

I was nominated by the Secretariat to attend a two week training programme organized by the Royal Institute of Parliamentary Administration, London (U.K.) for the officers of Rajya Sabha Secretariat.

It was a first of sorts for me in the sense that never before in my entire service career had I ever had the opportunity to participate in any training programme. It was therefore a great exposure both in terms of the content and also the venue of the training programme. As there were twelve officers in the batch, all belonging to different services, the course content was designed in a way to make the training programme useful for everyone. As British Parliament is considered the mother of all parliaments in countries where Parliamentary Democracy or the Westminster model of governance is followed, it was a training for which there cannot be any substitute.

RIPA had roped in faculty and guest speakers from different spheres. There were people from academia, media, serving and retired officers of the two Houses of British Parliament. The entire curriculum of the training course can be broadly categorized under two heads, namely political and organizational. On the political side, first we were provided with an overview of British Parliamentary history, how it originated, its development through various phases, the various powers it acquired gradually in an evolutionary manner till its modern stage.

Almost everyday there were two speakers and it was not a mere classroom setting. The speakers were only too willing to have lively interaction with the participants of the training programme. Some of the topics that were discussed were Role of Her Majesty's opposition, Powers of the executive, Two party system, Reform of Parliament and the Public Sector, Government's interface with the parliament, Parliament, Politicians and Media. Apart from the British Parliament, there was a lecture on 'Structure, Role and work of European Parliament' since United Kingdom (UK) is a member country of the European Union.

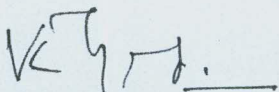
On the organizational side, we had presentations on Library Services in the House of Commons, Financial control and Accountability at the Westminster Parliament, Role and work of the Commons office of the Clerk and the Board of Management, Parliamentary Reporting System and its role in the 21st century, A view from the Table, Development in Parliamentary Information and communication, working of the House of

Lords and its changing constitutional position, Role and composition of the Select Committees in the House of Common and the functioning of the Question Hour in the two Houses.

In addition to classroom lectures, RIPA also orgained guided tour of the British Parliament and we were fortunate to witness the proceedings of the Question Hour in the House of Commons. On the same day we were taken to watch a Parliamentary Committee discussing one of the bills. We were also provided with an opportunity to have interaction with Senior Officers of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat.

On the whole, it was a great learning experience wherein besides getting in depth knowledge of the functioning of British Parliament, we could also compare the same with the system practiced in our country. In our interaction with the faculty and guest speakers, it was abundantly clear that the Parliamentary system in India despite being comparatively younger is quite mature in its functioning. There are merits and demerits in both the systems but each one has its own logic and rationale.

I look forward to more such programmes in future.


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