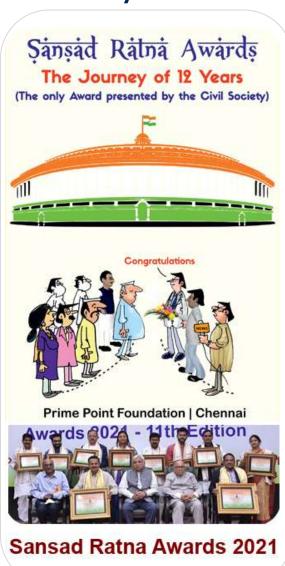


Spreading Positive Vibrations Issue No 169 – March 2021 Published by Prime Point Foundation

Cover Story of the Month



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From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief

Greetings from all of us @ The Editorial Team to all our readers.



Welcome to this month's special edition on the 11^{th} Sansad Ratna Awards function 2021 held in New Delhi. As one of the honourable dignitaries to the function mentioned in his speech on the dais, Sansad Ratna Awards function has moved from the south to the north, coinciding with the spring equinox on March 20^{th} , when the sun moves from the south towards the north of the equator.

The Sansad Ratna Awards has come a long way from the first function held in 2010 as a humble initiative to recognise ace performers among our country's Parliamentarians. Over the years, the Awards gained increasing recognition because of its high credibility, genuineness and authenticity. Sansad Ratna Awards enjoyed the privilege of having IIT Madras, as its associate partner. The event in 2019 was held in the Hon'ble Governor's premises in Chennai, the Raj Bhavan. After a miss last year due to the extraordinary situation caused by the Covid attack, the Awards for the 17th Lok Sabha session was held this year at the prestigious Constitution Club in New Delhi, with the attendance of high-ranking dignitaries.

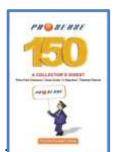
Being a Sansad Ratna Awards 2021 special edition, your eMagazine this month brings you an exclusive coverage of the event. In the Editorial, the Founder and Chairman of Sansad Ratna Awards, Shri K Srinivasan *aka* Prime Point Srinivasan reflects on the journey of the Awards. The Cover Story gives a brief account of the function. We also carry synopses of the messages rendered by the dignitaries on the occasion. We have included the video recordings of the functions along with collages of snapshots from the event.

We are pleased to announce the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee 2021-22. This edition provides the composition of the Committee.

I hope you will enjoy reading this edition. Please share your feedback with us at editor@corpezine.com. Your feedback is important to us.

Susan

Downloads







www.prpoint.com/ezine/initiatives

Earlier Editions of your eMagazine, PreSense: https://www.corpezine.com



Editorial

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

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.

Proposals on Electoral Reforms

July 2004

Mirechan India
Adulta Band, Iran Outs 110001

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



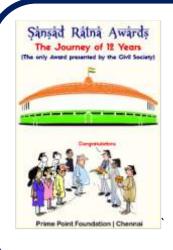
and the media and poll agencies. These surveys are not transparent as they do not indicate the methodology and the sample size of the survey and the results. Since many of the media houses are owned by political parties or are in alliance with some parties, their views are unreliable. In the past elections, 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.

by K. Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor



Sansad Ratna Awards – The Journey of 12 Years

We are pleased to inform the release of the booklet, 'Sansad Ratna Awards – The Journey of 12 Years' on the occasion of the 11th Sansad Ratna Awards Function held at Constitution Club, New Delhi on 20th March 2021. The printed copies of the booklet were distributed to all the guests who attended the function.

The e-booklet is available in the following link for download:

http://www.prpoint.com/ezine/sansadratna2021.pdf



Cover Story

12 Years' Journey of Sansad Ratna Awards



Sansad Ratna Awardees 2021 with Shri Sunil Arora, Chief Election Commissioner of India (third from left) and Justice Shri A K Patnaik, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India (fourth from left)

The Background

Members of Parliament (MPs) of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are representatives of the people of India, elected/nominated to work towards efficient governance of the country. This is an especially challenging task in a country like India, which is the largest democracy in the world. These MPs come from different walks of life, with their individual spheres of expertise, to learn and understand the political system, in order to run the government. Many among them work quietly but relentlessly, with dedication and efficiency. They often go unnoticed.

The functioning of the Lok Sabha came under severe criticism especially towards the end of the 14th Lok Sabha in 2009 because of the frequent disruptions and pandemonium in the Parliament. The then Speaker, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, in his valedictory address for the 14th Lok Sabha, was expressly critical, and registered his unhappiness over the frequent disruptions in the Parliament. The public too, criticised the conduct of the Parliamentarians, through social media. In mock Parliament sessions held in colleges and schools, students ridiculed by throwing chairs and creating pandemonium. In the meantime, elections for the 15th Lok Sabha were announced.



Suggestion by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

It was around this time that, on the suggestion of former President of India (late) Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Point Foundation decided to highlight the positive aspect of Indian democracy by recognising its top performing parliamentarians, who quietly discharged their constitutional duties with exemplary commitment and performance. Prime Point Foundation instituted the Sansad Ratna Awards to recognise and honour these Parliamentarians.

In the March 2009 issue of your eMagazine PreSense, interviews with top performing Parliamentarians of the 14th Lok Sabha, including Shri Kharventhan (Tamil Nadu) and Shri Anandrao Adsul (Maharashtra), based on the data provided by PRS India, were carried. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam too gave his exclusive interview, on the role of Parliamentarians. This was the humble beginning of the recognition of performing Parliamentarians, on behalf of the civil society.

The First Awards Function

The first Awards function was held at Chennai in May 2010, coinciding with the 50th Edition of your eMagazine PreSense. Two top-performing Parliamentarians, Shri Hansraj G Ahir (Maharashtra) and Shri S S Ramasubbu (Tamil Nadu) were honoured, in the presence of Chennai citizens. Dr Abdul Kalam himself inaugurated the Awards event through teleconference from Delhi.

From then on, every year, Prime Point Foundation and eMagazine PreSense presented Awards to top-performing Parliamentarians, based on the data provided by PRS India and Lok Sabha Secretariat. Till the 9th edition (2019), the Awards functions were held jointly with IIT Madras. The 10th edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Chennai in January 2019, at the end of 16th Lok Sabha. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Awards function could not be held in 2020. The 11th edition was held on 20th March 2021 at Constitution Club of India, New Delhi.

The Awardees are selected by a Jury Committee headed by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs) with Shri N K Premachandran (Member of Parliament from Kerala) and Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Member of Parliament from Maharashtra). All the three Jury Committee Members themselves are Sansad Ratna Awardees of earlier Lok Sabha. Dr Abdul Kalam used to discuss about the Sansad Ratna Awards with the Founder of the Awards, Prime Point Srinivasan and also with the Jury Committee Members. He had given several suggestions to improve the parameters for selection of awardees.



11th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards 2021

The 11th edition was held on 20th March 2021 at the prestigious Constitution Club of India, New Delhi. Shri Sunil Arora (Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India) and



Justice Shri A K Patnaik (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) presented the Awards during the Awards function. Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs, and Chairman of Jury Committee) was also present. Ten Parliamentarians received Awards. The event was telecast live by Doordarshan News and other private channels.

Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJD, Odisha) and Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra) received the Sansad Maha Ratna Awards for the 16th Lok Sabha. Smt Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra), though nominated for Sansad Maha Awards, could not participate due to some urgent official work. Sansad Maha Ratna Awards are given once in five years.

This is the first time that the Sansad Ratna Awards function was held outside Chennai, and in the national capital of the country. The gist of the speeches of the Chief Guests and the new list of Sansad Ratna Committee Members are included in this edition.

For the first time in the 12 years of the Sansad Ratna Awards functions, school students participated as volunteers at the function in New Delhi. The Management of Ahlcon Public School supported the event with the participation of 10 senior student volunteers. The students were given the opportunity to interact with India's top performing Parliamentarians.

Synopses of the speeches of the main dignitaries, with YouTube links, are given separately in this edition.

Videos of the 11th Sansad Ratna Awards function: www.tinyurl.com/sansadratna2021
Photographs of the event: https://photos.app.goo.gl/fUidDS3SjSmNvgdZ7

Parliamentarians Who Received Sansad Ratna Awards

No. Name Party | State

SANSAD MAHA RATNA FOR 16th LOK SABHA

1 Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab BJD | Odisha

2 Shri Shrirang Appa Barne Shiv Sena | Maharashtra

SANSAD RATNA FOR 17TH LOK SABHA (based on performance in 2019-20)

3	Dr Subash Ramrao Bhamre	BJP Maharashtraq
4	Dr Heena Vijaykumar Gavit	BJP Maharashtra
5	Dr Amol Ramsing Kolhe	NCP Maharashtra
6	Shri Ram Mohan Naidu	TDP Andhra Pradesh
7	Shri Ajay Kumar Misra	BJP Uttar Pradesh

SANSAD RATNA FOR RAJYA SABHA (based on performance in 2019-20)

8	Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad	SP	I	Uttar Pradesh
9	Smt. Chhaya Verma	INC		Chhattisgarh

DEPARTMENTALLY RELATED STANDING COMMITTEE

10 Shri P C Gaddi Goudar Chairman,
Agriculture Committee



Synopses of Speeches of Dignitaries

Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble MOS for Heavy Industries, Public Enterprises & Parliamentary Affairs, & Chairman of the Jury Committee of Sansad Ratna Awards



"Today is an auspicious day because today is the International Day of Happiness. The appreciation and recognition conferred on the award-winning Members of Parliament will surely increase the happiness index of these awardees.

Why is Sansad Ratna Awards important?

It was in 2012 when I received a telephone call from Shri Srinivasan, Chairman of Sansad Ratna Awards Committee. He said I was selected to receive the Sansad Ratna Award as the best debater of the Parliament for the 15th Lok Sabha. When I asked him the basis for my selection, he referred to data provided by PRS India, which regularly compiles data pertaining

to the performance of all the Members of Parliament in both the Houses. He also said that Dr APJ Abdul Kalam was his mentor for this purpose.

Therefore, I met Dr Kalam and asked him the reasons for initiating the Sansad Ratna Awards. In response, Dr Kalam explained that India follows the multi-party system of governance. In this context, he also quoted a Hindi slogan: "विविधता में एकता, भारत की विशेषता (vividhatha mein ekta, bharat ki visheshatha", meaning,' the uniqueness of India is its unity in diversity').

Dr Kalam shared his experience during his visit to IIT, Madras where the young students criticised the performance of the politicians, labelling them all 'bad'. When he asked them, who would clean up the corrupt system, the students did not have an answer. It was then that he felt that a civil society organisation should come forward to recognise and appreciate the good performers in the Parliament. He felt responsible about doing something as he was then the Former President of India and therefore part of the Parliamentary system.

It was then that he suggested to Prime Point Srinivasan, whom he knew personally, to implement the idea under his guidance and mentorship. He suggested that PRS India which maintained unbiased data on the MPs' performance, could be selected as the basis for the selection process. He also suggested a Jury Committee to facilitate the selection system.

The Sansad Ratna Awards Committee is transparent in its functioning and there is no hidden agenda behind these Awards. As Chairman of the Jury Committee, and with my association with Srinivasan since 2012, I can vouch for the genuineness of the Awards.

The Awards is the implementation of Dr Kalam's dream."

The complete address can be watched in the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixOQZLivRXA



Chief Guest Shri Sunil Arora, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India

"When Mr Srinivasan and his team interacted with me and my colleagues in the context of today's event, he mentioned that Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Saheb, whom he knew on a personal level, had once articulated his thoughts about the critical role of the Hon'ble Members of Parliament and the expectations of the nation from them. This seminal conversation, in fact, became the fountain head of instituting the prestigious Sansad Ratna and Sansad Maha Ratna Awards.

This brings us to the pertinent question, 'What is the role of Parliament in a democratic country like ours, with multiple layers of identity, manifold challenges and opportunities?' In order to understand that, we need to go back to where it all began - the Constituent Assembly.

The Constitution of a country is the embodiment of the collective aspirations and vision of its people. About the nature of our Constitution, Dr Ambedkar said: 'However good a constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However bad a constitution may be, if those implementing it are good, it will prove to be good.'

It is the spirit of 'We the People' that lies at the very core, the very foundation of this grand edifice called the Constitution of India. This is from where we, as a nation, draw our strength, our inspiration and legitimacy.

The sanctity and legitimacy of the institution of the parliament derives itself from the conduct of elections that are truly free, fair and participative - which represent the sovereign will of the people. The history of Indian elections bears testimony to the fact that Indian elections, despite their unprecedented scale and complexity, have always expressed the democratic right of the people.

While speaking about the role of Election Commission of India, the great statesman, Shri Pranab Mukherjee had said, 'The role of the Election Commission in the practical play of democracy in India, has been simply outstanding. The challenges it has had to face have been daunting. The management of an electorate of over 900 million in 2019, that is nearly the combined population of the third, fourth and fifth largest nations in the world, and ensuring fair polling over eight lakh thirty thousand polling stations, is not an easy job. I compliment the Election Commission for this laudable achievement.'

This brings to us the issue of electoral reforms, which is a rather continuous process. For the Commission, transparency and confidentiality of voting has always been a guiding consideration in ensuring free, fair and credible elections.

Each day in the present of our nation is significant, each challenge a tryst with destiny. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all of us to ensure that the glorious traditions set forth by the great leaders and freedom fighters continue to prevail and the nation makes great strides in every sphere of life."

The complete address can be watched in the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOw0Odkj8hc



Justice Shri A K Patnaik, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India



"Under our Constitution, the Parliament is the most important institution. Parliament makes laws for the entire country in matters listed in the Union List and also debates the national issues. Members of Parliament are representatives of their respective constituencies and their respective States, to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively. They have a commitment to the people whom they represent and they are able to appreciate their problems.

I have been listening to the debates in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and have been reading the parliamentary debates published in the newspapers, and I appreciate the quality of debates on the national issues and some of the criticisms that the opposition members make in Parliament. For such debates and criticisms, Parliamentarians need to be rewarded. Sansad Ratna Awards are in recognition of Parliamentarians, who have performed well in Parliament. I congratulate all those who have been awarded Sansad Ratna Awards 2021, for their outstanding performance in Parliament during 2019-20, despite adverse pandemic circumstances.

Considering the role that Parliamentarians play in our representative democracy, the best available in our country, in merit and integrity, must get elected to the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. I am of the view that our political parties do not send their best talents, with merit and integrity, to Parliament for various reasons, some of which I would like to narrate.

The first reason is that there is no internal democracy in our political parties. In democracy, a political party should give an opportunity to its members to participate in the debates on the formulation of the programmes of the party. This is now recognised in the laws of various other countries.

The second reason is that persons, with merit and integrity, who want to contest election to seats in Parliament do not have the funds for campaigning for their election. Considering the huge resources required by a candidate in an election for parliamentary seat, a prospective candidate has to either depend on a political party for such funds for election, or has to organise his own funds as an independent candidate. This has discouraged many capable and meritorious persons from contesting elections for seats in Parliament.

The idea of Prime Point Foundation to confer Sansad Ratna Awards, which has been appreciated by late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, as I understand, is to promote high ethical standards amongst our parliamentarians. In my considered opinion, ethics cannot be expected from a Parliamentarian, who has to go through the struggles of politics to become a Member of Parliament. Max Weber in his lecture on 'Politics as a Vocation' has said that a political career provides a sense of power, but the three qualities required of a good politician are: passion for a cause, sense of responsibility, and sense of proportion.

For ensuring these qualities in our next generation political leaders, India needs a new law to be made by Parliament to regulate political parties, political funding and conduct of politicians, as have been made in some other democracies in the world."

The complete address can be watched in the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XN5TsYBQoR8



Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, Sansad Maha Ratna Awardee, on Behalf of the Awardees

"I have been conferred the Sansad Maha Ratna, probably not to compete anymore with the other Parliamentarians, when I fight for my space and time to take up issues of my constituency, or certain issues during zero hour, or when I burn the midnight oil to prepare for at least five questions every day to present in the Parliament, probably in the starred and the unstarred category of question, or to prepare for the debate based on the agenda for the following day, or to go after the party leader for time to speak in the Parliament for my party.



I remember the efforts taken by the various parties to find space and time for allotment to take up issues of relevance. The Chair of the House has the challenging task of allotting sufficient time to all requests for speaking. The challenge for the Parliamentarian who stands to speak is to restrict to the allotted time, failing which the Chair of the House informs and reminds you to stop as the allotted time has been exceeded. This is the most devastating moment.

There was a time during Jawaharlal Nehru's time when Parliamentarians were allowed to take their time to speak and the Parliament was prepared to work long hours to permit all the speakers to complete their speeches in Parliament, during the debate on the proposed First Amendment of the Constitution. It is a different scenario today. Even then, it is advisable that we speak intelligently for the allotted time instead of prolonged sessions.

One area of satisfaction is when you receive appreciation for a gesture or help you render to a stranger in your constituency, with no expectations in return.

I am reminded of what I saw displayed on the wall behind a school headmaster's seat. It was the famous letter written by a father to the headmaster on what his son should be taught, the father being Abraham Lincoln. The positive points written by him were studied by me in my schooldays. Similarly, though there are bad elements in society today, it is commendable that the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee on behalf of the civil society, is recognising good work.

It is coincidental that today is Spring Equinox, when the sun will be on the celestial equator before moving from south to north. Sansad Ratna Awards too has moved from the south to the north.

On behalf of fellow Parliamentarians from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, I thank the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee for recognising and appreciating on behalf of the civil society. It is also commendable that this is the only Award presented by Civil Society."

The complete address can be watched in the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-k5qqAiYsUk



Pictorial Glimpses





Snapshots from 11th Sansad Ratna Awards Function Held at Constitution Club, New Delhi on 20th March 2021















Sansad Ratna Awards Committee 2021-22 (17th Lok Sabha)

Jury Committee:



Chairman of Jury Committee Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal Hon'ble MoS for Parliamentary Affairs (Bharatiya Janata Party)



Member of Jury
Committee
Shri N K Premachandran
Hon'ble Member of
Parliament, Kerala
(Revolutionary Socialist
Party)



Member of Jury Committee Shri Shrirang Appa Barne Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Maharashtra (Shiv Sena)

Mentors:



Patron
Shri T S Krishnamurthy
Former Chief Election
Commissioner of India



Founder & Chairman
Prime Point Srinivasan
Chairman, Prime Point
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HAPPY This is HOLI filled with 2021 colorful SANITIZER .. Triambak Sharma



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Awards

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