



SPEAKS

Editorials 2024

**Compiled by
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Joint Managing Editor**

**Prime Point Foundation
Chennai**

PreSense Speaks – Editorials 2024

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Introduction

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The PreSense100

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



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New Delhi-110011

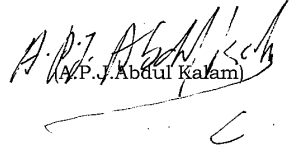
FOREWORD

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

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

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

28th May 2015


(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones

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

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

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

PreSense Speaks – Editorials 2024

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

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

The Journey Continues.....

Editorial Board – January 2025

Publisher and
Managing Editor

K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)
Former Banker,
Communication consultant
and Digital Journalist

Joint Managing
Editor

Ramesh Sundaram,
Senior Journalist, Ex The
Hindu

Editor in Chief

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Manager, Canara Bank and
CVO, IOB, Chennai

Consulting Editor

R Nurullah, Senior
Journalist

Editor

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

Cartoon Editor

Triambak Sharma, Editor,
Cartoon Watch, Raipur



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) is an off-shoot of Sansad Ratna Awards. This is a registered NGO operating since 2018. NGPL has organised several workshops online and offline, for young political leaders and aspirants. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and retired constitutional authorities have participated and shared their views. NGPL will shortly be instituting Awards for young promising politicians.



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



Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI):



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

Download all our publications free from the link

<https://tinyurl.com/PPFpublication>

Please click this link and subscribe to our Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/c/PrimePointFoundation/>

Publisher's Note

We are delighted to announce the release of the 49th publication from the Prime Point Foundation, titled **"PreSense Speaks: Editorials 2024"**, as part of our *PreSense Speaks* series. This remarkable edition is a comprehensive compilation of all the Editorials featured in the *PreSense* eMagazine throughout 2024.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Shri Ramesh Sundaram, Joint Managing Editor of PreSense, for his dedicated efforts in meticulously compiling these articles into this exceptional book and eBook.

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

With warm regards,

K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)

Founder & Chairman,
Prime Point Foundation

Editorials 2024

A milestone in ISRO's Space Odyssey: Unveiling the Sun's secrets

By Ramesh Sundaram, Editor in Chief (Jan 2024)

(ISRO's Aditya L1 mission at L1 Lagrange point observes the sun, enhances space weather understanding globally.)

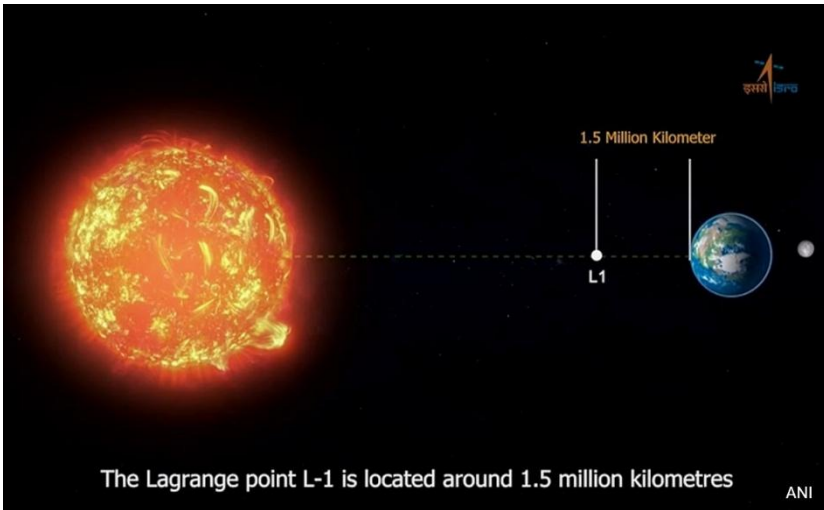
Successful launch of Aditya L1 mission – On January 6, 2024, the halo-orbit insertion of the Aditya-L1 Solar observatory spacecraft was successfully accomplished. The Spacecraft was precisely placed in L1 Lagrange point. It marked a milestone in ISRO's space missions. The mission was launched on September 2, 2023 and aims to provide valuable insights into solar activities. The mission enjoys an uninterrupted view of the sun. This is because it is positioned at a distance of approximately 1.5 million km from the Earth, at the first Lagrange point (L1), a perfect spot between the Earth and the Sun, where there is almost zero gravitational pull either from the sun or the Earth.

(At the L1 point in space, gravitational forces from both the Sun and the Earth are counteracted by the centripetal force necessary to maintain an object's equilibrium)

The advantage of L1 Point

The L1 point is a unique location in space where gravitational forces from both the Sun and the Earth are

counteracted by the centripetal force necessary to maintain an object's motion under the influence of gravity. This equilibrium at L1 will keep Aditya-L1 stable, allowing it to orbit effortlessly in the halo orbit without expending significant fuel.



The heat shield

The Aditya-L1 spacecraft is also equipped with a heat shield, which will reflect most of the Sun's heat away from the spacecraft, keeping it cool enough to operate. This strategic positioning and protective shielding allow Aditya-L1 to continuously monitor the Sun and conduct scientific studies.

The Sun

The Sun is the closest star to our earth and it is around the sun our planetary system revolves. The Sun may look like one simple mass of fire. But beneath its surface, there is a gamut of activity – that which imparts a great influence on our planet in many ways. The solar flares, a steady stream of charged particles, and coronal mass ejections can affect our satellite communications, bring to a standstill power grids, and even affect spacecraft and astronauts.

Hence Indian Space Agency ISRO launched the Aditya L1 Mission to unravel these mysteries and find a way to shield the Earth from harmful radiations like solar flares. The best Celestial point to observe the sun: While the ground telescopes are affected by the Earth's rotation and atmosphere, Aditya L1 spacecraft enjoys a privileged and uninterrupted view of the Sun. Its viewing is not affected even during the eclipse.

Aditya L1's scientific pay-load

The Aditya L1 spacecraft is loaded with seven instruments. Four instruments scan the Sun's fiery expanse by dissecting its emissions. The other three instruments analyse the environment by measuring the energetic particles, solar winds, and magnetic fields. In toto, these instruments provide a deep insight, crucial for the study and observation of solar activity. The mission seeks to forecast coronal mass ejections thus providing much-needed early warning for potentially

disruptive space weather incidents. The life span of Aditya L1 mission is expected to be around 5 years.

Ambitious space programme

The Aditya L1 mission is a cornerstone in India's ambitious space programme while symbolizing significant advancement in its astronomical research. It has not only positioned India as a major leader in solar physics but has also paved the way for future space missions dedicated to understanding in a better way other celestial bodies and their impact on our planet.

The expectations and aspirations: The Aditya L1 mission carries the hopes of a planet that is eager to know about the sun and to protect the planet in the face of unpredictable cosmic flare-ups from our nearest star.

Conclusion

Aditya L1 mission marks a significant milestone in India's space research programme. The data collected from this endeavour will not only enhance our knowledge about the Sun and its activities but also contribute towards international scientists understanding of space weather and its effects on the Earth.

Sansad Ratna Awards: A 15-Year Triumph, from Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya to Rashtrapati Bhavan 2010-2024

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

(The Sansad Ratna Awards, initiated in 2009, have honoured top-performing Indian Parliamentarians, gaining visibility and credibility over 15 years. The 2024 event highlighted the need for academic research on Parliament functions.)



(Photo left: Awardees with T S Krishnamurthy and N Gopalswamy, Former Chief Election Commissioners in the first Award event in May 2010 | Photo right: The Awardees with Hon'ble President at Rashtrapati Bhavan in Feb 2024)

The initiative to honour top-performing Indian Parliamentarians, which began in March 2009 at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's suggestion through the eMagazine PreSense and later a physical event in 2010 at Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya in Chennai, has now reached the corridors of Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi in 2024. This

challenging 15-year journey has enriched our team with more knowledge and commitment to Indian democracy. We have presented 121 Awards to individuals and Committees in the 14 Award functions. On the suggestion of Dr. Abdul Kalam, we featured top-performing Parliamentarians of the 14th Lok Sabha in the March 2009 edition of eMagazine PreSense.

In May 2010, the first Award function was held at Thakkar Bapa Vidyalyaya, Chennai before a limited audience. After that, IIT Madras became our partner until 2018. In 2019, the Award event was held at Raj Bhavan, Chennai. After a break in 2020 due to Covid, we shifted the event to Delhi in 2021. We gained a lot of visibility in the past four years, after moving the event to Delhi. The Sansad Ratna Award has become a dream award for many Parliamentarians.

The 14th Edition of the Award function was held in New Delhi in February 2024. Every year, we appeal to the Parliamentarians and the Government during the Award event on a point of concern. This year, we highlighted the lack of academic research by Indian Universities on Parliament-related functions. This is probably due to a lack of awareness about the function of the Parliament and the lack of knowledgeable professors. In a growing, largest Parliamentary democracy like India, it is highly important that academic institutions focus on the insights of governance. On behalf of the Prime Point Foundation and the Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL), another initiative of the Foundation, we have assured support to academic institutions and researchers who

want to research the functioning of the Indian Parliament.

The credibility of the Award has also reached its peak. For the past four years, the Sansad Ratna Awards has been one of the suggested questions for the UPSC examinations by trainers. In 2023, Prime Minister Modi tweeted on his personal Twitter handle, greeting the Awardees. In 2024, the Honorable President and Vice President had photo sessions with the Awardees. During the Photo Session, the Hon'ble President keenly listened



Prime Point Srinivasan (Founder and Chairman Emeritus) and Priyadharshni Rahul (Chairman) with Hon'ble President

to the history of the Sansad Ratna Awards. Hon'ble President took individual photographs with all the Sansad Ratna Award winners and also with us.

The 14th edition of the award function was a grand spectacle, overcoming various challenges. As we consistently believe, the divine influence of Lord Sri Krishna has been instrumental in our success. We dedicate our achievements to Lord Sri Krishna, acknowledging His unwavering support over the past 15 years.

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As the 2024 General Elections near for the 18th Lok Sabha, the nation should elect Parliamentarians who can strengthen democracy. Jai Hind



New Maharashtra Sadan, the venue of 14th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards event

Unlocking the 17th Lok Sabha: Triumphs and Challenges

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

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



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

Despite the successful completion of the full term by the 17th Lok Sabha, there is a notable lack of discussion, both among the public and in the media, regarding its performance and the contributions made by the elected Members. Analogous to how we review the performance of our children monthly to improve their education, it is essential to assess the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Lok Sabha upon completion of its term. Before casting our votes, it is imperative to scrutinize the performance of the completed Lok Sabha and its Members.

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

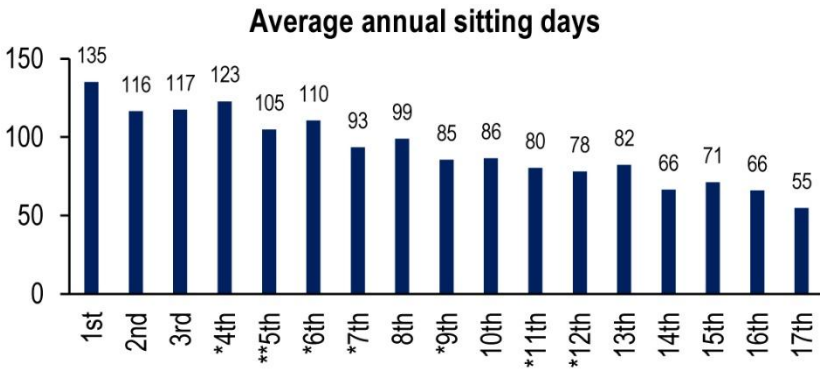
Role of Parliament

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

paramount in ensuring smooth governance.

Sittings and Legislative Business

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



Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

During the 17th Lok Sabha, 179 bills (excluding finance and appropriation bills) were passed. Of these, 58% were passed within two weeks of introduction, and 35%

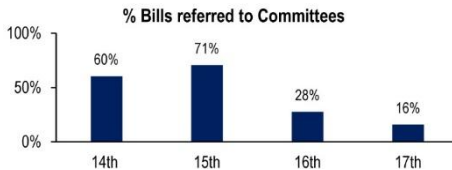
were passed with less than one hour of discussion. Remarkably, 80% of budgets were passed without any discussion, with the entire budget for 2023 being passed without debate. Several important bills, including new criminal laws, were passed in the absence of opposition members who were under suspension. In September 2023, a Special Session was held in the New Parliament House making the beginning of future Sessions.

Role of Committees

Parliamentary Committees play a vital role in the legislative process. Members from all parties thoroughly discuss subjects

and reach consensus decisions. Bills are referred to

Less than 20% of Bills referred to Committees



Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

Committees for examination and refinement. However, in the 17th Lok Sabha, only 16% of bills were referred to

Committees, compared to 60%, 71%, and 28% in the

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

Private Members Bills (PMB)

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

Questions

A total of 101,999 questions were raised during the 17th Lok Sabha, with an average of 195 per Member. Starred Questions receive oral answers from Ministers, while Unstarred Questions receive written replies. During the Question Hour, 60% of the scheduled time was used for oral responses, with 24% of listed questions being answered.

Election of Deputy Speaker

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

Conclusion

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

Data courtesy: PRS Legislative Research, Delhi

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

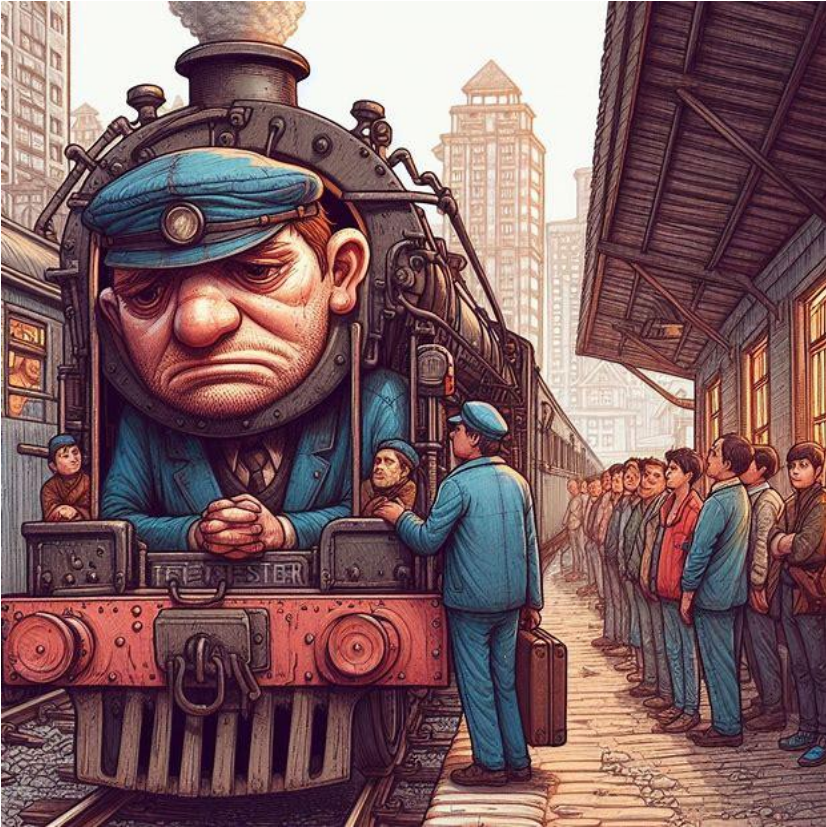
***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor
(April 2024)***

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

Unsung Heroes

Train journeys, with their massive engines and the thrill of travel, have always fascinated people of all ages. However, few are aware of the challenges faced by the engine drivers, or Loco Pilots, who ensure our safe travel, often at the expense of their health. It may come as a surprise to many that these Loco Pilots lack even basic amenities, such as facilities to answer nature's call while on duty.

This forces them to suppress their needs for hours, leading to various health issues. The struggles faced by female Loco Pilots, especially during their menstrual cycles, are indescribable. Regrettably, the grievances of these unsung heroes and heroines often fall on deaf ears of the Railway Administration.



Indian Railways at a Glance

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

They maintain a fleet of over 14,800 locomotives, which includes both electric and diesel locomotives.

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

Long Working Hours, Lack of Toilet Facilities

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

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

Besides, these Loco Pilots, including women pilots, have no washroom (toilet) facility in their engine cabin. They

are unable to attend nature's call when the train is running continuously at high speed for long hours.

"The Loco Pilots should not be given night duties for more than two consecutive days. Unfortunately, due to shortage of pilots, they are asked to run for four or five consecutive nights. They do not get adequate rest. They are away from home on duty for several days. This leads to various health issues like varicose veins, kidney problems, etc.," says R. Elangovan, Former Vice President of Dakshin Railway Employees Union (DREU) and presently, the President of Dakshin Railway Pensioners Union. He also cited the example of a Loco Pilot, who had a 22 mm kidney stone removed through surgery. The Doctors informed the patient that holding the urine for such a long time without discharge may create more kidney problems.

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

In 1973, there was a nationwide strike by loco-running staff under the banner of All India Loco Running Staff

Association (AILRSA) demanding 8 hours of duty. On August 14, 1973, the then Railway Minister announced on the floor of Parliament that Members of Loco Running Staff would not be required to work for more than 10 hours at a stretch from 'Sign On to Sign Off'. Even after the completion of the 50th anniversary of the announcement, in 2024, the agreement remains dishonoured. Even the present rule of 11/12 hours is not implemented and in practice, Loco Pilots are being forced to work more than 14 hours at a stretch.

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

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

Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD)

Sometimes loco pilots jump the 'danger signal' due to physical and mental strain and fatigue. This is known as SPAD (Signal Passing at Danger). Accidents happen due to this SPAD. The Task Force set up in 2017 found that the majority of such SPAD incidents in the Railways happened after 'home rest' at the residence of the loco pilot. "This is because quality rest is missing during such

long home station rest as the loco pilot is preoccupied with attending to personal and family matters,” the Task Force observed. Elangovan says that only because of the refusal of eligible leave, these loco pilots are forced to use ‘home rest’ periods for their domestic work.

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

Acceptance by Authorities

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

“Generally, they should maintain around 30% of the strength for leave reserve and change of duties. Indian Railways never maintains the leave reserve. Instead, they refuse ‘leave’ to the pilots and extend their working hours, without realising that it has safety implications as well as human rights violations. The Chairman of the Railway Board himself has admitted before the Parliamentary Committee that with these vacancies,

they were not sanctioning the leave to the extent that people would have desired.” Elangovan added.

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

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

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

Since the Loco Pilots are working in high-stress conditions, many of them are getting medically de-categorised before the superannuation age. It means as per railway medical standards Loco Pilots should fit in the A-1 category which is the highest medical standard.

“During the periodical mandatory medical examination, many of them get de-categorised to B1, B2 or C1 and they are moved to those jobs that can fit in that category. This is also the main reason for the shortage of pilots. The de-categorisation happens in large numbers due to poor working conditions of the Loco Pilots,” says Parthasarathy.

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

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

One more new committee – Delaying Justice

Though there were agreements, announcements and several Committee Reports in the past that identified the problems of Loco Pilots and advised the Railway Board to implement solutions, the Ministry of Labour has set up another High Power Committee on April 18, 2024 (when we are writing this article), to implement ILO Convention C001 Article 8 for providing time intervals for food and for attending calls of nature. They have given one year time for this High Power Committee to submit its report. Ironically, this Committee was set up after a delay of four years after a petition raising industrial dispute by trade unions in 2020.

PreSense Speaks – Editorials 2024

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

The

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

decision that could have been made within a week, is now allowed to drag on for years, at the cost of the safety of the passengers. Strangely, if a Private company had not provided a 'time interval for food and for attending calls of nature', to their employees, the owner would have been prosecuted and jailed.

“When I was in the Rajya Sabha, I discussed the hardships of loco pilots with Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu and also spoke in the Parliament. These bureaucrats, sitting in comfortable air-conditioned rooms with attached toilets, taking food in time and enjoying the royal saloon facilities, continuing from the British days, do not understand the difficulties of the engine drivers running for long working hours without toilet facilities and timely food, in a bad working condition. They will only realise when they travel in the engine continuously for 3 to 4 hours. The Railway Authorities should realise that they are playing with the safety of lakhs of passengers travelling in train daily, by not improving the working conditions of loco pilots,” says T K Rangarajan, a former Rajya Sabha MP for 12 years, with great pain and sorrow.

Possible Solutions

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

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

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

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

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

The Indian Railways, as one of the largest employers in the world, should set an example by prioritizing the comfort, rest, and well-being of its loco pilots, instead of appointing committee after committee to delay justice. These are the individuals who bear the immense responsibility of safely transporting more than 2000 passengers at a time. It's high time we recognize their invaluable silent contribution and treat their grievances with the urgency and importance they deserve.

PreSense Speaks – Editorials 2024

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

Modi 3.0: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (May 2024)

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



Three Cheers to the Indian Election Commission

PreSense congratulates the Indian Election Commission for successfully conducting the 2024 General Elections to elect 543 Members of the Lok Sabha. The Election Commission deployed 1.8 million Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) across 1.1 million polling booths nationwide. Around 11 million officials, including security

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

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

BJP's Hat-Trick Victory

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made history as the first non-Congress party to form the government at the Centre for the third consecutive time since Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure. The BJP alone secured 240



seats, while the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) headed by the BJP secured 293 seats, 21 seats above the majority mark of 272. In 2019, the BJP had secured 303 seats, but this time it fell short by 63 seats.

Analysing the BJP's Performance

In 2019, the BJP secured 22.9 crore votes with a vote share of 37.3%. In 2024, despite a slight drop in vote share to 36.6%, the BJP polled 23.6 crore votes, which

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

Unemployment and rising prices were significant issues affecting the common man, which Prime Minister Modi did not address adequately in his campaign. Opposition parties highlighted these issues prominently. Additionally, Modi's communal rhetoric against Muslims and the hype around the Ram Mandir failed to garner the expected support. The narrative of fear created among minorities, particularly Muslims, led to a consolidated vote against the BJP.

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

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

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

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

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

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

partners. This works as checks and balances for the governance.

Challenges Ahead for the BJP

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

Narendra Modi has previously managed the Gujarat Government and the Central Government with an independent majority, allowing him to make decisions independently. This time, he will face the challenges of handling alliance partners and their demands, similar to what Vajpayee experienced in 1998. Modi will find it difficult to implement all his promises independently and without consulting partners. Sensitive bills, like the Uniform Civil Code, will need to be discussed with partners before being introduced in Parliament. Modi will likely need to draw up a 'Common Minimum Programme' in consultation with alliance partners. Both Modi and Amit Shah have to adapt their functioning and body language to suit the new political environment.

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

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

Strengthening Democracy

One of our main concerns in the 17th Lok Sabha was the lack of discussion on bills and the Budget. Bills were not referred to Standing Committees for scrutiny. Another major concern was not filling up the constitutional positions like Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, Members of the Election Commission, Governors, Members of various Statutory and Constitutional bodies, etc. in time. Either they were not filled up or filled up after undue delay. PreSense is confident that with a larger opposition presence in the 18th Lok Sabha, the new Lok Sabha will effectively discharge its duties, thereby strengthening Indian democracy.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Opportunities and Challenges for the Ruling Alliance

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

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

Previously, with a weak opposition in the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, the BJP managed parliamentary procedures

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

Opportunities and Challenges for Opposition Parties

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

Dr. Sudarsana Nachiappan, a senior Congress leader and former Minister in the UPA Government, feels that the

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

Though Rahul Gandhi had the opportunity to assume a significant role in the UPA government, he declined any such responsibilities. His attire and public behaviour have led to perceptions of him as a 'non-serious politician' for over a decade. It seems he lacks senior advisors and mentors who could adequately brief him on historical contexts. On several occasions, Rahul Gandhi was embroiled in controversies for misstating information at public events, contradicting his party's established policies and decisions. Occasionally, these missteps required him to issue apologies in court. Lacking effective mentorship appears to be a recurring issue. Now that he holds the position of Leader of the Opposition, equivalent to a Cabinet Minister, the country will be observing his actions with keen interest. This period presents Rahul Gandhi with a significant opportunity to establish himself as a prime ministerial candidate, especially given that his allies did not nominate him as a PM candidate for the 2014, 2019, and 2024 elections.

Unfortunately, the opposition parties caused a commotion in both Houses, resulting in adjournments

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

Democracy Prevails

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

A New Dawn for Justice: India Overhauls Its Colonial-Era Criminal Law

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (June 2024)

***(On July 1, 2024, India will implement transformative laws, modernising criminal justice, replacing outdated statutes, and enhancing judicial efficiency and fairness. The author is also an advocate in the Supreme Court of India)
(This article, authored by Priyadharshni Rahul, was published in one of the leading English Newspapers DT Next on June 24, 2024, on Page 2)***

December 2023 etched itself into the annals of India's legal history, marking a pivotal moment as the nation bid farewell to its colonial-era criminal laws.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860, the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of 1898, and the Indian Evidence Act (IEA) of 1872 – pillars of the Indian criminal justice system for over a century – were replaced by three new laws: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Samhita (BNSS), and the Bhartiya Sakshi Adhinyam (BSA).

This monumental shift wasn't a sudden decision but the culmination of a process that began in May 2020. The Centre constituted a Committee for Reforms in Criminal Law, tasked with recommending updates to the British-era statutes. The committee's work bore fruit in August

2023 when the bills were introduced during the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The Winter Session of the same year saw their passage, followed swiftly by the President's assent, paving the way for a new chapter in Indian criminal law.

Criticisms

The journey to these new laws has been far from smooth, sparking intense debates across political, legal, and human rights circles. The Sanskritised names of the new codes drew attention, but it was the expanded powers granted to investigating agencies that ignited the most heated discussions.

Critics argue that the changes, while significant, could have been achieved through amendments to the existing laws rather than creating entirely new codes.

Several provisions have come under particularly intense scrutiny:

- The anti-national law, which some fear, could be used to stifle dissent
- Trial in absentia, allowing courts to proceed with trials even when the accused is not present
- Extended police custody periods from 60 to 90 days, where experts opine to be taking us back to colonial era or even worse
- Limitations of third-party intervention in mercy petition applications, potentially overseeing the

ignorance of legal illiteracy and lack of awareness of appropriate remedies

Section 356 of the BNS permits trials to proceed if the offender is proclaimed an absconder evading trial with no immediate prospect of arrest. Critics argue that this violates principles of natural justice, potentially leading to unfair convictions.

However, supporters contend that it's necessary to address the massive backlog of pending criminal cases that has long plagued the Indian judicial system. This will also challenge those offenders who swiftly take the international route and remain clandestine, leading to many cases that don't see the light of justice.

Supporters' perspective

Supporters of the new laws have endorsed them as progressive, arguing that while past laws focused on punishment, the new laws emphasise justice.

The Parliament has passed many reformatory, unique, and robust laws. Some of the key features are:

- Enhanced penalties for minor rape up till death sentences or life imprisonment for convicted offenders
- A strong stance against mob lynching and anti-nationalism, addressing growing concerns about vigilante justice

- A clear and specific definition of terrorism, demonstrating zero tolerance for any forms of insurgencies and providing law enforcement agencies with scope and guidelines
- Time-bound dispositions, including a maximum period of 45-day limit for pronouncing reserved judgments to reduce delays in the justice system
- Mandatory videography of criminal searches and seizures, increasing transparency and reducing the potential for political interference or evidence tampering
- Acceptance of digital evidence and technology in legal proceedings
- A 7-day timeline for delivering medical reports of rape victims to investigating officers
- Requirement of forensic experts at crime scenes for offenses carrying sentences exceeding 7 years
- Introducing community service as a punishment to petty crimes

Embracing tech, AI

Digital and sophisticated crime, combined with globally connected criminal networks, has created complexity in crime patterns that require equally sophisticated investigative techniques.

Cybercrime, in particular, has emerged as a significant challenge. Data theft has become a daunting task for law enforcement, with privacy compromised on a global scale. India's success in mastering the digital economy

should embolden its aspirations for a progressive, digitalised legal system as well.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of virtual modes in legal proceedings, and the new laws capitalise on this shift. The new laws promote digital recording throughout the criminal justice process – from the filing of FIRs to the final judgments. This digital transformation will promise transparency and accountability.

The new law directs digital recording right from the inception of criminal investigation – that is FIR till the judgement and disposal of the case. Not to forget that virtual arguments have created vast scope for lawyers to pursue their practice and present their legal acumen from any part of this country. This has encouraged many lawyers from the remotest spot in the country to confidently argue in various high courts and Supreme Court without any deterrence of distance.

The Supreme Court is currently developing a virtual court model that will convert speech to text, significantly reducing the time spent recording evidence. Additionally, plans are underway for an app that will keep all stakeholders of a criminal case updated on judicial proceedings, facilitating better communication and coordination.

In the opinion of the honourable Chief Justice of India, AI algorithms will hasten investigation, and help break complex evidence to resolve intricate cases at a fast pace. They may even be a likelihood to even predict

crimes, if the technology is used with its ethical boundaries and understanding its limitations.

Predictive policing is another aspect that global policing agencies are analysing to forecast criminal activities with AI analytics. So, when the world is running at an unimaginable pace, the requirement for new laws and new thoughts is mandatory.

Addressing scepticism

Some critics argue that the wholesale replacement of long-standing laws was unnecessary, suggesting that amendments would have sufficed. They question whether the marginal changes in the law justifies creating entirely new codes with new titles.

However, supporters of the new laws counter the argument that the laws have evolved since 1793, and a comprehensive overhaul was long overdue. They argue that the current changes aren't about reinventing the wheel but rather about creating a more efficient and responsive legal framework.

The introduction of these new criminal laws represents a significant step in India's legal evolution. While concerns and criticisms persist, the potential for a more efficient, technologically advanced, and justice-oriented system is clear.

The success of these new laws will depend not only on their content but also on how effectively they are implemented and how well the legal system as a whole

adapts to this new paradigm. Ongoing dialogue between lawmakers, legal professionals, and citizens will be crucial to ensure that the new system truly serves the cause of justice in a modern, digital age.

Despite such progressive reforms, if the question remains whether these new laws were a necessity, remind yourself law is change and change is law to manifest dominance incessantly.

End this Colonial Hangover: The Need for an Anti-Discriminatory Dress Code Legislation

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

(This editorial urges India to enact a national law protecting traditional attire, combating colonial-era discrimination, and promoting cultural respect and awareness in public and private spaces.)

In mid-July this year, a farmer dressed in a traditional dhoti and turban was denied entry to a leading cinema hall in a large mall in Bengaluru. This incident sparked protests from various political parties, leading to a heated debate in the State Assembly. The State Government responded by closing the mall for a week. It is also reported that the Government is planning to introduce legislation to prevent such disrespect towards traditional attire, reflecting colonial regulations. It may be recalled that before India's independence, clubs across the country displayed signs reading "Dogs and



Indians not allowed," prohibiting the entry of Indians. Ironically, in 2022, Rishi Sunak, a person of Indian origin, entered 10 Downing Street as Prime Minister with his dogs.

A few years ago, Justice Hariparanthaman, then a sitting judge of the Madras High Court, was denied entry to the Tamil Nadu Cricket Club because he was wearing a traditional dhoti and shirt. This incident garnered significant media attention. In response, the State Government swiftly enacted legislation to penalise office bearers and private establishments that denied entry to individuals wearing traditional attire.

There have been numerous incidents in recent years, both reported and unreported, where even celebrities, including M F Hussain, Justice Krishna Iyer have been denied entry for wearing traditional Indian dress such as dhoti, kurta, or turban.

As we celebrate 75 years of India's independence, it is disheartening to see remnants of colonial discrimination persisting in our society. While the British Raj had ended decades ago,



the echoes of these practices still continue, as evidenced by recent instances of discrimination against those wearing traditional Indian attire. It is imperative for us, as a nation, to address and eradicate these outdated prejudices and ensure respect for our cultural heritage. This editorial aims to highlight notable incidents of such discrimination and propose legislative measures to

prevent the dishonouring of our national and traditional dress. There are also several instances where senior journalists wearing dhoti were not allowed entry to five-star hotels for attending press conferences or for interviewing VIPs.



Only Tamil Nadu has enacted legislation preventing such disrespect towards ethnic attire (Indian dress). Karnataka may soon follow suit. However, instead of individual States addressing this issue, a broader and

more comprehensive national legislation is needed. The Indian Government should consider enacting a "National Anti-Discrimination Dress Code Act." This nationwide Act should prohibit any form of discrimination based on attire in public and private establishments. The act should explicitly state that traditional Indian attire, including Kurtas, dhotis, turbans, sarees, and other regional dresses, must be respected and cannot be the grounds for denying entry or service.

The Government, along with Non-Governmental Organisations and cultural bodies, should launch public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of respecting traditional attire. These campaigns should highlight the cultural significance of various traditional garments and encourage acceptance and appreciation. The Indian media should actively participate in these efforts.

Government and private institutions should include traditional attire in their official dress codes and protocols. This inclusion will set a positive example and reinforce the acceptance of cultural attire in formal settings. Events such as Republic Day, Independence Day, and other national celebrations should prominently feature traditional dress.

The hospitality and service industry should provide training to their staff on cultural sensitivity and the importance of respecting traditional attire. This training will help prevent incidents of discrimination and promote a more inclusive environment.

The proposed legislation should include stringent penalties for establishments that violate the anti-discrimination dress code act. These penalties could range from hefty fines to the suspension of business licenses for repeat offenders. Such measures will ensure compliance and deter discriminatory practices.

Conclusion: The persistence of colonial-era discrimination in our society is a blemish on our nation's progress. PreSense appeals to everyone to ensure that every Indian, regardless of their attire, is treated with respect and dignity. By enacting comprehensive legislation and promoting cultural awareness, we can eradicate these outdated prejudices and honour the rich tapestry of our cultural heritage.

A Grim Reality - The Unabated Crime Against Women in India

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor, and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (August 2024)

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



The recent horrific rape and murder of a doctor at a Kolkata hospital has once again brought the issue of women's safety in India into the national spotlight. This incident, which has triggered widespread protests across the country, is yet another grim reminder of the vulnerability that women face daily. What makes this case even more alarming is the casual attitude of the West Bengal Government, which has been criticised for

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

Apathy and Political Silence

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

State of Affairs: Top 5 States in Crime Against Women

India has witnessed a disturbingly high number of crimes against women over the years, and certain States have consistently topped the charts in this grim statistic. The

following table provides a snapshot of the top 5 States in India for crimes against women, including conviction rates and the national average:

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

Data Source: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

Please note that these are all the reported crimes as per the NCRB records. More than 90 per cent of cases are not reported for various reasons. Rajasthan consistently ranks as the State with the highest number of reported crimes against women cases, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Delhi. Despite numerous initiatives and legal reforms, these States have seen little improvement in reducing crime rates or improving conviction rates.

Global Position: Where Does India Stand?

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

Rank	Country	Women's Danger Index	Conviction Rate (%)
1	South Africa	771.82	5-10%
2	Brazil	624.28	11%
3	Russia	592.71	3%
4	Mexico	576.05	8%
5	Iran	553.11	2%
6	Dominican Republic	551.32	10%
7	Egypt	546.91	4%
8	Morocco	542.75	6%
9	India	541.25	23%
10	Thailand	533.22	12%

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

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

Rank	Country	Women's Danger Index	Conviction Rate (%)
1	Norway	220	70-80%
2	Sweden	230	65-75%
3	Denmark	240	60-70%
4	New Zealand	250	55-65%
5	Finland	260	60-70%

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

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

Root Causes: Why Are Crimes Against Women So Rampant?

The reasons behind the high incidence of crimes against women in India are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the

socio-cultural fabric of the country. Here are some of the key factors:

1. **Patriarchal Social Structure:** Deep-rooted patriarchal norms continue to perpetuate gender inequalities, with women often being seen as subordinate to men. This mindset not only leads to violence against women but also normalises it within society.
2. **Cultural Stigma:** The cultural stigma associated with reporting crimes, especially sexual crimes, discourages many women from coming forward. This allows perpetrators to act with impunity, knowing that their victims are unlikely to seek justice.
3. **Poor Law Enforcement:** Inadequate policing, corruption, and investigation delays further embolden criminals. The lack of swift and decisive action against offenders often results in the perpetuation of violence against women.
4. **Judicial Delays:** The slow pace of the judicial system, with years-long delays in securing convictions, weakens the deterrent effect of the law. Justice delayed is justice denied, and this is particularly true in cases of crimes against women.
5. **Economic and Social Dislocation:** Rapid urbanisation, migration, and the breakdown of traditional community structures have led to increased social tensions and vulnerability for women.
6. **Lack of Education and Awareness:** Insufficient education on gender equality and a lack of awareness about women's rights contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence.

Solutions: A Multi-Faceted Approach

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

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

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

Role of Civil Society and Government

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

Conclusion

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

societal change are necessary to make India safer for women.

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

Secularism or Vote Bank Politics? India's Dilemma

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Sep 2024)

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

In recent years, the topic of secularism in India has become a frequent subject of public discourse. Many now believe that the concept of secularism is often misinterpreted to appease minorities for vote-bank politics, while Hinduism is depicted in a negative light, hurting the sentiments of the majority.



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

by minority communities. However, it is unfortunate that they often neglect to do the same for the festivals celebrated by majority Hindu community.

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

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

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

While Dr B.R. Ambedkar strongly opposed and did not support Article 370, secular parties continued to defend it, which denied reservations to Scheduled Castes (SCs)

and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Similarly, Dr. Ambedkar advocated for implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). Yet, these parties now oppose the UCC, which could help bring legal uniformity among the people. Ironically, all of them claim to be followers of Dr. Ambedkar.

These actions do not reflect true secularism; instead, they create divisions between Hindus and minorities, making Hindus feel alienated. This is far from the vision India's founders had for the nation.

Dr Ambedkar's Views on Secularism

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

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

Dr Ambedkar once said, "What should be the state's

policy? The policy of the state should be neutral in the matter of religion. The state should not impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people. This is the essence of secularism."

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

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

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

Constitutional Provisions

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

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

Article 30 gives minorities the right to establish and administer their own educational institutions.

Article 25 provides religious freedom to all, though in practice, it has sometimes been interpreted in ways that afford certain privileges to minorities, such as personal laws for Muslims and Christians.

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

Adding 'Secular' to the Preamble

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

Ancient India's Secular Ethos

A well-known mantra in Hindu rituals is "Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavantu" (Let all people be prosperous). The *Rig Veda* states, "Let noble thoughts come from everywhere," and also quotes "Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava" (treat all faiths equally). Ancient Indian rulers supported Christianity and Islam when they arrived in India, allowing them to preach their beliefs. Buddhism and Jainism originated in India, reflecting a longstanding tradition of religious tolerance. The distortions we see today began only after the invasions of the British and Mughals. Secularism and tolerance are part of the very fabric of Indian society.

Challenges in the Present Day

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

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

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

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

Over the years, this has led to growing resentment among the majority population, further fuelling division. Political parties exploit this situation in the name of

secularism to advance their vote-bank politics.

The Way Forward

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1.4.14)

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

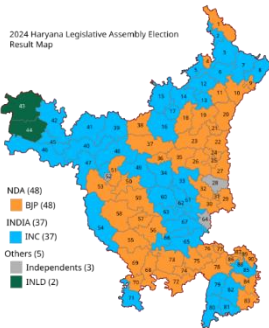
***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing
Editor (October 2024)***

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

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

A Review of Haryana Elections

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



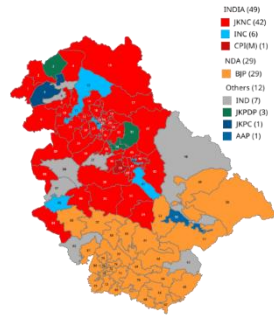
incumbency sentiment. However, the BJP's strategic adjustments changed the electoral tide in its favour.

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

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

A Review of Jammu & Kashmir Elections

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



Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Election 2024

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

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

Lessons Learnt by Political Parties

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

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

Second, the importance of internal unity cannot be underestimated. Congress's internal divisions in both Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir weakened its ability to present a strong, cohesive front. This lack of unity not only diminished the party's effectiveness but also created opportunities for the BJP to consolidate its support.

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

must remain responsive to regional dynamics and provide local leadership that resonates with voters.

Impact of this Result on Maharashtra and Jharkhand

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

In Jharkhand, where local leadership and community outreach are crucial, both the Congress and BJP will need to adapt their strategies. Congress, in particular, will need to broaden its appeal and ensure that it addresses local issues effectively, avoiding the complacency that led to its downfall in Haryana.

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

Conclusion

The 2024 Assembly elections in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir have provided critical insights for India's political parties. For the Congress, these elections were a reminder of the dangers of over-reliance on traditional leadership and support bases. For the BJP, they

underscored the importance of broadening appeal and the challenges of gaining ground in sensitive regions. As the parties look ahead to elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, these lessons will likely to guide their campaigns. The results from Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir suggest that success will require careful attention to regional dynamics, effective leadership, and a broad-based approach to voter outreach.

PODCAST



Please listen to the AI generated Podcast conversation on this Editorial.

Courtesy: NotebookLM of Google.

Please watch this link.

<https://youtu.be/ALgEZIVyUb8?si=cHk7co8uUpXiRaIb>

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

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor (November 2024)

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



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

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

involves creating an environment that nurtures and develops capable women leaders.

The Challenge of Gender Inequality in Politics

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

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

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

The Women Reservation Act is a positive move. By reserving one-third of the seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies by 2029, it acknowledges the historical exclusion of women from political decision-making. This law has the potential to reshape India's political landscape, giving women a greater voice in shaping policies that affect their lives and the future of the country.

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

The Need for More Women Political Aspirants

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

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

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

but also help women develop their own voices and perspectives.

Breaking Barriers: Empowering Women to Lead

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

The media also plays an important role in shaping public opinion about women in politics. Too often, women in politics are portrayed based on their appearance or family background rather than their abilities and achievements. The media must emphasise women's competencies and contributions to society, not just their gender.

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

Training the Next Generation of Women Leaders

Political parties, schools, universities, and civil society organisations must work together to identify and train

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

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

It is crucial to involve women in local governance at the grassroots level. Elections to panchayats, municipal councils, and State Legislative Assemblies provide opportunities for women to gain experience and build political credibility. These roles serve as stepping stones to higher positions and offer a platform for women to better understand their communities' needs.

Conclusion: A Vision for the Future

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

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

The Ruckus in Parliament: A National Shame

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor (December 2024)

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

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

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

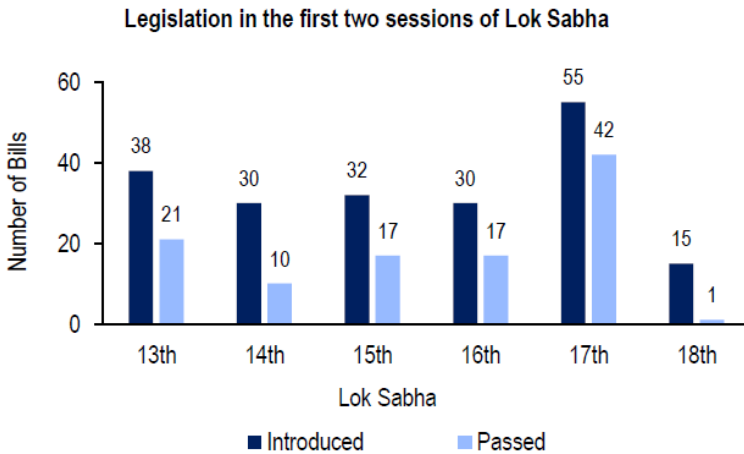
Parliament functioned for about half of its scheduled time

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

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

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

While one notable achievement was the extensive discussion on the Constitution (16 hours in Lok Sabha and 17 hours in Rajya Sabha), key parliamentary tools like Half-an-Hour Discussions, Private Members’ Bills, and Question Hours were not utilised effectively. Instead, repeated disruptions, primarily by the opposition demanding a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Adani issue and later protesting remarks by the Home Minister Amit Shah about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, dominated the session.



Note: This excludes Finance and Appropriation Bills.

For civil society, it appeared as though opposition leaders, particularly Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were not serious about the sanctity of parliamentary proceedings. Their approach often

seemed more reminiscent of college-level antics than mature statesmanship. Disturbingly, there were physical altercations at the entrance of the House, culminating in an FIR against Rahul Gandhi for allegedly assaulting a senior BJP member. Concurrently, the BJP highlighted alleged connections between the Gandhi family and George Soros, further fuelling tensions. The opposition also filed a no-confidence motion against the Rajya Sabha Chairman, an unprecedented move in independent India's history.

A Failure of Leadership and Vision

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

The opposition's campaign against Amit Shah's remarks on Dr Ambedkar has inadvertently backfired. Shah's speech highlighted how Congress historically sidelined Dr Ambedkar, prompting widespread public interest in the lesser-known aspects of his struggles. Articles have surfaced detailing the Congress's treatment of Dr Ambedkar, including his defeat in the first general elections, the humiliation he faced during his lifetime, and the indifference shown to his family after his demise.

It is worth noting that Dr Ambedkar was eventually elected to the Rajya Sabha with the support of Jan Sangh, BJP's predecessor, countering Congress's efforts to thwart him.

Shared Accountability for Parliamentary Functioning

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

A Call for Collaborative Governance

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

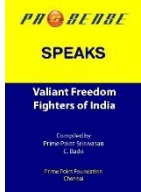
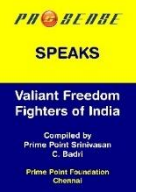
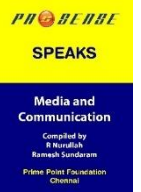
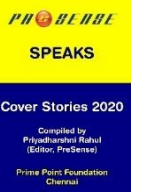
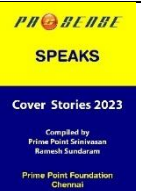
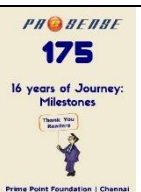
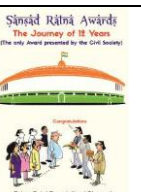
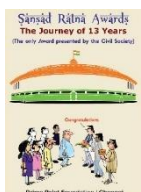
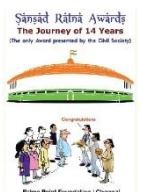
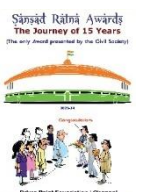
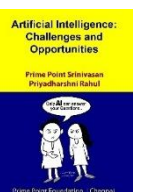
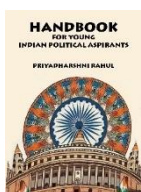
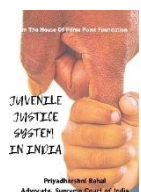
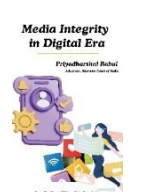
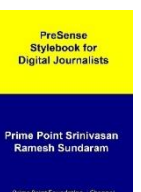
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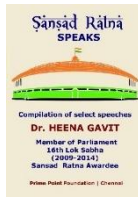
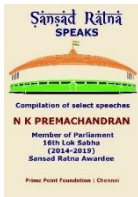
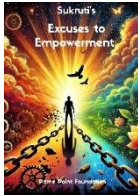


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