

WORKING OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: OUR WAKEFUL ELECTORATE

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Abstract:

John Adams has rightly said, "As the happiness of the people is the sole end of the democracy, so the consent of the people is the sole foundation of it". The main objective of our Constitution is to achieve a Welfare State. It can only be attained when all organs of the State follow their respective duties and work within their defined roles. The focus of this research is on the first organ of the State, that is the Parliament, as it has been accorded a pre-eminent position in our constitutional and political setup, with the power to make laws, to exercise control over the nation's purse, to make the executive accountable to the popular House, and when considered necessary, also to amend the Constitution. This research was an attempt to know the awareness level of the young and mature educated electorate about how our supreme organ of the state works. It was found that the girl students belonging to the science background were not aware of the working of the parliamentary democracy in India. The picture appeared to be different in the case of girl students from arts, humanities, commerce and business streams. The maximum awareness level was found amongst the girl students from these streams. The students from the law stream have been purposely avoided because the study of parliament is part of their course. Their knowledge about this subject would definitely have hindered the result outcomes of the present study.

Key Words: Democracy; Parliament; Constitution; Democratic political set-up; Awareness; Youth.

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Introduction:

India gained independence after a prolonged struggle to have a self government and then framed its own constitution. Democratic political set up was adopted by the country to bind together a society, which to a great extent was culturally, socially, economically and politically fragmented. It opted for a parliamentary form of government providing an opportunity to the people of the country to engage in the process of governance. The Parliament of India is the supreme forum of India's democracy and is supposed to represent the collective will of the people. For the successful working of the Parliamentary system, the people must be aware that there is something beyond the mere election of their representatives.

Every generation is a new Nation. So they have a right to make changes in their constitution and leadership. Indeed, from its Vedic days and epic ages India has changed its culture and basic structure from age to age. When 'Bharat' came under the British Crown it was subject to imperial governance. Finally a do-or-die struggle for independence was launched till the people of India gained 'swaraj' and made a 'tryst with destiny' to make the country a 'Socialist, Secular, Democratic and Republic' under a Constitution. In light of our historical progress, it was incumbent upon the worthy and the thoughtful to take the tasks into their hands and took the nation to its pinnacle. So, history has beckoned the present generation to perform its duties which its predecessors have done so far. In order to do so, a timely check is required whether we have enough worth to bring such change of governance for welfare of people.

Youth is the future of a nation and educated youth is an asset as they are the trailblazers of nation. Their actions in all fields of life set forth standards for others. A mature electorate is one of the biggest assets of democracy. It is to be seen that law and society moves hand in hand. Laws are framed due to social changes and sometimes result in social changes. When laws bring social change, it has serious repercussions. So Parliament being the law making body has to consider all aspects of the society. Therefore, it is important for the people to be aware of the functioning of the Parliament to make it truly representative. The initial step to be taken is to know whether the youth is aware of the working of the Parliament. This study is mainly an attempt to assess the extent of the maturity achieved by the electorate of our country. The main interest of the study is to assess the level of awareness regarding functioning of the Parliament amongst the girl students of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives are:

1. To know the opinion of the girl students regarding need of awareness of one's governmental functioning.
2. To know the awareness level of the working of parliamentary democracy amongst girl students of various streams i.e. Languages, Science, Business/Commerce and Arts/Humanities.
3. To analyze the level of parliamentary awareness among girl students of Panjab University.
4. To evaluate general factual knowledge about current governmental set up among the girl students.

Design of the Study:

The design of the study involved, descriptive survey method of research.

Sample Of The Study:

In the present study incidental sampling techniques were used. The sample for the study was drawn from the boarders and day boarder's girl students of Panjab University. Rationale behind selecting female students is that females are normally presumed to have less awareness about the parliament and politics but they have greater responsibilities in life ahead as they are the backbone of a family, so it was important to analyze their awareness level. The efforts of women in bringing democracy in the country have largely remained unnoticed. A well aware woman of present generation can only inculcate and promote knowledge of our future generations, which in turn will shape our democracy in coming times.

For selecting the sample, incidental sampling technique had to be used as those beneficiaries could be taken who were available at the time of data collection. A sample of 60 respondents was taken. They vary from age 18 to 26 years so, whole of sample comprise of eligible voters. Respondents are pursuing Arts/Humanities, Science, Business/Commerce and Language streams. A sample of 15 students from each four streams has been taken. Deliberately law students have been avoided because parliamentary working is part of their course study under subject Constitution, so their responses tend to be correct, and may hamper overall evaluation of data collected from students of Humanities/Arts Stream.

Table 1.1. Sample Characteristics

Sr. No.	Departments	No. of Respondents
1.	Language (English, Hindi, Punjabi)	15
2.	Humanities/Arts (Psychology, Economics, Human Rights,	15
3.	Sciences (Computer Science, Physics, Biology, Botany, Dental Sciences, Chemistry)	15
4.	Business/ Commerce (Business studies, Hospital Management)	15

Research Tools: The present study was conducted with the help of a self-prepared questionnaire. Questionnaire used in this study was locally prepared and meant to elicit opinions of the respondents whether they are aware about the "Working of Parliament Democracy of their Nation."

Description of the Questionnaire: For preparing the questionnaire, information was gathered from various sources. The Questionnaire used for the present study comprised of 30 statements.

Collection of Data: The questionnaire was administered to the girl students of Panjab University. Before the actual administration of the questionnaire the purpose of the study was very clearly explained to each respondent.

Statistical Techniques: Descriptive statistics and statistical techniques, like frequency counts, have been used in the present study.

Data Analysis And Interpretation Of Results: With a view to attain a detailed picture of the awareness about Parliamentary working, presentation of results in the tabular form along with their interpretation were discussed. The findings have been concluded below

Results and Conclusions:

- 1. In India we have a democratic form of Government.** All the respondents from the various streams except Sciences (93%) of Panjab University have correctly opted for democracy as a form of governance prevalent in our nation.
- 2. Most of the respondents of all the streams accepted the relevance and need, to be aware about the working of government of their nation.** Thus, validity of this research work can not be questioned.
- 3. Parliament's existence corresponds with the coming into force of India's Constitution in the year 1950.** The responses of students from Language stream is equally divided (40%) between 1950 and 1952 regarding year of coming into existence of Parliament and 13% of students have not responded this question. Among Business students, only 47% goes with 1950, whereas 20% each opines that year 1951 and 1949 as the year of parliamentary existence. Whereas 53% students from Humanities believe that parliament came into force in 1950, whereas 27% and 13% responded in favour of 1951 and 1952 respectively, but 7% of respondents have not answered this question. Maximum students (60%) of Science background opted for 1950 whereas options 1949 and 1952 are responded by 13% and 27% students respectively. So, 50% students have responded this question rightly and most of them belong to the Science background.
- 4. A perusal of results indicates that most of the students from all the streams are clear with the fact that a civil servant does not form part of parliament.** Though 13% of Science students even believe that speaker is not part of parliament and 7% of students from Language background have not responded this question.
- 5. Between both the houses of parliament, members of Lok Sabha are directly elected by people whereas members of Rajya Sabha are elected by people's representatives.** The 100% of students of Language background and 93% each of Humanities and Business background holds that members of Lok Sabha are directly elected by people, whereas 27% of Science background believes that members of Rajya Sabha are directly elected by people. On the whole, 90% students have responded rightly and most of them are from Language stream.
- 6. Presently, we have 15th Lok Sabha with tenure from 2009 to 2014.** Most of the students from Science stream are of the view that we have 13th Lok Sabha (i.e. 47%) and

6% students have not responded. Whereas students of Arts/Humanities background extends equal weight age of 27% each to 13th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha, with 13% have left the question unanswered. Students from Language background have also responded 27% each in favor of 14th and 15th Lok Sabha, with 33% leaving question unanswered. Only students of Business/Commerce background have given maximum weight age of 40% to 15th Lok Sabha and 20% of them have not answered this question. Among whole of the sample of 60 respondents only 28% have opted 15th Lok Sabha, as present Lok Sabha.

- 7. As Lok Sabha is subjected to dissolution after end of tenure of ruling government and Rajya Sabha is not subjected to dissolution, so it is a permanent house of parliament only 1/3 of its members retire after every second year.** Students of Language background have given equal responses of 47% each to both options and 6% have not answered this question. 67% students of both Humanities and Sciences consider Rajya Sabha as right answer whereas 27% considered Lok Sabha as right response. Question remained unanswered by 6% students of both streams. 80% respondents of Business stream have given right answer whereas 13% students opted for Lok Sabha and 7% have not responded. In whole, 65% respondents have answered this question correctly; most of them are from Business/Commerce background.
- 8. Speaker of present Lok Sabha is Smt. Meira Kumar and she is the first women in India to hold such position.** All the respondents of Language background (100%) have responded correctly. 93% of Arts/Humanities students have given right answer. 80% of respondents of both Science and Business/Commerce background have answered Smt. Meira Kumar whereas 20% of Business students consider Mr. Kipal Sibal as speaker of Lok Sabha. On the whole, 88% students have answered this question rightly and most of them belong to Languages department.
- 9. Chairperson of Lok Sabha is its Speaker who presides over all its meetings.** Results indicate that, 67% of students of Language background opted for Speaker as right answer whereas 33% opted for Prime Minister. Most of Humanities/Arts students answered correctly i.e. 73% whereas 20% opted for Prime Minister and 7% have not responded this question. 60% of Science respondents answered correctly and Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister are responded by 27% and 7% students respectively with 6% students leaving the question unanswered. 47% of Business/Commerce background students have

responded rightly and 20% each of them responded Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister but 13% have not answered this question. So in whole, 61.66% respondents have correctly answered this question and most of them belong to Humanities department.

10. In Lok Sabha maximum there can be 552 members, 530 from states, 20 from Union Territories and two are nominated by President to represent Anglo-Indian Community. 33% respondents of Language background answered 550 members and 27% answered 552 members whereas 13% each opted for 549 and 555 members and 14% have not replied this question. 33% of students of Humanities/Arts marked 552 members as correct whereas 27% marked 550 members and 20% marked 555 members and 13% have not responded this question. 40% of Science background students marked 549 members, 33% marked 552 and 20% marked 550 members as maximum members of Lok Sabha, 7% have not answered this question. 40% students of Business/Commerce stream marked 552 whereas 33% and 20% marked 549 and 550 members respectively. So, only 33.33% respondents have answered this question rightly and maximum right answers are given by students of Business/Commerce background.

11. Leader of opposition holds most prestigious position presently; Smt. Sushma Swaraj is the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha. 60% of respondents of Language background answered correctly whereas 27% answered Mr. Lal Krishan Advani (a) as leader of opposition and 6% have not answered this question. Most of Humanities/Arts students i.e. 60% marked for option (a) and only 33% answered Smt. Sushma Swaraj whereas, 7% have not answered it. 53% of students pursuing Science field opted for option (a) and again only 33% opted rightly whereas 14% have not answered this question at all. 40% of respondents of Business/Commerce answered (a) option and only 27% rightly opted for Smt. Sushma Swaraj as right answer. Out of 60 respondents, 38.33% opted in favour of Smt. Sushma Swaraj whereas 45 % wrongly opted for Mr. Lal Krishan Advani as opposition leader of Lok Sabha.

12. Members of Rajya Sabha are elected by people's representatives and 12 are nominated by President from field of arts, literature, science etc. Results depict that, among Language students, 60% correctly marked the option, whereas 13% and 20% respondents marked the options(a) 'Elected members' and (b) 'Nominated members' respectively. Most of students of Humanities/Arts background (67%) responded correctly

whereas both options (a) and (b) are marked by 13% respondents. 73% of Science background respondents marked for option (a) and only 20% marked option in favor of (c) 'Both Elected and Nominated Members'. Among students of Business/Commerce background 53% marked option for (b) and 20% respondents opted for option (a) and (c) respectively. In all, only 41.66% students have answered this question rightly and most of them are pursuing Arts/Humanities and 7% students of all the streams except Sciences have not answered this question.

13. Members of Rajya Sabha are elected by people's representatives in States and legislative assemblies of Union Territories and 12 are nominated by President so,

option (b) 'By people's representatives' is correct. Only 33% of students of Language stream have answered correctly, rest 27% and 20% opted for option (c) i.e. 'By Prime Minister's Nomination' and (d) 'None of the above' respectively and 13% of students have not responded. 67% of Humanities/Arts answered option (a) 'Directly by electorate' and 13% opted for (c) and again 13% have not responded this question. Most of students of Science background opted for option (b) i.e. 33% and 27% opted for (a). Among respondents pursuing Business/Commerce field, 40% have opted rightly and 27% opted for option (a) and 20% students each of Science and Commerce background have not answered this question. In all only 30% people have given right answer and most of them belong to Business background.

14. Vice-President of India is ex-officio chairperson of Rajya Sabha. So, in this question

option (b) 'Vice President' is correct. Results indicate that, 80% students pursuing Languages have opted in favour of Vice President as chairperson of Rajya Sabha and 13% students have not responded this question at all. 67% respondents of Humanities/Arts stream opted for (b) whereas 13% each opted in favour of option (c) President and (d) i.e. President and Home Minister. Among Science students 33% opted for President whereas 47% opted in favour of Vice-President as chairman. 33% students of Business background opted for Vice-President whereas 27% and 13% opted for (c) and (a) respectively and 20% respondents have left this question unanswered. In all, only 56.66 students out of 60 have rightly answered this question and maximum right answers are given by Language stream students.

- 15. In Rajya Sabha there can be maximum 250 members, out of which, 238 are to be the representatives of the states and the union territories and 12 are nominated by the President.** So option (a) i.e. 250 is right. 53% respondents of Language stream opted for 250 members whereas 13% and 20% of respondents opted for 260 and 255 members respectively and 7% have not responded this question. In Humanities/Arts too 53% opted for 250 members and 27% and 7% of students opted in favour of 255 and 265 members respectively whereas 13% students have not answered this question. 33% of Science students opted for option (a) and 27% opted in favour of (b) i.e. 260 and 7% have not responded this question. Most of Business/Commerce background students i.e. 40% opted for 255 as maximum members of Rajya Sabha and 20% and 13% of respondents have opted for options (a) and (b) respectively whereas 20% students did not replied this question. In all, only 40% have answered this question rightly and most of them belong both to Language and Humanities background.
- 16. Finance Minister presents the General Budget in parliament in each financial year.** 100% of respondents of Language and 93% each of Humanities/Arts and Business/Commerce background respondents have rightly answered in favour of option (b) but 7% of students of Business background have not answered this question. 87% of Science students opted for (b) and 6% have not answered this question. In all, 93.33% respondents answered this question correctly.
- 17. As per Indian Constitution, two budgets are introduced in parliament each year, which are “General Budget” and “Railway Budget”.** 73% of respondents from Language background opted for one budget and 13% opted (b) i.e. two budgets are introduced. 53% of Humanities/Arts students opted for one budget and 47% opted for two budgets. Again, 53% of Science students opted in favor of one budget and 33% opted for two budgets whereas 14% students have not replied to this question. 67% of Business/Commerce respondents opted for one budget and 27% opted in favor of two budgets, only 6% students have not replied this question. In all, only 30% respondents responded rightly, maximum of which are from Humanities and 61.66% of respondents hold that one budget is introduced in parliament each year.
- 18. As stated earlier, two budgets are formulated each year which are general and railway budgets.** 67% of respondents from Language background opted for (b) i.e. Two

and 13% of respondents opted for (a) i.e. One. Among Humanities/Arts field respondents 53% opted for (b) and 20% opted for (a) whereas 7% each opted in favour of (c) i.e. Three and (d) i.e. Four. 47% Science respondents opted for (b) whereas 20% and 13% of students opted in favor of options (a) and (c) respectively. Maximum of Business/Commerce students answered this question rightly (80%) and only 7% opted for (a). In all, only 61.66% students answered rightly and most of students of Commerce field are aware about this question whereas 13% students of each stream except Sciences (7%) have not answered this question.

19. Money Bill is always introduced only in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha has very limited

power with respect to Money Bill. Maximum number of respondents of Language stream i.e. 67% opted for Lok Sabha and 20% opted for Rajya Sabha and 7% have not answered this question. 73% of Arts/Humanities students opine that Money Bill is introduced in Lok Sabha whereas 27% opted in favor of Rajya Sabha. 60% students of Science background opted for Lok Sabha whereas 33% opted for Rajya Sabha. 7% students of Science stream have not answered this question. Only 53% respondents of Commerce/Business field opted for Lok Sabha and 33% opted in favour of Rajya Sabha, 14% have not answered at all. In all 63.33% respondents answered this question rightly, out of which maximum belongs to Humanities field.

20. Speaker of Lok Sabha declares a Bill as Money bill and decision of Speaker in this

regard is final and cannot be called in question by any authority. 47% of students of Language background have answered this question correctly whereas 20% students answered that President declares a bill as money bill. 33% of Humanities/Arts students opted for (b) i.e. Finance Minister whereas 20% and 27% opted for President and Speaker respectively. Majority of respondents pursuing Sciences opted for Finance Minister whereas 20% responded in favor of Speaker. Among Business/Commerce students 27% opted in favour of President, 20% opted for Finance Minister and only 13% opted for Speaker. On the whole, only 26.66% students answered this question rightly and most of them belong to Language background. 7% respondents of all streams except Languages (26%) have not responded this question.

21. On President's assent a bill becomes an Act of Parliament and gains enforcement of

law. A majority of Language respondents opted for President (53%) whereas 27% opted

in favour of Prime Minister, 13% of students have not answered this question. Again 80% of Humanities/Arts background respondents answered in favour of President whereas 13% answered Prime Minister, 7% did not respond to this question. Among students pursuing Sciences 33% opted for President and 27% opted for Prime Minister whereas 33% respondents have not answered. 73% students of Business/Commerce field are of the view that bill becomes Act on assent of President and 20% did not responded to this question. On the whole, 60% students answered this question rightly and most of them are from Humanities stream. Very few respondents opted for options (c) i.e. Three and (d) i.e. Four.

22. In case of deadlock, a joint sitting of both the houses of Parliament is organized and

bill is subjected to vote and finally it moves to President for his/her assent. 47% of students of Language background answered that opinion of President prevails whereas 27% opted for joint sitting of Parliament. 40% of respondents pursuing Arts/Humanities answered in favor of joint sitting whereas 27% and 20% of students responded to options (a) i.e. Opinion of President prevails and (b) i.e. Opinion of Lok Sabha Members prevails respectively. Option (a) and (b) are opted by 40% each by respondents of Science field and only 7% student answered in favor of joint sitting. Responses of Business/Commerce respondents are equally in favor of (27%) options (a), (c) i.e. Joint Sitting of the both Houses and (d) i.e. Bill ends with no further action. On the whole, only 25% students responded this question rightly and most rightly responding students belong to Arts stream, also 12% students each of Languages and Business whereas 6% each of Humanities and Sciences, have not answered this question.

23. Parliament of India is situated in its capital, Delhi. All respondents of Humanities/Arts

stream, 93% each of Language and Business/Commerce background and 87% of Science background responded this question correctly. 6% and 7% students of Science and Business background respectively have not responded this question.

24. Parliament of India has three Sessions in each financial year: Budget Session

(February to May); Monsoon Session (July to September); and Winter Session (November to December). Results depict that, 87% of Language respondents are of the view that two sessions are there of Parliament in a year. Among respondents from Humanities/Arts background, 53% opted for two sessions and 27% opted in favor of

three sessions and only 6% students have not answered this question. Among students of Science background, 33% opted for two sessions and 20% each opted for four sessions and five sessions of Parliament and only 13% responded correctly. Merely, 4% respondents have not answered this question. 33% of Business/Commerce respondents opted in favor of two sessions and 20% opted for three sessions of Parliament, 40% of students have not responded to this question. On the whole, only 18.33% students have answered this question rightly and 51.66% answered that there are two sessions of parliament in a year.

25. Government of India started Lok Sabha TV which is wholly dedicated to broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings for parliamentary awareness of masses.

A perusal of results show 47% each of Language background respondents opted for options (c) Lok Sabha TV and (d). Doordarshan. 60% of Arts/Humanities students opted for (c) whereas 33% opted in favour of (d). Lok Sabha TV is opted by 60% of Science students and 40% opted for Doordarshan. Among Business/Commerce respondents only 40% opted for Lok Sabha TV and 47% opted for Doordarshan. On the whole, only 51.66% answered this question rightly, rest answered in favor of Doordarshan. Most of the students responding rightly belong to Humanities and Science background, and 6% and 13% respondents of Language and Business Streams respectively have not answered this question.

26. Ruling party of 15th Lok Sabha is United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Party, whose chairperson is Mrs. Sonia Gandhi.

As shown in the results, 80% of respondents from Language and Business/Commerce background answered this question rightly in favor of UPA. 93% students of Humanities/Arts also responded correctly. Among Science background students, 60% opted for UPA whereas 20% and 13% opted in favor of CPI and BJP respectively. As a whole, 78.33% responded this question correctly. 7% students, each of Languages and Humanities/Arts department and 6% students of Business/Commerce background have not responded to this question.

27. Today the coalition party in opposition is National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and party in majority in this opposition group is Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).

A perusal of the results indicate that, most of students belonging to Language background (67%) have opted for BJP whereas 27% answers in favor of NDA. Among Humanities/Arts

students 80% opted in favor of BJP whereas 20% answered NDA. Similarly 80% of respondents from Science background opted for BJP and 13% opted for NDA. 53% students pursuing Business field opted for 33% and 53% in favor of NDA and BJP respectively and 14% did not answered this question. On the whole, 70% respondents answered this question rightly in favor of BJP and 23.33% believes NDA as majority party in opposition today.

28. UPA is ruling party in India today and its full form is United Progressive Alliance.

Results indicate that among Language background students 93% answered it correctly. 60% of Humanities/Arts respondents opted for United Progressive Alliance and 35% opted in favor of Union People's Association, 7 % respondents did not answer this question. 47% of Science students opted for United People's Association(c) United Progressive Alliance and only 27% opted in favor of option (c). Among respondents from Commerce/ Business background 73% opted in favor of option (c) and 13% did not responded this question. On the whole, only 63.33% respondents answered this question rightly and most of them belong to Language background. NDA is ruling coalition party of India today. Its full form is National Democratic Alliance.

29. NDA is ruling coalition party of India today. Its full form is National Democratic Alliance

so, option (a) is correct. Around 87% of respondents from Language background answered for National Democratic Alliance(option a) whereas 13% opted in favor of National Development Association(option b). All the students of Humanities/Arts stream have answered for option (a). Among Science respondents, 60% opted for option (a), 27% opted for option (b) and 13% opted in favor of option (c) i.e New Democratic Alliance. 80% students of Business/Commerce background answered for option (a) and 13% did not answered at all On the whole 81.66% students answered this question rightly and all respondents of Humanities/Arts field answered rightly.

30. Tenure/Term of a Government in India is five years. After completion of tenure,

Lok Sabha automatically gets dissolved. A perusal of the results indicates that, 100% students of Humanities/Arts and Science background whereas 93% each of Language and Business/Commerce background students responded rightly. 7% of students of Business background have not answered this question. So on the whole, 96.66% of respondents answered this question rightly.

Conclusions:

If we evaluate the responses as per the discipline stream, then we can conclude that, maximum awareness is found in the Arts/Humanities students. Commerce/Business students along with Language students have almost equal number of right answers but least awareness is of students from the Science background. It was also seen that less than 50% students knew about common facts about the election of members of Rajya Sabha; name of leader of opposition; number of sessions of parliament; number of budgets introduced each year; and facts about the money bill. It appeared anomalous that this information which appears frequently in newspapers, magazines, on television etc., did not form to be an important aspect worth to be grasped by the young girl students of the present era. Ignorance of such basic knowledge represents the dark side of democratic future of world's biggest democratic nation.

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