



SPEAKS

Politics and Governance

**Compiled by
Priyadharshni Rahul**

**Prime Point Foundation
Chennai**

PreSense Speaks | Politics and Governance

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Introduction

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

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



10, Rajaji Marg
New Delhi-110011

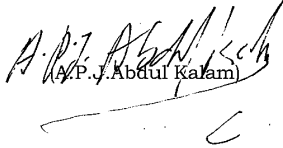
FOREWORD

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

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

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

28th May 2015


A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Publisher's Note

The eMagazine PreSense which was started in March 2006 on the suggestions of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam for positive journalism has reached the 200 editions as at Oct 2023. This digital only eMagazine is passionately run by a group of eminent volunteers without any commercial motive and without accepting any advertisements.

Looking back, we have published high quality articles on various subjects, including current affairs in every issue. Earlier, we have published Digest of articles after 100, 110, 130, 150 and 175th editions. We had the great honour of getting the Foreword from Dr Abdul Kalam himself for the first Digest published at the end of 100th edition.

We have been publishing compilation of articles published earlier under various eBooks titled Indian Heritage, Communication and Media, Politics and Governance, Science and Technology, etc. We have also started a PreSense Speaks series to publish such compiled articles. In September 2021, we published the compilation of select articles under 'Politics and Governance'. We are happy to publish the updated version of various articles published by us earlier under the title 'Politics and Governance'. This book will be very useful for all political aspirants, politicians and students and teachers of politics.

I am thankful to Priyadharshni Rahul (Editor), who passionately spent lot of time in compiling the select articles published in the past editions.

K. Srinivasan
Publisher and Managing Editor
PreSense
26th October 2023

About the Compiler



G. Priyadharshni (a) Priyadharshni Rahul, Advocate practicing at the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. As a political science graduate, she has rich experience in media and corporate houses.

She has shown exemplary leadership skills as a student and has led the Republic Day parade of NCC in 2005 in Delhi. She was deputed as the Youth Ambassador of India to the United Kingdom by the Ministry of Defence, during her cadet days.

She is presently the Trustee Secretary of Prime Point Foundation, Chairman of Sansad Ratna Awards Committee and Founder President of Next Gen Political Leaders. She is also the Editor of the eMagazine PreSense.

She is the panel Lawyer for various organisations, including REPCO Bank functioning directly under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt of India. She had addressed Women Ambassadors across the globe on the theme 'Empowering Talk on Women' at an event in Kuwait in 2023.

She is a professional motivational speaker. She has addressed several teachers and students on the national interest, including the Annual Seminar 2023 organised by DLF Foundation. She was invited as an expert speaker during the online course organized by IIT Madras on the "Indian Parliamentary System". She has also moderated several panel discussions online and offline on the topics of national interest.

She is the recipient of several awards, including 'The Dr Abdul Kalam Award of Excellence for Nation Building' in 2020 and 'The Visionary of the Year Award' by the Public Relations Council of India in 2021. She can be reached at priya@primepointfoundation.org

Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones

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

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

Apr 2012	Ezine resumed in a new format of contents. The tag line changed from 'Communicate the Communication' to 'Spreading Positive Vibrations'.
Apr 2013	Tamil Nadu Governor 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.

PreSense Speaks | Politics and Governance

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.
Sep 2021	Fifth edition of Digest PreSense175 in 6 volumes released.
Aug 2022	Part I one of the compilation of articles on "Freedom Fighters of India" released
Aug 2023	Part II one of the compilation of articles on "Freedom Fighters of India" released marking the 30 th publication of Prime Point Foundation
Oct 2023	Launch of 200 th edition. Launch of PreSense stylebook for Digital Journalists and other two e Books, Digest of articles published earlier.

The Journey Continues.....

Editorial Board – October 2023

Publisher and Managing Editor

K. Srinivasan (Prime Point Srinivasan), Digital Journalist

Editor in Chief

Ramesh Sundaram, Senior Journalist, Formerly The Hindu

Editor

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

Consulting Editors

C. Badri, Former General Manager, Canara Bank and Indian
Overseas Bank

R Nurullah, Senior Journalist

Sakthi Prasanna, Senior Communication professional

Cartoon Editor

Triambak Sharma, Editor, Cartoon Watch, Raipur

Associate Editors

Dipti Kumar, Senior Digital Journalist, USA

Suparna Gangal, International Video Journalist

Download all our publications free from the link
<https://www.primepointfoundation.in/p/publication.html>

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



Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives

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

In the past 24 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication, and digital journalism.

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

PreSense: The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till Oct 2023,, the Foundation has published 200 editions. This is a digital-only magazine. Digests, containing select articles upto 150 editions of the eMagazine, have so far been



published. Dr Abdul Kalam has written the foreword for the Digest of articles upto 100 editions. PreSense publishes the cartoon character Prince, which was launched by Dr Abdul Kalam in 2008. PreSense has published a Digest in 8 volumes of select articles published up to 175 editions in the month of September 2021. In addition, various compilation of articles have been released under the 'PreSense Speaks' series.

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 2023, the Foundation has conducted 13 editions and presented 106 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner upto the 9th Edition. 10th Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11, 12 and 13th editions were held at New Delhi.



Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) is an off-shoot of Sansad Ratna Awards. This is a registered NGO operating since 2018.



NGPL has organised several workshops online and offline, for young political leaders and aspirants. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and retired constitutional authorities have participated and shared their views. NGPL will shortly be instituting Awards for young promising politicians.

Education Loan Task Force (ELTF) was started in 2010 to create awareness about education loans, among students and parents. More than 30,000 queries have been responded to, through email, and more than



5000 serious complaints have been taken up with the top management of the banks concerned, for redressal. Many policy issues have been taken up by Sansad Ratna Awardee MPs, in the Parliament for solution. ELTF does not facilitate loans.

Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI): DiJAI is an independent NGO founded in 2017 to create awareness about digital journalism and its implications, among the public and particularly among the journalists. DiJAI conducts several online and offline workshops and seminars, with panels of domain experts.

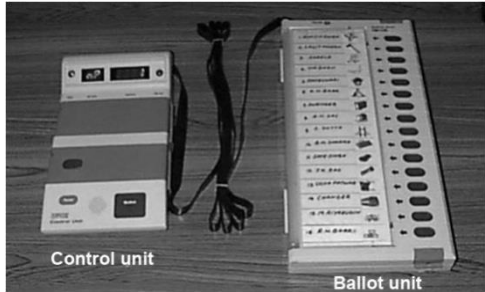


Politics and Governance

Snippets about Indian Elections

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor (Feb 2014)

Electronic Voting Machines (EVM): Nearly 11 lakh Electronic Voting Machines are used in the General Elections, covering 8.5 lakh polling stations. EVMs were devised and designed by the Election Commission in collaboration with two Public Sector Undertakings viz., Bharat Electronics Ltd., Bangalore and Electronic Corporation of India Ltd., Hyderabad. Every machine can support 64 candidates and record 3840 votes. Since every polling station in India has a maximum of 1500 voters, one EVM is sufficient for every station. EVMs manufactured in 1989-90, were used on an experimental basis for the first time in 16 Assembly Constituencies in the States of Madhya Pradesh (5), Rajasthan (5) and NCT of Delhi (6), in the General Elections to the respective Legislative Assemblies held in November, 1998.



Indelible Ink or Voter's Ink: This special ink is manufactured by Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited, a State owned public sector company in Karnataka. This company supplies the indelible ink to several other countries too. This ink dries in 40 seconds and cannot be removed for 20 days. This prevents fake voting. A 10-ml bottle can be used for 300 voters. This company supplied 2 million bottles in the 2009 General Elections.

First Chief Election Commissioner of India

Shri Sukumar Sen, a Civil Servant from Bengal was the first Chief Election Commissioner of India. He prepared the first electoral rolls of the country and developed the systems. The first General

Election was held between 25 October 1951 and 21 February 1952. During this first election, a different ballot box was used for each candidate, rather than using the ballot paper! Different coloured boxes represented different parties. Later, ballot papers were introduced with the candidate's name and symbol. In 2004, EVMs were used in all the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies.



1033 candidates contested in the Modakurichi assembly constituency in Tamil Nadu in 1996. The ballot paper was in the form of a booklet!

Nation's 5 biggest and 5 smallest constituencies according to area:

Biggest constituencies:

Barmer (Rajasthan) :
71601.24 sq-km
Ladakh (J&K) : 173266.37 sq-km
Arunachal (East) (AP):
39749.64 sq-km
Kuchh (Gujarat) : 41644.55 sq-km
Arunachal(West) AP:
40572.29 sq-km

Smallest constituencies:

Mumbai South: 13.73 sq-km
Mumbai South-central: 18.31 sq-km
Delhi sadar: 28.09 sq-km
Chandni chowk (Delhi): 10.59 sq-km
Kolkata north west 13.23 sq-km

Case Study – Political Intolerance

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor (Dec 2008)

Ananda Vikatan, a leading Tamil weekly published a cartoon on the cover page of its issue dated 29th March 1987. (Picture left).



In the cartoon, a member from the audience asks another, "Which is the MLA and which is the Minister". The other person replies, "The person who looks like a pickpocket is the MLA and the person who looks like a dacoit is the Minister"

When the issue was released, the Tamil Nadu Assembly was in session. One member raised the issue of this cartoon as 'breach of privilege'. The Speaker of the Assembly demanded an apology from the editor.

In the next issue, the Mr S Balasubramanian, Editor of the weekly, wrote an editorial saying, "This cartoon is about the politicians who come to power using democracy and then betraying the trust of the people. This cartoon can apply to any country".

Not satisfied with the response by the Editor, the Assembly passed a resolution imposing a three month imprisonment to Mr Balasubramanian, Editor. The Editor was arrested. Immediately, the entire media in India and world



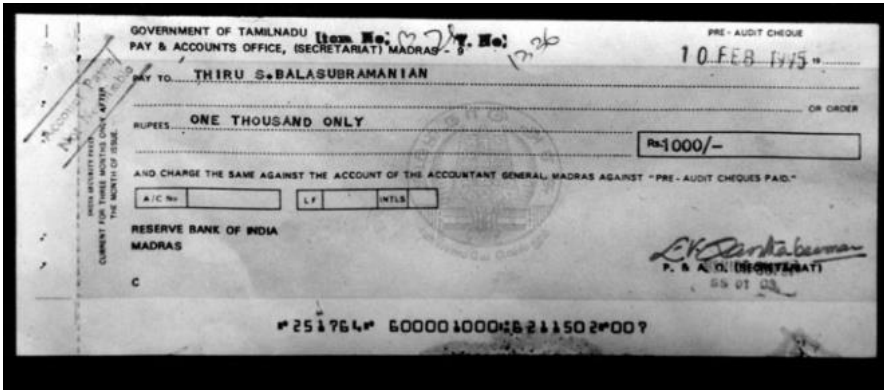
over objected to this arrest, as it was considered interference in the freedom of press. Even BBC carried a strong message.

Since the issue was taken up by the global media, the speaker ordered the release of the Editor after two days. The Editor came out of the prison a victor. (picture)



At that time, the Times of India carried a cartoon by R K Lakshman. In the cartoon, a politician tells the Editor, when he comes out of the prison, "Remember, no more funny cartoons like this about us, distorting our public image". (picture right)

After release from the prison, Mr Balasubramanian filed a 'defamation case' in the High Court, Chennai demanding a token compensation of Rs.1000/-. After seven years, in Sep 1994, the High Court ordered a compensation of Rs.1000/-, declaring the arrest as 'unconstitutional and null and void'. The Tamil Nadu Government paid the compensation by cheque (picture).



Ananda Vikatan displays an enlarged picture of this cheque in their office as a symbol of 'freedom of expression'. – Photo courtesy: Ananda Vikatan

The Parliament House

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor (Apr 2013)



The Parliament House is one of the most magnificent buildings in New Delhi and has one of the brightest clusters of architectural gems possessed by any country in the world. The building was designed by two famous architects – Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker – who were responsible for the planning and construction of New Delhi. The Parliament House is a massive circular edifice, 560 feet (170.69 metre) in diameter.

Its circumference is one-third of a mile and it covers an area of nearly six acres (24281.16 square metre). The open verandah on the first floor is fringed with a colonnade of 144 creamy sandstone columns, each 27 feet (8.23 metre) high.

The Chamber of the Lok Sabha is semi-circular in shape with a floor area of about 4800 square feet (446 square metre). The Chair of the Speaker is placed conspicuously at the centre of the diameter

connecting the two ends of the semi-circle. In the pit of the Chamber just below the Speaker's Chair is the table of the Secretary-General of the House. The Chamber has a seating accommodation for 550 members. In the wood work around the Lok Sabha Chamber, there are 35 gilded designs representing the various Provinces of Undivided India, the Dominions and certain other British Settlements.

Role of RSS in the General Elections 2014

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor (May 2014)

RSS Involvement in Elections



Dr Mohan Bhagwat, Chief of RSS

Recently, Ram Madhav, a senior leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) confirmed to the media, of their involvement in the recent Parliamentary Elections to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister. Generally, RSS does not compete in the elections and does not share power. Ram Madhav further

confirmed that this was the second time that RSS had wholeheartedly involved their cadre in the election strategies. Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed the active involvement of RSS in his victory. When Indira Gandhi imposed emergency in 1975, RSS was banned and more than 10,000 RSS workers were arrested. During the 1977 General Elections, RSS worked at the ground level to defeat Indira Gandhi. During that time, the Janata Party won 345 seats out of 543 seats and formed the Government. Though RSS is an apolitical organisation, they involved their cadre to restore democracy in 1977, Ram Madhav said.

After 26 years, RSS involved their cadre again to bring a change of Government, when the nation was facing large scale corruption, policy paralysis and lack of leadership. The Congress made public statements that the electoral fight was between Congress and RSS. Interestingly, NDA won 336 seats in the Lok Sabha. RSS is known to work from behind and without publicising their achievements, however significant they might be.

RSS – Background

RSS was founded by Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925 with the intention of promoting the concept of a united India and to promote indigenous ideology. They drew inspiration from social and spiritual leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Aurobindo. Their cadre was also active during the freedom movement.

RSS conducts a daily one-hour '*Shakha*' (training) of yoga, physical exercise and games for their members to develop their spirit of nationalism and patriotism. It is reported that around 5,500 full-time workers (*pracharaks*) manage the RSS. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L K Advani and Narendra Modi started their public service as *pracharaks*. It is also estimated that around 50,000 *shakhas* are held every day throughout India, with the participation of nearly 800,000 to 1,000,000 volunteer members, belonging to various castes and professions, without any discrimination of status.

The RSS network has more than 30 sister organisations, viz. *Sangh Parivar*, which includes the political wing BJP, India's largest trade union *Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh* (11 million membership), India's largest student union, *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (ABVP with 2,200,000 members), *Vidya Bharathi* (running 13,500 schools with 3 million students), *Bharatiya Kisan Sangh* (2 million members), *Muslim Rashtriya Manch* (1 million members), *Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram* and many others. RSS spreads the message of patriotism and nationalism in all the districts of the country through these organisations.

The current chief of RSS (*Sarsanghchalak*) Dr Mohanji Bhagwat is the 7th chief after the launch of RSS and he is the mentor for all the *Sangh Parivar* organisations.

Rescue Operations during Crises

The RSS cadre is known for its rescue operations during disaster situations like the Bhuj earthquake in 2001, Tsunami in 2004 and the Uttarakhand disaster in 2013.

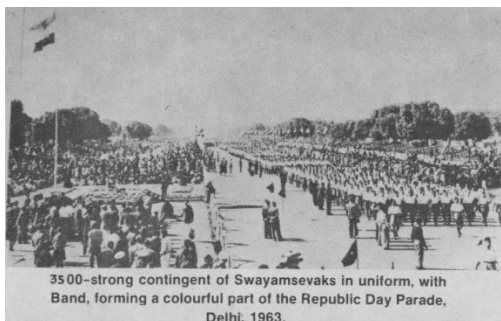
In 1962, the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had requested RSS to assist the Government in various assignments during the Sino-Indian War. As a gesture of goodwill, in 1963, Pandit Nehru invited RSS to participate in the Republic Day parade at New Delhi. Again in 1965, during the Indo-Pak war, RSS was requested by the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri to take care of the law and order and the traffic in Delhi, so that the policemen could be spared for war duties. Even during the 1971 Indo-Pak war, RSS cadre helped the authorities to maintain law and order in various states.

When Gandhiji visited a 1500-strong RSS camp at Wardha in 1934, he was pleasantly surprised to find that the *Swayamsevaks* were not even aware of the castes of one another, not to speak of any ideas of untouchability. The visit left such a deep impression on Gandhiji's that he referred to it even thirteen years later.

Controversy

The RSS, with its paramilitary style of functioning and its emphasis on discipline and nationalism, is sometimes seen by some as "an Indian version of fascism". When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, an ex-member of RSS, the Nehru Government banned RSS for the first time in February 1948.

The Justice Kapur Commission was set up to enquire into the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Justice Kapur observed that RSS was not responsible for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The Government lifted the ban in July 1949 with the condition that RSS should adopt a constitution.



RSS was again banned in 1975 during Emergency and the ban was lifted in 1977.

Confused Perception about RSS due to Lack of PR

RSS, as a matter of policy, does not display any reaction to bouquets or brickbats. Thus, even misleading and wrong information about RSS go undefended. This leads to confused perceptions about it. Even for writing this article, I had to struggle to get information as they do not have any professional Public Relations set-up to share their positive achievements and services to the nation.

Circumspection and Silence Go Together in Governance

By S Narendra, Former Information Advisor to Prime Minister of India (June 2009)

Effective communication can take place without sound or gestures; and, silence, used wisely, could be more eloquent. To quote Keats: "Unheard melodies are sweeter" (*'shruta gana abhirama, ashruta gana abhirama taram'*). While decision-making through loud sound-bytes has become the political norm, employing the art of silence as a communication weapon is rare and criticised. The



P V Narasimha Rao

former Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao used this weapon very effectively and received his share of criticism from the more vocal communicators.

Ever circumspect that he was, he cautioned against creating hype about the mere fact of his cabinet giving nod to any new proposal. His advice was that when the proposal got implemented, it would create its own communication.

Sometimes by not expressing any opinion on an item coming up before the cabinet and deferring the subject, Rao would signal a powerful message.

The finance ministry was keen to drastically cut most of the government subsidies, including the subsidy to food grains supplied through the ration shops. This was at a time when there were misgivings within the ruling party over liberalisation. There were demands to strengthen the social safety net for protecting the people affected by changes in the economic policy.

Every time the proposal to increase the price of food grains issued through ration shops came up before the cabinet, without a word

Rao would shift to the next agenda item. Through this stratagem, he avoided a political storm within and outside his government. Economic liberalisation was not a popular issue within his own party as well as a section of the private business. Without picking up a fight with them, he quietly allowed the loosening of bolts and nuts holding the weight of state control over economic activities. When these started bearing fruit, liberalisation won many votaries.

He preferred action to words. Here is an example: the minister in charge of power sector excitedly rushed to him with an announcement in 1994 that a Hong Kong-based tycoon offered to sign a MOU with India for generating 10,000 MW. Rao's suggestion to the minister was to sign the MOU but let the foreign tycoon make the announcement along with its details. The minister preferred the sound byte.

And nothing more was ever heard about this MOU. (Gestation time of power projects is long and people feel their impact over time. In the meanwhile, the short term pains to be endured by power consumers are many. Therefore, in Rao's view merely announcing an MOU was not enough. If a private party makes the relevant announcement, it would be held accountable rather than the government. The latter's announcement of MOU could be used for manipulating the company share market).

In 1996, almost at the end of its term, the government took an in-principle decision to buy Sukhoi fighter jets from Russia that would put the Indian air force on par with neighbours having American F-16 fighters. This was a significant decision taken on the election eve and many of his colleagues wanted the government to make an announcement to derive political mileage. Rao was not in favour, and security issue was not the only reason. The deal involved payment of an advance and other procedures, including approval of the deal by the successor government after the poll. Actual induction of these fighters was a long way off. He was prepared to forego the temporary political advantage in order to protect the deal. As and when these Sukhois took to the skies flying the Indian tri-colour, the message was very clear.

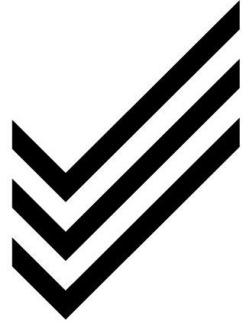
The scamster, Harshad Mehta had announced through a press conference that he had delivered a sum of one crore rupees in a suit case to Rao at his high security official residence. The media went berserk. Party colleagues, sycophants and civil servants rushed to advise him to issue an immediate denial. Rao's reaction: "Don't hustle me. A crook has made the allegation. Onus of proof is on him'. More than 24 hours elapsed before releasing an official denial.

In contrast to this, in the Bofors' Howitzer gun controversy, the government came out with an immediate denial barely a few hours after the Swedish radio alleged that there was a payoff to middlemen contravening the contact terms. Buying time through silence for getting facts and assuring people that the government was concerned and would get to the bottom of the developing scandal could have saved it the ensuing embarrassment. Circumspection and silence mix like salt and pepper to make any communication more palatable and prevent the possibility of one having to eat one's own words.

Milestones of 'Right To Education Act'

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor (July 2010)

education for all



Indian Constitution –Article 45 states:

"The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years "

Amendments

Following initiatives by the Supreme Court of India during the 1990s the Ninety-third amendment bill suggested three separate amendments to the Indian constitution:

The constitution of India was amended to include a new article, 21A, which read:

"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

Article 45 was proposed to be substituted by the article which read:

“Provision for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years: The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.”

Another article, 51A, was to additionally have the clause:

“...a parent or guardian [shall] provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.”

The bill was passed unanimously in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in 2001 and 2002. After the approval by the President of India, it became the 86th amendment. Since then those between the age of 6–14 have a fundamental right to education.

Passage of Bill and implementation

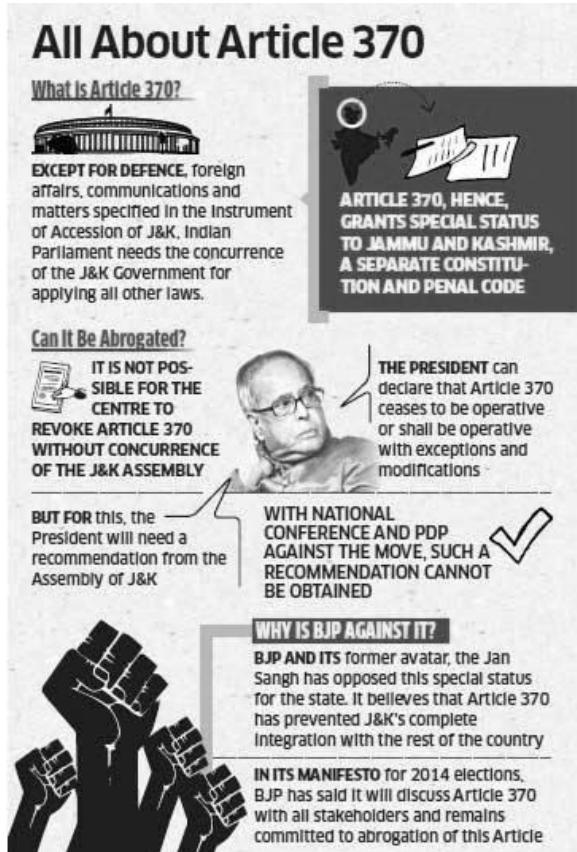
A draft Education Bill was released in 2005. It received opposition, as it contained a mandatory provision of 25% reservation for disadvantaged children in private schools. Both the Houses passed this Bill in July and August 2009 and President approved this bill in Sep 2009. This historic law came into effect on 1st April 2010 with a speech by the Prime Minister of India.

The Ado about Article 370

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (May 2014)

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Jitendra Singh stirred up a controversy recently by talking about initiating a debate on Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which grants special status to the northernmost state of Jammu and Kashmir. This seemingly off-the-cuff comment has fuelled a debate on the sensitive subject, both in the media and on political platforms.

It may be recalled that when the Bharatiya Janata Party held its rally in Jammu during December 2013, its then prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, had called for a debate on Article 370.



Graphics courtesy: Economic Times

Reasons for Article 370

It is pertinent to know the genesis of, and understand the reason for Article 370. When India and Pakistan gained their national independence on August 15 and 14, 1947 respectively, Jammu & Kashmir chose to remain independent. Maharaja Hari Singh, the then ruler of Jammu & Kashmir, signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan. India refused to sign any such agreement. In October, 1947, Pakistani Muslim tribes attacked the Maharaja and the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

To save his state from invasion, the Maharaja chose to accede Jammu & Kashmir to India, so that India could help in defending him. It was in the pursuance of those commitments that Article 370 was incorporated under Part XXI of the Constitution of India, which deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions". Article 370 was worked out in late 1947 between Sheikh Abdullah, who had by then been appointed the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir by Maharaja Hari Singh, and the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. Interestingly, Sheikh Abdullah had then argued that Article 370 should not be placed under 'temporary' provisions of the Constitution. He wanted 'iron-clad autonomy' for the state, which Centre did not comply with.

Dr Ambedkar opposed this Article 370 and refused to draft the article

It is interesting to note that Dr Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution, refused to draft this Article 370 and it was drafted by Mr Gopalaswami Iyengar a State Minister. Dr Ambedkar is reported to have told Sheikh Abdullah, *"You wish India should protect your borders, she should build roads in your area, she should supply you food grains, and Kashmir should get equal status as India. But the Government of India should have only limited powers and the Indian people should have no rights in Kashmir. To give consent to this proposal, would be a treacherous thing against the interests of India and I, as the Law Minister of India, will never do it "* (Ref: wikipedia.org)

Implications of Article 370 on India and J&K

Article 370 was intended to provide space, in matters of governance, to the people of a state who felt deeply vulnerable about their identity and insecure about their future. The state of Jammu & Kashmir was thus accorded special autonomous status. All the provisions of the Constitution which are applicable to other states are not applicable to Jammu & Kashmir.

For example, till 1965, Jammu & Kashmir had a *Sadr-e-Riyasat* for Governor and a Prime Minister in place of Chief Minister. Besides, except for defence, foreign affairs, finance and communications, the Parliament needs the State Government's concurrence for applying all other laws. Thus the state's residents live under a separate set of laws, including those related to citizenship, ownership of property, and fundamental rights, as compared to other Indians. Indian citizens from other states cannot purchase land or property in Jammu & Kashmir.

Under Article 370, the Centre has no power to declare financial emergency under Article 360 in the state. It can declare emergency in the state only in case of war or external aggression. The Union Government can therefore not declare emergency on grounds of internal disturbance or imminent danger unless it is made at the request or with the concurrence of the State Government.

Article 370 was included in the Constitution on a temporary provision and should have been gradually abrogated. This has not happened in the past sixty years. One asks why a state of the Indian Union should have a special status. It conveys a wrong signal not only to the resident Kashmiris but also to the separatists, to Pakistan and indeed to the international community that Jammu & Kashmir is yet to become an integral part of India. One is convinced that Article 370 has done little to integrate the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India.

Is it possible to revoke Article 370?

Can Article 370 be revoked unilaterally? Clause 3 of Article 370 states that the President of India may, by public notification,

declare that this Article shall cease to be operative, but only on the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State. In other words, Article 370 can be revoked only if the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir is convened and is willing to recommend its revocation.

The Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution to change this provision. But this could be subject to a judicial review which may find that this clause is a basic feature of the relationship between the State and the Centre, and hence not for review by it.

As one of the most debated and discussed articles of the Constitution, Modi's suggestion of a debate, followed by Jitender Singh's reiteration, has brought the issue of this provision in the limelight once again.

To read full text of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, please visit

http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/documents/jk_art370.html

The Economic Makeover of India – 1991 Economic Liberalisation Policy

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (July 2016)

July 24, 1991 is a landmark date in the history of the Indian economy. India instituted a series of economic reforms known as the Economic Liberalisation Policy of 1991. This happened at a time when India was at the brink of economic collapse and a severe balance of payments (payments for export and import of goods, services and capital) crisis. The country was unable to pay off essential imports, and had to borrow heavily from external sources to finance the resulting deficits. Inflation was rampant.

There were several other factors that contributed to this unwelcome state, tracing down from the early post-independence era. India drove a centralised economic planning model (inspired by the Soviet Union), in place of distributing controls.

A natural outcome of this policy was extensive bureaucracy, red tape, unnecessary regulations and trade barriers. Although these socialist reform measures were meant to alleviate poverty, the opposite happened. India faced food shortages and mass starvation; farmers struggled to meet the agricultural production needs and industrialists suffered from the grip of the *License Raj* (Government control). The state intervened in industrialisation, businesses, labour sectors and the financial markets, leading to a huge public sector. Since independence, India had only been able to maintain a growth rate of 3-3.5%; the capital growth rate was even worse, at around 1.3%. It compared poorly even among some of the other developing countries with similar independence timelines.

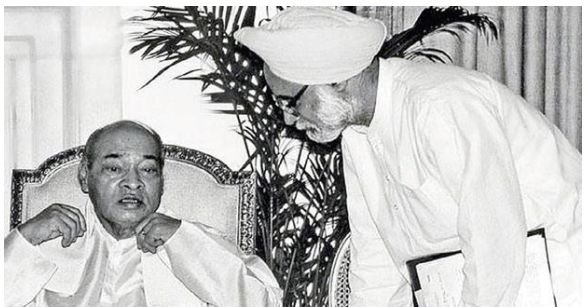
The wars of 1962, 1965 and 1971 drove up the defence spending, causing further strain to the economy. India also relied on import for some essentials as oil. India dealt with the deficit in the worst possible way - borrowing from external sources to finance the deficit. During 1980-1985, half of India's external financing needs

were met with outside assistance. External debt grew to as much as 38.7% of the GDP in 1991-1992, culminating in the Balance of Payments crisis. The then Prime Minister had to pawn India's gold as collateral for IMF (International Monetary Fund) bailouts.

With just three weeks left to completely depleting the last loan from IMF, Narasimha Rao took over as India's Prime Minister and announced India's Economic Liberalisation Policy. He appointed Dr Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister. The goal of his visionary policy was to remove unnecessary bureaucratic controls, take measures to integrate India with the world economy, remove restrictions on foreign investments and crack down on public sector enterprises that yielded very low returns. The Indian Rupee was devalued. Industrial licensing was abolished. The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act (that protected businesses from monopolies) was reformed, enabling competitive and productive industries. All industries (barring two) were opened to the private sector. There was gradual reduction of import duties, encouraging foreign investments to flow in. More clearance was given to capital goods. Taxes (income and corporate taxes) were lowered.

How much has India changed as fallout of the 'makeover' of 1991? India's GDP which was Rs.10.8 lakh crore (10.8 trillion) in 1991 quadrupled by 2011 with GDP at Rs.48.8 lakh crore (48.8 trillion); its forex reserves rose from USD5.8 billion in 1991 to USD274 billion in 2011. India boasts of exports' surge from USD 18 billion in 1991 to USD 245 billion in 2011.

It is pertinent to mention here that as per the principle of economics, when a particular sector performs disproportionately higher than the



Architects of 1991 Economic Liberalisation Policy: P V Narasimha Rao (Prime Minister) and Dr Manmohan Singh (Finance Minister) in 1994

average growth rate, economic wealth starts concentrating in that sector. In the case of India, it is the service sector. Within this sector, the highest growth is marked by sectors such as financial services and real estate services, etc. which are least employment elastic. Consequently, growth in the past decade in India was limited to upscale areas of the country as almost the entire service industry operates from these areas. This accelerated migration to urban areas, creating an array of social problems associated with urbanisation. It also changed the pattern and lifestyles of the Indian society. Now we have the ultra-modern and the ultra-primitive societies co-existing and conflicting with each other.

What we have learnt from the past 25 years is that unless we have a crisis, we might not see big bang reforms. We may have incremental reforms that are politically palatable. The present Prime Minister appears to be focusing on fixing some of the architecture that is required for long-term positive change – making government accountable, clamping down on corruption and stimulating entrepreneurship and, hopefully, developing the much-needed infrastructure.

Time will tell how and where India will be propelled towards, in the next 25 years under the present and future legacy. The people of India are hopeful that it would be towards a more balanced and healthier economy that ultimately benefits the common man on the streets of India and the farmers in the fields of its rural landscape. For this, there needs to be inclusive participation of both the government and the entrepreneur, especially in the implementation of the roadmap towards India's development and progress.

US Government Shutdown – What It Means?

By TN Ashok, Consulting Editor (Jan 2018)

The expression “When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold” was probably coined as an adage during the cold war days (beginning in the '60s) to imply that if the US foreign policy or its economy or its international trade took a tail spin, it would impact the world globally, since America has dominated foreign policy and world trade for decades.

So, when the US shutdown happened in mid-January this year (2018), the world shuddered as it did during the Lehman Brothers' collapse that triggered the global recession. But thankfully, it has remained an internal situation.

What is US Shutdown?

First, let us understand what the US shutdown is, and what it means domestically to that country. To understand it better, let us first understand the policy closer home in India. Here, when a ruling party government fails to pass a money bill, particularly the budget, to allocate money to different sectors and to appropriate salaries to government employees in the lower house of the Parliament, the government falls and the election process is set in motion for a new government to come out with a new budget. In the interim, the caretaker government adopts a 'Vote on Account' with the support of the opposition, to draw monies from the treasury to pay out. India follows the British model of bicameral legislature and legislative proceedings, which have enough built-in safeguards.

USA follows a presidential form of government where there is the Congress and the Senate, with the President as the final authority. But his authority can be questioned and at times, he can be impeached by the Congress.

A government shutdown occurs in USA when the Congress fails to pass and/or the President fails to sign the appropriation bill – the

legislation funding government and agencies. In such a case, interpretation of the Anti-Deficiency Act requires that the federal government begin a "shutdown" of the affected activities, involving the furlough (*i.e. placing an employee in a temporary non-duty, non-pay status, in this case because of lack of funds*) of non-essential personnel, and curtailment of agency activities and services.

In the Past

Since 1976, when the current budget and appropriations process was enacted, there has been 19 gaps in budget funding, eight of which led to federal employees being furloughed. Prior to 1990, funding gaps did not always lead to government shutdowns, but since 1990, the practice has been to shut down the government for all funding gaps. Shutdowns have also occurred at the state/territorial and local levels of government.

Under President Ronald Reagan's administration, there were three funding gaps leading to shutdowns lasting one day or less. A funding gap in 1990 during the George H W Bush administration caused a weekend shutdown. During the Bill Clinton administration, there were two full government shutdowns leading to furloughs and significant disruption, during 1995 and 1996, lasting 5 and 21 days respectively. During the Barack Obama administration, a government shutdown occurred during October 1–16, 2013. The Republicans' desire to delay or defund the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, more popularly known as Obamacare, brought out by then Democrat President Obama, led to the shutdown.

Why the Present Crisis?

Therefore, the recent US government shutdown under President Donald Trump during January 20-23, 2018, was not a new phenomenon (though it was the first since October 2013). It is just history repeating itself. Differences between the Democrats and the Trump-led Republican regime over the passage of an amended Immigration Bill led to a tussle between the two parties with the

Democrats adopting filibustering action, blocking the passage of the Bill and preventing the House from adopting the appropriation bills to sanction money to government departments.

How US Senate voted for closure (60 votes needed for pass) on 18th Jan 2018

Party	Voted for	Voted against	Not voted
Republican (51)	45	5	1
Democratic (47)	5	42	
Independent (2)		2	
Total (100)	50	49	1

Essential services are normally exempted, so they continue in service, but they would not be paid until the shutdown ends. Essential services would include, for example, the armed service personnel as well as the federal government employees, some of whom would still be required to report to work but would not be paid until the government reopens.

Government shutdowns have the effect of disruption to government services and increased cost to the government due to lost labour. During the 2013 shutdown, Standard & Poor, the financial rating agency, estimated that that the shutdown had "to date taken \$24 billion out of the economy," and "shaved at least 0.6 percent off annualized fourth-quarter 2013 GDP growth." The shutdown in October 2013 lasted more than two weeks and more than 800,000 federal employees were furloughed. There is no official tally on how many were off work this time.

Will It Affect India?

Does or did the American shutdown affect India in any way? Here is the take. Indian shipments to the U.S. are likely to get affected following the shutdown of that country's Federal Government, exporters claimed. "The shutdown of the U.S. Federal Government is certainly bad news for the Indian exporters since the American economy is among the largest destinations for (India's) exports,"

Ravi P Sehgal, chairman, EEPC India — the apex body for Indian engineering exporters, was quoted in the media as saying.

“For the (India’s) engineering sector, the U.S. is the number one export destination, giving a robust growth in the current financial year. During the April-December period of the current fiscal, (India’s) engineering exports to the U.S. grew by over 50% to \$7.5 billion,” Sehgal said in a statement. With as many as 60,000 employees of the U.S. Commerce and Transportation Departments being furloughed, port operations as also the clearing (of shipments) would be hit, he said.

Global Reaction

While the shutdown at the time of writing was almost resolved, the Republican administration was bracing itself for another potential shutdown in February 2018 as Democrats are in no mood to allow the Trump-led administration to conduct government business unless their demands are conceded to. Of particular concern for the Democrats over the Immigration Bill, is the fate of 700,000 children who had migrated to USA over the last decade, and Republicans worry of legalising illegal entry and incurring the wrath of the voters.

The American shutdown did not impact global business as feared but drew criticism from some European and Asian countries such as Britain, France and China. Even Mexican newspapers criticised the shutdown as an inherent defect in American style of governance. The French media criticised it. China was the first to react, calling the American political system flawed.

Anyway, the latest American shutdown has drawn more global attention than ever before because of antipathy from most countries to President Donald Trump Administration’s ‘America First’ Policy construed as an action of protectionism. The policy was criticised by Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi recently at the WEF (World Economic Forum) meet at Davos in Switzerland. China too supported India in the criticism. Modi said that protectionism in a global village was as bad as terrorism.

Ethics in Politics – Role Model in Canada

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (March 2018)



The Parliament of Canada

When we talk about politics, the clichés that most often go with the word, are 'dirty' and 'corrupt'. Politics and politicians as well as the Government most often mean power, where "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". And this is a universal impression.

Against this background, when the PreSense Editorial Team met up with Mr Ranjith Narayanasamy, a political volunteer from Canada and discussed about the quality of politics in Canada, the information shared by him was enlightening. Ranjith is a registered Professional Engineer who has also been associated with several political campaigns in Canada over the past decade at federal, provincial and municipal levels. Ranjith shared about how Canadian politics is transparent and how Canadian politicians hold the highest level of dedicated service and integrity in their public life through its open and transparent political system. He

highlighted the following points that have facilitated the practice of integrity and high standards of morale in public servants of Canada:

- 1) A professional and non-partisan federal public civil service is an integral part of the Canadian democracy. Civil service is professionally run and is not just government appointments. The civil servants do not change with change of the government.
- 2) Civil servants follow a high legal and ethical standards. Over the past century, this practice has become ingrained in the Canadian political culture.
- 3) All expenses of the Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are in the public domain and under scrutiny all the time. If any expense is deemed inappropriate as public expense, the MP, the MLA or the minister is asked to reimburse those expenses to the public coffer.
- 4) The control/monitoring system followed in the Canadian political system to ensure that high standards of integrity and morale are followed is the *Open and Accountable Government*. It sets out core principles regarding the roles and the responsibilities of the ministers in Canada's system of responsible parliamentary government.
- 5) On the critical issue of ethical conduct, the ministers are expected to be thoroughly familiar with and adhere to the contents of the *Conflict of Interest Act*.
- 6) The Conflict of Interest Bill also provides for an annual declaration of the private interests of senators, Members of the House of Commons, their spouses and dependent children to an independent three-member Conflict of Interests Commission. Penalty for non-compliance ranges from fines to loss of the Member's or Senator's seat.

7) Canada has an independent Ethics Commissioner who can provide advice to the Members of Parliament and is also enabled to adjudicate alleged breaches of ethics.

8) The Canadian Elections Body which oversees all federal elections, is also empowered to receive information and impose penalties for breaches of conduct and transgressions that do not conform to the Elections Act.

9) The *Parliament of Canada Act* prohibits a member from receiving outside compensation for services rendered on any matter before the House, the Senate or their committees. Pursuant to that Act, a Member found guilty of such an offence is liable to a fine and is disqualified from being a Member of the House of Commons and from holding any office in the public service of Canada for five years after conviction for that offence. In addition, the *Criminal Code* provides for 14 years' imprisonment for a parliamentarian who accepts or attempts to obtain any form of valuable consideration for doing or omitting to do anything in his or her official capacity.



Ranjith Narayanasamy

10) The corruption issues are addressed by dedicated committees appointed for the purpose and the process is followed ethically.

11) The public has access to full disclosure on any public issue. The Freedom of Information Act is very powerful in Canada.

When asked if India could learn from Canada, and aspire for a corruption-free system, Ranjith believed that India could learn lessons from Canada, especially about an inclusive society, accommodating diversity with open arms. In Canada, every citizen is equally eligible for similar services irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or economic background. There is no queue-jumping or special privileges in its government system. Ranjith feels that the real key is to encourage the media to look for corruption.

The Indian public has to be educated to realise that corruption leads to poor decisions. Once corruption is seen as unacceptable by a majority of the voters, change becomes easier. If corruption is accepted as a “normal” way of doing business, it is hard to implement a major change. Incidentally, Ranjith observes that in Canada, most of the leaders are young and university-educated. All candidates seeking political office at any level of government have to understand the law and rules around election funding and personal integrity.

In conclusion, when one compares the political, social and legal provisions of India with Canada, one will find that India is equally well-equipped in its legislatures, norms, rules and penalties to deter corruption. If corruption persists in spite of it, the lacuna is in the lack of intent among its public and government servants. Proper education of the majority of its people is also critical so that they can understand the implication of the election system and governance, their impact on the masses, and their role and responsibility in making it work. Success in transforming India into a corruption-free country and society can happen only if there is an equally strong positive intent, implementation and practice of the standards and norms spelt out in the legislatures, laws and rules of the country.

Why is the Judiciary Under Criticism?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Oct 2018)

Some recent judgements delivered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has attracted unprecedented debates, not witnessed in the past. The social media is flooded with 'memes', teasing the judgements.



As per the 'Doctrine of Separation of Powers', the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary should maintain checks and balances, without overstepping into others' jurisdiction. People impose their faith on the judicial system as the saviour of last resort, when the other pillars of democracy fail to redress. That is the reason that people the world over, expect the judiciary to be beyond criticism.

A month ago, some judgements on nationally sensitive and important issues, were delivered by the Supreme Court. In the

last decades, it was only the mainline media that used to comment or review the judgements of the courts, that too with restraint. With the emergence of the social media, people are posting their reactions and comments about the judicial system and some of its rulings. This has increased the responsibility and prudence of the judicial system.

The recent judgement scrapping Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 377, decriminalising homosexuality, though justifiable in the eyes of law, has attracted immense criticism in the public domain. Another important judgement scrapping IPC 497 has led to a peculiar situation, where if a married man has an illicit relationship with a married woman, it is legal, whereas if he marries her, it becomes illegal.

The recent Sabarimala Judgement scrapping the centuries-old religious practice of disallowing women inside the temple, has attracted protests in many parts of the country, particularly in the South. Similarly, the judgement restricting the window for bursting crackers for festivity to two hours, between 8 pm and 10 pm on Diwali festival day, has created confusion and dissent. In the South, Diwali is celebrated in the early hours of the morning from 4 am. It would be difficult for the police authorities to take action against the 'offenders', in the light of the revised judgement. Questions are being asked whether the judiciary can and should interfere about the methods of celebration of religious festivals.

In the case of the scrapping of IPC 377, the Supreme Court might have delivered the judgement to protect the rights of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender). A majority of the public seems to feel that the Supreme Court is being influenced by media hype and the sensation aroused by a handful of activists promoting views and ideas from the western world.

People are also questioning the wisdom of the judges who deliver a series of judgements just before their retirement on superannuation, though they were pending for a long time. This appears to be the case with all the judges in India. Some senior advocates explain that it is due to the long pendency of litigations,

and the fact that the judge who has once heard and reserved the judgement, has to deliver the judgement. If it is not delivered, it leads to further dislocation. Therefore, long pendency of litigations seems to be the cause of the last-minute rush to clear cases.

In the case of retiring bank chairmen, powers for taking important decisions which have far-reaching consequences, are withdrawn from them three months before their retirement. A similar model can be considered for adoption by the courts in India. Judges could thus be prevented from delivering judgements which have far-reaching consequences, on the eve of their retirement. They should not be pressurised to prepare the judgements in the last leg of their term, to be delivered just before retirement.

Although the Supreme Court has clear guidelines about allocation of cases, it is understood that due to various reasons like long pendency of cases, and shortage of judges, such guidelines are not being implemented effectively. Recent media reports indicate that the new Chief Justice of India is viewing the issue of long pendency seriously and is taking steps to reduce last minute rush. He has advised all the judges across the country to avoid taking leave or availing the Leave Travel Concession (LTC) facility, or attending seminars during the working days, so that they can tackle the long list of pendency of cases in the courts.

It is strongly felt that courts should stay away from sensitive issues such as religious practices. In the case of *Jallikattu* (a bull-taming sports festival in Tamil Nadu), the Supreme Court faced a similar problem when it banned the sport, going against popular sentiments. Such judgements create law and order issues. The Supreme Court has the responsibility to ensure that the law and order situation is not threatened by their own judgements, and not expect just the State Government to ensure law and order in the fallout of the judgements.

Sabarimala is a cult by itself. The Supreme Court judgement has stirred an hornets' nest with political and communal ramifications. Many people in South India feel that the Supreme Court should not have intervened in the matter of the centuries old religious

practice, when many other more important and critical cases are pending for judgements. It was strongly opined that people who are familiar with the local socio-religious practices in Kerala, should have been consulted. This would have helped in avoiding the unwanted debate and apprehension in the minds of the public about the sensitive matter, leading to outburst of criticisms in the social media.

There is a feeling among the public that there should be 'judicial restraint' and not 'judicial over reach' under the guise of public interest litigation. Courts should examine the *locus standi* of the person or the association filing the litigation, especially if it has emotional and sentimental overtones. In this case of Sabarimala, the case was filed by an association of people, neither associated with nor devotees of the Sabarimala temple.

The temple is meant for worship by believers and those having faith in the deity. It cannot be treated as a tourist spot. All over India, every temple has its own worshipping methods and practices. Courts should refrain from admitting and passing judgements on cases involving traditional 'religious faith', whether such practices are legal or not.

16th Lok Sabha – At a Glance

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Feb 2019)

After completing the full term of five years, the 16th Lok Sabha concluded its final session on 13th February 2019. Although the media has carried a basic analysis of the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha the following morning, so far there has been no in-depth discussion about the performance of the Members. As the nation prepares for the 17th General Elections, it is pertinent at this juncture to analyse the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha vis-à-vis the earlier one, which was elected in 2014. PreSense attempts to bring out a quick review of the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha, in comparison to that of the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

Duties of Parliamentarians

- Enacting Laws
- Passing the Financial Budget
- Supervision of the Executive functions
- Representation of the issues of Constituency, State and Nation.

Tools Available in the Parliament

- Debates (Zero Hour, Rule No 377, Short duration discussion under Rule 193, calling attention motion, half an hour discussion, Financial business, debates during legislative business, private members bills, etc)
- Raising Questions
- Participation in Standing Committees

Uniqueness of 16th Lok Sabha

The 16th Lok Sabha has recorded some unique aspects during its tenure.

- Absolute majority by a single political party, after 1989;
- Online filing of notices by Members;

- Merger of Railway Budget with General Union Budget, after 91 years;
- Advancement of Budget presentation to 1st February, from 28th February;
- Passing of Budget proposals before the beginning of next financial year.

Productivity

Lok Sabha	Sittings	Actual working hours	Disruption	Productivity
14	332	1737	13%	87%
15	357	1342	39%	63%
16	331	1616	15%	85%

Data source: PRS Legislative Research / Lok Sabha site

- 16th Lok Sabha has shown improved productivity, compared to 15th Lok Sabha.

Members Participation

Parameter	14 Lok Sabha	15 Lok Sabha	16 Lok Sabha
Debates (D)	15324	18121	21196
Debates – Average per member	31	38	44
Private Members Bills (PMB)	309	372	1116
PMB – Average per member	0.6	0.8	2.3
Questions raised (QR)	89055	143635	142158
Questions – Average per member	179	300	292
Total Tally (D+PMB+QR)	104688	162126	164470
Total tally – Average per member	210	339	338

Average Attendance	70%	76%	80%
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Data source: PRS Legislative Research

- There is a marked improvement in the participation by members in Debates, Private Members Bills and Attendance.
- Debates include both initiated debates and associated debates in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha. The 16th Lok Sabha has shown a substantial increase in Associated Debates (Initiated Debates 21196 and Associated Debates 11166). We have taken only Initiated Debates for our analysis in this article)
- Ministers do not participate in debates, raise questions or introduce PMBs. They are excluded for calculating averages throughout this article.

Legislation

Standing Committee	Lok Sabha		
	14th	15th	16th
Bills introduced (Other than Finance and Appropriation Bills)	245	228	190
Bills referred to Standing Committee	147	157	39
Bills referred to JPC	1	0	5
Bills referred to RS Select Committee after passage by LS	0	4	8
Total Bills referred to Committee	148	161	52
Percentage of Bills referred	60%	71%	27%
<i>*Above Data does not include Finance and Appropriation Bills</i>			
<i>Bills which were referred again during the subsequent Lok Sabha period have been included in the list for the same Lok Sabha period in which they were originally introduced and referred to avoid double counting.</i>			
	14th	15th	16th
Bills Introduced and Passed			

Finance and Appropriation Bills Introduced	74	63	47
Other Govt. Bills Introduced	245	228	190
Total Bills Introduced	319	291	237
Other Govt. Bills Passed	173	116	133
Finance and Appropriation Bills Passed	74	63	47
Total Bills Passed	247	179	180
Total Bills Lapsed	39	68	46

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

- 46 Bills got lapsed in 16th Lok Sabha as against 39 and 68 Bills in 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.
- Fewer number of Bills (i.e. 27%) were referred to Standing Committees during the 16th Lok Sabha as against 60 and 71 percent Bills respectively, referred in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC) – Lok Sabha – 16 DRSCs

Lok Sabha	No. of Sittings	Bills referred	Reports presented
14			627
15	1362	67	662
16	1343	17	720

Data source: Lok Sabha site

- There are 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees in the Parliament (DRSCs). (16 relate to Lok Sabha and 8 relate to Rajya Sabha). Data for Rajya Sabha Committees is not available.
- Three important functions of DRSCs: (1) Discuss and report on policies (2) Scrutinise the budgetary proposals and (3) Scrutinise bills referred to the committees.
- During the 16th Lok Sabha, fewer number of bills were referred to DRSCs.

PreSense Speaks | Politics and Governance

Performance of Members – State-wise

State	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member
Maharashtra	45	14623	325	44	22222	505	48	28904	602
Kerala	19	5029	265	17	7694	452	21	10231	481
Tamil Nadu	29	5826	201	38	14713	387	38	18168	478
West Bengal	39	7449	191	43	7905	184	46	4996	109
National	498	104688	210	478	162128	339	486	164470	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.
- For 16th Lok Sabha, Initiated Debates only taken into account. Associated Debates excluded.
- Maharashtra and Kerala have consistently maintained their position as toppers amongst the States.
- Tamil Nadu has shown better participation in the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha as compared to the 14th Lok Sabha.

Performance of Members – Party-wise

Political Parties	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member
Shiv Sena	12	5328	444	11	7793	709	17	12476	734
NCP	9	1696	188	7	2733	399	7	4271	610
BJP	131	27637	211	119	42404	356	264	74916	284
Congress (INC)	126	25085	199	177	49616	280	50	15968	319
CPI(M)	42	6554	156	16	4788	299	9	4333	481
AIADMK	-	-	-	9	4587	510	37	18106	489
DMK	10	1471	147	18	4431	246	-	-	-
CPI	10	3558	356	4	2004	501	1	451	451
AITC	1	32	32	20	1348	67	38	3597	94
National	498	104688	210	478	162128	339	486	164470	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.

- For 16th Lok Sabha, initiated debates only taken into account. Associated debates excluded.
- Shiv Sena has been the topper consistently.
- CPI(M) has shown better performance under Debates.
- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.

Performance of Members – Age-wise

Age group	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR) in lakhs	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR) in lakhs	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR) in lakhs	Average per member
Less than 45	90	0.18	184	80	0.29	362	83	0.28	343
46 to 60	219	0.51	232	232	0.74	320	217	0.74	343
61 & above	183	0.36	197	209	0.59	282	243	0.62	254
National	498	1.05	210	478	1.62	339	486	1.64	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- For 16th Lok Sabha, Initiated Debates only taken into account. Associated Debates excluded.
- The younger members of less than 45 years of age have participated more in the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

(Ministers do not participate in the Debates, introduce Private Members Bills or raise Questions. They have been excluded from the analysis for this article).

Toppers

Lok Sabha	National Level toppers	
	Name of the MP	Total tally
14	Shri Anandrao Adsul	1290
	Shri S K Kharventhan	1287
15	Shri Anandrao Adsul	1304
	Shri S S Ramasubbu	1236
16	Smt. Supriya Sule	1321
	Shri Rajeev Satav	1255

Data source : PRS Legislative Research

Shri Anandrao Adsul (Shiv Sena) was the topper in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha. He is a fifth time MP from Maharashtra. He is also the Chairman of the Sansad Ratna Awards Jury Committee, instituted by PreSense. He secured the 9th position in the 16th Lok Sabha in spite of

various responsibilities shouldered by him.

Shri S K Kharventhan (Cong) and Shri S S Ramasubbu (Cong) who secured the second position in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha, are from Tamil Nadu.



In the 16th Lok Sabha, Smt. Supriya Sule (NCP), second-time MP secured the top position, and Shri Rajeev Shankarrao Satav (Cong), first-time MP, secured the second position. Both are from Maharashtra. PreSense congratulates all the toppers and performers of the 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

16th Lok Sabha – Sum Up:

- Various unique decisions implemented for the first time in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- The 16th Lok Sabha showed increased productivity with fewer disruptions, when compared with 15th Lok Sabha'
- Participation by Members were good compared to the earlier Lok Sabha sessions; The younger MPs showed good performance in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- Departmentally Related Standing Committees have presented more reports to the Parliament.
- Fewer number of bills were referred to Standing Committees.

PreSense-Lok Sabha Index

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Feb 2019)

PreSense Lok Sabha Index - Guidelines

No	Parameter	Norms to get 10 marks	Explanation
1	No. of working days (Sittings)	375 (average 75 days per annum)	Since Departmentally Related Standing Committees are in place since 1993, the sittings of the House have decreased.
2	Productivity	Zero disruption – 100% productivity	Zero disruption is the goal
3	Average Attendance	100%	100% attendance is the goal
4	Debates	16250 (3250 per annum)	There is no provision in the rules as to how many debates have to be held and how many Members have to participate in the debates. However this has been taken on the basis of practice and past records. Zero Hour (20 x 70 days = 1400); Rule 377 (20 x 60 days = 1200); Bills discussions (10 members x 40 bills = 400); Private Members Bills (5 members x 10 bills = 50); Rule 193 (20 members x 5 = 120); Discussion on President's address (30 x 1 = 30); Budget discussion (50 members x 1 = 50) = Total 3250 per annum
5	Private Members Bills (PMB)	350 (70 per annum)	This has been taken on the basis of past records, as there is no provision in the rules as to the number of PMBs can be introduced.
6	Questions	87500 (17500 per annum)	As per rules, maximum of 250 questions can be listed for a day. If various Members ask the same question, they will be clubbed as a single question for answer. But all the members will get the credit individually. (250 x 70 days = 17500 per annum)
7	Government bills passed	200 (40 per annum)	This has been taken on the basis of past records, as there is no provision in the rules as to the number of bills can be introduced.
8	Lapsed bills	Zero	If the bills introduced in Lok Sabha, are kept pending in the Rajya Sabha, after being adopted in Lok Sabha, the bills lapse automatically after the dissolution of the current Lok Sabha. Ideally, bills which are passed by Lok Sabha should be passed by Rajya Sabha as well.
9	Departmentally Related Standing Committees - Reports	800 (10 reports per committee per annum – 16 committees)	DRSC system was introduced in 1993 and there is no general rule as to the number of reports to be presented by a committee. However, taking into account recent introduction of committee system, average record has been taken.
10	Percentage of bills referred to committees	100%	Ideally, all the bills introduced in Lok Sabha are to be referred to Departmentally Related Standing Committees for scrutiny and suggestion.

Your eMagazine PreSense, in consultation with Parliamentarians and experts, has developed an Index to evaluate the performance of Lok Sabha under 10 parameters. PreSense has also defined

norms based on Parliamentary rules, practises, pasty averages and capacity. This will be known as **'PreSense Lok Sabha Index'** and this Index will be used in future too.

Using this Index, PreSense analysed the performance of 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha on the 10 parameters. Based on the analysis, PreSense has observed as follows for the performance of 16th Lok Sabha.

PreSense Lok Sabha Index

No	Parameter	14th Lok Sabha		15th Lok Sabha		16th Lok Sabha	
		Achievement	Marks	Achievement	Marks	Achievement	Marks
1	No. of working days (Sittings)	332	8.85	357	9.52	331	8.82
2	Productivity	87	8.70	63	6.30	85	8.50
3	Average Attendance	70	7.00	76	7.60	80	8.00
4	Debates	15324	9.30	18121	10.00	21196	10.00
5	Private Members Bills	309	8.82	372	10.00	1116	10.00
6	Questions	89055	10.00	143635	10.00	142156	10.00
7	Government bills passed	173	8.65	110	5.80	133	6.65
8	Lapsed bills	39	6.10	68	3.20	46	5.40
9	Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC)- Reports	627	7.83	662	8.27	720	9.0
10	Percentage of bills referred to committees	60	6.00	71	7.10	27	2.70
Total Score			81.25		77.79		79.07

Data source: Lok Sabha Secretariat / PRS Legislative Research

- Participation by Members in Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions are quite satisfactory.
- Reports of the Departmentally Related Standing Committees are more than earlier sessions;
- Productivity is good compared to 15th Lok Sabha, with less disruption.
- Lapsed bills in 16th Lok Sabha are more compared to 14th Lok Sabha but less than in 15th Lok Sabha.
- Fewer number of bills were referred to DRSC for scrutiny.

Is Social Media the 'Game Changer' For Indian General Elections 2019?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Mar 2019)

Indians experienced the impact of the social media in elections' campaigning for the first time in 2014. Many technology tools were used then. The voters who were used to the traditional style, experienced a different kind of campaigning which was run through internet tools. The then BJP party candidate and Prime Minister-designate, Narendra Modi used these tools effectively. In 2016, the social media was utilised in full swing during the US Presidential Elections.



Growth of Social Media

Internet tools are used in elections' campaigning across the world since 2012. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp are mainly used in India for political communications. The penetration of the mobile phones in India over the past five years, and the availability of internet data at very low cost, has increased its use in political communication and in a highly competitive manner by political parties.

Between 2014 and 2019, mobile subscribers have gone up by 32% and internet subscribers have gone up by nearly 12 times. The entry of Jio as service provider has revolutionised data usage by smartphone users.

Social media users have gone up from 125 million in 2014 to 360 million in 2019, with a three-fold increase. This has created more challenges for political parties. The social media remains both a boon and a bane for the political parties.

"The early movers in the social media have gained a lot. Their early gain in the social media is still there but it is fast eroding with others playing quick catch-up, especially in the rural constituencies. Newer tools and micro segmentation analytics that can precisely predict user clusters/user behaviour, using AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Deep Learning technologies are now being used", says Srinivasan Venkatraghavan, social media data expert.

Political Parties in Social Media

Currently, all political parties at the national and regional levels, are using social media tools extensively for their political communication. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has more followings in the social media than frontline Opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi. Interestingly, during March 2019, Rahul Gandhi's tweets were more re-tweeted than those of Narendra Modi.



Translate Tweet

1.4K 9.6K 42K

Chowkidar Narendra Modi @narendramodi · 19h

#MissionShakti is special for 2 reasons:

(1) India is only the 4th country to acquire such a specialised & modern capability.

(2) Entire effort is indigenous.

India stands tall as a space power!

It will make India stronger, even more secure and will further peace and harmony.

9.9K 32K 106K

Urban	529	654	139	157
Rural	364	528	42	59
Total	893	1182	72	90
Internet	42	522		

Source: TRAI website

On 27th March 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the achievement of DRDO scientists in 'Mission Shakti'. Both Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi tweeted on this issue. Narendra Modi's tweet had more re-tweets than that of Rahul Gandhi.

These social media engagements are also taken up by mainline



media like the television and the print media. Therefore, the views from the social media are discussed outside the social media too.

Almost all the parties are using WhatsApp groups to communicate their messages and instructions to their last mile workers. They also use WhatsApp groups to transmit their messages to potential voters.

According to the Election Commission data, 25 million new voters were added in 2014 and 45 million in 2019. The total number of voters in India is around 900 million. The new voters, particularly from the younger age group, should not be taken for granted.

Traditional and Social Media Campaigns

Two questions emerge while considering the type of campaigning to use to reach potential voters:

- whether the social media communication could influence voters to vote in favour of the candidates, and
- whether the young voters who spend more time on social media, would actually go to the polling booths to cast their votes, since the campaigning style itself has changed over the past five years, due to the emergence of the social media.

Interestingly, during the 2014 and 2016 elections, Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu did not bother about the social media, to the extent that even the party's website was not updated. She resorted to traditional campaigning, by personally reaching out to the people. Even though the other parties used the social media extensively for their campaigning, Jayalalitha and her party swept the polls. According to Bhanu Gomes, a political analyst, the social media does not add much to the existing charisma of mass leaders. The social media is only complementary for them.

Social Media		
		
Twitter - followers	46.6 M	9.1 M
Facebook - followers	45.0 M	2.0 M
Instagram - followers	19.6 M	0.6 M
Twitter - Average retweets *	5.8 K	9.0 K

* Average for the last 25 tweets in Mar 2019

Opinions are divided when assessing whether young voters would go to polling booths for voting on election day. According to many party workers who work at the ground level, only very few of the

youngsters in the past who had shared their strong views on social media platforms, had actually gone to the polling booths to vote. With the Election Commission currently on an aggressive campaign mode for 100% polling, it is expected that many more youngsters will go to the polling booths on the election day to cast their votes.

It is the opinion of almost everyone who was asked, that the social media would have some impact in influencing potential voters. When the engagements of the social media are picked up by the mainline media, they assume greater significance. Those topics are picked up for discussion and debate by the mainline media, and are also discussed by the people.

"The uneducated voter may not be influenced by the social media, as he goes by various other parameters to vote for a candidate", says Ranganathan, digital media consultant.

According to C H Sekhar, Ex-MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly), who contested the elections three times before, there is an increase in the impact of the social media in influencing the voters. "In my view, about 10-15% of the voters can be influenced by the social media. There are fence sitters in every constituency. They may not be unduly influenced by a single message. They will

compare and analyse fully before voting. However, the social media will also help them in taking a decision. The trending in the social media about a week before the polling date, can influence greatly”, he added.

Dr Y S Rajan, eminent scientist and co-author of the book, *India 2020* with Dr Abdul Kalam, says that the middle-class and the lower middle-class people take the elections seriously. The social media reflects the mood of the middle-class. The people of the upper middle class do not take the elections seriously. It is doubtful how many of them go to polling booths. Information not carried by mainline media, is usually circulated in the social media.

Many political leaders agree that the campaign model has changed. K T Raghavan, a senior leader of a national party agrees that political parties have to depend on social media to reach out to their party workers and voters, due to the restrictions imposed on wall posters and street meetings. He agrees that the penetration of the social media is more than what it was in 2014, and that political parties do face the challenge of converting this into votes.

Generally, the voters decide their votes, based on the political party rather than the candidate. Around 10-15% of the fence sitters may vote according to their last-minute perception, influenced either by the party or the candidate. These would be the deciding votes. Everybody agrees that the social media can influence this segment of fence sitters to take their decision.

Challenges

Even though the social media helps political parties to run their campaigns to reach their target audience, it also poses great challenges to the parties.

“Innumerable fake news generating agencies have come up. They spread YouTube videos out of context. Fake news, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (malicious information) are already playing a major role in communication, in the run-up to this year’s elections. Emotional messages are transmitted. Even

rural people view WhatsApp messages, which are transmitted in the local languages”, says C J Singh, Strategic Communication Consultant from Chandigarh.

Many political workers and supporters have started circulating fake news and memes to malign their opponents, without realising that they could boomerang on them too. WhatsApp groups are flooded with fake news. They run the risk of influencing the people to take decisions, based on misinformation or incorrect messages received by them.



In the recent years, memes have become popular in the social media. Meme creators use text, image and video to convey political messages in a humorous way.

“Entertainment-oriented humorous memes in regional languages are used by political workers to attack their rivals. People enjoy memes.

Memes can create crisis situations for even senior leaders”, says Sridhar Raj, President of Next Gen Political Leaders Forum (NGPL).

It is also reported that some foreign countries are interfering in the election campaigning, using the social media to create confusion



in India during its run-up for elections. On 1st March 2019, some opposition parties at Chennai campaigned against Narendra Modi with a global trending of *#GoBackModi*. According to Ranganathan, social media trend analyst, nearly 58% of the tweets originated in Pakistan and 6% in UK, much to the shock of the opposition parties, which had initiated this trending. Strangely, Chennai which started the campaign had only 4%. According to Ranganathan, such trending might not impact much as they are short-lived. However, when the trending is carried through the mainline media, it reaches a larger section of the people.

Wrap Up

According to many experts, General Elections 2019 can show around a 5% swing in the voting pattern, due to social media. Every 1% swing makes a difference for the candidates. As the social media does not have any regulator at present, fake news will continue to pose greater challenges to the political parties and its candidates. Even though the Election Commission is taking active steps to regulate social media advertising, it would be difficult to totally eradicate/prevent fake news, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. This throws more responsibility on the citizens and social media users. Every citizen should ensure that wrong information is not circulated in the social media, which can destroy the credibility of the genuine candidates. Mainline media should take efforts to create awareness among the people for responsible use of the social media, instead of looking for sensational news.

Chowkidar Crowned as King

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Apr 2019)

Historic Victory

The 2019 General Elections (*Lok Sabha*) has given a massive mandate to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to continue his leadership of the BJP-led NDA Government for another five years. The landslide victory by this political combine has not only stunned political parties within the country but the entire world. BJP increased its vote share and seats over its first term verdict of 2014. The Indian National Congress (INC) increased the number of its seats marginally in the Lower House, but with a reduced vote share, falling short again, for the second time, of the required minimum number (one tenth of the strength of the House of 543 seats) to qualify for the official position of Opposition Party in the House.

Party	2014		2019	
	Seats	Vote share %	Seats	Vote Share %
BJP	282	31.3	303	37.5
INC	44	19.5	52	18.3
NDA	336	38.5	353	45.0
UPA	60	23.1	91	26.0

In 2019, BJP has secured 229 million votes, as against 171 million votes in 2014. INC secured 119 million votes in 2019 as against 107 million votes in 2014. In 2019, BJP has added more than 50 million votes to its tally, with an additional 6% increase in its vote share. India is the world's largest democracy with more than 607 million registered voters exercising their franchise personally to elect their Government. In 2019, as against 910 million eligible electors (834 million in 2014), 66.7% voters (66.4% in 2014) exercised their franchise. In 2019, 607 million (554 million in 2014) voters went to the polling booths to cast their votes. For the first time, Indian voters were able to see the symbols of the

political parties which they voted for, through VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) machines. Although the opposition parties expressed concerns about alleged manipulation of the EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines), not a single complaint from any voter was registered about wrong display in the VVPAT machines. Besides, during the counting, more than 20,000 VVPAT machines were physically tallied with the corresponding EVM Machines and found to be accurate.

Why This Massive Mandate?

After the declaration of the polling results, PreSense conducted a quick online survey to understand the people's perception, and contacted several voters pan-India. The general perception was in favour of a strong leader to lead the nation.

Not Projecting a PM Candidate by Opposition: Rahul Gandhi of INC could not bring all the Opposition Parties together under a single umbrella of the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) banner. More than 12 regional parties contested in the elections, each with its own Prime Ministerial ambition. While NDA projected Modi as their PM, neither the Congress nor any of the other Opposition Parties could project a single leader. This worked to the advantage of NDA as people could not see an alternative leader to Modi, with the TINA factor operating (There Is No Alternative).

Wrong Campaign by Opposition:

Although the Modi's regime was stacked with economic deficiencies like unemployment, farmers' issues, impact of demonetisation and GST, slow growth of the manufacturing sector, the Opposition Parties did not campaign strongly on these issues. Instead, they ridiculed the Pulwama attack on our security forces as well as the Balakote bombings of the suspected terrorist camps in the valley by our



security forces. This infuriated a large section of the common people to whom nationalism and patriotism is primary. This *faux pas* was cleverly leveraged by BJP in its election campaign, projecting national security and citizen security over all other issues in its election campaign. Besides, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi focussed on '*Chowkidar Chor Hai*' slogan, leading even to his tendering an unconditional apology before the Supreme Court in this context at the height of his election campaigning. The Rafale aircraft deal signed by the Prime Minister himself in 2016 at Paris, was raked up by the Congress for alleged corruption issues and of favouring a particular big industrial house, but it did not cut much ice with the voters for want of evidence.

Political experts claim that the Congress-led Opposition and *Mahagatbandhan's* (Grand Coalition) ambition of multiple choices for the Prime Ministerial candidate created confusion and apprehension amongst the people, thereby feeling that a strong leader was the 'need of the hour'. There was no better alternative to Modi as the proven Prime Minister. The people felt very strongly that an 'undecided crowd of parties' was definitely not an alternative.

Past Experiences: Political analysts quote the example of the 1971 and the 1980 General Elections with similar phenomena. In 1971, when Indira Gandhi declared the '*Garibi Hatao*' (Remove Poverty) slogan, the Opposition Parties had a single agenda of '*Indira Hatao*' (Remove Indira). Indira Gandhi went on to win 352 seats in the elections. History seemed to repeat itself, as in the 2019 elections, even as Modi declared a resurgent 'New India' slogan, the Opposition Parties had a single agenda of '*Modi Hatao*' (Remove Modi).

In 1977, post emergency, Indira Gandhi was defeated by the Janata Party, riding on the wave of the people's anger against the emergency and its alleged atrocities. However, within two years, the Government fell due to infighting. In 1980, Indira had a massive win with 353 seats.

Past experiences indicate that Indian voters always look for stability in the Government and the leadership of the PM candidate. The same Indira Gandhi, rejected by voters in 1977 polls, was returned to power with a massive mandate in 1980 as the Opposition that formed the Government, messed up due to infighting over leadership issues. The then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, was replaced by an over-ambitious Haryana leader, Charan Singh. But his Government fell.

Tamil Nadu Mandate: It is interesting to note that while almost the entire country voted for Modi, in Tamil Nadu, the regional political party, DMK projected Rahul Gandhi as PM candidate, which the Opposition failed to do at the national level. It was a battle of 'Modi vs Rahul'. With Anti-Modi sentiments riding high because of his support to a fledgling faction-ridden AIADMK without Jayalalitha, the DMK allies swept the polls, bagging 37 out of 38 seats. People suspected that AIADMK was being puppeteered by the Central Government and was carrying out their dictates in the state without protecting the local interests. It may be recalled that during the 2014 elections when Jayalalitha campaigned, she promoted the slogan, "*Modi or Lady*". She bagged 37 out of 39 seats then. So, past experiences clearly indicate that the people want a choice of strong leaders, and in its absence prefer the best available candidate. In the 2019 polls, it turned out to be Modi again as in 2014.



Challenges before Modi Government

As Modi begins his second five-year tenure as Prime Minister, he has all the odds of economics ills stacked against him. He faces several serious challenges at the political and economic level. High on the agenda of challenges that Modi faces are:

- Demonetisation and introduction of GST crushed the small trade and industry leaving them cash-strapped as the country runs on 85% cash transactions.

- The manufacturing sector is very sluggish. Due to the oil crisis (high prices of crude), India has to pay more foreign exchange for importing crude and POL (Petroleum, Oils and Lubricants) thus depleting its foreign exchange reserves. With sluggish exports, as incentives were low, South-East Asian countries competed fiercely with India over a variety of commodities including *basmati* rice, so much so, the Capital Account Deficit (CAD) has widened considerably, exerting pressure on inflation and fiscal deficit. CAD is the difference between import revenues and export earnings, and the former has exceeded the latter. Tax revenue has come down even though compliance has risen. This might lead to a deficit in the budget. Notwithstanding this, people have given a massive mandate to Modi to continue so that he can work on the 'structural reforms' introduced by him, which have however inadvertently caused collateral damage to the lower sections of trading classes.
- Although Modi promised job creation and *Ache Din* during the 2014 elections, people feel that nothing has materialised. Many of the schemes like 'Make in India', 'Start Up India', 'Stand up India', 'Skill India' have not been properly executed, keeping with the well-intended spirit of the programmes. A separate ministry to monitor these important schemes seems imperative to drive growth and generate more employment.
- The promise to bring back all black money from foreign countries and to punish the corrupt politicians has not yet been implemented fully till date. Unfortunately, candidates with tainted records have got re-elected to the *Lok Sabha* this time. The new regime should be firm and strong in dealing the corrupt severely.
- Since the BJP has returned to power, some of the aggressive *Hindutva* forces may re-emerge and create problems about cow vigilantism (some people were lynched on suspicion of slaughtering cows for the sake of eating beef). Even if there were such isolated incidents, a section of the media with vested

interest, could blow this up at national and international levels and tarnish the country's image, creating unnecessary fear among the minorities. The Government should keep a tight leash on such aggressive elements and also that section of the media which may generate unwanted panic amongst the people.

- In the earlier regime, the Government had put a ban on the flow of foreign funds to some NGOs, who were using the money for anti-national activities. These NGOs may create more trouble in a different form to show their anger against the Government. The Government should be firm on such NGOs and the persons who indulge in anti-national activities.
- Although BJP has swept almost the entire country, they were unable to convince some of the major Southern states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. In the South, BJP is perceived as a North Indian party. In the past regime, the Government did not show much interest in the Southern states. Thus, while the entire country had the 'Modi Wave', the Southern states had the 'Anti-Modi Wave'. The new Government should develop the relationship with frequent visits to the Southern states. The current North-South divide must be bridged immediately.
- With the massive majority, now the *Modi Sarkar* can try to resolve the Kashmir issue firmly, so that terrorism can be under control.

Summing Up

Indian voters have given a historic mandate to Narendra Modi for the second time to govern the Nation, notwithstanding some of the negative aspects of its earlier regime. Indian voters have reposed faith and confidence in Modi, so that he can continue his efforts to improve the economy and living standards of the people. PreSense wishes Modi and his new team the very best to lead the nation to greater heights.

Investments Without Production and Confusing Policy Announcements Hit Indian Economy

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Prof. K Prabhakar, Editorial Advisor (Sep 2019)

The slow-down of the Indian economy has caused serious concerns for every citizen. This has resulted in many people losing their jobs without creation of new jobs. The Government of India has also announced various measures to overcome this challenge. On behalf of *PreSense*, Prime Point Srinivasan and Prof. K Prabhakar interviewed Shri M R Sivaraman, Former Revenue Secretary to Government of India and Former Executive Director



M R Sivaraman, Former Revenue Secretary to Government of India

of International Monetary Fund (IMF) to understand the reasons behind this situation and to get the possible solution. Excerpts:

What precisely is the problem with the country's economy? The GDP growth rate is estimated at 5%. There is recession in the automobile industry, etc. What is the real impact of demonetisation and GST in this slowdown?

As I have been handling finance for the past three decades in government as well as outside government, I would say that the growth rate coming down is nothing surprising, mainly because we have been growing at the rate of nearly 6.8% for nearly two decades. Therefore, it is but natural that the rate of growth will come down slightly. When the economy grows, the base widens. When the base widens to a large extent, it will take some time for the economy to adjust itself again to go up to a larger growth path.

The effect of demonetisation has virtually worn out because the currency in circulation has now almost reached the level it had before demonetisation with respect to the GDP. Demonetisation has not led to less use of cash in the Indian economy. This is mainly because of the traditional way the Indian economy has been functioning. Cash has been playing a major role. If cash has to be brought down, then the Government has to say that they will not allow people to pay in cash in petrol pumps and all other places where government transactions take place. It will take a long time for it to happen. It will not happen overnight. It would have had an impact may be, in the first year. But subsequently as cash started building up in the economy, it did not affect the growth as such.

Soon after demonetisation, we had the GST coming in. Because GST is a decision by all the finance ministers of the country including the Union Finance Minister, the way in which the GST had to be implemented became the responsibility of the government of all the states and union territories, and the Government of India. So, they had to accommodate the views of 29-30 states in the country. There could not be a single, particular view. And every state had its own point of view regarding the implementation of the GST and the rates of GST. It became an 'accommodating system'. When it became an accommodative system, every time a decision was taken in the GST council, they had to make adjustments in the GST network and programs because the backbone of the implementation of GST is the GST network, which is a computerised system. Every time a change is made, the system had to undergo a major change. When the system undergoes a change, there will be a lot of glitches. That way, GST had impacted the system to a considerable extent. This led to the accumulation of refund of taxes, particularly in the export sector. As far as export is concerned, they had to pay the GST and claim a refund. That is the system we have adopted.

Now the things are getting sorted out. As soon as the exports leave the hands of the exporter and the customs give the clearance for export, the shipping bill with the customs clearance will

automatically be put into the system. They now get the refund immediately. To a large extent, this has been rectified.

It is reported that MSMEs have suffered heavily due to GST. What is your opinion?

A large number of MSME operators are not properly educated about the system of GST. Many of these people employ agents to carry out their work. These agents have not been doing their work properly. They have been misleading the people. There is a lot of misinformation and disinformation spreading because these MSME people are not able to do their own work properly.

These are some of the internal difficulties in the working of the GSTN which has caused problems to the MSME sector. That is why they have not been able to expand.

The Government did conduct classes. But these classes were mostly held in Chennai and a few other places. They are not adequate. These are some of the internal difficulties in the working of the GSTN which has caused problems to the MSME sector. That is why they have not been able to expand.

But then, there is another point we have to see. Has the number of MSMEs gone down after demonetisation and GST? That is an important indicator. In June 2019, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Committee on Small and Medium Industries submitted a report. The report which is on the website of RBI, shows that on June 15th, they got the numbers of MSMEs at 68.9 lakhs, which is more than what it was before demonetisation. It could be that more people have got registered. If demonetisation and GST had affected the MSME, then there should have been a significant reduction in the number of MSMEs instead of going up.

But there has been a problem in functioning. People are uncertain about their (GST) money coming back and unsure about how to fill the form. This must have caused some inconvenience. My appeal

to the Revenue Department is that they should form small groups of officers who should conduct training to small and medium industries in the smaller places and educate them about how to get the refund and fill the forms, without depending on agents.

Why has investment not taken place in heavy industries in the past few years? What do you think are the main reasons?

There are certain areas where the investment should have taken place – heavy engineering, automobile and textile sectors. In the last 2-3 years, we have observed that Rs.18-20 lakh crores have turned into Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). When Rs.18 lakh crores come into the industry as investment, people get employed and theoretically, when people get employed, production happens and value addition takes place. It is now found that most of them were expanding without production and market development. The economy is hit now because those investments are not giving any returns.

For example, the four or five huge superpower thermal plants (Adani, Tata, Essar, Reliance) were erected at a cost of nearly Rs.1 lakh crores. Now, all these power stations are idle because they could not procure coal at the price they had contracted for the sale of power. They had approached the Supreme Court for relief but it did not agree, saying the companies had signed the agreements assuring sale of power at the price contracted at that particular time. If the companies did not forecast that the price of coal would go up, then the people could not be held responsible. Therefore, the power plants could not generate power except for a minimal quantity. The total investment therefore remains idle. Similar investments made elsewhere such as ports, have not been able to generate any returns. This situation is a major cause in the sudden fall in the GDP.

After those investments, people are scared to make fresh investments even though banks are flushed with funds. Banks are not lending and people are not ready to invest money without

sorting out these issues. So, we have a structural imbalance taking place in the country.

What is the real problem with the automobile industry?

There is confusion in the automobile industry of the country. Several factors have come together for this – BS6 norms (automobile emission standard), collapse of the NBFCs which were lending money, etc. The automobile sector contributes 49% of the GDP of India because the automobile industry has thousands of ancillaries, which also constitute part of the engineering sector, which makes up 7% of the GDP.

The announcement by a senior minister of the Government of India that there would be a shutdown of fossil-fuelled cars by 2030 created confusion in the country. Manufacturers became nervous,

The announcement of a senior minister of the Government of India that there would be a shutdown of fossil-fuelled cars by 2030 has created confusion in the country.

wondering how the cars would be produced and where the charging stations would be. All places in India do not have charging stations. Indian Oil and Bharat Petroleum do not have a single charging station in Chennai. People became hesitant to buy a petrol-driven car. He also announced that only BS6 compliant cars would be permitted. Hundreds and

thousands of cars were already produced and waiting to be released in the market and people were not ready to buy them. The industry requires at least 10 years for a gradual phase-over of equipment. Of course, the Minister later reversed his statement and assured that petrol cars would be allowed. However, the automobile industry has been very severely impacted by then. BS6 cars are now being purchased by the people.

Another factor is the rule insisting on a 3-year registration fee payment and 5-year third-party insurance policy payment –

matters that have not been happening in the country for over 60 years. Where do people have the money to invest in this? There is little gained by these confusing announcements. And when these factors hit a major sector, it takes a long time to revive.

How has the employment been affected?

If one additional (new) truck is sold in the market, it generates 2-4 man-years of employment. In a sale of 100,000 trucks, assuming 25,000 go for replacement, for 75,000 new trucks multiplied by an average 3 people, 2.25 lakh additional people will gain employment.

A car will generate 0.3 man-year employment because of new drivers, cleaners and accessories for the car. Every year, 3.5 million cars were being produced. Assuming a conservative 0.1 man-year employment, 3 lakh people were being employed. Today, additional employment of half a million people from car and commercial vehicles has disappeared. 500,000 people were in the market for purchase of FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods). They are not there today. This is a major problem for the Government to solve.

How is the agricultural sector?

The agricultural sector by itself does not contribute much money but it attaches a sentimental value. This year, because of the rains, they hope that the production will reach the same as last year, if not more. Shri Modi too has done well by distributing Rs.2000 each to the farmers, which means much to the poor farmer. The only thing is that it must be ensured that all the farmers get the money.

How is the service sector?

The service sector contributes 58% of the GDP of this country. Once the automobile sector goes down, it will affect the other sectors as the financial, insurance, etc which accompany the automobile sector. It has a nominal impact on the hotel sector because people travel to shops and hotels. There is a chain reaction

in the service sector. The growth of the service sector has fallen from 12% to 8%, impacted by these factors.

What will be the impact of the trade war between China and USA on India?

The impact is going to be only of sentimental value because it is not going to affect us directly. The impact would be that if the US economy goes down, then our exports to USA will go down. So far, the US economy has not gone down.

The European economy has grown by 1% and it is generally 1-2%. Therefore, it does not materially affect our exports. But the war between the European Union (EU) and United Kingdom(UK), which will end in October (2019) would affect us because many Indian industries have investments in EU and UK. This will affect our income too.

Will the merger of major banks help to improve the situation?

The problem with this Government is that they bring all the changes together, creating confusion in the country.

I would have postponed this merger to one year later, to wait for the economy to settle down from this current turbulent period. The problem with this Government is that they bring all the changes together, creating confusion in the country. Their policies are good with good impact but bringing them together creates confusion. This merger was

not necessary at this time because merger always creates organisational, administrative, lending and marketing problems. They could have postponed it as politically they are battling with the issue of Article 370.

Can the country achieve a 5 trillion economy as announced by the Finance Minister?

No, because this year's rate of growth is not going to be more than 6%. Therefore, for the remaining 5 years, the rate of growth has to be more than 10%. India has never achieved a 10% growth rate except in one year. And now to achieve a 10% growth on a very big base of economy is very difficult.

The problem with the Government of India is that although they enact good policies and measures, the State Governments are not ready to implement them properly in the same spirit. These are some of the physical and structural problems for the Government of India.

The Finance Minister has proposed Rs.100 lakh crores for infrastructure projects. Where will she source the funds from?

Rs.100 lakh crores is the target which can come from various sources like FDI, borrowing from external market and domestic economy.

Recently, RBI transferred Rs1.70 lakh crore to Government of India. Will it help the situation?

It will help the Government of India in a minimal way.

The Finance Minister took office in the middle of May 2019. On July 5th, she presented the Budget. In one and a half months, it is difficult to understand the Budget as it is complicated. She was not given the correct budget figures. The figure in the Budget is more by Rs.1 lakh crore than the actual figure. If the rate of growth is 17-18% on the Rs.1 lakh crore, it is gone. Therefore, the income tax figure is going to fall by Rs.1.5 lakh crore, which will be covered by this amount.

The principal mistake the Government makes is that they do not invite at least all the former Revenue Secretaries and Finance Secretaries for their experienced opinion about the Budget.

As a former Revenue Secretary, having dealt with similar issues in the past, what would you like to suggest?

I have seen serious fiscal deficits. I would suggest that the Finance Minister, along with the good steps announced for the supply side of the economy, should also plan steps to build up the demand side of the economy.

- First of all, the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister should have a technical discussion with the experienced Cabinet Secretaries, Finance Secretaries and Revenue Secretaries about what is to be done to deal with the situation.
- Thereafter, they should call the Chief Ministers and give them action points for implementation. Chief Ministers must be taken into confidence because they function at the field level. It is their orders that ultimately get translated into action.
- Invite the Opposition leaders and consult them too. In a time of crisis, you have to take the Opposition into confidence. This economy belongs to all the people.

Please listen to the full interview of
Mr M R Sivaraman: Click
<https://youtu.be/OhKKiVz5wQ4>

How an Idea Becomes an Act of Parliament

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Sep 2019)

Every Indian or foreigner in this country is governed by an Act of Parliament or Legislative Assembly. It is worthwhile to know as to how an idea or a concept becomes an Act of Parliament.

How an Idea is Conceived

The Government gets the idea to make an Act from different sources like (1) the Public, (2) the Industry or professional bodies, (3) Discussions in Parliament, (4) Private Members Bills or (5) from their own internal discussions. When the Government gets any idea or concept to make an Act, the Ministry concerned sends the input to the Law Ministry for a Draft Bill. The Ministry concerned and the Law Ministry then finalise the Draft Bill. After the approval of the Draft Bill by the Cabinet, the Bill requires the approval of both the Houses of Parliament and the President of India, before it becomes an Act.

Types of Bills presented to the Parliament

- Ordinary Bill
- Money Bill (Under Article 110 of the Constitution)
- Financial Bill (Under Article 117(1) and 117(3) of the Constitution)
- Constitution Amendment Bill

Legislative Procedure of an Ordinary Bill

Notice of Bill—A Minister or any other Member who desires to introduce a Bill has to give a seven-day notice in writing to move for 'leave to introduce the Bill'. The Speaker may, however, allow the motion to be moved at a shorter notice too.

Circulation of the Bill— A Bill will not be incorporated in the list of business for its introduction unless its copies are made available to the Members at least two days before the day on which the Bill

is proposed to be introduced. However, Appropriation Bills, Finance Bills and such secret Bills are exceptions to this list of business. The Speaker may, however, permit the introduction of a Bill without prior circulation or after circulation for a period shorter than the stipulated two days if the Minister concerned is able to provide adequate reasons in a Memorandum for consideration of the Speaker.

Passage of the Bill – A Bill undergoes three readings in the House where it is introduced and should be passed with a simple majority for it to be considered passed in that House. The same procedure is followed in the second House, with or without amendments to the introduced Bill. The Constitution amendment Bills should be passed by not less than two third members of the House present and voting, but subject to half of total strength of the House and should be passed in each House separately, by this procedure. A joint sitting cannot be held in case of Money Bills, as Rajya Sabha does not have enough powers in respect of Money Bills.

If there is a deadlock in the passage of the Bill, the President can summon a joint sitting to resolve it.

If there is a deadlock in the passage of the Bill (if the second house rejects the said Bill altogether, or passes with amendments, or holds the Bill with no action for more than six months or if the first House does not agree to the amendments made by the second House), the President can summon a joint sitting to resolve it. The joint sitting is usually chaired by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. If the majority of members present and voting in the joint sitting approve the Bill, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses. However, Constitution Amendment Bills have to be passed in both the Houses separately. There will be 'Three Readings' for passage of all Bills.

First Reading

The First Reading refers to the Motion for Leave to introduce a Bill in the House by the Minister concerned. Motion for Leave to introduce a Bill may be opposed by any Member on general grounds or on the ground that the Bill initiates a legislation outside the legislative competence of the House. Any such opposition by the Member has to be given as a notice specifying the objections that are to be raised, by 10:00 hours on the day on which the Bill is included for introduction. The Speaker will then put to vote and decide on the introduction of the Bill. When the House gives permission to introduce the Bill, the Minister will say "I introduce the Bill". Now the Bill becomes the property of the House. With the permission of the Speaker, the Bill will be published in the Official Gazette of the Government.

Reference of Bill to Standing Committee

After the Bill has been introduced, the Presiding Officer of the House may refer the Bill to a Standing Committee with the concerns for examination and make reports thereon. A time limit of three months is normally prescribed. The Committee can also take opinion from experts and the general public who are interested in the measures. The report of the Committee shall be treated as considered advice given by the Committee.

Second Reading

During this stage the Bill goes through a detailed scrutiny and assumes its shape. This reading involves two stages. In the first stage, the House can decide to refer the Bill to a Select Committee or Joint Committee for scrutiny. Any amendment can also be moved by any Member for any clause of the Bill. The Speaker will decide based on the vote.

The second stage of the Second Reading consists of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, as introduced in Lok Sabha or as reported by a Select or a Joint Committee or as passed by the other House, as the case may be. Discussion takes place on each clause

of the Bill and amendments can be moved at this stage. Each amendment and each clause is put to vote of the House. The amendments become part of the Bill if they are accepted by a simple majority of members present and voting and the Second Reading is deemed to be over.

Third Reading

At this stage, the debate is mainly confined to acceptance or rejection of the Bill, with or without amendments, as a thorough scrutiny is done during the Second Reading. Debate is confined to arguments either in support or rejection of the Bill without referring to the details. Only formal, verbal or consequential amendments are allowed at this stage. If a majority of the Members present and voting accept the Bill, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by that House. If the said House is the initiating House, then the Bill is forwarded to the second House. If the said House is the second House, then the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses and moved for the President's assent.

Bill in the Second House

After the bill is passed by one House, it is forwarded to the second House for concurrence, with a message to that effect. Therefore, an introduction stage is not required in the second House. The Bill again goes through the same stages, *viz.* the Second Reading stage comprising either discussion on the motion that the Bill be taken into consideration or its reference to a Select Committee of that House and the Third Reading stage. The second House may either agree to the Bill, or return the Bill with amendments to the initiating House for its concurrence, or a joint sitting is summoned by the President if there is a deadlock.

Money Bills can be initiated only in Lok Sabha. Rajya Sabha is required to return a Money Bill passed and transmitted by Lok Sabha within a period of 14 days from the date of its receipt, with or without recommendations. It is open to Lok Sabha to accept or reject all or any of the recommendations of Rajya Sabha. However, if Rajya Sabha does not return a Money Bill within the prescribed

period of 14 days, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses of Parliament at the expiry of the period of 14 days in the form in which it was passed by Lok Sabha.

Assent of the President

Every Bill after being passed by both Houses of the Parliament is presented before the President of India for his assent. The President has three options: (Article 111)

- He may give his assent to the Bill; then it becomes an Act.
- He may return the Bill for reconsideration to the Houses,
- He may withhold the assent to the Bill;

Withdrawal of Bills

The Minister in charge of a Bill, who introduced the Bill in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, may at any stage of the Bill, move for leave to withdraw the Bill on any specific ground listed in the Rules.

Ordinance Power of the President of India

When both the Houses are not in session, the President can promulgate ordinances under Article 123 of the Constitution. **Parliamentary approval is required during the next session within six weeks from the date the Parliament is in session.** If the Ordinance is not passed by the Parliament, it shall cease to operate. However, the President does not have any power to promulgate ordinance to amend the Constitution.

(Reference: The Legislative process in regard to Government Bills is governed by various provisions of the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and the Directions by the Speaker, which include, *inter alia*, provisions contained in Articles 107 to 111, 117, 245 to 255 and 274 of the Constitution, Rules 64 to 159, 218, 219, 331E, 331H and 335 of the Rules of Procedure and Directions 19A to 26 and 31 to 37 of the Directions by the Speaker).

(Source: Lok Sabha Website)

Fundamental Duties (Article 51A of the Constitution of India)

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Nov 2019)

It shall be the duty of every citizens of India-

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.

Nationalism and Secularism in the Indian Context

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Dec 2019)

Perceptions Derived from the Sample Survey

In the past three decades, political parties in India have brought the subject of nationalism and secularism to the centre stage for political purposes. One section of the political establishment has hijacked 'nationalism' and another section, 'secularism'. Both the establishments have interpreted the concepts to suit their political gains.

People's Perception

PreSense conducted a quick online reader's survey in December 2019 on how common people perceived these concepts and how they felt they were being followed in India. Sixty quality samples were obtained with self-disclosure of neutral, left and right ideologies.

Almost all the respondents identified 'nationalism' with patriotism, national interest, loyalty to the nation, culture, heritage and values. They identified 'secularism' with treating all equally, not interfering with any religion, tolerance, and so on. One striking factor is that there was no clear-cut difference between both the terms as perceived by the respondents.

However, when asked about how the Government and the political parties followed these concepts, the respondents were ambivalent. Many of them feel that these terms were primarily being used for their own political gains. Nationalism is being used to kindle patriotic fervour and to gain votes, while secularism is being used to appease minorities. Followers of the 'left' ideology consider the right-wing parties as 'fascists'. 'Right' followers consider the left parties as 'pseudo secularists'. Although nationalism and secularism should mean the same to all political parties and

citizens, the political parties have hijacked these terminologies to their advantage, while blaming each other of hijacking them. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents were not able to differentiate the meaning between the concepts and used them both in similar context.

Mr Padmanabhan, a senior journalist, who is not aligned to the left or the right ideology, observed that the term 'secularism' is a European word and not relevant to our country. "For centuries India has been following unity in diversity and equal respect to all religions, based on the traditional Indian philosophy, '*Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava*' (equal respect for all religions). Unfortunately, today political parties confuse nationalism and secularism with pro- or anti-Hinduism", he added.

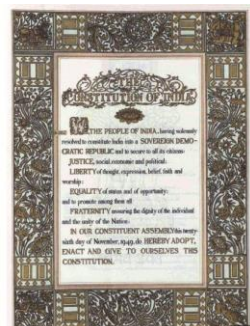
Another respondent Ms Kongkona, a research student from Assam felt that in recent times, nationalism is being looked down upon as a vice, which can rob people of their rational thinking ability. This narrative has been inserted in public minds by a section of political establishment. As a result, nationalistic feelings are discredited as 'bad and harmful' and a path towards unleashing fascism.

Global Phenomenon

There are 96 secular states in the world. Africa and Europe have 27 and 33 secular states respectively. Asia has 20 secular states.

In the West, the word 'secular' implies three things: (1) freedom of religion, (2) equal citizenship to each citizen regardless of his or her religion, and (3) separation of religion and state. Everyone is equal under the law, and subject to the same laws irrespective of his or her religion.

In contrast, in India, the word 'secular' does not imply separation of religion and state. It means equal treatment of all religions. Religion in India continues to assert



its political influence and authority in matters of personal law.

Constituent Assembly Debate

During the freedom movement, 'Nationalism' was brought to focus by leaders to bring together all Indians to fight against British Raj. Slogans like *Vandemataram*, *Bharat Mata ki Jai*, *Jai Hind*, etc. were used to kindle patriotic feelings.

During the initial documentation of the Indian Constitution, the Constituent Assembly had debated at length whether to include 'secularism' in the Preamble (Chapter 1 Clause 1) of the Constitution. During the debate in the Constituent Assembly on November 15th, 1948, Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution said, "What should be the policy of the state, how the society should be organised in its social and economic side are matters which must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances. It cannot be laid down in the Constitution itself because that is destroying democracy altogether". After a lengthy debate, the members decided against the inclusion of the word, 'secularism' in the Preamble, and it was not added in the Preamble of the original Constitution.(see picture) The words 'secularism' and 'socialism' were added later by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in 1976 during the Emergency.

Ancient Indian Scriptures

Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President said, "I have been saying that secularism was in the DNA of every Indian much before it was enshrined in the Constitution. '*Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava*' epitomises India's secular ethos. India is a land of diverse cultures and religions." India has been following the concept of secularism traditionally, treating all faiths equally."

The ancient Rig Veda says, "*Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.*" Based on this, Mahatma Gandhi said, "*I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed.*"

I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

The phrase, "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" is contained in a Sloka in the *Maha Upanishad* (6.71-75). It means, "*the entire world is my family*".

Even around 3000 years ago, Tamil Poet, Kanian Poongundranar stated, "*யாதும் ஊரே; யாவரும் கேளிர்*" (*Yathum Oore Yavarum Kelir*) - (Song 192, Purananuru, Sangam Literature). It means, '*Every place is my home town; Everyone my kith and kin*'.

Indian prayers, rituals and ceremonies end with generic prayers such as *Lokāḥ Samastāḥ Sukhino Bhavantu*, meaning " Let the entire world be happy."

Traditionally, our country has adopted 'inclusive prosperity' and tolerance, acceptance of other faiths over thousands of years even before the words nationalism and secularism were invented.

Court Verdicts

Since 1950, the Supreme Court has upheld secularism as the backbone of the Indian democracy, in various judgements. Many judgements have held that tolerance among the people in India on the basis of '*Sarva dharma sama bhava*' has sustained secularism in India strongly. Even the latest Ayodhya verdict indicates that 'secularism' is toleration based on tradition.

Current Trend

Nowadays, both nationalism and secularism are politically appropriated to suit the political expediency of various parties with an eye on winning elections. Author Taslima Nasreen says that most Indian politicians appease minorities in the name of secularism and this infuriates many belonging to the majority community. There is also an accusation that another section of politicians brand whomsoever not agreeing with them as 'anti-nationals'.

Nationalism and Secularism are Inter-Connected

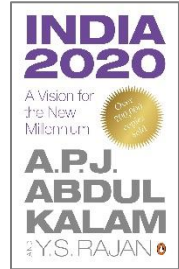
In an exclusive chat with PreSense, Mr N K Premachandran, a senior Member of Parliament from Kerala, said, "Nationalism should be seen from a broad perspective. It should not be confined only to territorial jurisdiction. It includes the cultural diversity, various languages and the secular fabric of our nation. We should be proud of our national character. Today, people are branded either as nationalists or as secularists. That is not good for the country. Both nationalism and secularism belong to all citizens. Both are interconnected."

Time has come that all political establishments should desist from misinterpreting the words nationalism and secularism for their narrow political gains to mislead the people and to develop hatred and fear among the citizens. What we need today is the true nationalism with communal harmony.

'India 2020' Vision – An Assessment

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (Jan 2020)

In 1998, late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India and Dr Y.S.Rajan, former scientist and technologist of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) and Founder Executive Director, TIFAC (Technology Forecasting, Assessment and Information Council) wrote a book titled "India 2020 – A Vision for the New Millennium", wherein they envisioned a new, progressive India, recommending the pathway towards this accomplishment. It was based on a two-year long national exercise by TIFAC.



Over 20 years later, Dr Rajan has made a candid assessment of how far and where India has progressed and where it stands in the nurtured vision of India 2020. Dr Rajan has enumerated the achievements and shortfalls, and the way forward in his website, (<http://ysrajan.com>).

As the subject is pertinent for the general awareness of the readers of your eMagazine, PreSense, we reproduce below a synopsis of the assessment.

Assessment

The sectors that have made immense progress are the telecom including data services, entertainment, financial services, e-governance and e-commerce services, IT industry, automobiles which facilitated better employment opportunities, agriculture where grain, fruits and vegetables and milk production have done exceedingly well, aviation with its economy carriers, making air travel an affordable facility, pharma, providing high class, relatively inexpensive medicines, and the consumer sector reaching the people even in small towns and villages. India's overall GDP and GDP per capita have grown more than envisaged. GDP has grown 8.12 times over the period and GDP per capita has

grown at a more modest 5.62 times (because of the growing population, which increased 1.43 times).

On the downward side, Dr Rajan observed that the total production or consumption in several sectors, based on per capita calculation, is still low not just because of the increasing population but also because the people, mainly of the lower middle class, have not been able to acquire the necessary skills to adapt to the demands of modern economy and contribute to the economy. The one-size-fits-all archaic system of education is not helping the youth.

India 2020 – Assessment of Performance	
Good News	Not So Good News
• Telecom	
• Entertainment	• Per Capita Consumption
• Financial Services	• Steel
• e-Governance	• Manufacturing
• Information Technology	• Modernisation of Defence & Security
• Automobile	• Internal Technology Strengths
• Agriculture	• Reforms in Agriculture
• Aviation	• Education System
• Pharma	• Medicare
• Consumables	
• GDP	

Similarly, the manufacturing sector has slipped and Dr Rajan attributes it to the failure in developing internal technology strengths in manufacturing, electronics, software, etc. as recommended in the book, India 2020. Instead, most of the machines for the manufacturing, IT, telecom and biomedical sectors rely almost entirely on imported hardware and licensed software. Modernisation of India's defence and security sectors too have been slow due to the slow take-off of indigenous strengths of the Indian industries in this sector. The reason is that the government policies discourage the Indian private sector. They therefore, depend largely on imports. One of main reasons for this state of affairs is the government procurement rules which deny the right to the Indian industry to even quote against Government tenders if their products are through indigenous R&D unless they have two years of export experience! Dr Rajan expressed his disappointment that it was a sad fact that this hitch has persisted all through the 70 years since Indian Independence, even in the socio-economic sectors of the Government (power, transport, etc).

Dr Rajan recommends steps, some of which are enlisted below, to set the mission on track:

- India needs to accelerate building up the internal technological strengths in the Indian industries, the defence and security sectors, as well as the academia, orienting them to India-relevant R&D. The government rules must change to encourage India-made and India-developed products.
- The agriculture sector needs modernisation through technology and policy reforms to help the farmers instead of periodical subsidies and loan waivers.
- Education needs a radical re-orientation to provide relevant vocational skills to students as well as drop-outs to equip themselves for employment. The youth must adapt to the new work culture to cope with the competitive world.

(For a detailed report, please visit www.ysrajan.com).

PreSense had a conversation with Dr Rajan on the subject, to understand some of the specifics of his assessment and suggestions. (***Incidentally, Dr Rajan launched the first issue of eMagazine, PreSense in March 2006***).



We reproduce below a synopsis of the conversation.

Q. In agriculture, grain production has done well. However, we have issues of farmers facing acute financial problems, not being able to service their loans and resorting to suicides too. Where then is the problem?

Production of grains, milk, fruit and vegetables has indeed done well. The issue of suicides is because of serious problems of lack of reforms and steady actions to help marginal farmers to move out of the low income work they do. To understand the problem of farmers, we need to understand what GDP denotes. GDP is value

in money. (Any free service does not contribute to GDP since it generates zero rupees).

While the IT sector, for example, employing about 0.5% of the population, produces about 5% of GDP, the farming sector of about 60% of the population contributes about 17-18% of GDP. Therefore, the per capita return in case of IT is much higher when compared to that of the farming sector, especially the marginalised farmers. The economy is not able to match the return that the IT industry is able to give its workforce, with that to the farmers, which is minimal and in the form of subsidy only. The marginalised farmers (constituting over 86% of the total count of farmers) with their limited land-hold are not able to contribute enough to the GDP.

The recommended solution to this is “aggregating the land”. This means these marginalised farmers who are not able to produce enough crops from their land, can lease out their land for large-scale farming, and they in turn must develop other skills (ie. upskill) for alternative means of livelihood. The government (both at the Centre and the States) should facilitate growth of industries around villages and nearby towns. This way, they can earn income from the lease as well as deploy their skills elsewhere to earn more money. This cannot be an overnight change. It is a slow revolution and must be initiated without delay. This is how global leaders in agriculture have excelled.

Besides, the farmers or farm aggregators who are able to produce crops and other foods should have the freedom to produce and sell in the market even for exports without any restriction. They should be able to earn their revenue, based on the market conditions and not by Government controls that adversely affect the farmers.

Q. You observed, "Biomedical sector relies almost fully on imported hardware and licensed software". Can we upgrade our capability to providing indigenously developed hardware and software for our biomedical and other sectors?

If we need to develop our indigenous skills in innovation, the Government must be focussed towards product-based R&D support to the Indian scientists and engineers for their new ideas and innovations. We must encourage innovations by facilitating its promotion in the market, both through Government bodies and public platforms. Unfortunately, today, any innovative product that is brought out in India is not even purchased by the Government sector due to cumbersome Government procedural formalities. Indigenous technical strength of innovators must be developed steadily, brick by brick. We may even buy IPR's (Intellectual Property Rights) from abroad and build on them.

Q. "India still holds a good position though it is far behind the world economic powers, US and China". Can you elaborate please?

India currently stands fifth among the world economic powers after USA, China, Japan and Germany. China has gone a long way since the 1980s when it was comparable with India. Today, it is at a full-steam pace to overtake USA.

The chances for India to promote itself in the ranking are good provided it maintains continuous sustained efforts in developing a product-focussed value chain in its infrastructure, supply chain connectivity and economic development.

The factors that India has in its favour are:

- Strength in its large population to contribute to growth of GDP.
- Indians have the aptitude to adapt quickly in the changing economic environment, if given the opportunity.
- Indians, even from "B-grade" colleges and towns have shown promising calibre for adaptation and innovation and they must be encouraged by the Government policies which will facilitate 'Make In India' type projects even by foreign companies, speedily. Only then can they be inducted into the workforce with better incomes.
- Many Indians have command over the English Language and this helps in most of the international markets and to access world knowledge and skills.

With concerted efforts in the right direction, India can achieve the fourth position by 2026 and the third position among the world economic powers by 2034, keeping in mind that the other world economies are also in the competitive drive. Persistence is the key.

Q. You have cited China's case of "leapfrogging" to catch up with the technological boom. China follows a political system that enables it to control and even force change. India, on the other hand, is a democratic country and has its limitations in implementing some its policies because of the tendency of the people to oppose change. You have suggested mindset change and new culture of equipped skills among our youth. How can we do this?

It is true that the one-party political system in China has facilitated implementation of their government policies. However, we need to trace China's path towards becoming a world economic power, to over forty years back when the then leader of China, Deng Xiaoping put China on a new course. Abandoning the strictures of the past, China went in for reforms, encouraging entrepreneurship among the Chinese people.

India, which enjoys full-fledged democracy, faces bigger challenges while implementing its policies, even if they are well-intended. We, as a nation, need to take care not to fritter away our freedom under the premise of liberty and freedom to oppose everything. The social media is helping little in this regard as most of them promote misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. The mood of the people, the media and the government should be towards empowering Indians with modern economic skills and taking India to a strong, sustainable position as a world economic power.

Based on the conversation with Dr Y S Rajan, former Professor, Scientist, Technologist, ISRO, and Founder Executive Director, TIFAC.

Ban Political Activism in Educational Institutions

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief (Aug 2010)

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

During the academic years in college, students vie for positions in student unions and communities. These positions are therefore often fiercely contested by talented and competent student candidates who display qualities of leadership. Winning and serving in positions in student communities is a bonus credit to the student, fortifying his prospects in the career market. Holding such positions of power also wins power and respect among the students and the teaching fraternity of the institution. Students are also naturally ambitious to seize such privileges, working hard for them.

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

According to a former student leader of a renowned city college, who won the college elections purely on the merits of his capability and leadership traits, this trend of political affiliations has become especially pronounced in the past decade. What used to be a battle of talents and skills to win a college election, has turned out in

most higher education colleges, including reputed ones, to be a political battle as the contesting student candidates are often backed by political parties. Thus, college elections in the student community become a contest of political might rather than personal competence.

This unhealthy practice has polluted the atmosphere in the corridors of the institutions. Students are misled to believe that political power and affiliation is more important than value-based skills and character development. Such students forget the reason they are in college, which is to learn, be educated and leave the corridors as a young adult ready to start his life in the working world. Instead, they involve themselves in political activities, shirk their studies, exploit their political contacts in order to continue in the college beyond their eligible tenure, enjoying the subsidised facilities and other perks as a student even though they are not entitled to them. Unfortunately, the administrative authorities of the institutions turn a blind eye to these 'student politicians' because of the bullying influence of the political parties they belong to.

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

The recently released National Educational Policy 2020 spells out ways and means for the holistic development of the students to produce responsible, conscientious young citizens of integrity. The Policy recommends value-based education to achieve this objective. The Policy should have strongly recommended a ban on political interference, activity and affiliation in educational institutions and student communities, thus enabling students to accomplish their main purpose of enrolment – to study, gain knowledge and groom their personalities, and leave the institution promptly after the prescribed academic tenure. As young and individual adults, they are free to pursue their political ambitions – outside the purview of educational institutions, and with their own time and money. The educational institution is the Temple of Knowledge. It earned that prestigious title from the traditional education system of ancient India. These temples were centres of learning. True patriotism, which is what politicians and political aspirants generally profess, begins with respecting our heritage and respecting our Temple of Knowledge, and not contaminating it with the colours of political fervour and interference.

Contempt of Court

By V Rajendran, Editor (August 2020)

In a democratic system of governance that prevails in India, freedom of expression is enlisted as a right under the Constitution of India. However, these rights have their limitations. One such limitation relates to any act that could be derogatory to the dignity of the judiciary system or its courts. This is called 'Contempt of Court'.

Contempt of court, often referred to simply as 'contempt', is the offence of being disobedient to, or disrespectful toward a court of law and its officials in a manner that defies the authority, justice and dignity of the court. Words spoken or written which obstruct or tend to obstruct the administration of justice can be classified as contempt. Historically, contempt of court, was originally introduced as a concept seeking to protect judicial institutions from specific motivated attacks, unfounded or unwarranted criticism, and as a legal remedy to punish those indulging in such activities.

There were pre-Independence laws dealing with contempt of court in India. The High Courts of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had their own powers to punish any one for contempt by virtue of their inheriting the powers by Supreme Court in these presidencies. When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression enshrined in Article 19(1)(a). Article 129 of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself (Supreme Court), and Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts. Subsequently, The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, was passed in India giving statutory backing to the concept of 'Contempt of Court'.

Classification of Contempt of Court

Contempt of court is classified as civil and criminal.

- Civil Contempt is when someone wilfully disobeys a court order or breaches an undertaking given to a court.
- Criminal contempt is more interesting and deserves an elaborate discussion because of its complexity. Criminal contempt could be the use of 'spoken or written words' that 'scandalise or tend to scandalise' or lower the dignity of the court, prejudices or interference with any judicial proceedings' or obstruction of the administration of justice. Making allegations against the judiciary or individual judges, attributing motives to judgements or judiciary motions and any scurrilous attack on the conduct of the judges are often considered to be matters that scandalise the judiciary. These provisions are listed out to ensure that the judiciary which are expected to command the highest level of respect in the society are not obstructed in their dispensation of justice by unfounded attacks.

The punishment for contempt of court is simple imprisonment for a term up to six months and/or a fine of upto Rs.2,000/-.

When 'Contempt of Court' was News Recently

Advocate Prashant Bhushan is a leading lawyer in India. Recently, the Supreme Court brought up a case of contempt of court against him, initiating *suo motu* (action taken on its own accord without any request from the parties involved) contempt proceedings against him for his tweets, where he published a photo of the Chief Justice of India riding a motorbike, and also criticised the role of the Supreme Court in the recent years, and his unproven allegations of corruption against some past Chief Justices of India in an interview to a magazine. The Supreme Court said that these tweets undermined the dignity and the office of the Chief Justice of India in the public eye.

The verdict for this case is out. But the debate among the advocates and the public, "What is the limit to which one can express one's opinion about the judiciary, and what exactly are the issues concerning the dignity of court?" may continue.

Do Political Parties Follow Democratic Norms in the Parliament?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Sep 2020)

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

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

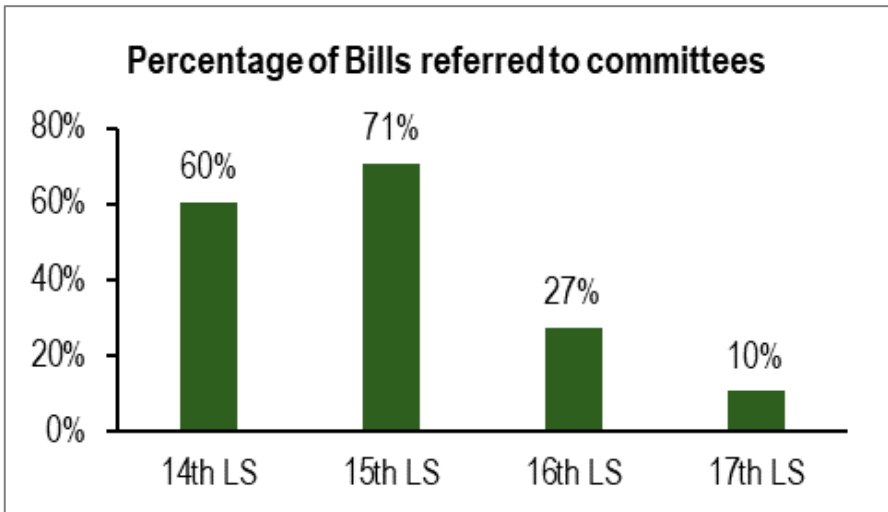
Legislative Business

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

Twenty-five Bills were passed by the Parliament (excluding the Appropriation Bills). On an average, Lok Sabha discussed a Bill for 1.5 hours, and Rajya Sabha discussed a Bill for about an hour, before passing it. Lok Sabha discussed and passed the three Labour Codes within three hours, and Rajya Sabha passed them

after 1 hour 45 minutes of discussion. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

Allegations Against the Government



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

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

There is also a general feeling amongst experts that the present Government does not give enough importance to the Standing Committees as they do not refer the Bills to the Committees for scrutiny. In earlier years, Bills were referred to the Committees, where they get fine-tuned to the best interest of the public. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, only 10% of the Bills introduced so far have been referred to Committees. It is much lower than the 14th (60%), 15th (71%) and 16th (27%) Lok Sabha.

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



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

Criticism against Opposition

While the Opposition blames the Government for not following the Parliamentary norms, they are guilty of creating ruckus in the House and misbehaving before the Chair in the Rajya Sabha, leading to suspension of 8 Members. They boycotted the sessions too. This enabled the Government to pass the Bills without serious discussions. Creating a ruckus in the House, and stalling the proceedings have become a trend in the past 15 years. Stalling the proceedings is against the principles of democracy.

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

The Opposition may have genuine reasons for drawing the attention of the nation on any issue. But creating a ruckus and stalling the proceedings are against the interests of the people. They

have to adopt different methods, like the mature democracies in UK and USA.

The people elect the Members to the Parliament to take care of the interest of the people and the nation and to frame suitable policies. Unless the ruling and opposition parties respect and value the traditions of the Parliamentary practices, our democracy cannot be successful. The ruling and the Opposition parties should instil confidence among the citizens by respecting and adhering to democratic and Parliamentary norms.

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

(Data and graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research)

Indian Govt Passes Three Major Farm Bills as Part of Agrarian Reforms

By T N Ashok, Consulting Editor (October 2020)

The Indian Government has passed three major legislations in Parliament as part of its major effort to put agrarian reforms on track. The two major bills passed were – The Farmers Produce and Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and the Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assuance and Farm Services Bill. The third legislation related to Essential Commodities Act. All three legislations replace ordinances promulgated by the government before the onset of Parliament's Monsoon session.

Reactions:

Prime Minister Modi in a series of tweets described the legislation as a watershed moment in the history of Indian Agriculture. The members of ruling party (BJP) called it a big bang reform. But the Congress led opposition dubbed the legislations as being "historic for all the wrong reasons". The opposition demanded the bills be referred to a Joint Select Committee of the House for further examination of its provisions. BJP's long-time and strongest ally Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) was disappointed about the Bill and its minister in the cabinet, Harsimran Kaur Badal resigned from the cabinet over the issue.

What the Bills contain?

The first bill seeks to prohibit the state governments from collecting market fees, cess or levies for trade outside notified APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) *mandis*. APMC is a marketing board established by a State Government to safeguard the farmers from exploitation by large retailers, and to ensure that farm-to-retail-price spread does not become excessively high. It also removes inter-state barriers and provides a framework for electronic trading directly between a buyer and a farmer breaking state control over farmers, enabling them to choose the buyer and

of course the price. This roots out money laundering practices too. State Governments are fuming over their alleged loss of control of farm produce and their distribution.

The second Bill opens up the market further and allows farmers to sell directly to corporate entities engaged in agricultural trade. The big players are Walmart, Pepsi Foods, Reliance and ITC Agro. Farmers led by the Opposition fear that prices can be manipulated by the corporate lobbies to their advantage with their infrastructure for distribution, financial and muscle power. But Government dismisses such fears as baseless, hoping that the competition among corporates will fetch a better price to farmers.

The third legislation is essentially an amendment seeking to take out some commodities from the essential commodities list – potatoes, tomatoes and onions, with the government justifying the move that removal of these commodities from the essential commodities list, will enable the farmers to stock these in their godowns or elsewhere and sell them when the market is favourable, instead of letting the huge, monopolistic middle-men do it.

Opposition's concern:

The concern of the Opposition is that the move undermines food security. But this is not true, says the Government, defending the legislations. The Government assures that the states still retain the power to control distribution and regularise it especially in times of exigencies like famine, shortages, wars etc. The legislations seem to strike at the heart of a big problem in the demand supply management, hoarders and black marketers. Under the new legislations, they are sought to be rooted out. In a nutshell, the Government is trying to open up the agriculture market, ensuring minimum price and food security. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) continues to hold good, to ensure fair price for the farmers produce.

Some farmer organisations are protesting, maybe because of lack of clarity on the MSP issue which they fear is being dispensed with,

though actually it is not. The Centre would do well to reiterate their categorical assurance that the Government-administered pricing mechanism under MSP is not being dispensed with. The problem started with a massive protest by Haryana farmers, who blocked all roads and highways soon after the Bills were introduced. They feared that the Bills were not beneficial to them. There were massive rallies and protests in Punjab too under the Congress Government, which in a democracy like India is quite understandable. And now, it is official news that after over a month of protests by farmers against the three farm laws enacted by the Central Government, a special session of the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday (October 20) not only rejected the three laws of the Centre by a unanimous resolution but also passed Amendment Bills removing Punjab from the ambit of the central laws. It would be a good academic and Constitutional subject for study, if all the non-BJP states in the country adopt a similar stand and pass similar Acts!

MYTH	REALITY
◆ The two new bills regarding agriculture market reforms are aimed at ending Minimum Support Price for farmers. ◆ The proposed laws are anti-farmers since the market force will decide their fate. ◆ This is an act of taking away the powers of states by nullifying APMC yards. ◆ Modi government pushing farmers to the sphere of exploitation by allowing contracts with big corporates.	◆ Farm bills are not going to affect MSP at all. The bill deals with additional trading opportunities for farmers outside the APMC market ◆ On the contrary, farmers can make more benefit by selling their produce to anyone by entering into an agreement. Middlemen stand removed from the process. ◆ States can still have APMCs under their law, but can't force farmers to sell only to them. This is about giving more choices to farmers. ◆ Contract farming is already in practice under APMC laws. Some examples of contract farming are seen in Punjab (PepsiCo), West Bengal (PepsiCo) and Haryana (SAB Miller). Moreover, the UPA had also formulated laws to encourage states for contract farming.

Government's clarification – Graphics courtesy thetrupicture.org

Minister's assurance on MSP:

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said: "MSPs won't be touched at any cost. Not just these Bills, many steps have been taken to double farmers' income in the past six years. There is no doubt that farmers will continue to get MSP." Former PM and agriculturist Deve Gowda has expressed concerns over farmers' so-called plight saying: "As a farmer I am really concerned with issues related to the farm bills. The entire House, all of us are concerned about farmers. Farmers are the backbone of the country. The Prime Minister should explain why there is a hurry to pass the Bills amid the pandemic."

Whether the farm bills benefit the farmers or not, whether the legislations seek to double the farmers income or not, whether Opposition's criticisms of the bill that farmers will not actually benefit if the existing chain of demand and supply management is disturbed is something one can answer only when the law is enforced in right earnest and the results follow. Perhaps in the next few agricultural seasons, we will know the outcome.

Emergence of New Age Political Consultancies – Are Political Parties Getting Corporatised?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (October 2020)

In the recent elections in India, we have seen major political parties and candidates engaging professional consultants to manage their elections. Rulers and potential rulers seeking advice from experts, is not a new phenomenon in India.

Political Strategies by Internal Team

Even in *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna functioned more like a political advisor to the *Pandavas*, and Sakuni for the *Kauravas*. In ancient India, every king had wise ministers to advise him on political strategies. During the freedom struggle, Pandit Nehru, Rajaji, Sardar Patel and many others planned strategies with Mahatma Gandhi. From ancient times, the people who provided strategies were from the team, and not outsiders.

Even in the post-Independence era, till 15 years ago, leaders of the various national and regional political parties worked out political and poll strategies on their own and they were highly successful. They never hired people to advise political or poll strategies. "Great leaders like Vajpayee, Advani, India Gandhi, and many others, worked out their political and election strategies on their own with the help of their internal leaders and workers," says, R Nurullah, a senior political journalist with 40 years of standing.

Leaders Lack Connectivity with Party Workers

"The present-day leaders of big political parties do not have connectivity with their cadre and they do not get any feedback on the aspirations and feelings of the people and hence, they have to depend on outsiders for obtaining feedback and planning strategies. A new class of 'political leaders' has emerged in the recent years, and they function like corporate leaders. Unlike the

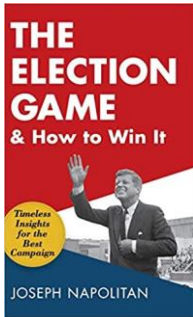
earlier era, where top leaders were easily accessible to party workers, nowadays, it is difficult for any party worker to meet the leaders and give feedback. Since most of the leaders nowadays function only from their air-conditioned chambers, their connectivity with the people and the party workers is lost, so that they need a third person to give them the feedback”, says N K Premachandran, fourth term Member of Parliament (MP) from Kerala State, representing the political party, RSP.

Agreeing with the above views, one of the poll strategists, who prefers to remain anonymous, says that in the earlier era, party workers were able to freely converse with their top leaders without fear. Presently, due to sycophancy, party workers and second level leaders do not share the correct feedback with their top leaders. He confirms that all major political parties are engaging outside professional consultants to undertake surveys and to work out poll strategies.

Global Scenario

Political strategists have been in existence since the advent of electoral politics, mainly in the USA, and later in India. However, these strategists were part of an internal team of a political party and not independent advisors.

The first organised political campaign can be traced back to 1896 with businessman turned senator, Marcus Alonzo Hanna successfully undertaking a campaign for William McKinley, the 25th President of the USA. As a corporate entity, Campaigns Inc., a consulting firm by Whitaker and Baxter in California, is said to be the first political consulting firm to get into the business in 1934.



Joseph Napolitan is said to have coined the word 'political consultant' and declared himself a political consultant in the USA. He has done more than 100 campaigns in the USA and other countries. He campaigned for President Kennedy in the 1960 elections. The New York Times newspaper described him in a 1968 profile, as the newest American phenomenon, the professional campaign manager and a pioneering campaign consultant. 'The Election Game & How

to Win It' authored by Joe Napolitan, is one of the top selling books, despite its high price. This indicates the high esteem held for the man who helped give birth to the modern political consulting industry.

Many political consultants in the USA work not only for parties, but also for political action committees, which is a unique trend in the USA. Internationally, many parties/leaders from various countries have started engaging political consultants during their poll campaigns.

The Indian Scenario

The 1990-2014 Era

After the economic liberalisation in 1991, the emergence of the television (TV) media changed the campaign strategies. Political parties began owning TV channels to promote their parties. In 1993, Sun TV was started as an entertainment channel with the agenda of promoting the DMK political party. Later on, many more parties started their own channels.

In 1996, the BSP leader, Kanshiram slapped Ashutosh, a reporter with the NDTV news channel, when he was asked some uncomfortable questions. That led to the political parties thinking in terms of engaging professional agencies for handling the media and appointing spokespersons to engage the media.

BJP and Congress began using professional public relation (PR) agencies like Good Relations India and Perfect Relations to handle media relations on their behalf. After 2004, national parties began using professional agencies in the states they were ruling (mostly in the North and the West), for election campaign.

Soon, national parties set up their own internal campaign managers, to professionally handle the campaign. Arun Nehru (Congress) Arun Jaitly (BJP), Narendra Modi (BJP), Pramod Mahajan (BJP) and Jairam Ramesh (Congress) emerged as good campaign managers.

The 2004 General Elections saw the emergence of 'theme-based advertisements'. Technology was used only to a limited extent in the 2004 General Elections. BJP projected Vajpayee as the Prime Minister (PM) candidate. For the first time in the Indian elections, a candidate was projected as a PM candidate. After 2004, political communication strategists emerged in a small way to support individual leaders at the regional level.

In the 2009 General Elections, both BJP and Congress used technology tools like the social media and SMS/telephone in their campaigns. Advani and Dr Manmohan Singh were projected as PM candidates of BJP and Congress respectively. BJP was the major user of technology tools. BJP lost the elections.

Till 2009, there was no concept of 'paid media'. Political parties appointed advertising agencies to plan and place their advertisements. Initially, many leading professional advertising and PR Gurus like Piyush Pandey, Sam Balsara, and Dilip Cherian were involved in advising leaders and running their election campaigns until the new breed of branding, technology, and data science consultants arrived and changed the entire campaign landscape.

Narendra Modi (BJP) used technology tools like social media, 3D hologram, mobile phones, and smart phones in the Gujarat Assembly Elections in 2012.

The 2014 (Post-Modi) Era

Political techno strategies were used in the 2014 General Elections. Professionals like Prashant Kishore supported the BJP campaign. A more professional approach towards the campaign, like survey, big data analytics, and micro-management of the campaign through technology, were used. New technologies like Augmented Reality (QR code) and Virtual Reality (like hologram) were also used. Even in 2019, new generation political consultants engaged by both BJP and Congress, used a mix of traditional and technology strategies.



BJP War Room – Photo Courtesy: DailyMail

Bihar's Prashant Kishore (IPAC), Karnataka's Sunil Konagalu, Tamil Nadu's Jhon Arokiasamy (JPG-PAC), Maharashtra's Girish Dhoke (JPG-PAC), and Maharashtra's Tushar Panchal (WarRoom Strategies) have contributed to end-to-end election campaigns for many leaders running for PM's (Prime Minister) and CM's (Chief Minister) offices.

Apart from these well-known consultants, there are numerous others who specialise in exclusive areas such as data science, opinion polls, party and candidate centric surveys, digital campaigns, political events, and voter outreach activations. Many public relations agencies have now started a separate wing for political consultancy.

Role of Political Strategies

Political consultants act as political strategists, brand strategists, and election or poll strategists. This is achieved by planning political narratives, moves and counter moves for leaders and



Indian National Congress War Room – Photo courtesy: Huffingtonpost

parties, and campaign strategies and events to promote leaders, candidates or causes. They also provide media strategies for traditional and internet media.

Controversies

The Indian political system is engaging external professional consultants for the first time, to manage poll strategies. They conduct surveys, analyse data and suggest names for the selection

of candidates. What was hitherto done by the political leaders, is now being done by outsiders. This is causing heartburn for the second level leaders. In many places, they are also protesting against the involvement of consultants.

The parties spend large amounts of money towards consultancy charges. Despite this, the consultants' team cannot work at the ground level. They engage a large number of educated professionals for undertaking surveys, collecting feedback and preparing reports. They have to depend on the party workers for execution of strategies.

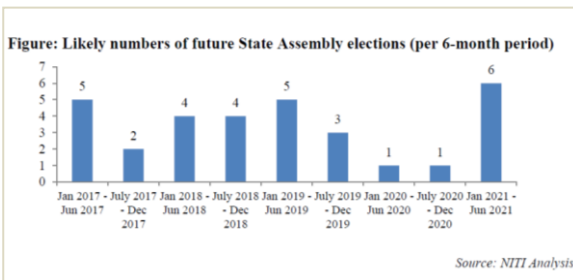
Notwithstanding the initial hiccups, the engagement of professional consultants has come to stay in India and it may further improve, according to R Jai Krishna, a media expert from Delhi. According to N K Premachandran, MP, a new class of corporate-styled 'political leaders' is emerging, who may not have direct contact with the people and the party cadre.

Is Simultaneous Election Feasible?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (January 2021)

Background

Recently, while addressing the 80th All India Presiding Officers' Conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the authorities to simplify the laws to enable 'One Nation, One Election', and a single voters' list for polls. He wanted the people to discuss the feasibility of 'Simultaneous Elections' for both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.



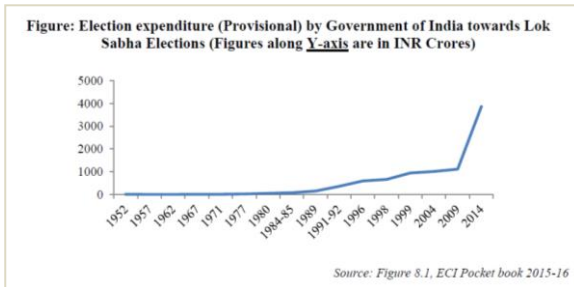
'Simultaneous Elections' is not new to India. The first four General Elections to Lok Sabha (1952 to 1967) and various State Assemblies were held

simultaneously. Thereafter, due to the dissolution of some State Assemblies and the premature dissolution of Lok Sabha, the election cycle got disrupted. Besides the General Elections for Lok Sabha, the Election Commission has to conduct elections for five to six State Assemblies every year at different times, depending on the term of completion of the individual State Assemblies.

Conducting the Indian General Elections is the biggest event management in the world. Besides incurring a huge expenditure, the Election Commission of India (ECI) deploys more than 10 million Government officials and security forces during this election period. Preparation of the voters' list involves expenditure and deployment of Government officials. This is in addition to the strain for the political parties, and a huge expenditure. According to Narayanan Thirupathy, BJP Spokesperson, the Government spends around Rs.10,000 crores every five year towards the General

Elections. According to him the political parties spent around Rs.30,000/- crores in the 2014 General Elections, and Rs.60,000/- crores in the 2019 General Elections.

Since elections are held every year for different states, the government



machinery and the security forces are engaged in election duty, and routine official work gets dislocated. Other issues include (1) disruption of normal public life, (2)

perpetuation of communal and caste issues and (3) adverse impact on the focus of governance and policy, for electoral gains.

The problems that arise due to the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), have been articulated by the Parliamentary Standing Committee in its 79th report. The Committee states "*The imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) puts on hold the entire development programme and activities of the Union and State Governments in the poll bound State. It even affects the normal governance. Frequent elections lead to imposition of MCC over prolonged periods of time. This often leads to policy paralysis and governance deficit*".

The Prime Minister said that the political parties and the Executives were always in the election mode due to frequent elections in the country, and many of the development schemes could not be announced or implemented due to the Model Code of Conduct, applicable at different parts of the country. Further, the multi-phased elections (upto 7 phases) create more strain to the Government machinery and political parties.

Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution (Article 83(2) and 172(1)) provides for a normal term of five years for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies from the date of the first sitting. Since they do not have any fixed time, they could be dissolved earlier than its normal term. The tenure of the House cannot be extended beyond five years, except in an emergency situation.

Section 14 and 15 of the Representation of People Act 1951 empowers the Election Commission to notify and conduct elections to both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, six months prior to the end of the normal term.

Other Countries

According to United Kingdom's Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011, the tenure of the Parliament is fixed at five years. Elections will be held on the first Thursday of May every fifth year. The Parliament can be dissolved only when the motion is passed by a two-thirds majority (including vacant seats), or when an alternate Government could not be formed within 14 days from a No-Confidence motion. Elections will be held only for the remainder period.

According to the Federal Republic of Germany's Basic Law (Article 67 – Constructive vote of no confidence), lack of confidence can be expressed only after electing the successor with a majority.

Reports of the Official Committees

The Law Commission of India headed by Hon'ble Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy, in its 170th report on Reform of Electoral Laws (1999), suggests an end to elections every year, and insists on one election every five years.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) also wrote to the Government in November 1999, that the separate electoral rolls prepared by the ECI and State EC created confusion.

In 2015, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 79th report analysed the 'Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies'. They sought the views of all the political parties and stakeholders. After an in-depth study, the Committee accepted that there were challenges in frequent elections, and recommended 'Two-Phase' elections, Phase One for Lok Sabha and some State Assemblies and Phase Two after 30 months for remaining State Assemblies, grouping various State Assemblies together based on their tenure.

Since ECI has the powers to notify and conduct elections six months before the end of the term, the Committee has suggested grouping of the State Assemblies either by curtailing or extending the term to synchronise with the General Elections as a 'one-time measure'.

This could be implemented by a consensus with the political parties and through a Parliament resolution. In this process, assuming that this scheme is implemented from the 2024 General Elections after consensus, around 16 State Assemblies and Lok Sabha Elections will be held in the first phase in May 2024. The second phase of elections for the remaining State Assemblies will be held somewhere during November-December 2026 (midway of 2024 and 2029). The 79th Parliamentary Committee Report explains this proposal with a detailed chart.

Reactions from Political Parties

Some of the political parties like Indian National Congress, Trinamool Congress, NCP, and Communist parties have expressed reservations about the executability and operational feasibility. This is the biggest challenge.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for an all-party meet in June 2019 to discuss and arrive at a consensus among the political parties, on this issue. Out of 40 invited parties, only 21 were present and three shared their views in writing. Indian National

Congress, Trinamool Congress, BSP, SP, DMK, AAP and Shiv Sena did not participate.

Criticisms

T K Rangarajan, former MP and Senior Leader of CPI(M) feels that this initiative would disturb the federal structure of our country, and only national parties would dominate, eliminating the regional parties. He also expressed the concern that the ruling party at the centre might create instability in the opposition party-ruled states, in order to bring the state under the President's Rule. He felt that such simultaneous elections were not implementable. He alleges that this initiative would be a politically motivated one, to bring the entire country under one rule.

During discussions with apolitical people, there was apprehension expressed about regional issues fading away in simultaneous elections. Hence, the regional parties are reluctant to accept the proposed election reforms.

Expert Views

Former Chief Election Commissioner of India T S Krishnamurthy, speaking to PreSense, said that 'simultaneous elections' is theoretically an attractive proposition. He also said that Constitutional changes were needed to ensure fixed tenure of legislatures and transition provisions, giving right to extend or curtail tenure of existing state legislatures. He cautioned that simultaneous elections might pose administrative problems with deployment of more para military forces to maintain law and order.

"This initiative will disturb the federal structure of our country, and only national parties will dominate, eliminating the regional parties. this is a politically motivated one, to bring the entire country under one rule."

- T K Rangarajan. Former MP and Senior Leader of CPI (M)

T S Krishnamurthy, added that as a first step, before considering simultaneous

elections, instead of multi-phased elections for Parliament and State Assemblies in the current system, we should hold 'single day' elections, excluding certain identified regions for security reasons. He agreed that 'simultaneous elections' would save enormous expenditure for the Government and for the political parties. He summed up saying that advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

Srinivasa Prabhu, Joint Secretary (Retired) of the Lok Sabha Secretariat and a Constitutional expert, speaking to PreSense, said that if a mid-term election was held for Lok Sabha or State Assemblies after a no-confidence motion without any possibility of

"Simultaneous Elections is theoretically an attractive proposition. Suitable Constitutional changes are required. This would save enormous expenditure for the Government and political parties. Advantages outweigh disadvantages."

- T S Krishnamurthy,
Former Chief Election
Commissioner of India

a new Government, the election should be held only for the remaining period of the term of the House. He said that none of the political parties were interested in dissolving the House, to face elections. They would therefore explore all possibilities of forming an alternate Government. He agreed that during simultaneous elections, the national issues might overwhelm the regional

issues, triggering the regional parties to work hard when they were in power.

Prof. G Ramesh, Professor of Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru said that corruption increased due to huge election expenses. Due to frequent elections happening across the country, the Government is not in a position to take any bold reform decisions, for electoral reasons. He supported the suggestion given by the Parliamentary Committee (79th Report) for two-phase elections. He said that holding simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies once in five years, was infeasible.

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan, former Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP), representing Indian National Congress, was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee and he presented the 79th report to the Parliament in Dec 2015. This report has also been accepted by NITI Aayog.

Speaking to PreSense, Dr Sudarsana Nachiappan said that during the first General Elections in 1952, when Congress had prominent national and regional leaders, they could not win in some of the State Assemblies. Even in the 2019 General Elections, when some State Assemblies went to polls along with Lok Sabha polls, BJP got a lower percentage in the Assembly segments of some states, than what they polled for Lok Sabha. Based on this observation, he allayed the fears that the federal set-up of the nation would be disturbed. The enactment of the Anti-Defection Act in 1985 and the Supreme Court Judgement in the SR Bommai Case (1994), have made it difficult for the ruling party at the centre to dissolve State Assemblies, according to their whims and fancies, he said. Indian democracy matures day by day, encouraging us to move forward with the reforms.

Dr Sudarasana Nachiappan also quoted the example of the Fixed Time Parliament Act 2011 of the United Kingdom, where the tenure of their Parliament was fixed by an Act. In his 79th Report, he suggested a model that a specific term could be fixed for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, and dissolution could be made tighter.

Conclusion and Way Forward

We consulted many political leaders and experts while researching for this Cover Story. There is consensus that a large amount of money is being spent during elections, leading to corruption. There is a general feeling that the country urgently needs electoral reforms to curb money power.

In the past three decades, we have seen the trend that whenever a new reform policy is mooted by the ruling party, the opposition parties give a knee-jerk reaction, opposing the proposal and demanding its immediate withdrawal, without going into the merits of the suggestion. At the same time, when the opposition comes to power, they implement those very policies quickly. The previous ruling party, now in the opposition, opposes the same policy, which they had mooted earlier. Although democracy seems mature because of voting by the people, political parties need to improve their attitude and approach, to look into any proposal objectively, keeping the nation's interest in sight, and not their political interest.

In 1991, when Congress introduced liberalisation, all the opposition parties opposed it tooth and nail. Later on, when they came to power, they implemented it. BJP, which had opposed the Aadhar card and GST when they were in the opposition, implemented them after they assumed power. Unfortunately, Congress which had piloted the idea, is now opposing the proposal. Similarly, the political parties which were in power earlier, and had proposed the NEET Examination, and various road projects and industry projects, are now opposing as the Opposition. 'Opposing for the sake of opposition' is not in the interest of the nation.

The concept of simultaneous elections is an idea mooted and developed over 20 years by various governments and the expert committees. In the interest of the nation first, all the political parties and stakeholders should critically discuss the concept, and come out with a solution for electoral reforms and simultaneous elections.

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee which went into the various aspects of 'Simultaneous Elections' and presented the report to the Parliament in December 2015. This 79th report, which is the latest official document available for discussion on the subject, can be downloaded from the link: <http://tinyurl.com/report79> .



As Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, he also presented a report (No. 18) on 'Electoral Reforms' to the Parliament.

Interactive Session with Dr Sudarsana Nachiappan | 24th Jan 2021

Please watch in YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/ZbOZHs-2fxk>

Know About the Union Budget

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (January 2021)

The Annual Financial Statement, which is more commonly known as the Union Budget is the Estimate of the Income and Expenditure of the Central Government for a definite duration, which is usually one year. Much planning and exercise goes into the preparation of the Union Budget and there is more to it after its presentation in the Parliament by the Union Finance Minister.

Your eMagazine PreSense had the privilege of interviewing Mr M R Sivaraman, Former Revenue Secretary, Government of India, with many years of experience in the preparation of the Union Budget and State Budgets. We bring you a synopsis of the interview about the Union Budget – Preparation, Presentation, Implementation and Audit.

Q1. We are familiar with the Hon'ble Finance Minister walking into the Parliament with the red cloth bag of documents, for presentation of the Union Budget. What goes into preparing the Union Budget, before it is ready for presentation?

There are six Articles in the Indian Constitution dealing with the Union Budget, and corresponding six Articles dealing with the State Budget. Article 112 deals with the presentation of the Annual Financial Statement, which is the analogue of the company (Government in this case).

The Government has certain commitments to fulfil, irrespective of whether it has enough money to fulfil them or not, such as the expenditure relating to the Judiciary, the Parliament, the President's Office, Interest payments to the public and other countries, Repayment of Loans. These are 'charged on the budget'. They are discussed in the parliament but not voted. The administration of the country which includes the expenditure on defence, police and similar forces, and those of other

administrative departments of the government are committed expenditure even though economy cuts can sometimes be imposed on them.

Preparatory Exercise

In the month of October each year, the Government calls for the Budget estimates from all its departments and ministries. To arrive at this estimate, the actual expenditure for the completed period is first ascertained, and then the projected expenditure for the remaining months of the financial year. For example, in the current year 2020-21, the defence expenditure has unexpectedly escalated with the need for more equipment, high altitude clothing for the soldiers, arms and ammunition, warm tents and food, due to the emergency situation at the national border. These are added in what we call the Supplementary Budget, which will be part of the revised Estimate. Then, the Budget for the following financial year is estimated.

Every ministry has its normal schemes and projects. In normal, healthy practice, projects are classified under different categories – projects that can be completed in the current year, those that can be completed in the ensuing year, and so on. The budget for those projects that are already underway and require additional allocation for completion, is given priority over new projects so that they are completed and utilised.

The Financial Advisor in consultation with the Joint Secretary and other officials, prepares the Budget for the ministry. When these proposals reach the Finance Ministry, they are examined and fine-tuned in consultation with the respective departments. The resources are divided into tax and non-tax sources. The Revenue Department consisting of the Central Boards of Direct and Indirect Taxes are involved in elaborate exercises, based on past performance and projections. For example, the services sector which accounts for 58% of the GDP has suffered due to the COVID situation this year. This factor has to be taken into consideration while planning for the next year. This is done by consulting with the various sectors of the economy. This exercise takes place in

November-December. Extensive and detailed discussions are held with all the stakeholders, and notes are taken, prior to the preparation of the Budget. Experts and professionals in the respective fields are consulted while preparing the tax proposals.

The Finance Secretary then sits with his team and finalises the Expenditure Budget while the Resources Budget, including changes in taxes if any, is finalised by the Revenue Secretary. The tax proposals go under the signature of the Revenue Secretary. The consolidation of the budget and the finalisation of the budget speech is done by the Finance Secretary, who is the most senior secretary in the ministry in terms of service in the ministry.



Q2. How is the Budget dealt with, in the Parliament for its approval?

The finalised Budget is discussed in detail with the Prime Minister, by the team. Thereafter, the Budget is printed. One hour before the presentation, the Cabinet meets in the Parliament House and a summary is presented for their comprehension. The Presentation of the Union Budget is then made in the Parliament. The Bills, such as the Finance Bill, and Appropriation Bills, are introduced. The approval of the President of India is necessary before the

presentation of the Union Budget, with the Appropriation Bill (which includes Demand for Grants) and the Finance Bill.

The Appropriation Bill consists of the expenditure and receipts from



the various ministries. The expenditure is prepared as a 'Demand for Grant'. Demand for Grant is the request for approval of the expenditure incurred/to be incurred by the respective ministries. A Cut Motion is a special power vested in the Members of the Lok Sabha, to oppose a demand being

discussed for specific allocation by the ministry, in the Government Bill, as part of the Demand for Grants. The cut/reduction can be a token amount of Rupee one. These Demands are then voted by the Parliament for approval. Similarly, the Appropriation Bill is discussed. The Finance Bill deals with changes in Customs and Excise Duty, Income and Corporate Taxes. Changes in GST (Goods & Services Tax) have to be approved by the GST Council of India.

Q3. Once the Budget is approved in the Parliament, what does the Government do with the approved Budget?

Once the Budget is approved, the grants are communicated to the various ministries. It is the responsibility of the Financial Advisor and the Joint Secretary to take care of the periodical disbursement of the funds to the ministries or State Governments.

Q4. As the funds are utilised by the ministries in the course of the year, there is an element of auditing of the utilisation of funds. How is this carried out?

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), an independent Constitutional Authority, audits the accounts of the Central and State Governments, and submits the audit reports to the President of India. This report is examined by the Public

Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament, headed by an Opposition Leader. In case of surplus of expenditure over the budgeted estimate, the ministry concerned has to explain to a Parliamentary Committee, to justify the surplus expenditure without seeking a Supplementary Budget. In case of an emergency as had occurred recently for the Defence Ministry because of the development in the borders, a Supplemental Budget can be proposed and approved, or reasons justified if expenditure has exceeded the allocation. PAC can raise observations based on the reports, and the ministry concerned would be required to respond to the queries. These responses will be submitted to the Action Taken Committee of the Parliament. India's Union Budget is considered as one of the most transparent budgets in the world.

Q5. In your opinion, what should the focus of the forthcoming Budget for FY 2021-2022 be?

It should focus primarily on the creation of demand for capital goods and consumer goods. This is a complicated exercise since it involves the GST factor, which does not come directly under the Union Budget. Some of the industries that critically need revival are tourism, construction, and automobile. The extent of taxes in the price of an automobile is 45% - almost the highest in the world.

The India's Union Budget is considered as one of the most transparent budgets in the world.

There is at least 25% tax evasion in the country. We need to address this, and increase the tax revenue to the GDP of the country. Otherwise, it is challenging to depend mainly on borrowings.

Therefore, the focus should be :

- Reviving the demand quickly,
- Streamlining tax rates and raising the tax revenue of the country,

- Encouraging employment generation,
- Enabling Unemployment Security to migrant workers through a calibrated unemployment relief scheme.

It is advisable that the Finance Minister associate experienced former government officials for their expertise and advice, which would be valuable, while planning and drawing up the country's Budget.

The complete interview can be watched on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t8Py3iCZ48>

Celebrating Negativity – Quo Vadis?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Feb 2021)

In the recent years, India has been seeing a trend, where a section of the public and the media celebrate negative news, without any reservation. In many states of the country, convicts and criminal offenders who



are released from jail after serving their period of imprisonment, are hailed as heroes and received in grandeur. Anti-hero characters who feature in films, social media and television serials, are hero-worshipped. Hanged terrorists are given grand funerals, with large crowds turning up. In the process, genuine heroes of our nation are not recognised, and are often side-lined.

In the recent violence caused by miscreants in the garb of farmers' support, at the time of the Republic Day celebrations at Delhi, some senior journalists tweeted some fake news against the police. These promoters of the fake news were hailed by a section of media and some intellectuals, in defence of 'freedom of speech and expression'.

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

The Silence of Concerned Citizens

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

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

Freedom of Speech is Not Absolute

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

Sadly, the people who advocate 'freedom of speech' do not educate the youngsters about the reasonable restrictions. When the author spoke to one of the senior professors of journalism of a reputed university, the professor questioned the right of the police to arrest any person who violated the restrictions. Surprisingly, this

professor was ignorant of the reasonable restrictions and even the fundamental duties enshrined in the Constitution. Thousands of students who are taught by this professor, are likely to be misinformed by him, and therefore, they run the risk of breaking the law, out of ignorance.

Why This Trend?

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

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

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

Role of Political Parties and the Media

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

instead of playing a positive role, fuel such acts, to up their TRP ratings.

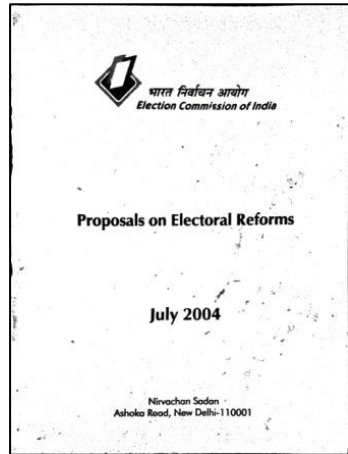
Differentiate between Government and Sovereignty of the Nation

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

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

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Mar 2021)

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



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

Although the Law Commission and the Parliamentary Standing Committee have suggested reforms, so far, there has been no political will to legislate such reforms. Without the major electoral reforms, our democracy cannot be strengthened.

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

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

Another important matter of concern is the 'Opinion Polls'. Even though the Election Commission had once wanted to ban opinion polls before the elections, the Supreme Court held that it could not be banned on the grounds of 'freedom of speech and expression'. In India, many of the offenders seek protection under the garb of 'freedom of speech'. Exploiting this privilege, many opinion polls are released with the nexus of political parties and the media and poll agencies. These surveys are not transparent as they do not indicate the methodology and the sample size of the survey and the results. Since many of the media houses are owned by political parties or are in alliance with some parties, their views are unreliable. In the past elections, none of the surveys has proved right. The Election Commission can impose restrictions like minimum sample size, transparency of methodology, etc. If there is any legal provision, the Election Commission can permit survey results till the announcement of election dates, without infringing

on the freedom of speech. Voters should decide based on their own perceptions. We need to draw the line between 'free and fair election' and 'freedom of speech' in the name of opinion polls.

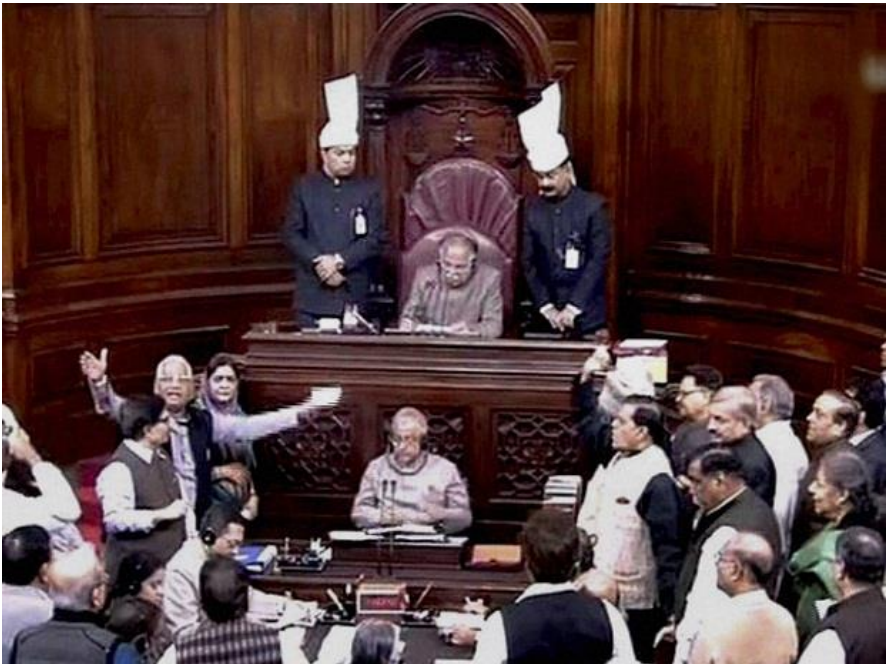
In the current Assembly Elections, some of the prospective parties have released manifestoes promising 'the moon and the heaven'. They have not declared their source of funds to meet their impractical promises. One party has promised 'government jobs' and washing machines to all the ration cardholders.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

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

In the past four General Elections, none of the parties has promised in their manifesto to bring about 'Electoral Reforms'. As the nation prepares to celebrate its 75th year of independence, it is time for all political parties to join together to clean up the electoral and societal system and bring in legislation for Electoral Reforms, including Public Funding through National Election Fund for Funding of Elections as proposed by Former Chief Election Commissioner of India Shri T S Krishnamurthy, and provide opportunities to enthusiastic and committed youngsters to be part of the legislature. PreSense appeals to all authorities to enact a separate comprehensive law to regulate all political parties, as recommended by Justice Venkatachaliah Constitution Review Committee.

Mother India@75 Sorrows Over Parliament Disruption

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Aug2021)



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

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

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

Commentary & Analysis

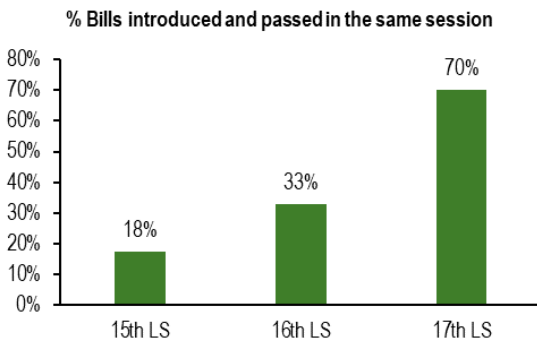
Though the Government was willing to discuss all issues raised by the Opposition, it was insisting on a debate only on the Pegasus issue, to be discussed on priority basis. The same opposition leaders, who were in the Government earlier, knew pretty well that the matter was sub-judice, as it was already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

Besides, it is common knowledge that every person holding a smart phone and downloading mobile apps is susceptible to snooping without his or her knowledge. Pegasus may not be a serious issue for the common man. But the opposition could have followed parliamentary protocols by requesting the Business Advisory Committee, for allotting time for a detailed discussion on various issues affecting the common man such as unemployment,

economy, fuel price, price rise, inflation more relevant to their constituencies. Sadly, they did not even allow the Prime Minister to introduce the new Cabinet Ministers, as per the Parliament procedure.

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

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



Because of the lack of Opposition's maturity, the ruling party gained brownie points taking full advantage in skirting over critical matters for discussion. In the midst of all the ruckus, the Government introduced 15 bills and all were passed

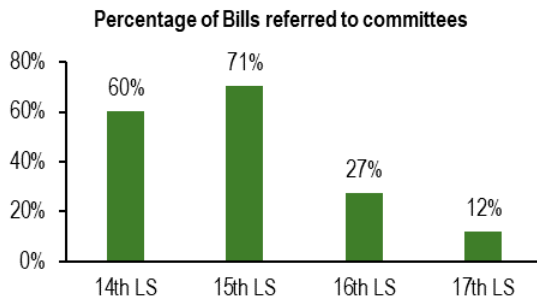
without discussion in the same session, excepting the 127th Amendment bill. Strangely, in the 17th Lok Sabha 70% of the Bills introduced were passed in the same session. This is very high compared to the previous 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

In a democratic process, any proposed legislation needs to be scrutinized thoroughly and debated well before its passage in the house. According to a Senior Member of Parliament, draft legislations prepared by the concerned bureaucrats, often are not in tune with the ground realities and they need to be thoroughly discussed by the MPs, both in the Standing Committees and in the Houses. Then only these bills are fine-tuned with public interests and pass muster of a judicial scrutiny.

Another MP, who also chose to remain anonymous, claimed that the present Government does not refer the Bills to the Standing Committees and pass them without in-depth discussions. During the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha (UPA Government), 60 to 70 percent of the Bills were referred to the Standing Committees. The NDA Government referred only 27% of the bills in the 16th Lok Sabha and 12% in the current 17th Lok Sabha to the standing committees.

Standing Committees with Members from all parties discuss the draft legislations in detail (media is not privy to such discussions) and also get the views of domain experts. They take the

consensus view on the bills and present their report to the Parliament. Based on the Committee's Reports, both the Houses discuss thoroughly and fine tune the draft legislation.



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

The amendment to legislation on labour was passed by both the Houses. Accepted by all, though there were muted protests. This bill was thoroughly scrutinised by the Standing Committee on

Labour and then presented to Parliament. Hence this sensitive bill with lot of reforms has been generally accepted.

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

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



Another issue is the delay in electing the Deputy Speaker for Lok Sabha, opposition MP's say. Normally the Deputy Speaker is elected within a month of the new Lok Sabha. Unfortunately, even

after 27 months, (longest in 75 years of parliamentary democracy), the government has not taken any initiative to elect a Deputy Speaker.

The unruly behaviour of a Rajya Sabha Member by climbing on the Table in the well of the House and throwing rule book on the Chair makes every Indian to hang his/her head in shame. This speaks of the poor quality of the Members nominated by the Political parties. While 90 to 95 percent of the Members observe decorum in presenting their view points, a section of the MP's, apparently with the blessings of their party leaders indulge in unruly behaviour, to impress them denying an opportunity to MPs, observing parliamentary protocols, to raise issues so relevant to national interests.

Suggestions

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

Time for Proactive Decisions

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

Sadly, political parties do not condemn such misbehaviour inside the House. Unfortunately, we do not have Opposition leaders strong enough in stature to stand up to speak against such unruly behaviour of some MPs. Strong stature of party leaders would

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invite admiration and serve as a role model for young MPs. Both Ruling and Opposition parties should respect the Institutions of Parliamentary Democracy and should not take them for granted.

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

Let us remember what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said:

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

Graphics courtesy: PRS India

Ten Challenges faced by India as perceived by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Aug 2007)

We recorded an exclusive podcast over telephone in August 2007 with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, when India was celebrating the 60th Independence anniversary.



In the 9 minutes interview with Prime Point Srinivasan, Dr Abdul Kalam lists 10 challenges before the Nation (as it was in 2007 and many continue even now) and the role of youth to build the nation.

This interview is still relevant today when we celebrate the 75th Independence Day.

Kindly spare 09 minutes and listen to Dr Abdul Kalam.

<https://youtu.be/hVY3hwsGgE0>

Panel Discussion: Ethics in Politics

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by Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Nov 2020)

In the panel discussion under the segment, *Sangamam*, organised



by this eMagazine PreSense, on 1st November 2020, Justice A K Patnaik urged the need for an immediate legislation to regulate political parties and political funding.

‘Ethics in Politics’ – Is it an Oxymoron?

PreSense and Prime Point Foundation in association with Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) organise a monthly panel discussion with nationally renowned persons under the series, “*Sangamam – Fusion of Great Minds*”. On 1st November 2020, a panel discussion was held on the topic “Ethics in Politics”, moderated by Ms Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor of PreSense. Justice A K Patnaik (Retired Judge, Supreme Court) and Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab (sixth-time sitting MP from Cuttack, Odisha) were the expert panellists.

While introducing the subject, K. Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor of PreSense, said that many people thought ethics

and politics were an oxymoron. But he cited the example of great leaders across the nation like Dr Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Morarji Desai, Dr Hari Krishna Mahtab, Kamaraj, Rajaji, Kakkan and many others who practised ethics in their political life. It was only after the period of the 60s and 70s that ethics seemed compromised in politics, he added.

Why Erosion of Values in Politics?

Justice Patnaik said that freedom fighters, who were committed to the national cause, were participants in the legislatures and in the Government till 1960s. He added that it was thereafter that the new class of 'fortune seekers' began to join politics, leading to the erosion of values in politics.

Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab, concurred with the views of Justice Patnaik that a new class of politicians has emerged after the 1960s, with the sole aim to acquire power and earn money. They also interfered with the functioning of the civil administration to gain illegal benefits. Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab quoted Dr Ashok Mehta, a well-known socialist leader who wrote in 1960 that people were rushing towards the political parties, which were expected to come to power.

Legislation Needed

Justice Patnaik observed that electoral politics has led to the collection of large amounts of funds. Therefore, political parties prefer people with a source of large funds. Over a period of time, the leaders themselves have become arrogant and do not follow democracy within their own party. He suggested legislation to regulate the political parties and political funding, along the lines of the UK, Australia, Germany, Cambodia, and South Africa, which have effective legislations in place. He insisted that internal democracy should also be included in the legislation.

Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab felt that in India, the enforcement of the law was weak and any amount of legislation would not help unless enforced effectively. He added that at present, details of funding

of political parties cannot be sought through RTI (Right to Information). In response to this observation, Justice Patnaik said that unless there is a legislation, the Supreme Court, the High Courts and the Election Commission would not be able to enforce, when needed. Both agreed that funding of political parties should become transparent.

Dynastic Politics

Justice Patnaik said that he was not in favour of dynastic politics. If any family is good, they can come back to power on their own. But he was not in favour of individual families controlling the political parties in India, as this was against the interest of democracy.

Agreeing with his views, Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab felt that complacency has developed in dynastic politics. Fortunately, people have become more demanding, and are more conscious of their rights. With the emergence of social media, people have better access to information. He added that the main challenge before politics was how to sustain a high standard of ethics, and do good for the society.

Advice to Young Politicians

Justice Patnaik appealed to youngsters to join politics, after ensuring they had a regular income base to maintain their families. He also appealed to the general public to be vigilant while exercising their votes, so that good people are elected to the legislature.

Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab welcomed the New Education Policy 2020, whereby children would be taught values and ethics from the primary school level. Honesty, gratitude, forgiveness and non-violence need to be taught and inculcated. That would help to build a strong nation.

The discussion in full can be watched on https://youtu.be/cf_w2EKJrmM.

Repeal of Farm Laws – Lessons to be Learnt

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Nov 2021)

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



introduced in the Parliament in September 2020. Both the Houses of Parliament discussed the three Bills together for a limited number of hours and passed them. President gave the assent to these Bills within a week. Probably, this is the first time in Indian history that an active law signed by the President is withdrawn within short time, even before implementation. The repeal was passed without discussion on 29th Nov 2021, the first day of the Winter Session.

Farmers' protest

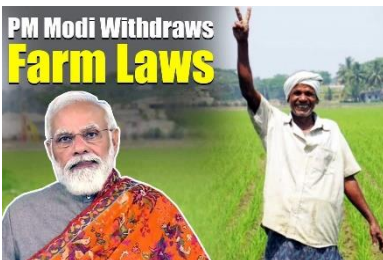
The major opposition parties have also included the concept of Agricultural Reforms in their respective manifestoes, but the way in which the Government pushed these Farm Laws hurriedly raised lot of suspicion in the minds of Farmers and opposition leaders. The Farmers of Punjab, Haryana and part of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

The farmers and the opposition leaders allege that the Government did not consult any of them before promulgating the ordinance and even later when they introduced the Bill in the Parliament. Despite the Government justifying the importance and the benefits of the Farm Laws, the Farmers continued their protest without break. Meanwhile, it is reported that more than 700 farmers died in the protest.

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

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

PM's announcement



Since the farmers were adamant and opposition parties were also protesting, the Prime Minister had to announce the repeal of Farm Laws and assured the nation that he would introduce the legislative process when the Winter Session started. During his public broadcast, Modi said that the Government brought those three Bills with good intentions, but failed to convince the farmers. "Maybe something was lacking in our 'tapasya' [penance], which is why we could not convince some farmers about the laws," he said.

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

Catch22 situation

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

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

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

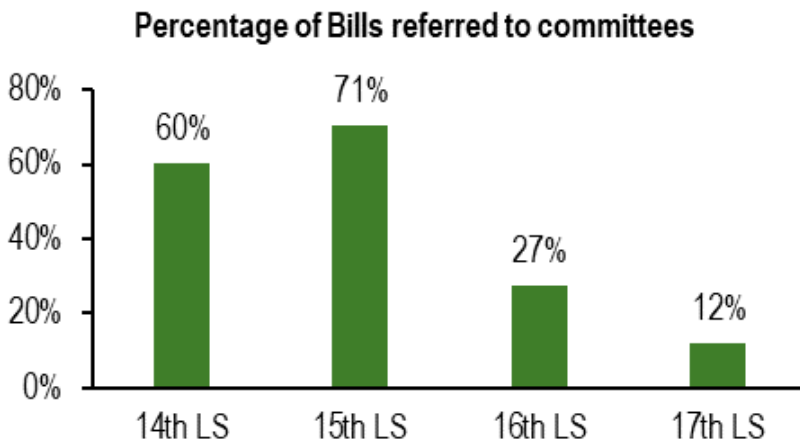
Even when the Bill was introduced in Parliament in September 2020, the opposition demanded that the Bill be referred to Standing Committee. Government hurriedly passed the Bills in

both the Houses with minimal discussion and got the assent of the President within a week. The hurry of the Government created a suspicion in the minds of all farmers and opposition leaders whether the Government was in a hurry to favour a few big corporate houses. As Prime Minister himself agreed, the Government could not convince the farmers, in spite of several rounds of talks with the Minister and officials.

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

Lessons to be learnt

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



a desirable one in a democracy. Government should start consulting the stakeholders in future.

2. In a Parliamentary democracy, Standing Committees have been set up to discuss the Bills thoroughly and to improve upon them. Unfortunately, during the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, the Bills were not referred to Parliamentary committees for vetting. Had these three Farm Bills been referred to the Committees, they would have improved the Bills and the country would not have faced this situation.
3. Of late, there is a general feeling among the people that the Government and the ruling party do not have connectivity with the public. This phenomenon is seen more often than not in the 17th Lok Sabha. Also the irresponsible behaviour of Opposition parties causes concern.

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

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

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (March 2022)

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

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

Do not disturb Question Hour and Zero Hour

In both the Houses of Parliament, Question Hour and Zero Hour are meant for taking up important issues relating to common men and constituency. Though 20 Questions are listed in the Lok Sabha and 15 in Rajya Sabha for oral answers by the Ministers during Question Hour as Starred Questions, hardly 5 to 6 Questions are answered. When starred Questions are taken up, the Members can raise supplementary Questions and grill the Ministers. 200 Unstarred Questions are answered by the Ministers in writing. During the Zero Hour, all the important issues relating to constituency and State that are affecting the common people in the region can be taken up. Unfortunately, we find that most of the time, the opposition parties submit notices to the Speaker seeking adjournment of the Question Hour and Zero Hour to discuss their agenda for their political reasons. If the Speaker or the Chairman does not adjourn, some of the Hon'ble Members

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

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

Increase the working days of the Parliament

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

Many of the bills get passed either without discussion or with less than 30 minutes of discussion. 75 percent of the Budget proposals get passed without discussions and guillotined. Sadly, the bills are also not sent to the Standing Committees by the Government for better scrutiny. Only 13% of the bills were referred to Standing Committees during this 17th Lok Sabha. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, the attendance in the Standing Committees is getting reduced session by session. Last year, then Chief Justice of India also remarked about the lack of discussions on the bills in the Parliament, adding burden to the Courts for further scrutiny. Hon'ble Members have been elected by the voters to effectively

participate in the proceedings of the Parliament and the Standing Committees and not to cause disruptions in the functioning of the Parliament.

The working days of the State Legislatures are also causing concern. On an average, our State Assemblies function around 20 to 30 days per year.

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

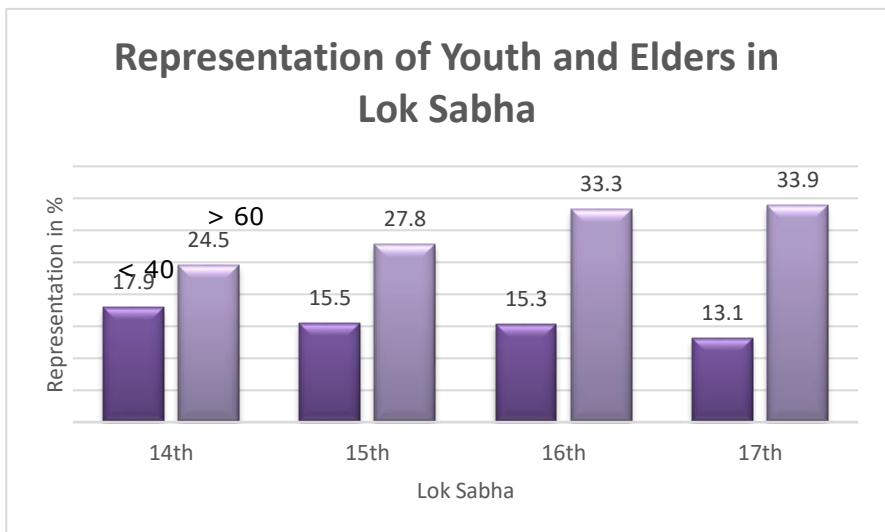
During the Sansad Ratna event, on behalf of PreSense and Prime Point Foundation, we appealed to the Government of India and to Hon'ble Members of Parliament to consider increasing the Parliament working days to a minimum of 120 to 150 days. India is the world's largest democracy. Unless the Parliamentary system functions effectively, we cannot boast of an effective democracy.

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

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul , Editor (April 2022)

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

Youth in Lok Sabha



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

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

Leadership vacuum

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

The reluctance of youth to enter politics

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

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

In India, two types of youngsters join politics. The first group is from the existing political families and the second group is without any political family background. Though the country has abolished the feudal system officially after Independence, it is estimated that the country is governed by around 200 families in politics. If we analyse these families, the first-generation politicians, were highly committed, hardworking and sacrificed a lot. Though the first-generation leaders were not much educated, they understood the pulse of the society and were working closely with the people. The second and third generation politicians from these families inherit the legacy of their parents and enter into positions quickly. Most of them might not have field experience like their parents. Around 70% of the heirs of political families do not show much

interest in acquiring knowledge or in policy making. Because of their money, religion or caste and muscle power, they get elected to State Assemblies and Parliament. Their contribution to the nation is negligible. On the other hand, in our estimate at least 30% of such second and third generation leaders from political families learn from their family experiences and exhibit better performance in politics. For example, Naveen Patnaik (Odisha), Supriya Sule (Maharashtra), Bhartruhari Mahtab (Odisha), Dr Heena Gavit (Maharashtra), Jayant Sinha (Jharkhand) continues to exhibit better performance in the political field. We see this trend across India in all States.

Is there a space for freshers?

If Indian politics is dominated by the members of a certain group of political families, a question arises as to how young aspiring educated people can enter politics and be part of the governance. Many

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

educated youngsters do not want to take risks and sacrifice their time. When the opportunity comes, they want to earn money and take care of their family and live a comfortable life. Also, presently, money and caste play a greater role in Indian politics. Committed educated youngsters with talents from the middle class and poor class are not able to dream of politics.

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

Attitude

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

Preparing youngsters for leadership

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

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

family may overthrow them, if they are allowed to grow. Hence, they want to stick on to their positions.



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

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

Interesting Unknown Facts While Introducing Bills in Parliament + Powers of the Governor

By Srinivas Prabhu, Retired Joint Secretary, Lok Sabha, Delhi (April 2022)

Procedures for introducing a Bill in the Parliament. An interesting episode while presenting the Budget by Indira Gandhi

The main function of the Parliament is 'Legislation'. There are two types. Government bills are piloted by the Ministers and the Private Members Bills are piloted by any member, other than Ministers. For tabling a bill of either type, the Minister or Member has to give notice to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Hon'ble Speaker or Chairman examines the bill and then includes it in the List of Business of the day.

When the turn comes for the introduction of the bill, the concerned Minister raises from the seat and seeks the leave of the House to introduce the bill. Immediately, the Speaker puts the question before the House. "Whether the leave is granted to the Minister to introduce the Bill. Those in favour may say Ayes and those who are against may say Noes." Usually, this is decided by the Voice vote, unless some controversial bills are introduced. Once the permission is granted by the House, Speaker will say "The Leave is granted. Now the Minister may introduce the Bill". At this stage, the Minister will stand up again and say, "*I introduce the Bill*". After Minister introduces the bill, it becomes the property of the House. This procedure is highly important to make the bill and Act legal.

Once the bill is passed in the Lok Sabha, it will be transmitted to the Rajya Sabha. After being passed by both the Houses, the President will give assent and the bill comes into effect. The bill becomes an Act only after President's assent. Government bills (other than Finance bills) can be introduced in either of the House. After getting passed by one House, the bill will be transmitted to the other House for discussion and passing.

Procedures are slightly different for Finance Bills. When the Finance Bill (Budget proposals) is introduced by the Finance Minister in the Lok Sabha, some of the tax proposals like custom duty, excise duty, etc. come into effect from the midnight of the day on which the bill gets introduced.



Until 1999, the Union Budget was presented at 5 pm on the last working day of February, inheriting the British legacy. From 1999, the time was changed to 11 am. Since 2016, the Budget is presented on the 1st of

February every year at 11 am in India.

On 28th February 1970, Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister and Finance Minister after presenting the Budget moved the motion seeking permission from the House to introduce the Bill. The motion was put to vote by Speaker G S Dhillon. The motion was opposed by some members. The motion was adopted. Because of the commotion and interruption, the Speaker adjourned the House till 11 AM the next working day, before Indira Gandhi formally introduced the Finance Bill. Stenographers used to record the proceedings.

Later some members drew the attention of the Speaker in his chamber that according to the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1931, the taxes could not be collected from the midnight of the day, as the bill was not formally introduced in the House. They also pointed out that any collection of taxes from midnight would become illegal and would be challenged in the Supreme Court. Further, it would create more economic mess. Immediately, Speaker ordered that House to be re-convened at 10 pm on the same day to enable the PM to introduce the bill. All the Members were informed through All India Radio, Special Bulletin Part 2 and over the telephone. The House re-assembled at 10 pm and after a brief discussion, Indira Gandhi formally said, "*I introduce the Bill*". Thus, they averted a great constitutional crisis. The House got adjourned at 10.55 pm till 11 am on 2nd March 1970.

In the Parliamentary system, procedures are very important.

What are the Powers of the Governor for bills presented to him?

Recently some discussions are happening in the Media about the powers of the Governor when the bills are presented to him for assent. According to Articles 200 and 201 of Indian Constitution, the Governor has three options.

1. He can give assent to the bill
2. He can withhold. No time limits.
3. He can forward the bill for the consideration of the President.

He can return the bill to the Speaker for reconsideration. If the State Assembly passes again and submits it to the Governor, he can either give his assent or reserve the bill for the consideration of the President.

The same rule applies to the President also. When Giani Zail Singh was the President, during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, a bill known as Indian Telegraph Amendment Bill passed by both the Houses of Parliament was sent to the President for assent. President did not give assent. He kept it pending. Every time, the Government approached the President, he was responding that he was examining the bill. Since the assent was not given by the President, the next Government withdrew the bill in the Parliament. Without the assent of the President or Governor, no bill can become an Act. According to the Constitution, there is no time limit for them to take decisions. They have to take decisions according to Constitutional provisions.

The Future of Dynastic Politics in Indian Democracy

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (July 2022)

The recent political developments in Sri Lanka and Maharashtra have generated debates across India about the competency and the future of dynastic politics in Indian democracy. When India got the freedom in 1947, the country had more than 500 kingdoms across the nation in every region. Sardar Patel brought them together under Indian Republic. After the vanishing of traditional Rajas, a new class of Maha Rajas started emerging in all regions of the country after Independence and continues even after 75 years.

Dynastic Business vs Dynastic Politics

Normally, the family members inherit the business and carry it forward, like Tatas, Ambanis, TVS, etc. Since inheriting business does not require the approval of the people, it is going on smoothly. The next generation in dynastic business takes the business to the next level with new ideas and technologies.

In politics, the dynamics of inheriting the political positions are different. Immediately after Independence in 1947, many political dynasties emerged in every State across the nation. Dynastic politics has two categories - one with the authority of governance and the other with positions like MLAs and MPs, including Municipal Councillors. Many dynastic politicians vanished slowly in the first sixty years. Presently some families remain in ruling position and some as MLAs and MPs.

What would be the future of such dynastic politicians after 10 years? Why many of them vanished gradually in the past? Who would survive in future?

PreSense spoke to many political leaders, party workers and common men. Everybody agrees, that the 'family name' may not

work in future and the 'connect with people' only would help the political families to remain in positions.

Nehru-Gandhi Dynasty



Nehru-Gandhi dynasty (Mahatma Gandhi was not associated with this family) had the control over the Indian Government directly and indirectly for nearly 47 years, out of 54 years of Congress rule after Independence. The Congress party is also under their control all these years. Presently, the party is not able to secure even the official Opposition Party status. The party which was governing almost all the States in the country is now left with only Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Even the Senior leaders of the party allege that the family does not allow any external leadership and the party has lost 'connect with people.'

Regional dynasties

At the regional level, parties like DMK (developed by Karunanidhi for 50 years), Shiv Sena (founded by Bal Thackeray), NCP (founded by Sharad Pawar), National Conference (founded by Sheikh Abdullah), Samajwadi Party (founded by Mulayam Singh Yadav), JDS (founded by Deve Gowda), RJD (founded by Lalu Prasad

Yadav), YSR Congress (founded by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy), BJD (founded by Biju Patnaik), Telugu Desam (founded by NT Ramarao) are some of the popular political parties, that are ruling or were ruling some of the States. Presently many of these parties are strong in their regions.



Dynastic Politics – Advantages

The children of the political leaders have distinct advantage over the other political workers who the same experience in the party. They have great exposure to various nuances of politics and also to get easy access with senior leaders of their own party and other parties. Being a member of a political family gives them an on-the-job training to get groomed as a leader, with adequate knowledge and skills. Also, they get priority in securing seats for election or position in the party or the Government over others.

If we analyse these families, the first-generation leaders were highly connected, hardworking, made lot of sacrifices, collaborated closely with the people and understood their pulse. The second-generation leaders inherited this legacy. Apart from this inheritance, only those leaders who maintain their connect with people continue to be popular. Right from young age, these next

generation family members can carefully build their positive image systematically with the handholding of their seniors in the family. For example, Supriya Sule (NCP), mentored by her father Sharad Pawar, has emerged as an effective political leader with her top performance in the Parliament and is also carefully nurturing her constituency. Also, Dr Heena Gavit (BJP), daughter of Vijayakumar, was getting trained from her school days under her father's guidance and she is doing excellently well both in the Lok Sabha and in her constituency.

Even in the governance and administration, the descendants can learn from their seniors in the family. Anurag Thakur trained by his father Prem Kumar Dhumal, former Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, has quietly proved his efficiency.

Sometimes, the second-generation leaders excel their own parents in their performance. Indira Gandhi trained by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Naveen Patnaik trained by Biju Patnaik have even excelled in their performance and proved to be worthy successors. Not resting on their father's legacy, the above leaders maintain a good rapport with their constituency always and address their problems personally.

Disadvantages

Though the descendants of political families have great advantages to learn, in reality many of them do not take it seriously. Though the family legacy can help to quickly get positions within the party, only 'contact with cadre and people' can ensure success in the political leadership. Many party workers of various parties, share in confidence that the second or third generation family members of their leaders, do not have enough contact with the party workers, but only interested in posting their photos in social media, when they visit common people. They do not take interest in understanding the problems of people and to find some solution. Using the family name, many of them want to hold positions. They do not understand that the party workers are the bridge between themselves and the people. It is also reported that a sizeable number of second and third generation family members lack good

attitude and soft skills. They communicate arrogantly with their own party cadre.

Without preparing themselves for the political positions, many of them want to enjoy the power. It is also reported that majority of the young generation members from the political families are not even prepared to listen to suggestions from the seniors, who are politically experienced. That is why, most of them vanish from the political scene slowly. Those who take advantage of the legacy, survive and flourish.

There are also allegations against the political families that they have amassed wealth using their political powers. When the political equations change, they are subjected to enquiries, investigation and court cases.

Way ahead

There are many leaders like President Draupadi Murmu. Narendra Modi, Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee, Mayawati and others who have risen to higher positions politically braving all challenges without any family background, because of their performance, commitment and sacrifice. Being a descendent of a political family is always advantageous, provided the new generation member takes it seriously and learn from the seniors. Dynastic politics cannot be avoided in Indian democracy. With the changing dynamics of voters, if the next generation members do not have connect with party cadre and lack in soft skills, slowly they will disappear from the political scene.

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

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (January 2022)



When the nation was gearing up to celebrate the 73rd Republic Day with pride, the country unfortunately witnessed an incident of security breach of our Prime Minister at Punjab. On the 5th of January 2022 during his visit to the National Martyr's

Memorial at Hussainiwala, his convoy got stuck on a flyover for around 20 minutes, blocked by protesting farmers.

Special Protection Group (SPG) entrusted with the task of providing proximate security to the Prime Minister of India sprang into action and surrounded his car to prevent any untoward incident, a sheer collapse of security administration. The PM cancelled his schedule and returned to Delhi. A Senior IPS Officer says, "there could have been a bomb under the bridge, the car could easily have been targeted by a well-positioned sniper or grenade-launcher, or faced an attack from a drone, an IED, or some other similarly easily-procured weapon" as this security lapse had happened just 15 kilometres from Pakistan border.

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

Response of the Punjab Government and reaction of the Opposition

As per protocol the State Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police should have received the Prime Minister which was not observed. The conspicuous breach of protocol by

them, led to serious debates. The PM security protocol demands that the State's DGP be prepared with plan A plan B and plan C route map of PM with required movements and scouting. Suspension of the Superintendent of Police and transfer of DGP later cannot undo the event.

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

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

Security lapse near Indo Pak Border

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

PM's travel by helicopter was dropped due to rain and poor visibility and as per the Ministry of Home Affairs, PM Modi proceeded to

travel by road only after necessary confirmation of security arrangements by the DGP Punjab Police.

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

Hon'ble Supreme Court's intervention.

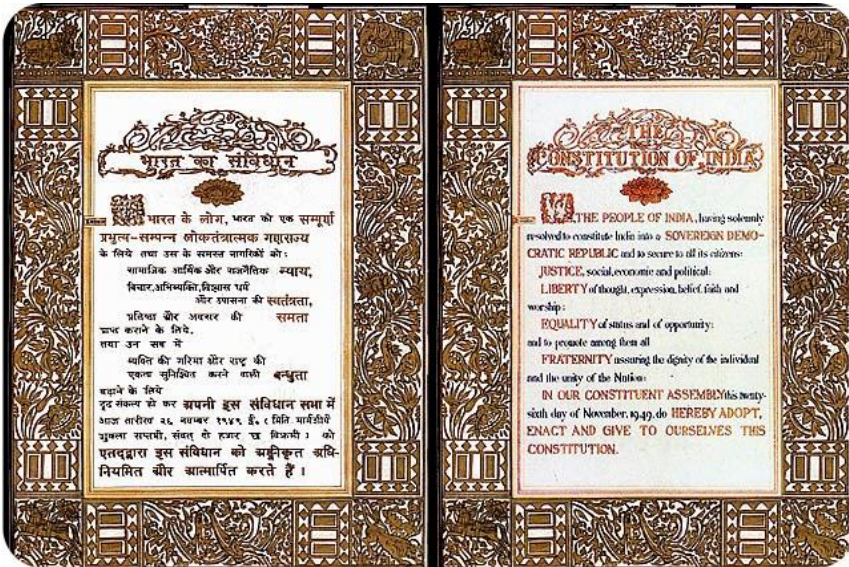
Taking cognizance of this mammoth security breach, the Chief Justice of India formed a committee under Justice Malhotra, Supreme Court Judge (retd) to probe into the circumstances that led to the PM's security lapse. The committee will also include DGP Chandigarh, Inspector General of National Investigation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

The after effect threatening calls to the advocates of Supreme Court, petitioner and others, clarify that the incident cannot be taken as a mere lapse of security but rather as a planned event targeting the PM of our country. *It is now left to the Supreme Court to intervene and unveil the truth of this allegedly condemnable event.*

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

Making of Indian Constitution – Interesting Facts

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Jan 2022)



On 26th Jan 2022, India celebrated the 73rd Republic Day with pomp and gaiety. While conveying the greetings to all the readers, we thought of sharing some interesting facts about the significance of this day for the benefit of our young members.

British Rule

The first batch of Britishers entered India in 1579. Thereafter, merchants started coming in and soon began to rule us. In 1765, the Authority was transferred to the East India Company formally. Then the British Parliament took over the administration. Indians started protesting the foreign rule even from the 18th century. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 to formally fight the foreign rulers. After the entry of Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom movement became

dynamic. Before Independence, India was governed by various Acts enacted by the British Parliament. The Government of India Act 1858, the Government of India Act 1909, the Government of India Act 1919 and finally the Govt. of India Act 1935 framed by the British Parliament governed Indians. (These Acts became irrelevant after Independence and the adoption of Indian Constitution)

Constituent Assembly Formed

After the prolonged struggle and negotiations, as a fore-runner to Independence, a 'Constituent Assembly' was formed with members representing different regions and religions. The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly was held on 9th December 1946. Many great leaders were part of this Assembly. On the first day, 207 members participated.

On the inaugural day, Acharya Kriplani, one of the respected leaders, started the proceedings invoking the 'divine blessings' and proposing the name of Shri Sachchidananda Sinha (Bihar), the eldest member of the Assembly as 'Provisional Chairman' till the Chairman was elected.

Shri C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) was the first member to present his credentials and sign the register to become the member of the Constituent Assembly.

On the third day, Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. The designation 'Chairman' was subsequently replaced as 'President of the Constituent Assembly'.

India attained Independence on 15th August 1947 and the governance of India passed onto the Constituent Assembly India from the British Parliament. Lord Mountbatten was requested by the Constituent Assembly to continue as Governor General for some more time. Shri C. Rajagopalachari (popularly known as Rajaji) took over as the Governor General on 21st June 1948 and he continued till 26th Jan 1950. Rajaji became the first Indian Governor General of India. After 26th Jan 1950, the Governor

General post was redefined as President of India. Dr. Rajendra Prasad became the first President of India.

Framing Draft Constitution for India.

After the Indian Independence, the Constituent Assembly wanted to frame the Constitution for India. They constituted a 'Committee to draft the Constitution' on 29th August 1947 under the Chairmanship of Dr B. R. Ambedkar. Shri Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar, Shri N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Shri K. M. Mushi, Shri Saiyid Mohd Saadulla, Shri B L Mitter and Shri D. P. Khaitan were included as other members of this Committee.



These eminent people drafted the Indian Constitution and presented to the Constituent Assembly on 4th November 1947.

Discussion in the Constituent Assembly



Jawaharlal Nehru moving the resolution for an Independent Sovereign Republic in Constituent Assembly

The Constituent Assembly discussed this Draft Constitution in 114 sittings, spread over 2 years 11 months and 17 days thoroughly. The final Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26th November 1949. This day is also known as National Law Day. After Modi Government assumed power, this day is celebrated as 'Constitution Day'.

Constitution Document Signed

On 24th January 1950, 284 members of the Constituent Assembly signed the document and presented the official Constitution to the nation. Two hand-written copies of our Constitution (one in English and the other in Hindi), illuminated by artists and one print copy of English version were signed by the members.

The original constitution is hand-written, with each page decorated by artists from Shantiniketan including Beohar Rammanohar Sinha and Nandalal Bose. Its calligrapher was Prem Behari Narain Raizada



Rajaji declaring India as a Republic

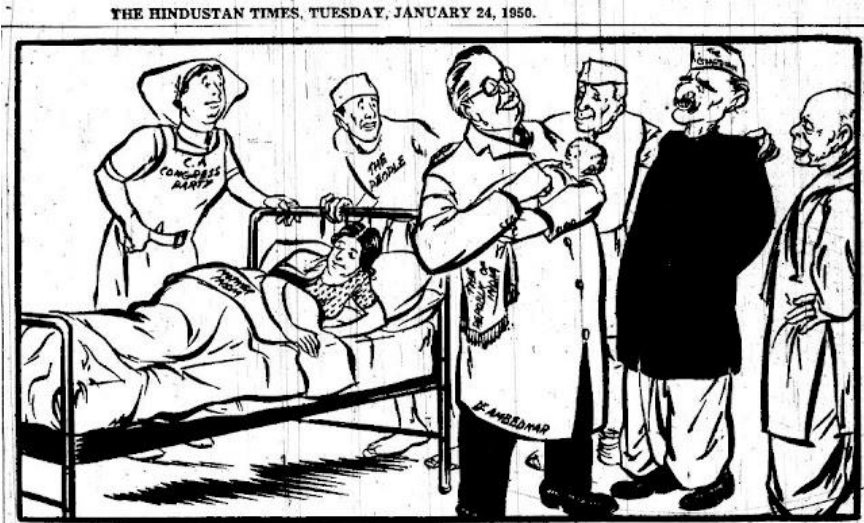
After putting their signatures, all the members including Dr. Rajendra Prasad (President of India Elect) and other members sang Vandemataram and Jana Gana Mana in chorus, symbolising a great achievement of the Sovereign Independent Republic of India, after a struggle of nearly three centuries.

If you want to read the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly verbatim, please click the link

https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/official_sites/constituent.asp

This Constitution came into force on 26th Jan 1950. From that day, India is a Sovereign Independent Republic. When the new

Constitution was signed by the members on 24th Jan 1950, it was drizzling outside the Parliament at Delhi. It was considered by them as a good omen.



This Constituent Assembly was made a 'Provisional Indian Parliament' from 26th Jan 1950. The first General Election was held in 1952 and the 1st Lok Sabha was constituted.

This cartoon was published by Hindustan Times on 24th January 1950, two days before the first Indian Republic Day. This cartoon was drawn by the popular cartoonist Enver Ahmed. In this cartoon, Mother India gives birth to a baby called 'The Republic of India' and the DOCTOR Ambedkar holds the baby in his hands and gives a gentle touch. Congress Party is depicted as Nurse. The people of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Vallabhai Patel are looking at the new born baby with great anxiety.

Indian Constitution - Some interesting facts

The Indian Constitution, drafted by great visionaries, continues to be one of the best Constitutions in the world. Many global legal experts have praised our Constitution. The Indian Constitution contains 22 parts, 395 articles, 12 schedules and 2 appendices. Over a period of 72 years, the Constitution has undergone 104 amendments.

We are publishing the finer details for the benefit of all the youngsters. The freedom and sovereignty we enjoy did not come on a single day. Our elders have struggled and lost their lives in the freedom movement spread over nearly 300 years. The great visionary leaders have also provided us a great Constitution. None of these leaders, who had signed the Constitution are alive today.

It is the responsibility of every one of us to salute our great leaders and freedom fighters on this day and live up to their vision.

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Political parties Should Respect the Institution of Parliamentary Democracy

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Aug 2022)



While the Nation was preparing to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of our Indian Independence, some of the political parties caused disappointment to the Nation by disrupting the Monsoon Session of the Parliament in August this year. While the nation is proud of being the largest democracy in the world, a section of Parliamentarians shamed India with their unparliamentary behaviour for their selfish interest.

Low Productivity due to disruption is against the interest of the Nation

The Monsoon Session ended as a complete washout without taking up many of the burning issues facing the nation. The productivity of the Lok Sabha was 47% and that of Rajya Sabha was 42%. Sadly, the productivity of the Question Hour was the lowest, at 12.1% in the Lok Sabha and 18.2% in the Rajya Sabha. That means both the Houses did not give much importance to the Question Hour, where the real issues of the people are brought out.

The entire country elects the Members of Parliament to discuss and to take up the issues facing the Constituency and the Nation. Generally, in our view more than 90% of the Members want to take up their job seriously and sincerely. They want to participate in the discussions and to raise important issues. Unfortunately, a handful of members belonging to some political parties for their own selfish reasons and to gain political mileage, disrupt the proceedings. They rush to the well of the House and shout slogans, display banners on the face of the Speaker and indulge in various activities against the rules of the House. They don't realise the negative impact, it may create on the students and youngsters watching the proceedings live.

The sittings are forcefully adjourned without doing any business. When all the political parties have enough opportunities to discuss all the issues, even sitting late, in both the Houses of the Parliament, it is highly unfortunate that the floor leaders of some of the parties encourage disruption, instead of getting time allotted through Business Advisory Committee.

The unruly behaviour of some of the Members of Parliament in disrupting the House has led to frustration among many of the citizens. PreSense has pointed out several times in the past that disruption of the House is against the interest of the Nation and the citizens.

Punish the disrupters

Before writing this Editorial, we spoke to many concerned citizens. Everybody uniformly agrees that the Speaker should punish the Members who disrupt the House. If few Members disrupt the House, many serious Members are unable to utilise the Parliament time for the benefit of the people. If some Members continuously indulge in disrupting the House, shout slogans in the well and display banners hiding the face of the Speaker, they should be suspended for the Session, besides withdrawing all the allowances and travel charges. Their privileges also should be withdrawn for specific period.

These Members cannot justify that they are doing disruption in the interest of the nation, since other avenues are available for discussion. We have seen many important Private Members Bills do not get introduced or debated on Fridays, due to disruption. The party leaders and floor leaders should not encourage such anti-people disruption for their short-term gains.



Allow the Inter-Session Notices

Due to disruptions, many issues are not taken up in the Parliament. To get more participation from the Members and to address many problems of the country, the Speaker and the Government should consider accepting notices under Rule 377 and Questions online during inter-session period also. This will improve the efficiency of the Government too.

Working of Parliament and Committees

Presently, Parliament functions only for 60 to 70 days in a year. Out of this 25 to 30 percent is wasted due to disruption. The productive working hours are getting reduced. Parliament should function for a minimum of 100 to 120 days with least disruption.

Then only the Parliamentarians will be fulfilling the dreams of our freedom fighters.

last five years, it has been observed that the attendance in the Parliamentary Committee Meetings is very poor. Members show scant respect of interest in attending the Committee meetings. Parliamentary Committees are like 'Mini Parliament' with representation from all parties. In the past, they have contributed a lot by scrutinizing the bills and the budget presented to them. Government should motivate the Members to participate in the Committees. The Government should refer as many bills to the Committees as possible for scrutiny.

This will strengthen the Committees and the quality of the bills for passage. Also, many important issues relating to individual States could not be taken up for discussion during the Parliament Sessions. The respective Committees can take up suo moto all the important matters that are not discussed in the Parliament and discuss within the Committee. The Committees have the advantage of inviting the stakeholders as witness to get the expert views.

Members do not use the Parliament library

The library in the Indian Parliament is one of the best libraries in the world. It is generally observed that only 5 to 10% of the Members utilise this facility properly to enrich knowledge and to share it during the debates.

Besides, the Parliament itself is conducting training programmes to all the Members for their effective participation. Unfortunately, such facilities are not used by the Members. Even PRS India conducts seminars on various bills to educate the Members for the discussion. Only a handful of Members participate in such educative programmes.

Deputy Speaker not elected even after 3 years

Even after three years, the Government has not decided to elect the Deputy Speaker for the Lok Sabha. It is a Constitutional position and the Deputy Speaker plays a significant role in the Parliamentary functioning. For the first time, since adopting the Constitution, the position of Deputy Speaker is lying vacant for three years. It is not a healthy one in the democracy.

Unless the ruling and opposition parties respect the Institution of Parliament, the purpose of our celebrating "*Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*" will be lost entirely.

Role of Media in Indian Freedom Struggle

By Ramesh Sundaram, Consulting Editor (Aug 2022)

In the present days, within few seconds, information is passed on globally with technology and media tools. During the freedom struggle, such facilities were not available. Even the Radio was owned by the Government. In spite of all the constraints, the messages were distributed across the country with the support of various print media and films, braving the rules by the British regime.

It carried the fervor of patriotism and freedom to all the four corners of the country. A person in southernmost tip of India was able to know the thoughts of great leaders of the freedom movement in north India through the newspapers only. Ironically the English language was a uniting factor behind the people joining the freedom movement.

Regional and English Newspapers



An Irishman James Augustus Hickey started in Calcutta what is perceived as first Asian and Indian Newspaper in January 1780. He boldly exposed the misdeeds of East India Officials and was even jailed for it. Thus Hicky's Gazette in tabloid

form became the first English newspaper published in India to write against British tyranny.

There were also three contemporary newspapers of that period namely Doorbeen, Samachar Sudhavarashan and Sultan-ul-Akbar that were suppressed for their anti-British stance. The English newspapers like Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The Statesman, The Hindu and The Indian Express carried the views of the leaders of Freedom movement leaders to all parts of the country. The regional language newspapers like Anand Bazar

Patrika, Mathrubhoomi, Dinamani, Swadesamitran also spread the freedom movement in their respective regions.

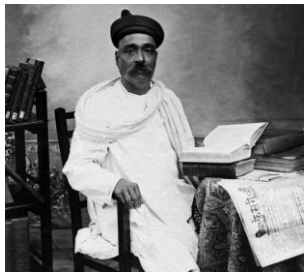
Gandhiji effectively used the newspapers like Navjivan and Young India to spread his messages on Indian freedom. Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose launched a radio in March 1942 named Azad Hind Radio (Freedom for India) from Germany to enthuse Indian people to fight for their country's independence. In 1821 itself Raj Ram Mohan Roy used his newspaper Sambad Kaumudi to propagate socialist reforms and independence fervor. He is for all purposes founder of Indian nationalist press.



Swadesa Mitran
Masthead

G. Subramania Iyer founded the nationalist English newspaper The Hindu in 1878 to enthuse Indian populace to participate intensely in independence movement. He also founded *Swadesamitran* (meaning friend of self-rule) in Tamil language in 1891 to trigger national spirit among the Tamilians. The great nationalists like Mahakavi Bharathiar and VVS Iyer were Editors and wrote many inspiring articles in the newspaper to kindle the freedom spirit among masses. Similarly Malayalam newspaper Mathrubhoomi started in March 1923 spread the message of nationalism in Kerala and south India. Ramnath Goenka started The Indian Express in 1936. He relentlessly and openly challenged the British rule through his paper. Jawaharlal Nehru founded the English newspaper National Herald and used it to propagate the Independence spirit.

Lokmanya Tilak founded two newspapers Kesari and Maharatta in English (both in January 1881) to spread dissent against British regime. Tilak always believed that journalism, when properly channeled, has the capacity to shape public resolve. He strongly criticized the negligence of Britain in tackling famine, drought, starvation deaths and epidemics like Plague which claimed many lives. He even conducted the Ganesh Chaturthi festival and Shivaji Maharaj festival and used them to arouse nationalism among people.



Lok Manya Tilak and his newspaper Kesari



The Svadesabhimani

A bold journalist Sishir Kumar Ghosh shook the foundation of British Empire in India through his newspaper Amrita Bazar Patrika. He actively campaigned against exploitation of the Indian peasants by forcing them to do Indigo cultivation.

Malayalam publication The Svadesabhimani was very critical of British rule in India. Its editor Ramakrishna Pillai wrote a number of articles in the newspaper supporting freedom struggle. The newspaper was confiscated and Ramakrishna Pillai was deported by British in 1910. Another prominent pro-independence leader Madan Mohan Malaviya started English daily The Leader along with Motilal Nehru. He published many of Mahatma Gandhiji's works and he also set a benchmark for article writing in newspapers.

Role of radio in covering Indian freedom struggle:

Indian newspapers were gagged by stringent laws like Sedition Laws, Rowlatt Act and Vernacular Press Act enforced by the British Government. To negate this in 1942, an underground radio station



Underground Radio Station set up by Usha Mehta and others

known as Congress Radio was started by Usha Mehta, Ram Manohar Lohia, Sucheta Kriplani and others to propagate independence movement with the tacit blessings from Congress Party which was leading the freedom struggle. It broadcast news reports and talks by prominent leaders on need for India's independence. Many protests for the sake of Indian Independence were also

broadcast to remote corners of the country. Usha Mehta thundered: "When newspapers and news were banned, our transmitter helps in great deal in spreading and sustaining the freedom spirit by conveying the public with facts of happenings." People gathered in large numbers around the radio to hear the broadcast even in rural areas that boldly broadcast against British rule and the plunder of Indian assets by the British Raj.

Role of Entertainment Media (films) in freedom struggle

In 1921, Bhakt Vidur, a silent movie was banned by British for displaying Indian topi (cap) and Chakra. Many films produced and released during the freedom struggle explicitly carried nationalist sentiments. Hindi films like Apna Ghar, Naya Tarana, Amar Joti, had lyrics that supported independence movement but escaped censor as British did not know Hindi.

Thyaga Bhoomi, a Tamil film is a pointer in this direction. It was directed by K Subramanyam and lead actors were M.S.Subbulakshmi and

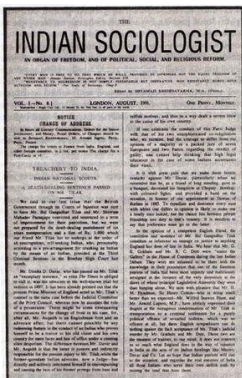


A scene from Thyaga Bhoomi

Papanasam Sivan. The film was released in theatres in May 1939. It was running to packed houses for weeks on. The film depicted people participating in protests against British rule. It also had a

song praising Gandhiji. This made the Britishers uncomfortable. The film was banned after successfully running for more than 20 weeks. This was the first time in film's history that a film was banned after its release. The fans did not like the ban. Free shows were conducted in a theatre by Director Subramanyam for 24 hours before the ban order was issued. People thronged the theatre en masse and kept the police from entering the theatre.

Role of Media published from foreign soil



Sep 1908 edition
published from

The Indians in Britain were not lagging behind in support for Indian freedom struggle. Shyamji Krishna Varma's started The Indian Sociologist newspaper in 1905 and published from London in the initial days and later from Paris. This newspaper propagated anti-colonial opinions and views.

The woman freedom fighter Bikaji Cama was deported to Paris. She did not remain silent there. She in association with Munchers Shah Burjorji Godrej, Rewa Bhai Rana published many literatures encouraging rebellion in India that included a song Bande Mataram and an article Madan's Talwar in response to the

execution of freedom fighter Madan Lal Dhingra. She also sent weekly magazines extolling freedom struggle to many freedom fighters in India. She also widely travelled in United States of America, bringing to their knowledge the freedom struggle in India through her talks and literature.

Conclusion

The Print Media, Radio and Movies imbibed political awareness among Indians that led to strengthening of Indian independence movement. They were not run for the sake of profit but to propagate freedom spirit among Indians. The impact of the newspapers extended well beyond cities and towns and percolated down even to villages, where it was common sight for one literate person reading the news to ten and more of the villagers. This led

to viral spread of nationalism throughout India. No wonder, the media is considered as backbone of freedom movement. The media thus played a major role in spreading the independence movement far and wide and sustaining it in this vast country called India.

This quote by the former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee clearly surmises the role of media in freedom struggle: "The history of journalism in India is closely linked to the history of our freedom struggle".

Significant Pada Yatras and Rath Yatras

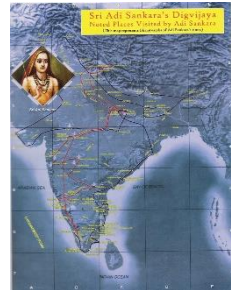
By Ramesh Sundaram, Consulting Editor (Sep 2022)

The Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is now leading a pada yatra named *Bharat Jodo Yatra* from Kanyakumari to Kashmir (about 3570 kms) from September 7, 2022. Rahul Gandhi says the motto of yatra is to unite India and strengthen the nation. So, *PreSense* thought it is pertinent and topical to look into some important pada yatras undertaken by various leaders in the annals of Indian history.

Here are some of the important Pada Yatras that impacted people: (in chronological order)

Adhi Shankaracharya Pada Yatra

Adhi Shankaracharya was arguably India's first historically recorded Pada Yatra. The 8th Century saint travelled widely across the whole of India propagating Hinduism and his philosophy. He travelled to many places in Kerala, Kashmir, Orissa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, along the slopes of the Himalayas, on the banks of rivers Narmada and Ganga and along eastern and western coasts that was instrumental in reviving and revitalizing Hinduism throughout India.



Freedom Movement - Dandi March

Mahatma Gandhi led the historical Dandi March or Dandi Salt Satyagraha from His Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad in Gujarat to the Coastal village of Dandi on March 12, 1930, and ended it after 24 days on April 6, 1930. It was a non-violent protest against the British monopoly on salt production by a law, which prevented Indians from producing or selling salt. Further they also imposed heavy tax on salt. The march covered 48 villages in 4 districts of



Gujarat. Initially the march started with less than 100 volunteers but were joined by thousands enroute. Gandhiji broke the Salt Law by producing salt at the Dandi seashore. It was a pioneer in Civil Disobedience Movement. Wide coverage given by the press about this march drew world's attention towards

India's freedom struggle. Gandhiji was arrested by British for alleged illegal production of salt on May 4, 1930, and was released from prison in January 1931. The protest continued for more than a year and many eminent Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and thousands of volunteers were arrested and jailed by British. It can be said that this strong protest led to many protests like boycott of British clothes and buying swadeshi clothes only.

Dharasana March

Dharasana salt march was an immediate follow up on Dandi march. The eminent Congress leaders Abbas Tyagi, a retired judge and Gandhiji's wife Kasturba Gandhi led the first march and were arrested. Later in



May 21, 1930, veteran Congress leaders Sarojini Naidu and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad led thousands of volunteers in the march to the salt works in Dharasana coastal town in Valsad in Gujarat. The participants were beaten up brutally and many were arrested by British police.

Vedaranyam March

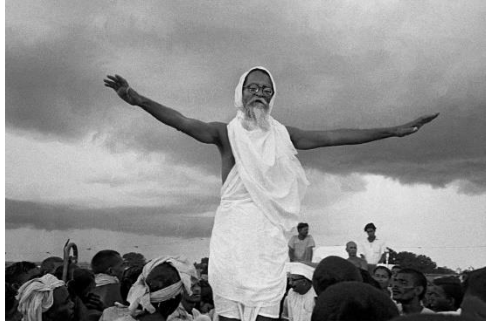


The Dandi march impacted the whole of India. On April 13, 1930, veteran Congress leader C Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, led a salt march (photo) in Madras State (now Tamil Nadu) from Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirappalli or Tiruchi) to coastal village of

Vedaranyam. He along with volunteers produced salt directly from sea in defiance of law enforcing British monopoly of salt production and selling and also against Salt Tax. During the march Rajaji also created awareness among people about the swadeshi khadi cloth and about evils of caste discrimination. The campaign ended on 28 April 1930 when Rajaji and the participants were arrested. Rajaji was jailed for about six months.

Pada Yatras – Apolitical and social causes Bhoodan March

Acharya Vinoba Bhave was a close associate and a great admirer of Gandhiji. They worked together in Kochrab Ashram. The turning point in Vinoba Bhave's life came when in April 1951, he attended Sarvodaya Conference in Shivnampalli near Hyderabad. After the conference the Acharya



toured Telangana area where extremist activities were on the rise. When Bhave visited Pochampalli village on April 18, 1951, the Harijans of the area requested him to get them land with which they can sustain themselves. He asked the audience whether they can give their land as gift to Harijans. Immediately a landlord Rama Chandra Reddy announced that he would gift his 100 acres. The Acharya announced the first donation of land to poor. Thus, the Bhoodan Movement was born. Vinoba Bhave continued the Bhoodan march through different parts of India. During this Padayatra he covered a distance of nearly 37,000 miles and collected nearly 100 million acres as donation and gifted them to landless poor. He followed it with march for Gramdan movement and received more than 1.50 lakh villages as donations. Thus, Acharya Vinoba Bhave through his march galvanised the whole of India. This Bhoodan march was one of the watersheds in Indian history.

Pada Yatras by Bahuguna

Sunderlal Bahuguna, one of the great icons of India, is the founder



of the Chipko movement, which fought against deforestation of Himalayas. He conducted many pada yatras and powerfully conveyed the message of saving The Himalayas. Between 1970 and 1980 he did more than twelve pada yatras in this regard including nearly 5000 km

march from Kashmir to Kohima. His pada yatras had great impact and made the Government to announce a ban on commercial felling of trees in higher altitudes of the Himalayas. His Chipko movement held unique protests, people hugged trees to prevent felling of trees. Bahuguna also did pada yatra and campaigned strongly against Bedthi Hydroelectric project in Karnataka which would have caused great ecological and environmental disaster. This made the Government to scrap the project itself. He further did pada yatra across south India promoting ecology conservation and saving biodiversity of Western Ghats.

Tri-Nation Ahimsa Yatra

Jain Acharya Mahashramanji led a Tri-Nation Ahimsa Yatra from Red Fort in Delhi in 2014 across three countries and 19 States covering over 50,000 km to spread the message of peace and non-violence. He ended the march on 27th March 2022.



Rally for revitalizing of rivers



Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev led a motorcycle rally from Kanyakumari to Kashmir on September 3, 2017, traversing 16 States and 7000 kms. During the rally he conducted around 180 public events propagating the ways to revitalise the dying rivers of India.

In the photo he is leading Cauvery Calling rally.

Political Pada Yatras - YS Rajasekhara Reddy Pada Yatra

Dr. Y S Rajasekhara Reddy led a Pada Yatra in Andhra Pradesh on April 9, 2003 (photo). He walked 1500 kms covering 10 districts in 60 days to highlight the drought problem in the State and ruling Telugu Desam Party's alleged apathy towards agriculturists. This led to revival of Congress in AP and the party won the consequent Assembly elections.



Similarly, his son Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launched a 340-day, 3650-km Praja Sankalp Pada Yatra across 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh against the ruling party on November 6, 2017. He also won the subsequent AP Assembly elections astoundingly.

Bharat Yatra by Chandra Shekhar



Janata Dal leader and former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar undertook Pada Yatra from Kanyakumari to Delhi named Bharat Yatra from January 6, 1983, to June 25, 1983, covering about 4300 kms.

The purpose was to highlight problems in rural areas and eliminate social inequalities and also to mingle with people and understand their problems firsthand.

Rath Yatra by N T Ramarao

Actor and founder of Telugu Desam Party, N.T. Rama Rao, did a Rath Yatra termed as Chaitanya Rath Yatra in 1982. He travelled 40,000 kms across Andhra Pradesh in nine months and ended in January 1983.

This Yatra has been entered in Guinness Book Records too. NTR's Rath Yatra led to his Telugu Desam Party winning Assembly elections in AP.



Rath Yatra by L K Advani



Bharatiya Janata Party leader LK Advani conducted a Rath Yatra on September 25, 1990, from Somnath to Ayodhya to press for construction of Ram Temple in disputed Babri masjid premises, alleging that the masjid was built after

demolishing Ram Temple in the place. He planned to traverse across 23 States but was arrested midway on October 23, 1990. This led to BJP withdrawing support to VP Singh government at the Centre.

Traditionally, India has believed in undertaking Pada Yatras to spread some message or to create awareness of something significant. Even the ancient Rishis were continuously on yatra to meet the people. In the modern days also, these pada yatras and rath yatras have yielded significant results, if they are undertaken seriously.

Indian Opposition Parties not Performing Their Roles Effectively

By Ramesh Sundaram, Consulting Editor (Oct 2022)

The recent election of Mallikarjun Kharge (80) as the President of Indian National Congress has raised lot of debates in the media and among people. Kharge carries a rich political and administrative experience. He has won 9 times continuously in the Karnataka State Assembly Elections and two times Parliament elections. Now he is a sitting member of Rajya Sabha. He has served as Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly and in Parliament. He was also a Cabinet Minister in the Centre. He belongs to Scheduled Caste and respected by all parties, including the Prime Minister.

For the first time in 24 years, a leader outside Nehru-Gandhi family (Mahatma Gandhi is not connected with this family) is taking over as the President of the Congress. In the post- independent era, except during Narasimha Rao period, whenever the Congress was the ruling party, irrespective of whomsoever was the party President, the Nehru family was controlling the party and the Government.

Political analysts feel that Mallikarjun Kharge may also be another Manmohan Singh 2.0 to follow the orders from the Nehru family. Only time can tell whether Kharge will act independently and wisely to strengthen the Congress party.

Challenge

The Congress party has lost its credibility among the people due to unprofessional handling by the Nehru family. It has lost even the official status of an Opposition Party in Parliament, as it has failed to secure 10% of the House strength. It has lost many of the State Governments, excepting Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The Congress also lost the Punjab Government due to wrong handling of Chief Minister issue.

Congress being the only national party with pan-India presence, technically it should lead all the opposition parties in the coming State Assembly and 2024 General Elections. It remains to be seen whether Kharge will be able to unite all the opposition parties under the leadership of the Congress. Further, over a period of 5 years, the Congress has lost many of its senior leaders like Gulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal and many others. Sadly, Rahul Gandhi has also not developed enough political competency to lead the party. He is surrounded by sycophants who do not advise him politically viable strategies. Even Sonia Gandhi did not function as an effective Interim-President after the resignation of Rahul Gandhi, probably due to her health conditions and court cases. Many Congress leaders, with whom PreSense spoke, expressed their deep concern over the future of the Congress party.

Need for good opposition

For effective governance of the Government, there should be a strong and responsible opposition. Prior to 1990, ruling Congress was strong. Rajiv Gandhi who was having 400 plus seats earlier could not win in the subsequent elections. After Rajiv assassination, Congress formed a minority Government under Narasimha Rao in 1991. At that time, the country was facing deep economic crisis due to the poor governance and political instability of earlier Governments. Though, Narasimha Rao Government was a minority Government, the then opposition leaders Vajpayee and Advani were highly responsible leaders and worked closely with the Government to stabilize the economy of the country. It is on record that then opposition led by Vajpayee and Advani played responsible role keeping the country's interest in mind. They diligently played the role of constructive opposition to perfection. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao even deputed Vajpayee to represent India in the United Nations on Pakistan issue, a rare and the only of its kind gesture in the post Independent India.

After Narasimha Rao period, till 2014, the ruling parties were not strong and they had to depend on various smaller and regional parties. This led to lot of scams between 2004 and 2014. These scams spoiled the image of the Congress with the result that in

2014 the Congress lost heavily across the country. BJP got a massive mandate under Narendra Modi.

Emergence of Regional parties

The Congress was losing ground after 1990 and hence the regional parties (like DMK, AIADMK, TDP, Shiv Sena, SP, BSP, JDS, JDU, RJD, etc.) and parties founded by the leaders quitting the Congress (like TMC, NCP, YSR Congress, etc.) slowly started playing major role in formation of Government at the Centre. Even in 2019 General Elections, the Congress party itself did not name Rahul Gandhi as their PM candidate. Rahul Gandhi, lost even in Amethi in 2019, the constituency won by their family for decades. He resigned as the President of Congress owning moral responsibility. Sonia Gandhi held the position of 'Interim President' for three years. During this period, the party had to face lot of corruption charges and money laundering cases. This has further wrecked the party leading to important leaders leaving the party. Now after three years, in October 2022, the party has conducted the election for the post of President. It remains to be seen whether all opposition parties will accept the Congress as their leader in the coming elections.

Status of opposition parties

Though opposition parties are numerically strong, they are divided due to regional issues, personal ego, allegations of corruption, etc. Almost all parties are having cases pending with CBI or ED. Though there are plenty of issues to take on the Central Government, the opposition parties take up only trivial and populist issues, keeping the *vote bank politics* in mind. They do not take up development issues. On the other hand, they protest against many of the developmental projects, for their own reasons. For example, according to media reports, seven National Highways Projects were cancelled in a State due to non-cooperation by a State Government ruled by Opposition. One of the prestigious projects, the Neutrino research project, was stopped due to misguided protests by some political parties in Tamil Nadu. Tuticorin Sterlite Copper manufacturing unit was closed due to a

protest by opposition parties, citing environmental issues. This unit was supplying copper to the entire country. Now copper is being imported from other countries. Sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, our opposition parties play into the hands of geopolitical sabotage against the interest of our nation.

Though there are plenty of issues to take on the Central Government, the opposition parties take up only trivial and populist issues, keeping the *vote bank politics* in mind. They do not take up development issues.

When Popular Front of India (PFI) and its associated organisations were banned by the Government of India for alleged involvement in anti-national activities, many of the opposition parties did not comment and some of them opposed Government's decision due to vote bank politics. On the previous

night of Diwali, a blast occurred at Coimbatore probably with an intention to repeat bomb blasts in several places. Now National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken up the investigation and many people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in terrorist activities. Some of the arrested people seem to be the associates of the convicts of 1998 Coimbatore blasts and 2021 Sri Lanka blast during Easter. Sadly, none of the leading opposition parties, including Congress, have condemned the blast by terrorists, for fear of vote bank politics.

PreSense places on record the constructive role being played by BJD (Odisha) in maintaining good relationship with the Centre and focusing only on the development of the State. Navin Patnaik remains as a role model Chief Minister keeping the country's interest above that of his party. BJD Members in both the Houses of Parliament use the Parliament time effectively.

In Parliament also, a section of the Opposition (not all parties) frequently indulges in disruption leading to ruckus and loss of productivity. Even for some trivial local issues, they create ruckus.

What is the way out?

In a vibrant democracy, both ruling and opposition parties should work together keeping the interest of the country in their mind. The first priority of the new Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge is to unite all the opposition parties keeping the national interest in focus. Instead of talking about trivial issues to please the vote bank, they should fight for more developmental projects.

Democracy can be more effective only when the ruling and opposition parties work together keeping the national interest at a higher plane than their political and vote bank interests.

On the part of the ruling party, PreSense feels they should respect the institution of Parliament, by taking the opposition parties into confidence before introducing the bills. They should refer maximum number of the bills to the Standing Committees for perfection. Government should also realise that keeping the post of Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, a constitutional position, vacant for three years is not in the interest of democracy.

Democracy can be more effective only when the ruling and opposition parties work together keeping the national interest at a higher plane than their political and vote bank interests.

Owner's Pride – Neighbour's Envy: Is India Facing International Conspiracy?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor (Feb 2023)



Leadership during Independence

"Owner's Pride; Neighbour's Envy" used to be a popular slogan in 80s to brand a TV. The same logic applies to India too, as a brand today.

In the past few years, we have been hearing about International conspiracy theories to damage the India's economics and image. Though it is getting debated over three decades, a fact remains that India is emerging as one of the largest economies of the world with talented human resources. At the time of Indian Independence in 1947, Winston Churchill was reported to have remarked, "all Indian leaders will be of low caliber and men of straw." While giving freedom to India, British regime gave an option to 500 plus Samasthans to either join India or Pakistan or to remain Independent. British regime thought India would break

into several pieces and the leaders would find this unmanageable. After Independence, Indian leaders proved their leadership skills and brought together all the 500 plus Samasthans under Indian republic, thanks to Sardar Vallabhai Patel.

India's growth story

Over 75 years, India has been growing steadily and strongly, under various Governments - proving wrong the statement of Winston Churchill. India has emerged as the largest democracy in the world with more than 800 million citizens electing the Central Government, that too through EVMs. The change of power from one party to the other has been very smooth in the last 75 years. India developed her own written Constitution which saved the country from many crises. The Constitutional bodies like Supreme Court and Election Commission have remained independent. After the liberalization in 1991, India is emerging slowly and steadily as one of the vibrant economies of the world. Today, we are in the fifth position, pushing even UK down. On several occasions, when the political crisis happens, our leaders have shown resilience and resolved the crisis within the framework of the Constitution and also with the guidance of Supreme Court. India has shown the supremacy in Science & Technology and in its rich cultural heritage.

Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) are heading many Multi-National Companies (MNCs) and political system in various countries. With nearly 130-crore population and with multiple caste, language and culture, India has shown unity in diversity, due to the attitude of the people. On the other hand, neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Nepal are not able to maintain their economy and political system properly.

Even during the Covid time, India was able to vaccinate all the citizens with two or even three doses, besides sparing vaccine to some of the needy countries. India was able to reduce the death rate due to the proper management of the health system, while advanced countries suffered heavily.

Traditionally, some of the advanced countries do not like India to grow and become a super power in the globe. In the past few years Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is emerging as a strong global leader. He is being carefully listened to by both America and Russia. India did not yield to pressure of America to stop import of oil from Russia.

Naturally, all the efforts to damage the image of India are being done by vested interests outside the country. The recent Hindenburg report on Adani, George Soros statement against India and the BBC documentary on Gujarat riots can be quoted as some of the strategies to damage the image of the country and that of the Indian Prime Minister. There are people who defend these reports in India and keep debating them in media.

Past examples

Even earlier, there were continuous protests against Koodangulam Nuclear Plant in the UPA Government. The then UPA Government termed this as global conspiracy. Construction of six nuclear reactors with capacity of 6000 MW was unduly delayed due to protests by the local people. The then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh blamed 3 NGOs using foreign funds to trigger the protests in India.

In 2018, Sterlite Copper was closed at Thoothukudi (Tamil Nadu) due to protests by local people quoting environmental reasons. The closure of this unit has resulted in the increase of import of refined copper from 0.44 lakh tonnes in 2017-18 to 1.52 lakh tonnes in 2019-20. Same way our exports got reduced from 3.78 lakh tonnes in 2017-18 to 0.37 lakh tonnes in 2019-20.

USING Indians to damage India

India's growth and robust democracy is an eye sore to many of the developed countries. Naturally, they would pump in money through various Indian NGOs and make use of Indian citizens, media and political parties for their advantage. Innocently, our own Indian citizens, media and political parties knowingly or

unknowingly help them to carry out the protests against the interest of the country. For example, the recent protests against CAA and Agricultural bill on a false narrative has created more damages. There are reports of invisible foreign hand in these protests.

Unfortunately, our own Indian mainline and social media play a role against the interest of the nation, supporting the invisible enemies under the pretext of environment protection, freedom of expression, social justice, etc.

Indian Foreign Minister Dr Jaishankar has also in his recent interview to ANI confirmed that some forces were making clever attempts to damage India's image globally. He felt that more than the conspiracy, politics was behind them.

Role of Indian media and political parties

Whether it is conspiracy or politics, we see a clear design to damage India's economy and image through our own people. Indian media including social media users and political parties should think beyond their self interest and not to be part of invisible hands that are damaging India.

Sansad Ratna Awards Crosses 100th Award Mark – completes First Phase and moves on to Next Phase

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (March 2023)

Sansad Ratna Award which celebrates the top performing Indian Parliamentarians, initiated by Prime Point Foundation and your eMagazine PreSense since 2009 on the suggestion of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, after 14 years of challenging journey has now completed the first phase of crossing the 100th Award mark. The first phase was to create awareness among the Parliamentarians and the general public/media about participation in the House proceedings. The Greeting Tweet by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra



Modi for the 13th edition of Sansad Ratna Awards has added more visibility and credibility to the Awards.

Sansad Ratna Awards is considered as one of the prestigious awards by the Members of Parliament. A time has come that we need to move to next phase. The first phase was

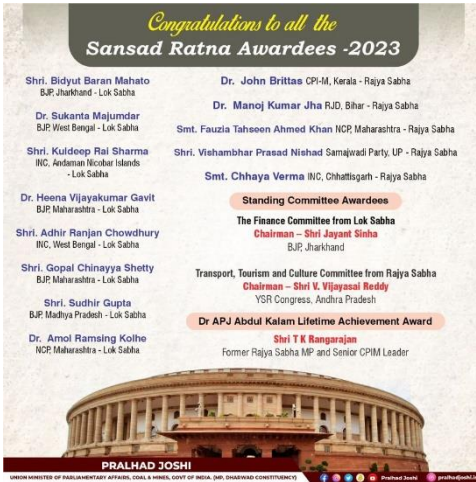
done based on the performance data provided by PRS India Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha websites. The focus was more on participation in the House proceedings.

In the second phase, besides the performance data, 'innovation' in the constituency development will also be considered. Prime Point Foundation and PreSense have constituted an expert committee under the chairmanship of Dr S K Kharventhan, Former MP and a Sansad Ratna Awardee to suggest guidelines for the additional parameters.

As part of the transition to next phase, we have also handed over the baton to the next generation team headed by Ms. Priyadharshni Rahul. She will become the Chairman of the Sansad

Ratna Awards Committee to take it to the next level. The Founder, Prime Point Srinivasan, will become the 'Chairman Emeritus' to mentor the new team and to plan new strategies. There will be a Governing Council consisting of eminent experts to handhold the new team.

Wisdom and knowledge are two essential things in any initiative. Elders with their vast experience have enough 'wisdom'. The youngsters, though not experienced, have more



'knowledge'. In our new model, elders with wisdom will mentor and handhold the vibrant and energetic youngsters with knowledge. This is to empower the Next Gen leaders.

Before the event, our team and myself met various senior leaders at Parliament House. All leaders were highly appreciative of this Sansad Ratna initiative. Their confidence in our team has placed more responsibility on us. Prime Point Foundation and PreSense reassure commitment to the nation and to create awareness on the Parliamentary democracy.

We are also happy to share with our readers that we are working out an online 28 hours programme jointly with IIT Madras on the theme "Indian Democracy: Constitution, Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Society". Details will be announced shortly.

Jai Hind.

13th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards 2023 Celebrating the 100th Award Mark - A Report

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (March 2023)

PRIME POINT Foundation Sansad Ratna Awards Committee PABENBE NEXT GEN POLITICAL LEADERS

Sanskad Ratna Awards 2023

100th AWARD MARK

LOK SABHA

Shri Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury Shri. Sudhir Gupta Dr. Heena Vijaykumar Gavit Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato

Shri. Kuldeep Rai Sharma Shri Gopal Chinayya Shetty Dr. Sukanta Majumdar Dr. Amol Ramsing Kolhe

RAJYA SABHA

Dr. Manoj Kumar Jha Dr. Fauzia Tahseen Ahmed Khan Dr. John Brittas Shri. Vishambhar Prasad Nishad Smt. Chhaya Verma

STANDING COMMITTEES **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Lifetime Achievement Award**

Dr. Jayant Sinha (Finance) Shri. Vijaysai Reddy (Transport, Tourism and Culture) Shri T K Rangarajan

Saturday, 25th March 2023 at 4.00 p.m. New Maharashtra Sadan, K.G. Marg, New Delhi

13th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards 2023 was held on Saturday, 25th March 2023 at New Maharashtra Sadan, Delhi. Shri Bandaru Dattatreya (Hon'ble Governor of Haryana) was the Chief Guest and presented the Awards. Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India and the Chairman of Jury Committee was the Guest of Honour. 8 Lok Sabha MPs, 5 Rajya Sabha MPs and two Departmentally Related Standing Committees were honoured with Sansad Ratna Awards 2023. One Veteran Parliamentarian was honoured with "Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

Lifetime Achievement Award”. During this event, 100th Award Mark was crossed. The Awards are given on behalf of the Civil Society.

An eminent Jury Committee chaired by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal and Co-Chaired by Shri T S Krishnamurthy (Former Chief Election Commissioner of India) nominated the Awardees.

Prime Point Foundation and the eMagazine PreSense started honouring the top performing Parliamentarians based on their performance parameters (Initiated Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions) inside the House, on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam from March 2009. Till this 13th Edition, 106 Awards have been presented and all Awardees have received the Awards in person on the stage.

Sansad Ratna Award Winners 2023



Please watch the Award presentation ceremony in this link

Video: <https://youtu.be/tjri4ZFnyws> |

Photos <https://photos.app.goo.gl/TCJtxvVQosypU7vL7>

Prime Minister Modi's State Visit to the US has brought India to Global Stage – A Comprehensive Review

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (June 2023)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's State visit to the US and his address to the joint sitting of the US Congress on 23rd June 2023 has brought India to the centre stage at global level. During his approximately one-hour-long speech, he described the partnership between India and the US as the "defining partnership of this century". PM Modi received 53 rounds of applause and a record 15 standing ovations. Narendra Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Joint Sitting of the US Congress twice and the sixth Indian Prime Minister to address the Joint Sitting. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao, Vajpayee and Dr Manmohan Singh have already addressed the joint sitting once.

Special Honour to Narendra Modi and India

Narendra Modi is the fourth Head of State/Government to address the Joint sitting of the US Congress twice. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has addressed Joint Sitzings three times. Britain's Churchill addressed two joint meetings and one informal meeting of the US Congress. Former South African President Nelson Mandela also addressed the Joint Sitting twice.

Modi's visit was historic as no Indian PM before him had the privilege of such red-carpet treatment and rose garden dinner with an Indian menu. This type of honour is usually given only to heads of developed countries. Agreements were signed, for the first time with India, to supply aircraft engines for combat aircraft and transfer of technology to state-owned HAL. This is a landmark achievement.



President Biden has gone out of the way to extend a warm welcome and strengthen Indo-US ties despite 70 of his own party men representing 26% of the party's strength asking Biden not to give a red carpet welcome to Modi, quoting Gujarat riots when he was the Chief Minister of the State. They alleged that Modi was suppressing religious minorities and freedom of expression. Biden virtually rejected his own party's criticism and extended a warm welcome to show he did not lend much credence to such reports.

The US needs India as part of the Quad to counter China on the South China Sea where India also has economic interests in oil fields and drilling in Vietnam by ONGC.

Counter narrative

During the Indian Prime Minister's state visit to the US, Obama told CNN that the issue of the "protection of the Muslim minority in a majority-Hindu India" would be worth raising in Modi's meeting with the US president, Joe Biden. Obama said that without such protection there was "a strong possibility that India at some point starts pulling apart." This is a very damaging statement by Obama provoking the disintegration of India.

During the Joint Press Conference with President Biden, a journalist asked Modi the question as to why his administration did not prevent harassment of minorities and suppressed press freedom. Modi denied any discrimination against minorities under his government and said the benefits reached all the people.

President Biden reacted to the journalist by saying that he and Modi had discussed at length the issue of human rights, rights of minorities and democracy.

In India, Modi's followers started abusing the journalist on social media for asking this question. White House reacted strongly to the online harassment of the journalist.

While Indian media was reporting about the 'red carpet welcome' to Modi, the American media was focussing on Obama's allegation. Back in India, Finance Minister Nirmala Seetharaman and Assam Chief Minister Biswas reacted sharply going out of the way to talk about the lineage of Obama as a Muslim which could have been avoided. Diplomatic experts feel that while Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were handling the situation, other leaders should not have shown hyper ventilated reaction since Obama was not the President.

Our Observations

India is emerging as a strong nation and is coming on to the global centre stage. Now India has developed the courage not to obey

the DICTATS of superpowers like the US. While on one side, the US may like to maintain a friendly relationship with India for market purposes, they like to weaken India both internally and externally promoting wrong narratives like this. India is the only country in the world, that is secular and where minorities enjoy more facilities and privileges than the majority people both legally and politically since Independence. While Obama and Biden belong to the same party, it is not known why they speak in different voices. Indian Government should try to trace the intent behind it.

Also, there has always been global criticism against developing countries like India, which cannot be avoided. PreSense has been pointing out very often that the BJP Government and leaders do not communicate when needed and communicate when not needed. Only the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister should handle the diplomatic issues. Unnecessary comments by other Ministers and followers of the BJP may become counter-productive. The BJP leaders should shed "I know it all" attitude and entrust the communication to the professionals. While the Anti India lobby is communicating professionally with the support of a few of our own Indian political leaders to defame India and create trouble among the citizens, Government has to ensure that professional communication is stepped up to counter such false narratives.

PM Modi's Nine-Year Rule Gets Good Rating, but the Middle-Class Expresses Concerns

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (June 2023)

In May 2023, Narendra Modi has completed 9 years of his rule. The Government has issued lot of advertisements claiming spectacular achievements on many fronts. Generally, it is said that politics and elections are based more on 'perception' than on 'performance'. We have in the past, seen several Prime Ministers (PMs) and Chief Ministers (CMs) losing elections in spite of their sterling performances, and several non-performing politicians winning again. In order to quickly study the perception of the people across the nation, PreSense conducted a snap survey on 6th June with a few questions. The link was circulated on social media and through various WhatsApp groups. Within 24 hours, we got 1661 responses from all the States from different age groups, with varied professional backgrounds and gender. After cleaning up the extreme views, we could get 1404 balanced responses. It may also be recalled that PreSense conducted a similar snap survey in June 2021, after Modi completed 7 years of rule. This was published in our June 2021 edition.

The survey has indicated a lot of insights about the positive and negative aspects of the Modi rule. Even those respondents who gave higher ratings to Modi expressed serious concerns about some of the issues.

Since it was conducted online, we can safely take this as the perception or mood of the average educated middle class and lower middle class segment across India. This segment was the base, which provided Modi with a huge mandate both in the 2014 and 2019 General Elections. Even now, this section forms part of nearly 50 per cent of the vote bank and can influence another 10 to 15 per cent of other segments. Hence, these perceptions are significant to the Modi team. We also clarify that we have not done any study of the Below Poverty Line (BPL) segment.

Positive Aspects

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

Good corruption-free and scam-free Governance, Effective COVID management, managing various schemes for poor people, infrastructure development, raising the image of India globally, maintaining national security, resolving the Kashmir issue, Digitalisation, and Economic reforms constitute around 85% of the views of the respondents. Since we have asked an 'open-ended question' to mention the positive aspects, we could feel the respondents were quite comfortable with the governance of Modi. Many people perceive Modi as a 'clean' person providing strong leadership.

Corruption-free governance gets huge appreciation from the respondents, including his critics.

Even during June 2021, we got the same perception. That means Modi maintains the leadership and clean image intact.

Negative Aspects

As indicated earlier, the respondents belong to the average middle-class and lower-middle-class segment. Hence, this can be considered the perception of this segment.

Though the respondents appreciate Modi Government for Corruption free governance, one-fifth of the respondents across the nation uniformly feel that Modi Government does not take action and punish the corrupt people. Though a lot of raids are conducted, nothing is being done thereafter. According to many respondents, corrupt people are roaming free without fear of punishment.

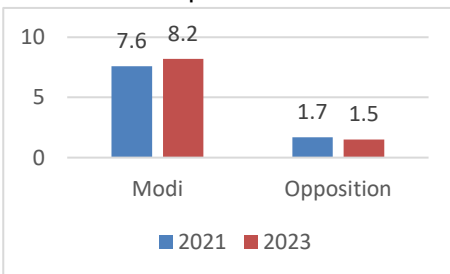
The other negative aspects perceived by the respondents are:

- Petrol and diesel price hike, leading to a price rise of other commodities;
- Unemployment problem / job losses;
- Not done anything to favour the middle class and senior citizens, including Pensioners (bank interest is getting reduced for deposits);
- While the schemes are laudable, implementation is poor;
- Some Ministers are generally inefficient, and Gujarat cadre officers dominate the bureaucracy;
- Poor communication strategies – not making any serious effort to counter fake messages and false news;
- 'Perceived arrogance' of some BJP and RSS leaders – not connecting with people – assuming themselves to be 'intellectual islands' with an 'I Know It All' attitude;
- Not taking enough action against continuous protests against CAA, Farm Laws, etc
- Not popularising the Central Government Schemes.
- Not doing anything to protect Hindu community, though claiming to be the saviour of Hindus. Not releasing Hindu temples from Government control.

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

Rating of Modi Government and Opposition

When the respondents were asked to rate the Modi Government



on a 0 to 10 scale, 83% rated more than 8.0. The average rating by all the respondents was 8.2 out of 10. A similar online survey was conducted by us in June 2021 and published in June 2021 issue of PreSense, when Modi completed 7 years of rule. At

that time, Modi got a rating of 7.6 out of 10.

The respondents were also asked to rate the performance of the Opposition Parties led by Indian National Congress as an effective opposition, on a scale of 0 to 10. Only 4% of the respondents rated more than 8 out of 10. The average rating was 1.5 out of 10. In June 2021, the Opposition got a rating of 1.7 out of 10.

These two indicators reveal that the popularity of Modi has gone up in these two years, in spite of all the negative observations. It may be probably due to a lack of credible opposition and alternative to Modi.

It is also observed that there is a marginal decline in voting pattern with 4% of respondents who voted for Modi in 2019, not voting for Modi in 2024. This may be due to the frustration of middle and lower-middle-class voters due to price rise, including the increase of gas and petrol, taxation and withdrawal of subsidies. Even senior citizens express concern over the declining rate of interest, withdrawal of concessions and huge medical insurance premiums. This decline of 4% is an indicator of frustration, in spite of a good rating. It should be noted that rating is different from voting. Though this is a small percentage, Modi Team cannot ignore this.

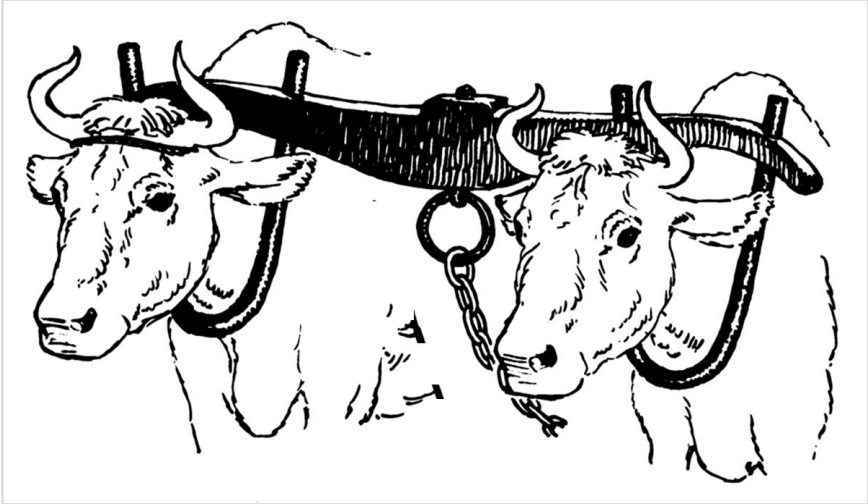
Alternate to Modi

The respondents were asked to specify an alternate to Modi. 58% of the respondents could not specify anybody and left the column blank. 23% of the respondents preferred Yogi Adityanath. Naveen Patnaik (5%), Amit Shah (3%) and Rahul Gandhi (2%) are also indicated by them. During the analysis, our team observed that many respondents got struck without anybody's name coming to their minds.

Functioning of the Opposition Parties

As indicated earlier, even those respondents who were against Modi were critical of the Opposition Parties led by Indian National Congress. In any democracy, both the opposition and the ruling

parties are like bullocks tied to a yoke. Both have to travel together in a balanced manner. Both have the responsibility to run the democracy, and both are accountable to the citizens.



In 1991, when Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister, the country was facing a major financial crisis, leading to the liberalisation of the economy. Although RSS was against the principles of liberalisation, the then-opposition leaders, Vajpayee and Advani worked closely with Narasimha Rao to bail out the country from the crisis. Both the PM and the Opposition Leaders placed the nation above their political gains.

Even as a minority government, Narasimha Rao completed his full term, implementing many financial reforms, the fruits of which we enjoy today. When Pakistan raised allegations against India, Narasimha Rao, instead of travelling himself, deputed Vajpayee to give a befitting response on behalf of India, to Pakistan at the United Nations. This gesture sent a strong message globally that all the political parties in India follow a similar policy on Jammu and Kashmir.

Today, unfortunately, our opposition parties do not act responsibly. They try to politicise every insignificant issue by spreading fake and unverified messages. Sometimes, they issue statements that favour enemy countries too. The opposition parties, barring a few parties, create a ruckus in the Parliament, defeating the very purpose of democracy.

Our Observations

Modi gets a better rating in 2023 among the respondents than in 2021, probably due to TINA (There is no Alternate) factor. We can take this survey as the mood of the lower middle-class and middle-class segments. (The mood of the Below Poverty Line was not taken). Modi enjoys a 'clean' and 'corruption-free' governance image. But at the same time, respondents feel that he is not taking any action against corrupt people to punish them. Though the middle-class people indicate their pains due to price rise, taxation, and unemployment, they seem to prefer Modi, since the opposition is very weak. As already indicated, there is a marginal decline in voters who voted in his favour in 2019.

From the various responses in the survey, it is clearly indicated that the people are more anxious and concerned about their day-to-day life than about the trumpeted achievements of a better macro policy or sound foreign relations. However, during the course of conversation with a senior Foreign Service Officer, it is understood that only because of the cordial relationship with various countries, including Russia and the US, we are able to maintain the petrol and gas prices at this level.

He also further said that if India had not maintained a good relationship with other countries, the prices would have gone up very high triggering huge inflation. But this factor has not been communicated effectively by the Government to the people. The ruling party should not ignore this fact.

In the past, more than the economic issues, emotional issues have helped BJP to come to power. With the new set of young voters and the growing frustration of the average middle class, emotional

issues may not play a significant role in future, particularly in South India. When a national party like Indian National Congress is weak, it could lead to a fragmented mandate with many regional parties securing seats, leading to chaos and leadership confusion. India has witnessed many fragile governments in the past, with Charan Singh, Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, Chandrasekar and V.P. Singh ruling without a majority mandate, collapsing at the whims and fancies of various regional party leaders. It is also sad that Indian National Congress is not taking enough efforts to emerge as a strong opposition party. A weak Congress is not good for democracy and India.

Our Conclusion and Suggestions

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

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

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

The survey in general indicates that there is no visible anti-incumbency factor with regard to the Parliament election against Modi even after his 9 years of ruling.

(Support for Survey analysis by Prof. Dr K Prabhakar)

Uniform Civil Code Promotes Gender Equality, Dream of Dr BR Ambedkar

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (July 2023)

Introduction

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a concept that has been at the forefront of the Indian societal and political discourse for decades. It refers to the idea of having a single set of secular civil laws that apply uniformly to all citizens, irrespective of their religion. The UCC aims to promote gender equality, social justice, and national integration by eradicating the prevailing disparities in personal laws governed by different religious communities.

Though the discussion on UCC is happening for several decades after Independence, it is now being seriously debated after the Law Commission has called for views from the citizens. Article 44 of the Indian Constitution states, "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India." Though the Government has not released the draft of the UCC, debates are going on either opposing or welcoming the UCC. The debate about the common civil code has polarized the political parties. The opposition parties allege that the UCC may destroy the religious identity of the minorities, mainly Muslims. The ruling party has not provided its official stand, to allay these fears.

Though the Constitution provides Gender Equality, in practice women are discriminated against in many aspects like marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance, adoption, etc. due to various personal laws followed by various communities. The UCC will remove only the anomalies of the injustice done to women in various communities providing equal status that has been enshrined in the Constitution. It will not affect the religious aspects of the communities. The opponents of UCC are fighting against the UCC without realising that they are fighting against the 'gender equality' provided in the Constitution. Probably, it is due to the

lack of understanding by the opponents or deliberately due to vote bank politics.

Position before Independence

Before 1937, Hindus and Muslims in India were following the personal laws adopted in that area. That means, even Muslims were following the practices of Hindus and vice versa. Though India was ruled by various invaders for nearly 800 years, there was no problem. Only in 1937, British Government enacted Shariat Law for Muslims, to create a wedge between Hindus and Muslims as part of their 'divide and rule' policy. After Indian Independence, the Constituent Assembly debated whether the 'Uniform Civil Code' could be implemented across the nation.

Constituent Assembly Discussion and Article 35

The Constituent Assembly of India, while framing the Constitution, engaged in extensive discussions about the need for a Uniform Civil Code.

It needs to be noted that the early proponents of UCC were women. Among the 15 women, who were part of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Hansa Mehta's contribution in trying to make UCC justiciable remains most significant. As a member of Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee, she along with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Dr B R Ambedkar and M R Masani stressed the need for establishing a single Indian identity over multiple religious identities and the role that the state has to play in ensuring this. Dakshayani Velayudhan, the first and the only Dalit woman in the cabinet had also made a strong case for UCC.

The Constituent Assembly took up the issue of Uniform Civil Code on 23 November, 1948 as part of Article 35 of the Constitution. There were impassioned debates on the topic with the 24 November 1948 edition of the Times of India describing it as "a series of full-blooded speeches."

Interestingly, the amendments to the Draft were tabled by five Muslim members – M. Muhammad Ismail, Naziruddin Ahmad,

Mahboob Ali Baig, B Pocker and KTM Ahmed Ibrahim. Their dominant view was that the implementation of UCC was “tyrannical” and that the state had no right to “interfere” in the personal laws of any community.

Among the members who felt that UCC was necessary to keep India united, the most vociferous arguments were put forth by K M Munshi. He said, the enactment of a common code affects Hindus equally and the goal of such legislation is to protect the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution like ensuring gender equality. Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer asked if India should be welded together as a single nation or always kept up as a series of competing communities. Ananthasayanam Iyengar also supported the UCC.

Dr Ambedkar’s views

Dr B R Ambedkar in his response pointed out that there was already a uniform code of laws covering almost all aspects of human relationships which meant that it was possible to have a uniform civil code in the country. Differing on the argument that the Muslim personal law was uniform throughout the country, he reminded the Assembly of the North-West Frontier Province which followed the Hindu Law in the matter of succession and others till, in 1939 the Central Legislature passed a law to apply Shariat to the Muslim dominated areas. Even in the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Bombay, the Muslims to a large extent were governed by the Hindu Law in the matter of succession. He also brought attention to the fact that in North Malabar, the matriarchal form of law, Marumakkathayam Law was applied to both Hindus and Muslims.

Concluding the debate on 2 December 1948 on UCC, Ambedkar said, “All that the State is claiming in this matter is a power to legislate. There is no obligation upon the State to do away with personal laws. Therefore, no one need be apprehensive of the fact that if the State has the power, the State will immediately proceed to execute or enforce that power in a manner that may be found to be objectionable by the Muslims or by the Christians or by any other community in India ... Sovereignty is always limited, no

matter even if you assert that it is unlimited because sovereignty in the exercise of that power must reconcile itself to the sentiments of different communities. No Government can exercise its powers in such a manner as to provoke the Muslim community to rise in rebellion. I think it would be a mad government if it did so”.

He assured the Assembly that the feelings of everyone will be taken into consideration and said that in future, the Parliament may make provisions where the uniform civil code is applied to only those who want to be voluntarily governed by it. In the end, it was decided that the amendments proposed to Article 35 do not hold any merit and it was adopted as it is. This article was later moved to the Directive Principles of State Policy as the law makers felt that the nation was not yet ready to accept a common civil code. Thus, the goal of a uniform civil code was enshrined in Article 44 of the Indian Constitution and read thus:

“The state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.”

Present situation

Though criminal law is applicable to all citizens uniformly, there are various personal civil laws governing the various religions and communities. There were several practices among the Hindus across the nation for marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, etc. Practices like Sati, polygamy, early marriage, discrimination of women in properties, etc. were prevalent among the Hindus in those times. In spite of the resistance, Hindu Laws were enacted in 1955 to bring uniformity among the Hindus. A modern civilisation needs to adopt reforms based on the need.

Islamic personal laws permit women to get married at the time of puberty or 15 whichever is earlier, while Hindu laws permit marriage only at 18. If a person marries a 15-year-old girl, the offence is determined based on his religion. Even for divorce, various communities have different procedures. There is no uniformity for the inheritance of properties. When Hindu laws prohibit polygamy, there are several cases in the courts where women plead that their husbands convert to Islam to get married to another woman. Legally women are discriminated in spite of the

Constitutional guarantee of equality. Supreme Court of India in many cases have pointed out these anomalies and advised the Government to bring legislation and implement UCC as provided under Article 44 of the Indian Constitution.

Though Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr Ambedkar wanted to bring UCC immediately after Independence, presently the followers of both leaders oppose UCC for their own political reasons. The political parties who were pleading for women's equality, now oppose UCC. The RSS in the 1970s opposed the UCC but now is in favour.

Way Ahead

Though Constitution provides equality for citizens, even after 75 years of Independence, women are discriminated against due to their religious practices and 'Gender equality' is only on paper. There is a fear among minorities that UCC may interfere with their religious practices. The Government and the media should explain the need for the UCC properly and allay the fears of minorities and others. All political parties should realise that in the name of opposing UCC, they are opposing Gender equality, which was piloted by Dr Ambedkar and Pandit Nehru. It may be noted that Goa State has been following the UCC right from the Portuguese days and continued the same laws even after their liberation in 1961.

Any change may create a fear psychosis and uncertainty. The government of India should come out with the draft UCC and create confidence among minorities that it is meant only for Gender Equity and does not interfere with religious practices. At the same time, the opposition parties also, instead of playing vote bank politics over this vital issue, follow the sentiments of Dr Ambedkar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and help the Government in a smooth transition for the reforms.

Empowering Indian Women: Parliament Passes Landmark Women's Reservation Bill - Reserving One-Third of Seats for Women

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Sep 2023)



Indian Parliament made history during the Special Session held in September 2023 in the new building named 'Sansad Bhavan' by passing the 128th Constitution Amendment Bill that provides one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and other State Assemblies. In the historic event, Lok Sabha passed the Bill on 20th September 2023 with 454 members voting in favour and 2 against. The Rajya Sabha on 21st September 2023 passed the Bill with 214 voting in favour and none against.

It is historic in the sense that the Constitutional Amendment could be passed in both Houses of Parliament after 27 years. Though the Bill was introduced in 1996 for the first time, this could not be passed due to differences of views among the parties. The Bill was introduced several times without getting passed. Modi Government made efforts to bring consensus among the parties to get the Bill passed in both Houses. This being a Constitutional Amendment Bill, it needs to be ratified by 50 per cent of the State

Assemblies. All the parties have agreed to this Bill, it will get ratified by the State Assemblies too within two or three months. After the assent by the President, the Bill will become effective.

Presently, the current Lok Sabha has only 14 per cent of the women members. The State Assemblies in India account for less than 10 per cent of the women members. Now this amendment enables one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to be reserved for women. This includes the reserved constituencies for SCs and STs.



***Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal
introducing the historic bill in the
Lok Sabha***

The one-third women reservation will come into effect only for the 2029 General elections because as per Article 82 of the Indian Constitution, the Census has to be

completed, before Delimitation Commission is appointed. The Delimitation Commission is to be headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge. The Delimitation Commission will go through the Census data and mark the constituencies for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, including the reserved ones.

The Census was not held in 2021 due to corona pandemic and is likely to start only after the General Elections in 2024. It may take even two years. The Delimitation Commission will be appointed for marking the new constituencies by 2026 and it may take another two years. The Election Commission does not have any authority to mark the constituencies. They can conduct only elections. The procedures are enshrined in Article 82 of the Indian Constitution. In view of this, the new reservation quota for women can come into force only from 2029, provided nobody challenges the amendment in the Supreme Court.

Some of the political parties allege that the ruling party made this amendment in a hurry when there was no urgency. In our view, this Bill has been pending for more than 27 years for various political reasons. PreSense appreciates the Modi Government for

bringing this legislation now when there is a consensus among the political parties and getting it passed. This Bill is long overdue. We may not know what will happen in the future with ever-changing political views. The Parliament has passed this amendment and hence there would be pressure on the new Government to start the census and form the Delimitation Commission for implementing this amendment.

Since this eMagazine PreSense has been honouring the top performing Parliamentarians with Sansad Ratna Awards since 2009, we have observed that women Parliamentarians, though in small numbers, perform better with high-quality participation. It may be noted that both in the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra) is maintaining the No. 1 position among the MPs in the overall performance.

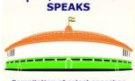
PreSense also takes pride that Arjun Ram Meghwal, the Minister for Law and Justice and also the Chairman of the Jury Committee of Sansad Ratna Awards (an initiative of this eMagazine PreSense) has piloted this historic Bill in the Parliament.

While congratulating the Government and all political parties for the historic decision, PreSense is of the view that this will empower Indian women more in governance.

For background information about this Bill and a comparison with other countries. Please read the analysis by PRS India

<https://tinyurl.com/womenbill2023>

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