic in the minds of the common men. These statements are religiously carried by the media. Recently, statements against vaccination by some senior political leaders, have created doubts in the minds of the common men. Now, the same leaders contradict themselves by promoting vaccination.

Sadly, the media houses depute their reporters and cameramen to hospitals and burial grounds, putting them to heavy risk in this pandemic time. Many government offices hold their press conferences physically, inviting a large number of TV and print reporters, when they could have organised these press briefings through video conferencing.

A recent study reveals that more than 200 such reporters have died of Covid in India. In Tamil Nadu alone, more than 20 such reporters have died while on duty, in the past ten days. This reflects the greediness of the media owners to provide news even against accepted norms of restrictions, thus risking the lives of their own young reporters. Sadly, another study reveals that news channels have lost viewership to the extent of 50-80% and their revenue is also affected substantially. The news channels have not yet realised that because of their gory and repelling news flow, viewers are shifting to other entertainment channels during this lockdown period.

While the private channels conduct discussions through Zoom or Google Meet Live, Doordarshan, the Government-owned channel invites people to their studios, causing risk to the guests. It is preferable if Doordarshan conducts only virtual

discussions during this period to avoid risk to the guests and to their own staff.

Even fake news and alarming information is spread through social media, creating panic among the people. At the time of writing this Editorial, social media platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook are yet to comply with the regulations given by the Government of India. The Government of India has so far been hesitating to take action against the erring social media platforms, and insist that they follow the rules in India.

Nowhere in the world do the domestic media spread fake news against their own nation, denigrating their own country. In India, many of the media and political leaders 'misuse' the Constitutional provision of 'freedom of speech and expression' to spread false information about our own country, and this is picked up by international media to disgrace our nation globally.

Media owners, reporters, political leaders and social media users should rise above such pettiness, and create an environment to develop confidence among people. Government of India should also be bold enough to deal with these mischief makers, who seek refuge under 'freedom of speech', with an iron hand.

PM Modi's Seven-Year Rule Gets Good Rating, but the Middle-Class Rings Alarm Bells

By K. Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (June 2021)

Generally, it is said that politics and elections are based more on 'perception' than on 'performance'. We have in the past, seen several Prime Ministers (PMs) and Chief Ministers (CMs) losing elections in spite of their sterling performance, and several non-performing politicians winning again. While analysing the seven years of Modi rule, we chose to study the



perception of a sample section of the common people. No doubt, the Government and the ruling party have released lots of documents enlisting their various achievements. Ultimately, how the performance is perceived by the common man matters much for any political system to function.

In May 2021, Narendra Modi completed 7 years of his Prime Minister ship. For this Editorial, PreSense conducted a snap online Survey to study the perception of a sample section of the people. Between 11th June and 13th June 2021, PreSense received 1321 online responses from across all states, from both genders and different age groups. Since it was conducted online, we can safely take this as the perception of the average educated middle class across India. This segment was the base, which provided Modi huge mandate both in the 2014 and 2019 General Elections. Hence, these perceptions are significant to the Modi team. We also clarify that we have not done any study of the Below Poverty Line (BPL) segment.

Positive Aspects

Generally, all the respondents, irrespective of whether they were supporters of Modi or not, perceived the following as his positive achievements:

- Strong Leadership qualities both within India and globally;
- Scrapping of Article 370 and resolving the J&K problem overnight – taking bold political decisions which other leaders hesitated to take;
- Friendly relationship with all foreign countries;
- No corruption charges during these 7 years, and even before, when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat State, *ie.* a clean personal image, and not involving his family in the politics and Government;
- Various Government Schemes like Jan Dhan, Swachh Bharat, Mudra Loans, Free Housing, Free Gas, Beti Bachao, Ayushman Bharat, Payment to Farmers, etc.;
- Demonetisation, effective structural changes in the economy, curbing black money, introducing digital economy, etc.;
- Covid Management (managing vaccines within a short time and vaccinating a large number of people, despite negative publicity given by some opposition leaders and the media).

Negative Aspects

The online respondents belong to the average middle class people. Hence, this can be considered the perception of the average middle class segment.

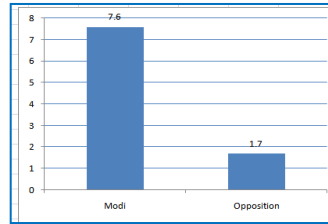
- Petrol and diesel price hike, leading to a price rise of other commodities;
- Unemployment problem / job losses;
- Not done anything to favour middle class and senior citizens, including Pensioners (bank interest is getting reduced for deposits);
- While the schemes are laudable, implementation is poor;
- A soft approach towards the corrupt. Raids with little progress thereafter. The corrupt have become fearless and are unshaken
- Some Ministers generally inefficient, and Gujarat cadre officers dominating the bureaucracy;
- Poor communication strategies – not making any serious effort to counter fake messages and false news;
- ‘Perceived arrogance’ of some BJP and RSS leaders – not connecting with people –assuming themselves to be ‘intellectual islands’ with an ‘I Know It All’ attitude;
- Not taking enough action against continuous protests like CAA, Farm Laws, etc

Interestingly, the persons who voted for Modi in 2014 and 2019, and confirm voting for him in 2024 too, are highly critical of his handling economic issues and insensitivity of the Government towards the problems faced by the common man.

Rating of Modi Government and Opposition

When the respondents were asked to rate the Modi Government on a 0 to 10 scale, 75% rated more than 8.0. 8.6% of the respondents rated 3.0 and below. The average rating by all the respondents was 7.6 out of 10.

The respondents were also asked to rate the performance of the Opposition Parties led by Indian National Congress as an effective opposition, on the scale of 0 to 10. 85% of the respondents rated them less than 3.0 out of 10. Only 3.7% of the respondents rated them 8.0 and above. The average rating was 1.7 out of 10.

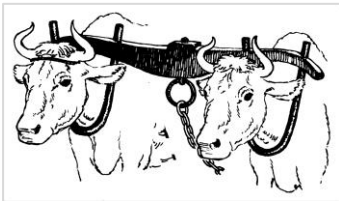


Rating by Respondents

These two indicators reveal the lack of an effective opposition in the current situation.

Functioning of the Opposition Parties

As indicated earlier, even those respondents who were against Modi were critical of the Opposition Parties led by Indian National Congress. In any democracy, both the opposition and the ruling parties are like bullocks tied to a yoke. Both have to travel together in a balanced manner. Both have the responsibility to run the democracy, and both are accountable to the citizens.



In 1991, when Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister, the country was facing a major financial crisis, leading to the liberalisation of economy. Although RSS was against the principles of liberalisation, the then opposition leaders, Vajpayee and Advani worked closely with Narasimha Rao to bail out the country from the crisis. Both the PM and the Opposition Leaders placed the nation above their political gains. Even as a minority government, Narasimha Rao completed his full term, implementing many financial reforms, the fruits of which we enjoy today. When Pakistan raised

allegations against India, Narasimha Rao, instead of travelling himself, deputed Vajpayee to give a befitting response on behalf of India, to Pakistan at the United Nations. This gesture sent a strong message globally that all the political parties in India follow a similar policy on Jammu and Kashmir.

Today, even during the pandemic situation, our Opposition Parties do not act responsibly and try to politicise every issue by spreading fake and unverified messages. Sadly, many of the opposition parties issued irresponsible statements, raising doubts about the vaccination, and creating confusion in the minds of the common people. Sometimes, they issue statements which favour enemy countries too.

Alarm Bell Rings

There is visible frustration among the average middle class segment on account of the rising petrol price, unemployment, economic issues, etc. The survey also indicates a drop of 9% support to Modi over 2019. Some have supported Modi because of TINA (There Is No Alternate) factor. The Modi Government should not take this for granted. This is an alarm bell.

There is a clear indication that out of the respondents who voted for Modi in 2014 and 2019, nearly 9% of them indicated that they would not vote for Modi in 2024. Although the General Elections are to be held only in 2024, the ruling establishment should understand the clear and loud message of average middle class. It may get reflected in the UP (Uttar Pradesh) State elections to be held next year. Therefore, they should not take them for granted. From the various responses in the survey, it is clearly indicated that the people are more anxious and concerned about their day-to-day life, than of the achievements trumpeted about a better macro policy or sound foreign relations.

In the past, more than economic issues, emotional issues have helped BJP to come to power. With the new set of young voters and the growing frustration of the average middle class, emotional issues may not play a greater role in future. When a national party like Indian National Congress is weak, it could lead to a fragmented mandate with many regional parties securing seats, leading to chaos and confusion of leadership. India has witnessed such fragile governments in the past, with Charan Singh, Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, Chandrasekar and V.P. Singh without majority of mandate, collapsing at the whims and fancies of various regional party leaders. It is also sad that Indian National Congress is not taking enough efforts to emerge as a strong opposition party. Weak Congress is not good for the democracy.

To the question, 'who could be an alternative to Modi, many respondents could not specify any leader. Various names have emerged. Interestingly, Rahul Gandhi has not emerged as front runner. Only a few people indicated his name. Many indicated 'None'. This clearly indicates the leadership crisis in Indian polity. Some of the senior leaders, with whom we spoke, said that a leader would emerge at the appropriate time. Our concern is that such leaders should not become a temporary leader for a stop-gap arrangement, like we had in the past.

Our Conclusion and Suggestion

As on June 2021, Modi continues to enjoy a good rating and the confidence of the average middle class. As we have not surveyed the BPL segment, we are unable to say anything about their perception. Although Modi has emerged as a strong national and international leader, there is frustration among the average middle-class people due to various economic issues. Even before the nation could recover from Demonetisation and GST impact, Covid has attacked the whole world, leading to further complications. Even though Modi has

been facing several such challenges, he has been managing the situation well.

There is also a feeling among the respondents that the Government is not handling the protests for CAA, Farm Laws, etc effectively. They have allowed too much time for the protests, causing inconvenience to the general public. Also, they do not act heavily on those who spread wrong/fake messages against the country. They also feel that the Government is soft towards corrupt people, who are already booked.

Unfortunately, the communication from the ruling segment is very poor. Although the Government has managed to overcome a lot of challenges, they are not being communicated effectively to the people. Even though the Government boasts of good governance, it is not felt at the grass root level, mainly because of lack of implementation and effective communication. The Government does not counter fake news effectively, and wrong information is spread by print, television and social media.

Media relations is very poor after Modi took over in 2014. Since the media is kept at a distance, without proper interaction, the Government is not able to use the media effectively. During the previous governments, there used to be a Media Advisor to Prime Minister, and he would function as a bridge between the media and the Government. Now, there is no such arrangement. A large gap exists between the Government and the media. This will not help the Government in the long run. The Government needs the support of the media to carry information about their schemes to the public. Senior journalists confirm that there is no coordination between the PMO (Prime Minister's Office), Ministry of I&B (Information & Broadcasting), PIB (Press Information Bureau), various ministries, and the media for dissemination of information.

There is added frustration when Modi supporters 'chest-beat' about their performance, when the common people are voicing their concern about their day-to-day life problems, including the petrol price. The 'perceived arrogance' and insensitivity of some of the BJP and RSS leaders on vital issues, add to the frustration.

Modi commands the confidence of the people and enjoys a clean non-corrupt image. This is a great advantage. Although the next Parliament election is due only in 2024, with assembly elections in some States scheduled for 2022, both the ruling and the opposition leaders should introspect about taking the country to the next level like bullocks in the yoke.

(Survey analysis by Prof. Dr K. Prabhakar, Editorial Advisor, and Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor)

High Prices of Fuels, Edible Oils and Commodities Hit Common Man Hard - Bring Fuels under GST immediately

By T N Ashok, Consulting Editor (July 2021)

From May to July 2021, the common man has been battling high prices of petrol, diesel and edible oils amid a depressing scenario of joblessness, unemployment during Covid times. It has been tough balancing the family budget.



Petrol prices breached the Rs 100 mark in 17 states. Diesel touched the Rs 90 mark. Since May 2021, fuel prices are on the rise, revised 15 times in June preceded by 15 times in May. Domestic prices had to sync with international prices.

The Government walked a tight rope in dismantling administered pricing mechanism to balance the interests of the economy and play to vote bank politics. While Petrol, Diesel went out, Kerosene and LPG were retained under Administered Price Mechanism (APM). Even as overall subsidies came down, the common man was caught by surprise by high prices. The subsidies provided by the government of PM Modi is about Rs 12,840 crore FY 20-21, almost half of the Rs 35,000 crore provided by the previous UPA government. LPG subsidy has been reduced and ceding of this by affordable class has not made an impact. LPG prices have gone up to Rs 700 to Rs 800

against the older price of Rs 500 per cylinder with a jump of Rs 300.

High diesel prices have had cascaded onto transportation costs reflecting high prices of commodities from vegetables, fruits to rice, wheat, barley and pulses like dal, which have to be transported over long distances. While cereals have a long shelf life, perishable commodities don't. Economists have been stressing on building up a large network of cold storage chains (refrigerating veggies and fruits at different places) to prevent waste leading, to a shortage and high prices.

What is the crux of the problem one might ask? Vote bank politics and political compulsions force governments of the day to prevent them by passing on the increased dose by dose but in quantum jumps of high price hikes. When the price escalation comes in a lump sum, the family budget goes into deficit. How does a family man balance his budget? Save on non-essentials.

On the subsidies on petroleum products, UPA led by Dr Manmohan Singh tried to fix this by allowing floatation of oil bonds to mop up revenues from the public. This comes for redemption next year amounting to over Rs one lakh crore plus interest. The present BJP Government has to raise resources at a time of low tax collections.

No solution appears on the horizon. Says M R Sivaraman, former Revenue Secretary of the Government of India, tax collections across the board have been very low as GST collections have seen a sharp revenue shortfall. Taxes have been low due to manufacturing coming to standstill because of Covid protocols.

Sivaraman says, "In such a situation the state or central governments cannot bring down the prices of fuels as this is the only high revenue raising resource for them. Petrol and

Diesel are yet to be brought under the GST and there is a tussle in the GST council between the centre and the states. GST can level out the prices uniformly in all states". But as T K Rangarajan , former MP of CPIM, points out that the states will never agree to bring petrol and diesel under GST as their share of the cess comes down to 28%, leading to a loss in revenue. States get 55% of the revenues from local levies on Petrol and Diesel. It may be virtually impossible for the centre to make up this loss of 27% of tax revenues to the states.

It's a tough task for both the centre and the states to get over this. As there is no immediate solution, the common man may have to bear the pain as prices will remain high until October/November this year that is the onset of the Kharif season.

Assuming the harvest is good and there is an abundant supply of food grains and edible commodities, Sivaraman says prices will flatten out to fall. Also, if crude oil prices come down from the 80-dollar level to about 65 USD level, which oil pundits predict, it will reduce the fuel prices. "This is the tipping point when the Government will intervene because it has machinery to monitor closely the prices of all commodities in the economy. If it finds that transportation costs alone have contributed to the rise in price of a particular commodity, then the Government will slash the prices of fuels", he says.

Notwithstanding the theoretical aspects, both Centre and State Governments should realize that prices are soaring in this challenging time of pandemic putting the poor and middle class into untold miseries. They should sit together and find a way out to bring the Petrol/Diesel prices under GST, before it becomes too late.

Mother India@75 Sorrows Over Parliament Disruption

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (August 2021)

The Indian Parliament's Monsoon Session 2021, which commenced on 19th July, was adjourned *sine die* on 11th August 2021, two days ahead of its scheduled time. The 17th Lok Sabha saw its session cut short for the fourth consecutive time ahead of its scheduled date. Also, the Winter Session of November 2020 could not be held due to Covid fears. Both the Houses of Parliament were disrupted by opposition members and were forcefully adjourned. Lok Sabha worked only for 21% of the Scheduled time and Rajya Sabha for 29%.

Opposition parties disrupted proceedings demanding a debate on the alleged Pegasus software snooping on journalists, MPs and even ministers and opposition parties based on a media house report, The Wire. Opposition led by the TMC called it Pegasus Snoop Gate. Though the BJP led NDA Government offered to allot time to discuss all the issues of the so-called Pegasus spyware thread bare, the Congress and TMC led opposition was not interested creating an impression disruption was the only goal.

The government however managed to introduce 15 Bills and get them passed with its majority in the house. All the bills were passed in both the Houses amidst the din without any discussion. Paradoxically, an adamant Opposition, which was disrupting proceedings in both houses, came forward to discuss the 127th Constitutional Amendment relating to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), presumably in pursuance of an electoral gain. Strangely, the Lok Sabha spent 474 minutes and Rajya Sabha 360 minutes discussing the 127th Constitutional Amendment bill, while other draft legislations were passed without discussion.

Commentary & Analysis

Though the Government was willing to discuss all issues raised by the Opposition, it was insisting on a debate only on the Pegasus issue, to be discussed on priority basis. The same opposition leaders, who were in the Government earlier, knew pretty well that the matter was sub-judice, as it was already in the realm of the Supreme Court. Besides, any open discussion on such sensitive matters involving national security in a public domain was also not possible, but a clear breach of security protocols.



Besides, it is common knowledge that every person holding a smart phone and downloading mobile apps is susceptible to snooping without his or her knowledge. Pegasus may not be a serious issue for the common man. But the opposition could

have followed parliamentary protocols by requesting the Business Advisory Committee, for allotting time for a detailed discussion on various issues affecting the common man such as unemployment, economy, fuel price, price rise, inflation more relevant to their constituencies. Sadly, they did not even allow the Prime Minister to introduce the new Cabinet Ministers, as per the Parliament procedure.

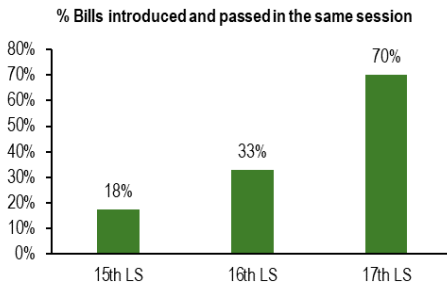
Such irresponsible behaviour of some opposition members freed the Government of its obligation to escape from discussions on such vital matters. An intelligent Opposition could have prepared an agenda of alleged government failures and discussed the same in both houses relayed live by both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in house TV networks. They could have grabbed headlines the next day in favour of the public in a positive manner. But they failed to do so for narrow gains. Now they carry the blame for wasting Parliament's time and money.

They should have participated in the discussions on the various bills introduced by the Government. For reasons best known to them, they compromised in favour of a political stance apparently for electoral gains and only participated fully in the 127th Constitutional amendment bill.

Because of the lack of Opposition's maturity, the ruling party gained brownie points taking full advantage in skirting over critical matters for discussion. In the midst of all the ruckus, the Government introduced 15 bills and all were passed without discussion in the same session, excepting the 127th Amendment bill. Strangely, in the 17th Lok Sabha 70% of the Bills introduced were passed in the same session. This is very high compared to the previous 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

In a democratic process, any proposed legislation needs to be scrutinized thoroughly and debated well before its passage in the house. According to a Senior Member of Parliament, draft legislations prepared by the concerned bureaucrats, often are

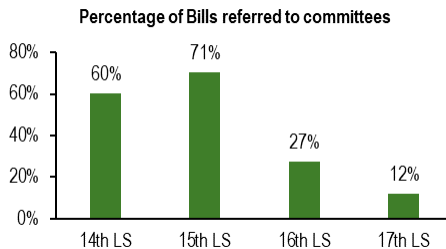
not in tune with the ground realities and they need to be thoroughly discussed by the MPs, both in the Standing Committees and in the Houses. Then only these bills are fine-tuned with public interests and pass muster of a judicial scrutiny.



Another MP, who also chose to remain anonymous, claimed that the present Government does not refer the Bills to the Standing Committees and pass them without in-depth discussions. During the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha (UPA

Government), 60 to 70 percent of the Bills were referred to the Standing Committees. The NDA Government referred only 27% of the bills in the 16th Lok Sabha and 12% in the current 17th Lok Sabha to the standing committees.

Standing Committees with Members from all parties discuss the draft legislations in detail (media is not privy to such discussions) and also get the views of domain experts. They take the consensus view on the bills and present their report to the Parliament. Based on the Committee's Reports, both the Houses discuss thoroughly and fine tune the draft legislation.



This democratic exercise is absolutely essential to avoid protests later and any legal scrutiny.

The amendment to legislation on labour was passed by both the Houses. Accepted by all, though there were muted protests. This bill was thoroughly scrutinised by the Standing Committee on Labour and then presented to Parliament. Hence this sensitive bill with lot of reforms has been generally accepted.

On the other hand, the Farm bills, over which there was nationwide protest by a section of the farmers, were passed without reference to the Standing Committee. The legislations are now facing the imponderable and have come under legal scrutiny. Had the Government referred the Farm bills to the Standing Committee and then got them approved through a consensus, such problems could have been avoided, political observers point out.

Expressing concern over the lack of debate in Parliament and state legislatures, the Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said it is a "sorry state of affairs" as the absence of quality debate leaves many aspects of laws unclear and increases the burden on courts. He said that an elaborate discussion during the law-making process reduces litigation as when courts interpret them, "we all knew the intent of the legislature".

Another issue is the delay in electing the Deputy Speaker for Lok Sabha, opposition MP's say. Normally the Deputy Speaker is elected within a month of the new Lok Sabha. Unfortunately, even after 27 months, (longest in 75 years of parliamentary democracy), the government has not taken any initiative to elect a Deputy Speaker.

The unruly behaviour of a Rajya Sabha Member by climbing on the Table in the well of the House and throwing rule book on the Chair makes every Indian to hang his/her head in



shame. This speaks of the poor quality of the Members nominated by the Political parties. While 90 to 95 percent of the Members observe decorum in presenting their view points, a section of the MP's,

apparently with the blessings of their party leaders indulge in unruly behaviour, to impress them denying an opportunity to MPs, observing parliamentary protocols, to raise issues so relevant to national interests.

Suggestions

Both Ruling and Opposition parties should stop the "Blame Game" in peoples' interests, especially in the interests of the constituency people who elected them. Senior party leaders on either side should sit and find a solution across the table and thus avoid such unruly scenes in parliament, which does not project a good image of MPs both within the country and outside. Youngsters get a wrong message about Parliament and its MPs or how democracy is run from such unruly behaviour. Definitely avoidable. Due to the spread of Covid, Parliament could not run on the scheduled timelines.

Time for Proactive Decisions

New Rules have to be framed to prevent Members from indulging in unruly behaviour and they should not only be barred from the rest of the Session but also be subject to a salary cut. Daily allowances and privileges, to which MPs are entitled, should be denied. Penalties of heavy fines should be imposed on them, as parliamentary records show crores of rupees of public money have been wasted in such disruption of parliamentary proceedings skipping in-depth discussion on

relevant issues of public interest. Sadly, political parties do not condemn such misbehaviour inside the House. Unfortunately, we do not have Opposition leaders strong enough in stature to stand up to speak against such unruly behaviour of some MPs. Strong stature of party leaders would invite admiration and serve as a role model for young MPs. Both Ruling and Opposition parties should respect the Institutions of Parliamentary Democracy and should not take them for granted.

New Rules have to be framed to prevent Members from indulging in unruly behaviour and they should not only be barred from the rest of the Session but also be subject to a salary cut. Daily allowances and all other privileges, to which MPs are entitled, should be denied.

The Civil Society expects a new era at least from the Winter Session 2021, keeping the common man in mind, instead of the impending assembly elections for electoral gains.

Let us remember what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said:

“Democracy means tolerance, not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us. With all my admiration and love for democracy, I am not prepared to accept the statement that the largest number of people are always right”.

Graphics courtesy: PRS India

The Teen Aged PreSense Salutes 'Kalaimagal', 90-year-old Surviving Tamil Magazine

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (September 2021)

When all the print magazines across the world suffer for readership and revenue due to technological changes, Kalaimagal, the 90-year-old Tamil monthly magazine, still continues to maintain good readership and revenue without compromising on the values and traditions focusing on Indian culture, Tamil literature, etc.

It was started by Shri R. Narayanaswamy Iyer of Madras Law Journal group in 1932 to encourage new Tamil writers, with Dr U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer and nine other eminent scholars were in the Editorial Board. Shri T. S. Ramachandra Iyer was named the Executive Editor.

Dr U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer (1855-1942), the founding Editor of Kalaimagal was a great Tamil scholar and researcher. He was mainly instrumental in bringing out many long-forgotten works of classical Tamil literature to light. Over a period of fifty years, he collected many paper manuscripts, palm-leaf manuscripts relating to classical Tamil literature from different places and published them. He is affectionately called 'Tamil Thatha' (meaning Tamil Grandfather). In 2006, Central Government also honoured him with a postal stamp.



Mahakavi Bharatiyar, the popular Poet and freedom fighter equated him with 'Sage Agastya', considered as the first exponent of Tamil. Rabindranath Tagore met him and also

penned a poem in praise of his efforts to salvage ancient classical Tamil literary works from palm leaf manuscripts.



Dr U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer working with palm-leaf manuscripts.

Founded by the great Tamil Scholar Dr. U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer, Kalaimagal continues till date to maintain the rich traditions of values and ethics. Dr K V Jagannathan, another great Tamil literary person and disciple of Dr. U.

Ve. Swaminatha Iyer succeeded him as Editor and improved the values further and further. Even the subsequent Editors maintain the same tradition and values till now. Kalaimagal is still considered as a 'dream destination' for young writers.

The present publisher PTT Rajan says that they do not carry articles on political controversies and cinema. They do not accept advertisements depicting women in poor light. They publish articles, short stories and poems with rich moral values. Since they have a niche readership across all the countries, some advertisers, including banks, consider it a great honour to place their advertisements in such magazines which maintains highest values and traditions.

Many of the new Tamil writers consider it a great honour to start their literary journey from Kalaimagal. If their piece gets published here, it is considered as a passport to reach all other magazines.

Kizhambur Sankara Subramanian, the Editor of Kalaimagal, says that the popular Tamil writer Akilan started his first journey from here and became Janapith awardee. Many well-known Tamil writers have started their first publication in Kalaimagal and became popular later. Many Sahitya Academy Award winners are its regular contributors.



**July 1934
edition**



Sep 2021 edition

Many eminent people used to be not only contributors, but also regular readers, which include Rajaji, Karunanidhi, Kanchi Sankaracharyas and more. "Since many eminent people are closely following up our magazine, we have to maintain the highest quality and value" says Sankara Subramanian. He also adds

that Kalaimagal has readers across the world and international readers want to learn and respect our Indian tradition and values, which we follow scrupulously.

When he visited Sri Lanka recently, he found that at Peradeniya University, Kandy, Kalaimagal issues were kept from the first edition in their library. Many scholars have researched on the past issues of Kalaimagal in both Indian and foreign Universities to obtain their Doctorate. Without compromising their traditions and values, they are now integrating with modern digital world to suit the needs of the readers.

Generally, people doubt if positivity can survive the time and get the required support. "Definitely there are always supporters for all positive journalism with strong belief in values and ethics. Though there may be challenges, they will

"Definitely there are always supporters for all positive journalism with strong belief in values and ethics. Though there may be challenges, they will all vanish on seeing the enthusiasm and support of the readers" – PTT Rajan

175th edition.

all vanish on seeing the enthusiasm and support of the readers", concludes PTT Rajan, the Publisher. PreSense is a cub magazine in the modern digital world. Kalaimagal is the traditional grandmother in 90s with rich experience. PreSense takes pride in saluting this Grand Mother magazine in its

Does Civil Society Play its Role Properly to Strengthen Indian Democracy?

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (October 2021)

There were two prophecies as to how India would shape up after Independence. The first was a statement attributed to Winston Churchill, as having been made by him in British Parliament during the debate in 1947 on the Indian Independence Bill.

“If Independence is granted to India, power will go to the hands of rascals, rogues, freebooters; all Indian leaders will be of low caliber and men of straw. They will have sweet tongues and silly hearts. They will fight amongst themselves for power and India will be lost in political squabbles. A day would come when even air and water would be taxed in India.”

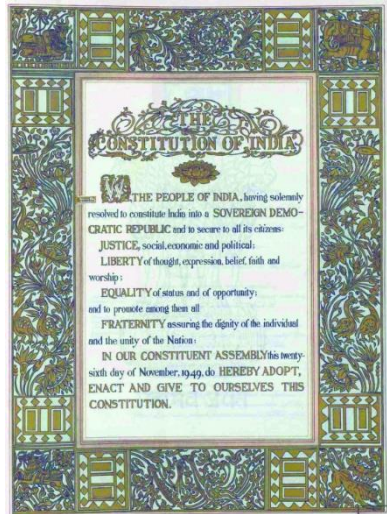
The second was from the Vellore jail diary of Rajaji, the tallest intellectual among India’s political leaders in the last century who fought for India’s freedom, dating back to 1921 (written 26 years before our Independence):

“We all ought to know that Swaraj will not at once or, I think, even for a long time to come, be better government or greater happiness for the people. Elections and their corruptions, injustice, and the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration, will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination. Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct, fear of God, and love, will be developed among the citizens from childhood. It is only if we succeed in this that

Swaraj will mean happiness. Otherwise, it will mean the grinding injustices and tyranny of wealth.”

The question remains whether the dreams of our freedom fighters and pre-independent leaders have been achieved even after 75 years of Independence.

Generally, Legislature, Executive, Judiciary are considered as pillars of democracy. By virtue of importance, Media is also considered as the Fourth Pillar. Unless all these four pillars function effectively, respecting each other and discharge their role, no democracy can survive. While all analysts talk about the four pillars, they do not talk about the most important stakeholder viz. civil society, for whom the democracy is established. The Preamble of our Constitution starts with *"We, the People of India"*. That means 'We, the People of India' have created the Constitution and given it to themselves.



If “We, the People of India” have created the Constitution for themselves, then what are their responsibilities? Though the word ‘Civil Society’ is not defined in India, We consider “We, the People of India” as the civil society. In that case, every voter becomes responsible for the smooth running of the democracy. Non-Government Organisations, Media, Social Groups and every responsible citizen of this country become part of the ‘Civil Society’.

Democracy and Governance

Generally, there is always criticism about all the four pillars. In recent years, we observe the Legislature and Executive do not have proper coordination, leading to disruptions. Many State Governments have only 20 days sittings of their Assemblies annually. In Parliament, we have seen how the Parliamentarians disrupted the proceedings, instead of spending their time on debates. Same way, we have witnessed how the Executives rushed through various bills without discussion in the chaotic situation.

The enormous delay in the Judicial system creates disillusionment and frustration among the citizens. Even the fourth pillar Media is biased and they provide information, based on their affiliation. Even social media is either emotional or biased. In view of this, the role of civil society (We, the People) becomes very important and relevant in maintaining the democracy.

Selective approach

Civil Society includes every voter interested in the welfare of the nation, Non-Government Organisations, Traditional and social media, Educational Institutions, various forums, Social Workers, etc. Unfortunately, in recent years, we see polarization of people based on caste, religion, language, etc. We see many people with extreme sycophancy or hatred taking their lines of argument. This is not good for any democracy.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi observed recently, even the Human Rights Organisations follow a 'selective approach' towards Human Rights violations. We never see any 'Human Rights Activist or Organisation' condemning the attack by terrorists on innocent people. Recently, we saw a majority of the political parties, activists and mainline media debating

selectively on the four dead persons, while eight people were killed in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident. In this incident, four farmers and four political workers were killed. While, the lives of all the eight persons are important, the political parties and media were discussing only four farmers, which suited their convenience. During the same time, many innocent people were killed by terrorists in Kashmir. All these people kept silent over the killings. We can quote many such incidents, where the selective approach was adopted by the media, social workers and political parties.

Strangely, one major political party in India does not prefer to greet the people on Dussehra, Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, etc. while they rush to greet the festivals of other religions. These selective greetings by responsible political parties create frustration among the people. Blatant exhibition of hatred towards language, caste, religion, community, etc. are dangerous to the functioning of democracy.

There are many NGOs that take neutral stand and work for the welfare of the nation. Their voices are not heard. Their good works are not publicised by the mainstream media. They need to be given full support by civil society and media.

Freedom Movement was the success of civil society. Jayaprakash Narayan's movement in the post Emergency era was a civil society movement. This movement led to political polarisation. Anna Hazare's nationwide movement against corruption led to the emergence of a political party, which rules a State for the second time. Jallikattu protest at Marina in Chennai made the Government to bow down to the aspirations of the people. These are the recent examples of the invisible power of civil society.

While we speak about the Civil Society organising themselves spontaneously for genuine cause, we cannot also ignore that in recent years, vested interests create movements against

some of the development projects causing huge delay or closure of these projects. They are also reportedly funded by foreign agencies. Unfortunately, a common citizen has to watch this silently. Sadly, Media too spreads misinformation to get public sympathy for wrong causes.

Unfortunately, civil society does not come on the streets often. The people at the helm of affairs in the Governance should understand that the emergence of social media has given a great tool in the hands of every citizen. The civil society watches the happenings silently and takes the appropriate decision during the elections silently. At the same time, the NGOs, Media and other social activists should function independently without any bias and bring out the problems in a neutral manner in the national interest to strengthen the democracy. The Executive, Legislature and Judiciary should understand the sentiments of the common man and function effectively to improve the system.

Repeal of Farm Laws – Lessons to be Learnt

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (November 2021)

The entire country was taken by surprise when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the repeal of three Farm Laws on 19th November 2021 in a public broadcast. The three Farm Laws were promulgated through a Presidential Ordinance in June 2020 and later introduced in the Parliament in September 2020. Both



the Houses of Parliament discussed the three Bills together for a limited number of hours and passed them. President gave the assent to these Bills within a week. Probably, this is the first time in Indian history that an active law signed by the President is withdrawn within short time, even before implementation. The repeal was passed without discussion on 29th Nov 2021, the first day of the Winter Session.

Farmers' protest

The major opposition parties have also included the concept of Agricultural Reforms in their respective manifestoes, but the way in which the Government pushed these Farm Laws hurriedly raised lot of suspicion in the minds of Farmers and opposition leaders. The Farmers of Punjab, Haryana and part of UP went on dharna protesting against the law from 26th November 2020. They are continuing the protest till date on the borders of Delhi, braving the extreme climate. The political leaders were allowed to meet the Farmers to give their support, but they were not allowed to bring their political flags. The farmers and the opposition leaders allege that the Government did not consult any of them before promulgating the ordinance and even later when they introduced the Bill in

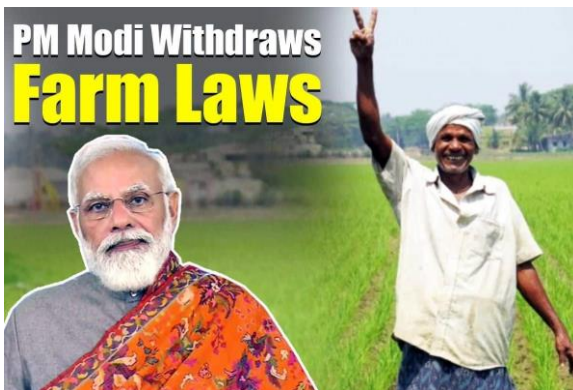
the Parliament. Despite the Government justifying the importance and the benefits of the Farm Laws, the Farmers continued their protest without break. Meanwhile, it is reported that more than 700 farmers died in the protest.

Seven State Assemblies ruled by Opposition parties passed resolutions demanding the repeal of the Farm Laws. Even after the Supreme Court had stayed the Farm Laws and appointed a committee to examine the Law, the Farmers did not withdraw the protest and continued their agitation. The union minister for Agriculture and officials held 11 rounds of talks with farmers without finding any solution.

The Government alleged that anti-national elements and Khalistanis have penetrated into the farmers' protest with an ulterior motive. The Government also alleged that only the brokers were protesting and not the real farmers. Meanwhile, the farmers across the country have a feeling as to why the Government pushed the Farm Laws in a hurry and they also started suspecting whether the Government wanted to favour big corporate houses.

PM's announcement

Since the farmers were adamant and opposition parties were



also protesting, the Prime Minister had to announce the repeal of Farm Laws and assured the nation that he would introduce the legislative process when the Winter Session

started. During his public broadcast, Modi said that the Government brought those three Bills with good intentions, but failed to convince the farmers. "Maybe something was lacking in our 'tapasya' [penance], which is why we could not convince some farmers about the laws," he said.

Thought it was an emotional speech, the farmers did not return home. They have added more demands.

Catch22 situation

Why did Modi Government get into this Catch22 situation? Time and again, your eMagazine PreSense, while appreciating various schemes introduced by Modi Government, has been pointing out the lacunae of (1) lack of communication and disconnect with people and (2) not taking the opposition and stake holders into confidence. While reviewing the 7 years of the Modi regime, PreSense pointed out in the Editorial (June 2021 edition), based on a survey, that alarm bell was ringing. In the recent bye-poll results, the ruling party has suffered a major setback due to their lack of effective communication.

It is generally perceived that probably because of the byelection results and the ensuing 5 State Assembly Elections, Modi Government might have repealed the Farm Laws. After the announcement of the Prime Minister, this author had an informal talk with various farmers and political leaders, including the ruling party members. Though everybody agreed that the Farm Laws are needed to benefit the farmers, they did not appreciate the way it was introduced without consultation. This bill should have been handled taking the success story of GST. Probably, some 'intellectual think tank' might have misled the Government, without realising the sensibilities of the subject.

According to our Constitution, Agriculture is in the Concurrent List. That means, both the State and the Centre have the

powers to enact the law. In view of this, Modi Government should have convened a meeting of the Agriculture Ministers of all the States and the Farmers representatives for a detailed discussion. The farmers in each State have different challenges. Instead, the Government introduced the Farm Laws through Ordinance route, without consulting the State Governments and the Farmers.

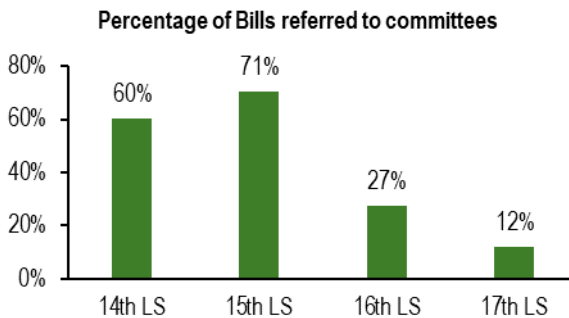
Even when the Bill was introduced in Parliament in September 2020, the opposition demanded that the Bill be referred to Standing Committee. Government hurriedly passed the Bills in both the Houses with minimal discussion and got the assent of the President within a week. The hurry of the Government created a suspicion in the minds of all farmers and opposition leaders whether the Government was in a hurry to favour a few big corporate houses. As Prime Minister himself agreed, the Government could not convince the farmers, in spite of several rounds of talks with the Minister and officials.

Everybody knows that the Ministers and officials do not have enough powers to promise anything to farmers. Instead, Prime Minister himself should have invited the Farmer Leaders and listened to them patiently. That would have solved more than 90 percent of the misunderstanding. Chest beating, Trumpeting and blaming caused more irritation to the protesting farmers.

Lessons to be learnt

1. Right from the beginning in 2014, there is a perception among the people that the Government never cared for the public opinion or the views of the opposition. Though such an approach might have yielded success in some cases, it is not a desirable one in a democracy. Government should start consulting the stakeholders in future.

2. In a Parliamentary democracy, Standing Committees have been set up to discuss the Bills thoroughly and to improve upon them. Unfortunately, during the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, the Bills were not referred to Parliamentary committees for vetting. Had these three Farm Bills been referred to the Committees, they would have improved the Bills and the country would not have faced this situation.



3. Of late, there is a general feeling among the people that the Government and the ruling party do not have connectivity with the public. This phenomenon is seen more often than not in the 17th Lok Sabha. Also, the irresponsible behaviour of Opposition parties causes concern.

The Prime Minister should review the situation internally and take remedial action.

Saluting Gen Bipin Rawat and 13 Martyrs

By Srinivas Gopal, Editorial Board (December 2021)



PreSense salutes and pays homage to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and 12 others who died in the helicopter crash at Nilgiris (Tamil Nadu) on 8th December 2021. They were on board an Indian Air Force Mil Mi-17 helicopter flight en route from the Sulur Airforce base to the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington, where Gen. Rawat was to deliver a lecture. At around 12:10 p.m. local time, the aircraft crashed near a residential colony of private tea estate employees on the outskirts of a hamlet in the Nilgiris district. The crash site was 10 KM from the flight's intended destination. Rawat's liaison officer, Group Captain Varun Singh was the sole survivor and was admitted to the hospital at Bengaluru and later he also died. Gen. Rawat was 63 at the time of his death. The last rites for all the martyrs were held with full State honours.

General Bipin Rawat (16 March 1958 – 8 December 2021) was an Indian military officer and a four-star general of the Indian Army. He served as the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of the Indian Armed Forces from January 2020 until his death. Prior to taking over as the CDS, he served as the 57th Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee as well as 26th Chief of Army Staff of the Indian Army.

The Government has appointed an investigation team to find out the reasons for this accident. There is also a feeling among the people that it could be a sabotage. Nation awaits the investigation report.

PreSense joins the Nation in saluting the brave soldiers.

PM Modi's Security Breach: Need for Legislation to fix Accountability

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (January 2022)



When the nation was gearing up to celebrate the 73rd Republic Day with pride, the country unfortunately witnessed an incident of security breach of our Prime Minister at Punjab. On the 5th of January 2022 during his visit to the National Martyr's Memorial at Hussainiwala, his convoy got stuck on a flyover for around 20 minutes, blocked by protesting farmers.

Special Protection Group (SPG) entrusted with the task of providing proximate security to the Prime Minister of India sprang into action and surrounded his car to prevent any untoward incident, a sheer collapse of security administration. The PM cancelled his schedule and returned to Delhi. A Senior IPS Officer says, "there could have been a bomb under the bridge, the car could easily have been targeted by a well-positioned sniper or grenade-launcher, or faced an attack from

a drone, an IED, or some other similarly easily-procured weapon” as this security lapse had happened just 15 kilometres from Pakistan border.

It is well known that the overall responsibility of securing the prime minister on his visits to states lies with the respective state forces — a rule that has in fact been codified in the SPG’s “Blue Book” guidelines.

Response of the Punjab Government and reaction of the Opposition

As per protocol the State Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police should have received the Prime Minister which was not observed. The conspicuous breach of protocol by them, led to serious debates. The PM security protocol demands that the State’s DGP be prepared with plan A plan B and plan C route map of PM with required movements and scouting. Suspension of the Superintendent of Police and transfer of DGP later cannot undo the event.

The most shocking response was from Punjab Chief Minister saying, “since there were persons carrying the BJP banners on the flyover where the PM’s convoy was stranded, the PM could not conceivably have been under serious threat”. Punjab Congress President, publicly claimed it as a “tit for tat for the “suffering” faced by the farmers on Delhi’s borders. Such allegedly irresponsible and immature statements from senior leaders apparently angered the people.

Our country has been a witness to several assassinations of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi by ones who claimed to be supporters and security guards. We have also witnessed the mysterious death of the Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. This insensitive response of the opposition is a true sign of immaturity even after 75 years of independence. The Prime Minister of India is not just a leader of a political party, but the most important constitutional

authority and his security is a reflection of our national security, globally.

Security lapse near Indo Pak Border

Security breach of the Prime Minister of India, compromising protocols, conventions and miscommunication between the State and Central security agencies close to Indo Pakistan border is a matter of serious concern. Neither was the State police security tightened nor did it curb the large number of demonstrators who blocked the pre-decided route of the Prime Minister. The State Police did not make any attempt to remove these demonstrators immediately.

PM's travel by helicopter was dropped due to rain and poor visibility and as per the Ministry of Home Affairs, PM Modi proceeded to travel by road only after necessary confirmation of security arrangements by the DGP Punjab Police.

It was also reported in a section of the media that the Punjab State Police was fully aware of the plans by protestors to disrupt traffic on crucial roads and had constantly updated senior police officials about the intensity. They were also aware of the announcement by the Fringe group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) offering Rs.1 lakh reward for anyone who threw a shoe at PM Modi during his visit to Punjab. In spite of this, it is not known as to why Punjab Police did not follow the security norms to protect the Prime Minister.

Hon'ble Supreme Court's intervention.

Taking cognizance of this mammoth security breach, the Chief Justice of India formed a committee under Justice Malhotra, Supreme Court Judge (retd) to probe into the circumstances that led to the PM's security lapse. The committee will also include DGP Chandigarh, Inspector General of National Investigation Agency (NIA), Registrar General of Punjab and

Haryana High Court and Additional DGP Punjab. The committee is expected to submit its report at the earliest. The after effect threatening calls to the advocates of Supreme Court, petitioner and others, clarify that the incident cannot be taken as a mere lapse of security but rather as a planned event targeting the PM of our country. *It is now left to the Supreme Court to intervene and unveil the truth of this allegedly condemnable event.*

Ministry of Home Affairs should discuss with all the Security Agencies, including SPG to strengthen the security of Constitutional authorities like Prime Minister, President and others. If required, necessary legislation can be introduced fixing accountability for any breach.

Appreciating Parliamentarians for the First Part of Budget Session 2022

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (February 2022)

7th Session of 17th Lok Sabha (Budget Session 2022 – Part one) was one of the productive Sessions of this Lok Sabha and the entire Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha functioned without much noticeable disruption. The Session started with the President's Address to the joint session of Members of both the Houses on 31st Jan 2022, followed with the presentation of the Economic Survey and Regular Budget for 2022-23. Part one of the Session was adjourned on 11th Feb 2022. The Parliament will again meet on 14th March 2022 for the second part to continue the Budget discussions. Common man expects that the Budget to be discussed thoroughly without disruption, to avoid the budget being passed by voice vote in a hurry.

It is quite heartening to note that the productivity of the Lok Sabha was 118% and that of Rajya Sabha was 91%. Lok Sabha functioned for 49.3 hours Rajya

Productivity

Productivity Lok Sabha



Productivity Rajya Sabha



Sabha for 36.8 hours. Both the houses spent nearly 15% of the Parliament time in Question Hour. This is a good trend.

Graphics courtesy: PRS India

PreSense always insists that Question Hour and Zero Hour belong to the common man, who has elected the Members. Only during these hours, the Members can take up a lot of serious local issues for a solution. In recent years,

Parliamentarians have developed a trend asking for adjournment of Question and Zero Hours, citing some reasons, which could be discussed in the regular business hours. If the Chair does not accept, they disrupt the Parliament and forces the Chair to adjourn the session without any business. This is a bad trend and against the interest of the people. If the political parties want to discuss any serious issue, there are many ways to draw the attention. Sadly, the Members seek adjournment of Question and Zero Hours citing State-level issues.

In the last concluded session, the Hon'ble Speaker mentioned the indecent behaviour of some members. The leaders of all the parties assured good behaviour of their members. There are many role model MPs in our Parliament, cutting across party lines. Only a handful of members, in order to gain publicity and to draw the attention of their party leadership indulge in such a disruptive mode. These members send a wrong signal to the youth, bringing bad image even to MPs of good stature. Senior party leaders should not encourage such unholy behaviour of their members in the House, which is treated as the temple of democracy.

If the Members want to protest against the Government, they can work beyond the hours and bring out all the deficiencies of the Government to the fore. This way they will be doing a great service to the democracy and parliamentary system. Our humble request to all Members is to allow Question and Zero Hour without disruption.

Disruption of Question and Zero Hours is against the Interest of the Common Man

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (March 2022)

The 12th edition of Sansad Ratna Awards presentation ceremony was held in Delhi on 26th March 2022. Nine Parliamentarians, four standing committees and two veteran leaders were honoured for their performance in person. Sansad Ratna Awards are presented on behalf of Civil Society by Prime Point Foundation and your eMagazine PreSense since 2010. An eminent Jury Committee Chaired by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS Parliamentary Affairs) and Co-Chaired by Shri T S Krishnamurthy (Former Chief Election Commissioner of India) selects the Awardees based on the performance data provided by PRS India.

Every year, during the event, we come out with two important suggestions for consideration by the Government and the Parliamentarians. This year we made two important appeals to the Government and to the Parliamentarians for consideration.

Do not disturb Question Hour and Zero Hour

In both the Houses of Parliament, Question Hour and Zero Hour are meant for taking up important issues relating to common men and constituency. Though 20 Questions are listed in the Lok Sabha and 15 in Rajya Sabha for oral answers by the Ministers during Question Hour as Starred Questions, hardly 5 to 6 Questions are answered. When starred Questions are taken up, the Members can raise supplementary Questions and grill the Ministers. 200 Unstarred Questions are answered by the Ministers in writing.

During the Zero Hour, all the important issues relating to constituency and State that are affecting the common people in the region can be taken up. Unfortunately, we find that most of the time, the opposition parties submit notices to the Speaker seeking adjournment of the Question Hour and Zero Hour to discuss their agenda for their political reasons. If the Speaker or the Chairman does not adjourn, some of the Hon'ble Members make noise during these hours disturbing the proceedings.

Many times, due to the disruption, Question Hours and Zeros Hours are getting cancelled. In a way, this gives an advantage to the Treasury benches and Ministers to avoid supplementary questions. In our view, it is a denial of the right of the common people, who have elected the Hon'ble Members, to discuss the important issues concerning them. Also, this deprives the information and benefits to the common people.

During the Sansad Ratna event 2022, we emphasized that such disruptions or adjournments of Question and Zero Hours were against the interest of the common people and we appealed to the Hon'ble Members to desist from disrupting these two important hours. In fact, we made an appeal that Question Hour should be increased in both the Houses from the existing one hour to two hours, so that more number of questions can be answered orally by the Ministers in the House.

Increase the working days of the Parliament

Between 1952 to 1972, the Indian Parliament was functioning for 120 days a year on an average. Presently, the Parliament works only for around 60 days per year. Around 25% of the working time gets lost due to disruptions. On an average, the Indian Parliament functions only around 45 to 50 days every year. We have also seen that some of the Sessions getting washed out without doing any business.

Many of the bills get passed either without discussion or with less than 30 minutes of discussion. 75 percent of the Budget proposals get passed without discussions and guillotined. Sadly, the bills are also not sent to the Standing Committees by the Government for better scrutiny. Only 13% of the bills were referred to Standing Committees during this 17th Lok Sabha. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, the attendance in the Standing Committees is getting reduced session by session.

Last year, then Chief Justice of India also remarked about the lack of discussions on the bills in the Parliament, adding burden to the Courts for further scrutiny. Hon'ble Members have been elected by the voters to effectively participate in the proceedings of the Parliament and the Standing Committees and not to cause disruptions in the functioning of the Parliament. The working days of the State Legislatures are also causing concern. On an average, our State Assemblies function around 20 to 30 days per year.

In the United Kingdom, the Parliament sits for 150 days every year. In Germany, their Parliament sits for 105 to 110 days. With 1.3 billion population in India and complex problems, it is not in the interest of common people if the Parliament sits only for 60 days on an average every year, that too subject to various disruptions.

During the Sansad Ratna event, on behalf of PreSense and Prime Point Foundation, we appealed to the Government of India and to Hon'ble Members of Parliament to consider increasing the Parliament working days to a minimum of 120 to 150 days.

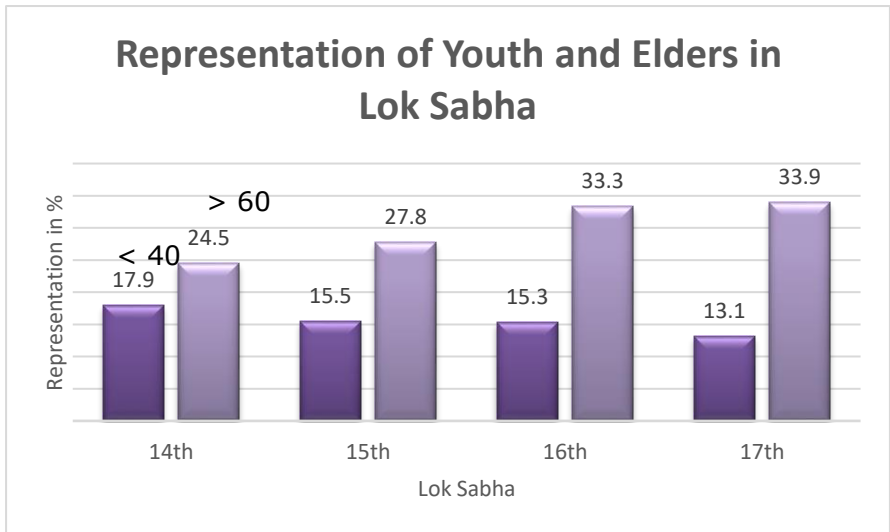
India is the world's largest democracy. Unless the Parliamentary system functions effectively, we cannot boast of an effective democracy.

Is there a 'Leadership vacuum' in Indian Politics? Are youngsters encouraged?

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (April 2022)

When we were analysing the Parliament data, we came across an interesting trend. The representation of youth (less than 40 years) and the elders (60 plus) in the 14th, 15th, 16th and the present 17th Lok Sabha was analysed.

Youth in Lok Sabha



Youth (less than 40) representation is getting reduced from the 14th Lok Sabha. Between 2004 (14th Lok Sabha) and 17th Lok Sabha (2019), it has come down by nearly 5%. The first Lok Sabha had a youth representation of nearly 25%.

On the other hand, the representation of elders (60 plus) has gone up by nearly 9.5%. PreSense made a quick study of this phenomenon and interacted with many young and senior political leaders, academicians, educated youngsters, etc.

Leadership vacuum

The country is facing a leadership vacuum in politics. Leadership is not a problem in the other verticals like the business, academia. Corporates, Industry etc. The Leadership vacuum gets managed within those verticals. Politics plays an important role in the governance of the nation and the political decisions are affecting the common man on a day to basis.

The reluctance of youth to enter politics.

During the pre-independent era, many educated youths lined up to join the Congress to fight for freedom. They sacrificed their family, earnings and profession for the sake of the country. They were all committed to their goal.

Probably after liberalization in the 1990s, when the youngsters get various opportunities for earning money, their interest in politics has come down drastically. Committed youngsters and their parents perceive 'politics' as a bad and corrupted profession, though corruption is prevalent in all domains. They do not realise like any other profession, there are good and bad people in politics too. Because good youngsters do not prefer to enter politics, naturally, bad people occupy this space.

In India, two types of youngsters join politics. The first group is from the existing political families and the second group is without any political family background. Though the country has abolished the feudal system officially after Independence, it is estimated that the country is governed by around 200 families in politics. If we analyse these families, the first-generation politicians, were highly committed, hardworking and sacrificed a lot. Though the first-generation leaders were not much educated, they understood the pulse of the society and were working closely with the people.

The second and third generation politicians from these families inherit the legacy of their parents and enter into positions quickly. Most of them might not have field experience like their parents. Around 70% of the heirs of political families do not show much interest in acquiring knowledge or in policy making. Because of their money, religion or caste and muscle power, they get elected to State Assemblies and Parliament. Their contribution to the nation is negligible.

On the other hand, in our estimate at least 30% of such second and third generation leaders from political families learn from their family experiences and exhibit better performance in politics. For example, Naveen Patnaik (Odisha), Supriya Sule (Maharashtra), Bhartruhari Mahtab (Odisha), Dr Heena Gavit (Maharashtra), Jayant Sinha (Jharkhand) continues to exhibit better performance in the political field. We see this trend across India in all States.

Is there a space for freshers?

If Indian politics is dominated by the members of a certain group of political families, a question arises as to how young aspiring educated people can enter politics and be part of the governance. Many educated youngsters do not want to take risks and sacrifice their time. When the opportunity comes, they want to earn money and take care of their family and live a comfortable life. Also, presently, money and caste play a greater role in Indian politics. Committed educated

Many youngsters, when they get a small success, they become arrogant and assume that they have achieved everything and conquered the world. That goes into their head and disrespect even seniors.

youngsters with talents from the middle class and poor class are not able to dream of politics.

Even those who want to join politics do not want to spend time acquiring knowledge to climb up the ladder. They want an immediate position in the party and in the governance. Only very enterprising youngsters want to learn the Indian Constitution, the role of democratic institutions, etc. Sadly, many of our own elected representatives do not have much knowledge about the Indian Constitution and other rules governing the country.

Attitude

Most of the youngsters after joining politics do not develop attitudes to sustain their performance and most of them get discouraged when they face small challenges. At the same time, many youngsters, when they get a small success, they become arrogant and assume that they have achieved everything and conquered the world. That goes into their head and disrespect even seniors. They need support to manage both success and failure without emotion.

Preparing youngsters for leadership

Twenty or thirty years back, some educational institutions produced great leaders. Those institutions permitted free discussions on various political aspects. Elections for the Students Unions provided good training grounds for leadership. Many political parties picked up students with great leadership skills and groomed them. Presently, we do not have such opportunity to the aspiring students. Since the youngsters do not show patience and tolerance, even such political discussions turn out to be violent. Modern students grow without any knowledge about the happenings around them. They do not even read newspapers. They have become addicted to social media. Wrong messages are planted in their

minds. Also, the youngsters with political ambition do not have the patience and mindset to discuss with senior leaders and learn from them. They consider the seniors as redundant.

In the past decades, we saw leaders like Vajpayee, Advani, Indrajit Gupta, Pandit Nehru, Kamaraj, Somnath Chatterjee, Bal Thackeray, Annadurai grooming the next generation of leaders. Presently, we are not able to see such senior leaders grooming the next line of leaders for the future. There is a generation gap between seniors and youngsters. Seniors are not technology oriented, whereas youngsters are highly technology driven. Seniors want to achieve the goal step by step, whereas the youngsters want to reach the goal quickly with the shortcut methods. Seniors are afraid that young leaders outside their family may overthrow them, if they are allowed to grow. Hence, they want to stick on to their positions.

Even women's representation in politics and governance is very less. Many educated women are reluctant to be part of the political system. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, we have only 81 women Members, out of the strength of 543. The bill for one-third reservation for women is still pending for decades.

Empowering youth and women are very important to strengthen the democracy in future. Political parties and the Government should seriously ponder over this and encourage more youngsters and women to be part of the political system and train them for the future. Youngsters also should understand the reality and develop their attitude to learn from their elders.

Release of Rajiv Gandhi Killer Opens a Debate

By K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (May 2022)

On 18th May 2022, Hon'ble Supreme Court of India released one of the Rajiv Gandhi killers, Perarivalan, using their special powers granted under Article 142 of the Indian Constitution. Article 142 of the Constitution gives unlimited power to Supreme Court to do complete justice in cases where the litigants have suffered injustices during the proceedings.

Reasons for release

The reasons given by the Supreme Court was that the Governor delayed the decision under Article 161 on the recommendations of the Tamil Nadu Government to release Perarivalan, one of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case and who was in jail for 31 years. Tamil Nadu Government had recommended remission of the sentence in Sep 2018. Governor referred to the President in Jan 2021 without taking decision, as it was investigated by CBI and the mercy petition was rejected by the President earlier.

The Court has observed that the advice of the State Cabinet was binding on the Governor in matters relating to commutation / remission of sentences under Article 161. Considering the 'mental stress' faced by the prisoner due to delay, the Supreme Court invoked Article 142, which is being used in rarest of rare occasions, released the convict Perarivalan immediately.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister hugs and celebrates

Some of the political parties of Tamil Nadu (other than BJP and Congress),



including the Chief Minister M K Stalin hailed the judgement and the Chief Minister met Perarivalan at Airport, hugged him affectionately and hosted a tea party to celebrate his release. Even many of the regional media in Tamil Nadu started portraying Perarivalan as a great hero. The Supreme Court released him only because he had served 31 years of jail term and did not declare him innocent.



The judgement of the Supreme Court to release the Rajiv killer and the Chief Minister's action of hugging him and honouring him generated a big debate in the national media and frustration among the neutral people.

History of the case



Dhanu, the suicide human bomb waiting to garland Rajiv Gandhi and to trigger the bomb – One eyed Sivarasan (fourth from left) mastermind behind this assassination – 10-year-old student Gokilavani (first from left) innocently standing by her side.

On 21st May 1991, Rajiv Gandhi during his election campaign, was assassinated at Sriperumbudur, near Chennai, by a human bomb, identified as Dhanu. Along with him, 17 others, including policemen and the party workers died. Even Rajiv Gandhi's body itself could not be identified, but for his Lotto shoes. 43 others had major injuries with penetration of pellets inside their bodies. Some of them died in due course. Some of them are living with all disability. Rajiv Gandhi assassination had a serious impact in the economy and political side of the nation. It had an international impact then. The country took several years to come back to normalcy. The investigations revealed the involvement of LTTE and a well-planned conspiracy to destabilise India.

After the assassination, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was formed and they arrested several people. The Tada court set up for this purpose sentenced Perarivalan to death penalty. The Supreme Court confirmed death sentence in 1999. Perarivalan submitted a mercy petition before the Governor of Tamil Nadu under Article 161 of the Constitution. The Governor rejected this petition in October 1999. Again, on the orders of the High Court, the Governor reconsidered the mercy petition and rejected it again in April 2000. He filed a mercy petition before the President under Article 72 of the Constitution and this was rejected in August 2011. Aggrieved by this, Perarivalan filed a writ petition before the Madras High Court and this was transferred to Supreme Court. In Feb 2014, Supreme Court commuted the death sentence to 'imprisonment for life'.

In September 2018, Tamil Nadu Cabinet passed a resolution to release the convict Perarivalan. In Jan 2021, the Governor, determined that President of India was the appropriate authority to decide the petition and hence forwarded the recommendations of Tamil Nadu Government to the President of India.

Views of `the common man`



Rajiv Gandhi patting the 10-year-old girl few seconds before the blast – Suicide human bomb Dhanu (with flowers on her head) waiting to trigger the bomb

Though the death sentence was confirmed and reconfirmed by Supreme Court of India and the President several times and in spite of the Supreme Court commuting the death sentence to 'imprisonment for life', Supreme Court has released the assassin considering the 'mental stress' of the assassin due to delay in taking decision by the Governor.

Though, no one questions the authority and wisdom of the Supreme Court to invoke article 142, the general feeling among the common man is that Supreme Court should have considered the 'mental stress' and sufferings of the voiceless family members of 17 people who died along with Rajiv Gandhi

and also 43 others who got injured seriously due to penetration of pellets.

While the assassins were able to engage highly paid senior lawyers to represent them at the Supreme Court, the family members of poor victims, who lost the lives or got injured seriously, could not engage any lawyer to represent their case. Both Central and State Governments and the Supreme Court could have considered the sufferings of the poor victims for a moment. One school student of 10 years old Gokilavani, few seconds before the blast, read out a poem to Rajiv Gandhi who appreciated the child patting on her back. This child was blown into pieces. Unfortunately, the authorities did not consider the agony and 'mental stress' of the family members who lost this child.

Further the celebration of some of the parties and the hugging by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu added more anger and frustration among the neutral people nationally.

The Supreme Court has observed that the resolution of the Cabinet is binding on the Governor in

respect of remission of punishment of convicts. What would happen if the recommendations were biased or irrational or against the interest of the unity of the nation? Governor has



A police officer and party workers trying to identify the charred body of Rajiv Gandhi

to act on his own to protect the interest of the people and sovereignty of the nation.

Now lot of demands are made to release many terrorists from the prison with the support of various State Governments. In our view, Article 142 should not have been invoked by the Supreme Court in the present case. There are delays in the courts also. If Courts can take the executive power, what would happen if executives took over the powers of the court due to delay in finalizing the court cases. This will create more confusion and conflict between Judiciary, executive and legislature.

Time to review Article 161 and 142

There are many judgements to confirm that 'imprisonment for life' means, that the prisoner has to remain in the custody till the end of his life. A time has come to review the term 'life imprisonment'. Article 161 and Article 142 should include suitable amendments to avoid confusion in future.

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Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's Forword for PreSense100

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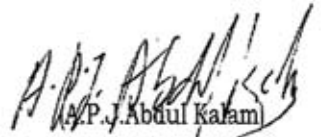
FOREWORD

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)

About this Book

This book is the collection of select Editorials published in the eMagazine PreSense, published by Prime Point Foundation, during the period between 2020 and 2022 (May). These Editorials deal with the varied subjects on Politics, Governance, Environment, Human Relations, etc. The Editorials have been contributed by K. Srinivasan, Susan Koshy, T N Ashok, Priyadharshni Rahul and Srinivas Gopal.

About the Publisher



K. Srinivasan, popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan, a senior banker turned Communication professional is the Publisher and Managing Editor of the eMagazine PreSense. He is also the founder of Prime Point Foundation, Digital Journalists Association of India, Next Gen Political Leaders and Education Loan Task Force. Prime Point Foundation honours every year since 2010, the outstanding Indian Parliamentarians with "Sansad Ratna Awards" (meaning Gem of Parliament) based on their individual performance in the House. Srinivasan is based at Chennai, India.

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