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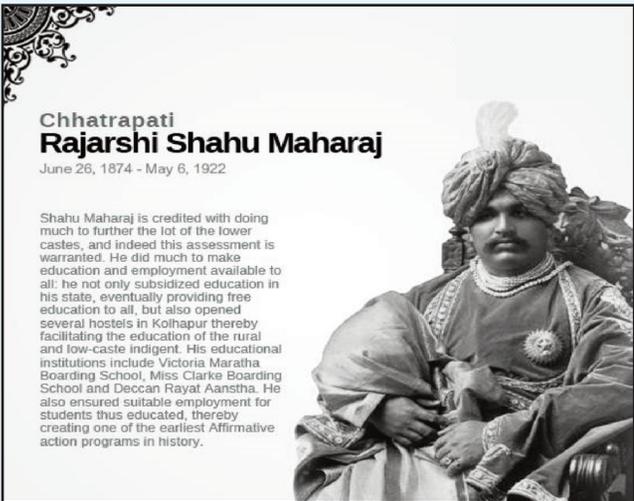
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Remembering Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj on his 148th Birth Anniversary

Prem K. Chumber Editor-In-Chief:

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Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj was one of the earliest pioneer-saviors of the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes who, for the first time in the history of the country, implemented 50 percent of reservation for the Dalits and Backward Classes in



Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj
June 26, 1874 - May 6, 1922

Shahu Maharaj is credited with doing much to further the lot of the lower castes, and indeed this assessment is warranted. He did much to make education and employment available to all: he not only subsidized education in his state, eventually providing free education to all, but also opened several hostels in Kolhapur thereby facilitating the education of the rural and low-caste indigent. His educational institutions include Victoria Maratha Boarding School, Miss Clarke Boarding School and Deccan Rayat Aanstha. He also ensured suitable employment for students thus educated, thereby creating one of the earliest Affirmative action programs in history.



government jobs and education institutions. He also facilitated the entry of the lower castes in the temples. He was of the firm view that a handful of the upper-castes of his state had monopolized all the offices of profit. All the shrines in the temples within his state, as elsewhere in rest of the country, were also monopolized by Brahmin priests. He saw to it that at least fifty percent of the shrines were to be looked after by the priests belonging to lower castes. He wanted that the lower castes should get best of the education, so that they could compete with their counterparts from the upper castes effectively. To make this a reality, he made the primary education compulsory for the lower castes in his Kingdom of the Kolhapur state.

The seminal contribution made by Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj was not limited to education and government jobs. He made concerted efforts to liberate the lower castes from the all-pervasive hegemony of the Brahminical priestly class structures of socio-economic dominations by empowering them to stand on their own sources of livelihood so that they need not to depend on the evil and oppressive systems of Balutdari and Vatandari. He paved the way for the inclusion of reservation in the constitution of Independent India drafted under the Chairmanship of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to whom Shahu Ji Maharaj encouraged and supported to come forward to cut the shackles of the centuries old slavery of the lower castes. "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" weekly newspapers fondly remember and pay its deepest regards to Revered Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj on his great cause to the Dalits and Backward Classes.

Interpreting Simranjit Singh Mann's Victory in Sangrur Lok Sabha Bypoll

The victory of Simranjit Singh Mann of Shiromani Akali Dal-Amritsar [SAD(A)] in the Sangrur Parliamentary bypoll shows that nothing lasts long in the quicksand of electoral democracies if it does not serve the interests of the concerned electorate. It is quite interesting to find that in a constituency where 72.4 percent votes were polled in 2019 Parliamentary election, only 45.3 percent of the total electorates turned up to cast their votes in the by-election on June 23, 2022, which represents a 27.1 percent drop. What does it signify that within an electoral eyeblink period of three months, the AAP that won Punjab Assembly elections held in February 2022 with absolute majority (92 Assembly seats of the total 117), failed to retain its only Lok Sabha seat – vacated by Bhagwant Mann, Chief Minister of Punjab, to contest the Punjab Assembly election? Why did the electorate of the Sangrur parliamentary constituency – and hometown of the newly minted Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann – and often known as the citadel of AAP in Punjab, prefer Simranjit Singh Mann over the AAP? What does it say about which direction Punjab will move in coming days?

Simranjit Singh Mann attributed his victory to the martyrdom of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his young militant brigade. While interacting with the media after his victory on June 26, 2022 Mann said "It is a win of our party workers and the teachings that Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale has given". Another possible factor behind Mann's astonishing victory could be the emotional mass appeal generated in the aftermath of the brutal murder of Shubdeep Singhaka Sidhu Moosewala, an internationally known rapper and songwriter, by channeling people's anger against the AAP government see mingly compromising his security despite regular threats to his life. Simranjit Singh Mann had reportedly promised to pay the rapper a visitat his native village Moosa in Mansa district just a few days before his brutal murder. Mann eventually went there on his *Antim Ardas* (last prayer ceremony). Simranjit Singh Mann also put on record his gratitude to Deep Sidhu, another notable emerging figure on the political turf of the Punjab politics, who died under mysterious circumstances in a car accident on his way from Delhi to Punjab.

The emotional mass appeal was further intensified by the occurrence of law and order related incidents within the state and the neighbouring states of Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, since the formation of the AAP government in Punjab and also by the failure of the latterin resolving theBargari sacrilege cases and Kotkapura & Behbal Kalan police firing amongothers. Moreover for quite some time now, as articulated by Pramod Kumar, political analyst and Director, Institute for Development and communication (IDC), Chandigarh, there has been a general inclination on the part of all traditional political parties in Punjab towards the adoption of some sort of a Panthic discoursein one or another form. A case in point: the Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) and the SAD-Badal fielded Kewal Singh Dhillon and Kamaldeep Kaur Rajoana, respectively, in the Sangrur bypoll. Earlier there were accusations against some political parties of having connections with terror outfits. There is also a common impression in Punjab that if one has to choose from amongst the Panthic discourses being

offered by varied contenders for political power, then it's better to choose the original one– hence Simranjit Singh Mann.

Simranjit Singh Mann is not perceived as a threat by the people of Punjab. He is one among them. His reference to Bhindranwale and others of the militancy period should not be an issue. One has to understand that the contested phenomenon of Bhindranwale is perceived differently by different people. For some, he is a freedom fighter; for others, he could be a militant. Though, after his victory in the Sangrur bypoll, Mann spoke about 'atrocities in Kashmir

and killing Muslims on a daily bases', and killings of 'the tribal people in Bihar and Chhattisgarh calling them Naxalites' quoted as saying by news agency ANI, but being an elected member of the Lower House of the parliament in a well laid down democratic electoral process, he has to work within the purview of the Constitution. Responding to a question in an interview with the Indian Express, regarding the possibility of the rise of extremist forces after his victory in the bypoll, Mann responded emphatically: "Why must extremism, terrorism and radical forces be associated with a law-abiding citizen? I am a constitutionalist and a peaceful man and have only worked against oppression and for the people of our state" (*The Indian Express*, June 29, 2022). His victory should not be interpreted as re-emergence of fundamentalist brand of politics dominated by the so-called Khalistan-centric thought process. During his earlier active stint in the parliamentary democratic politics in the country, Simranjit Singh Mann, recalled Rajiv Lochan, an academic of modern history at Panjab University, "used to talk about pursuing the Khalistan cause through electoral democracy and not to follow the path of violence". The victory of Simranjit Singh Mann is more a demonstration of people's anger with the functioning of the AAP government, as earlier during the State Assembly electionsin February 2022, they expressed their wrath in dismantling the duopoly of SAD & INC and bringing in their place the AAP. In a straightforward reply to another pointed question – "Whom would you give credit for this victory?" – stated Mann, "The Punjabi and Sikh people feel secure and strong after bringing down (in this bypoll) all the national majoritarian political parties who are

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receiving commands from Delhi and who are unlawfully working against the interest of Punjabis and the minorities. I term this as Sikh revival and Punjabi peoples' love for liberty and prosperity and for making Punjab a great state again. The people of Sangrur have made me proud with their mandate for my speaking against years of injustice and the Centre's encroachment of powers that belong to the state, including the BSF's illegal infiltration in Punjab" (*The Indian Express*, June 29, 2022). It is against this backdrop, one needs to situate Mann's victory in the Sangrur bypoll. As far as the vexed issue of Khalistan is concerned, so far there is no scope for its overall acceptance in Punjab at large. But if the AAP could not learn from its defeat and fails to make development and governance its core agenda, underlined Pramod Kumar, tough times may return once again to the chagrin of the people of this borderlands state in the absence of now almost decimated SAD-Badal – a moderate Panthic political party (*The Hindu*, June 27, 2022).

So far, the most striking factor behind Mann's stunning victory could be the pre-eminence accorded by the leadership of AAP in Punjab to its counterpart in Delhi. After Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's oath-taking ceremony at Khatkar Kalan, the native village of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, for the formation of the government by Bhagwant Mann, the people of Punjab expected to see him thoroughly focusing on various exigencies in a state corroded by decades of criminal misgovernance by a succession of inept and deeply corrupt political regimes.

This in turn, had given a free rein to multifarious mafias: sand, real-estate, transport, drugs, cable, etc. They certainly did not take kindly to

the state administration being puppeteered from Delhi.

Three months ago when AAP was elected to power in Punjab, the people of the state gave a straight message – we are saying good bye to all traditional parties, which were in agreement with each other to rule Punjab by turns. People were fed up with such a vicious power circle run by the traditional political parties. They gave the opportunity to AAP for providing good governance, a clear indication that they wanted a change. But within a short period of three months, since the formation of the government by the AAP, they have come to realise that even this option failed to work well for them that compelled them to incline towards Simranjit Singh Mann.

Moreover, the people of Punjab are highly sensitive to issues which offend their ethnic pride. They broke the mould of Punjab politics by ensuring that the AAP in Punjab defeated all the traditional/mainstream political parties in the recent Assembly elections to put an end to the deeply entrenched family (SAD-Badal) and dynastic rule (Indian National Congress). However the expectation was that once the AAP had won in the Punjab Assembly elections, it should govern independently of any outside influence to deliver what it had promised to the electorate.

Before and during the Sangrur Lok Sabha by-elections, there was a general grassroots impression that the AAP government in Punjab has been lacking in demonstrating its mettle in independently handling the state administration. It has neither been allegedly focusing on the resolution of core issues in Punjab, nor allowing its indigenous cadres and leadership to grow. There is a common belief among the people that the day-to-day political and administrative

affairs are controlled by the AAP's central leadership in Delhi. They were told to be unhappy and dissatisfied with the AAP over Raj Sabha nominations from Punjab. To their utter dismay, the newly formed government also failed in handling many a core issues of Punjab.

Many promised guarantees to people during the Assembly election campaign are yet to be realised, particularly Rs. 1000 for every woman above eighteen years of age. More importantly, the people of Punjab have realised that Bhagwant Mann's government is not run by those who they had elected three months ago. Even the leaders are also feeling unwanted because nothing they say is considered important. AAP has not come up to their expectation, it is alleged that the rank and file of AAP do not have any say in local governance of state and even its Ministers and MLAs seemed to have been side-lined. There is a lack of personal contact between the latter and peoples at grassroots. Moreover, the nature of the election campaign conducted in the Sangrur parliamentary constituency convinced the electorates that rather than a contest between the AAP and the rest of the traditional/mainstream political parties in the state, it was a demonstration of the hegemony of the central leadership of the AAP in Punjab. Even during the February 2022 State Assembly elections, the entire election campaign was Arvind Kejriwal centric.

This closely-watched five cornered electoral contest has serious political implications for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2024 on the one hand, and the emerging configuration of region-based identity politics in the borderland state of Punjab on the other. There is general consensus across political and ideological spectra that the people of Punjab are

completely disenchanted by the ad nauseam political gimmicks played on them earlier by the political duopoly of Congress and SAD and now by the failure of the AAP to run the state government on its own terms without any interference from outside. Under such circumstances what options remain for the politically astute in Punjab? Is there any possibility of the emergence of a regional political force within the state? What could be an ideology and road map of that possible regional political force? Of course there is plentiful social and political capital available within the society of this North-western borderland state of India, and given the volatile state of affairs within this region, it would not be an insurmountable task to build on the apparent neglect of the people and their cultural sentiments and emotionally rally them behind a regional political force championing their cause.

However, there is still enough space for the state leadership of the AAP to redeem the waning trust of the people of Punjab but only by burnishing its credentials as the voice of the people of the state and situating itself in a total command of the governance of the statecraft without any outside interference whatsoever from any quarter. But the most complex question of all questions is: Whether Bhagwant Mann would be able to muster enough support on his own from within the rank and file of the AAP in Punjab without the confidence and political backing of Arvind Kejriwal – the supremo of AAP? If not then would it be possible for Simranjit Singh Mann to fill the vacuum in near future with a new political mass based on regional identity-based politics? These are complex open ended questions need to be ponder over rather more critically.



Courtesy: Tribune India

Some Random Thoughts on the office of – President of India, Governor of a State and Member of Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament)

India is a democratic country with parliamentary system of government. It is also a 'Union of States' with Federal structures in normal times and with a sort of Unitary bias in times of constitutional emergency. In its 72nd year after the promulgation of the Constitution, India has come a long way on the path of constitutional governance. It is a matter of satisfaction. Of late, with the changing times, it appears that some reforms and transformation in the organs of the state has become due in the process of keeping the lofty idea of 'Trust with destiny' rolling for further progress and prosperity of India. The forthcoming Presidential elections in July, 2022, the recent elections to Rajya Sabha Membership and issues pertaining to the conduct of Governors (with reference

visions in the constitution have stood the test of time. So far, it is so good. It is a matter of gratification to note that over the years philosophers, scholars politicians, statesmen, diplomats, scientists from Rajendra Prasad to Ram Nath Kovind representing various religions, different ideological belief, both the gender, diversified socio-economic and cultural backgrounds adorned the high office of the President of India – The Mahamahim of India that is Bharat. It is my pleasure and honour to add here that during the course of my diplomatic career, I have had the opportunity to see, meet and interact with some of the Mahamahims – Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Giani Zail Singh, K.R. Narayanan, Pratibha Patil, APJ Abdul Kalam and Ram Nath Kovind - and I

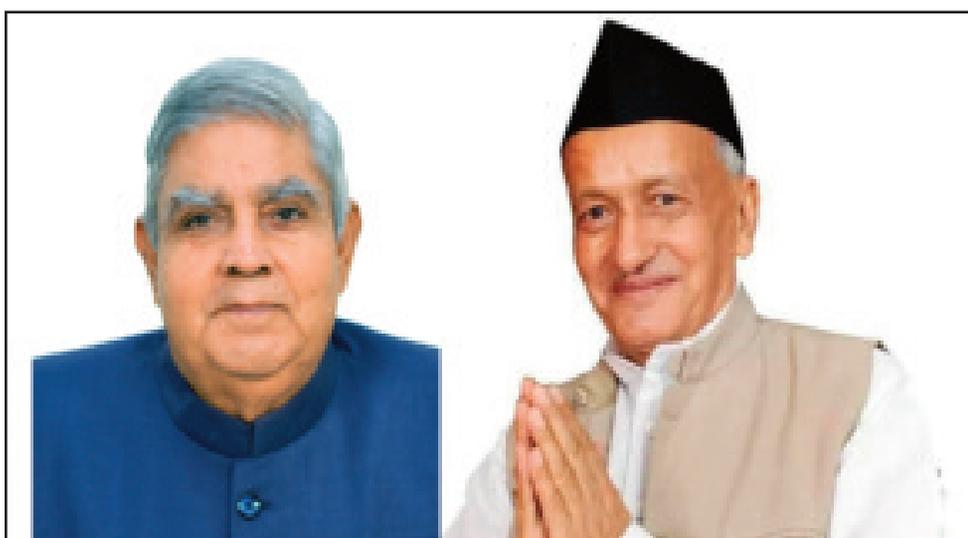
good lot.... The Constitution can provide only the organs of State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics."

Anyway, I have no point in going to the negative side of the matter. The fact is that the office of President has increasingly become a tool in the hands of the Executive. The moral authority of the incumbent office holders, which is considered as an important element of the powers and functions of the President, has increasingly come under scanner, as has been observed in the past experience; be it Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed for signing the declaration of emergency

things. Generally, such nominees to the highest office of the country lose the will and standing to be the 'guardian and custodian' of the constitution. It is no aspersion on the acumen and integrity of individuals to occupy the august office but the fact remains as asserted by Babasaheb Ambedkar 'the man is vile'. With a view to ward off the inherent likelihood of reaching a



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to Governors of West Bengal and Maharashtra) and related matters gave me an opportunity to think and say my mind, not as a constitutional or legal expert but as a common citizen of India. It is in the interest of India to make and maintain the polity of India as a dynamic and functional parliamentary system of government on one hand and a robust and functional federal state on the other. The aspects which I would touch have a direct bearing on the subject.

President of India - Keeping with the tenants of parliamentary form of government, President of India, the first citizen of the country, is the 'Head of the State but not of the Executive. He represents the nation, as a symbol of the nation, but does not rule the nation'. These pro-

cherish those moments and memories. President of India ought to be a non-party, secular, non-biased, democratic leader of stature with high social and moral standing who is able and capable of upholding and defending the constitution of India in its letter and spirit. May be our forefathers, the constitution makers, were too idealistic, as there was no other way, thought that our political system and the players in it would be men of substance and committed to the constitution values. Babasaheb Ambedkar rightly said, "However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a

in 1977 without any question or Sanjiva Reddy discriminating again Jagjivan Ram for not giving him chance to prove his majority on the floor of the Lok Sabha when Charan Singh resigned without facing Parliament, Giani Zail Singh appointing Rajiv Gandhi as PM in 1984. There may be many more instances when Presidents might not have acted as was expected of them. As already said, I am not writing this as a political analyst but as a layman. Political forces are getting polarized not only on the basis of hardcore and ill-placed ideologies but also on communal and narrow sectarian considerations. The ruling political dispensations tend to have their own man in the Rashtrapati Bhawan who could be used in case of need to further their own scheme of

'less desirable' to the Raisina Hills and smoothen the process, I have the following to say:-

- Most of election procedure laid down in the constitution to elect the President of India seems fine except the nomination of candidates based on political considerations vested motivation. It may be changed with a view to screen the suitability and ability of the candidates to occupy the highest position.

- Let there be no direct nomination. We may consider forming a High Power Committee under the administrative control of the Cabinet Secretariat who would consider the nomination to be a candidate for the Presidents' office. The Committee may be headed by the Vice President

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Some Random Thoughts on the office of – President of India, Governor of a State and Member of Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament)

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with Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India, Leaders of Opposition in both the Houses of the Parliament, Secretary Generals of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as Ex-officio Members. Cabinet Secretary may be made the Executive Secretary of the said Committee who would be responsible to make all administrative and procedural arrangements to make final nominations with the Returning Officer appointed by the Election Commission for the purpose.

- Who can make a nomination to the said Committee? – All recognized national political parties, all political formations in both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha having 5 or more members in the relevant House of Parliament, Any five independent and nominated members of Lok Sabha.

- The High Power Committee would consider all the nominations made and short list three suitable nominees who could be nominated for the election of President. Accordingly, Cabinet Secretary/Executive Secretary of the Committee would complete the nomination procedure with the election machinery for election.

- Voters in the Electoral College would vote and indicate their three preferences, as they please. The rest of the procedure remains the same as per the existing practice.

- There should be no consecutive second term for the office of President.

This nomination procedure would obviate the chances of getting, a partisan or not-suitable aspirant, nominated to be a candidate for the

highest office of the land, I hope.

Governor of a State: - The constitutional provisions for the office of Governor of a State are: - The executive power of the State shall be vested in the Governor and shall be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinated to him in accordance with the Constitution of India (Article 154). The Governor of a State shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal (Article 155). In simple formulation one can say that 'Governor is an agent or representative of the President of India and his Government headed by the Prime Minister in his Council of Ministers.

The office of Governor remained an issue of debate and contention in the last 7 decades. It has been observed most of the time that Governors, allegedly, carried the dictates of the Central Government, rightly or wrongly, on political considerations without caring for the wishes of the duly democratically elected Government of the State. The problem comes to head when the State Government belongs to a party other than that of the Central Government. Keeping in view the federal system of the polity, the conduct of the Governor becomes all the more important to avoid the acrimonious tussle or friction recently seen in Maharashtra and West Bengal. The mode and procedure of appointment of Governor, to my mind, could not evolve a functional and fair edifice for the working of Governor. I suggest the following to bring about some relief from the existing avoidable friction and slugfest between the Governor and the concerned State government:-

- Governor should be appointed (by the President) on recommendations of the High Powered Committee headed by the Prime Minister with Home Minister, Chief Minister of the concerned State, Vice Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha as Ex-officio Members. Home Secretary may be appointed as the Executive Secretary of the High Power Committee.

- Governor may not get consecutive second term of the same state or any other state.

- Nominations for appointment of Governor may be made by Home Minister of the Central Government or Chief Minister of the concerned State or the outgoing Governor of the concerned State.

- Governor once appointed may be removed only by a Resolution, moved by the Home Minister of the Central Government or Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha passed with two third majority by Rajya Sabha and sent to the President of India.

These suggested reforms may streamline the appointment procedure and help in getting suitable nominees avoiding the temptations to appoint defeated candidates and inconvenient political competitors to park them in Raj Bhawans on one hand and discouraging the incumbent Governors blindly following the dictates of the ruling outfit at the Centre.

Members of Rajya Sabha: -

The Upper House or the House of Elders or the Council of States or Rajya Sabha, paradoxically, is neither Upper as the Lok Sabha has more powers nor Elder as, of late, as young members below the age of 30 are becoming the Members of Rajya Sabha nor

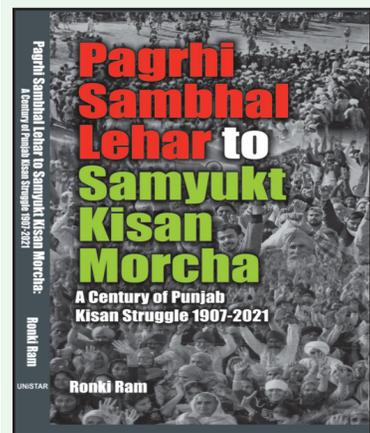
Council of States as quite often Members of Rajya Sabha do not belong to the state concerned from where they get elected. These aspects of the membership of Rajya Sabha are becoming a matter of controversy increasingly. The recent case of non-domiciled nominees of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) got elected from Punjab brought the issue to focus. Some of the objections and criticism appears to be valid, in this regard. I have the following suggestions to make:-

- Rajya Sabha Members should represent the State of their domicile or origin, generally, to justify the name of Rajya Sabha or Council of States in the Federal structure of the country as stipulated in the Constitution of India.

- With a view to not to deny 'political expediency or available talent' to the mandated ruling outfit, Prime Minister or any Minister who is not a member of any House may continue, as PM or a Minister, beyond 6 months and may be made an Ad-hoc member, by the President of India, of either Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha without voting rights and other entitlements of a regular member till he or she remains the PM or a Minister.

- The minimum age to become a Member of the Rajya Sabha may be fixed at 40 or more to make it a House of Elders with experience and maturity.

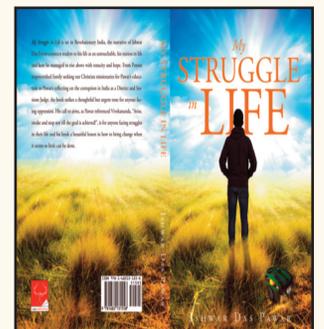
These are some of my off the cuff suggestions which may be considered and polished to introduce reforms in the polity to catch with the changing times in the 75th year of Independence – Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.



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