Preface

In contemporary times parliamentary democracy has become the most desirable mode of governance throughout the world. But the efficacy of parliaments in providing effective governance by securing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from the executive is not up to satisfaction in many democracies, particularly in the developing countries. Evidently, parliaments have several mechanisms in place to deal with the governments; the Committee system being the latest and most prominent. Again, the efficacy of the Committee system in assisting the parliament falls short of the expectation enjoined upon them. This thesis is an attempt to analyse the role and functioning of the Committee system as well as their problems and their potentials.

The analysis is done in comparative terms in order to appreciate the contexts of their operation. The parliaments selected for comparison are Indian and British, the largest and the oldest, representing two different worlds; besides, there is a common historical genesis of both the parliaments.

This study has emerged out of my interest in studying the role of legislatures in modern democracies. India is the only country in the developing world where Parliamentary democracy has survived with a short interregnum. India also is cited as a success story despite several problems facing its
democratic politics. My desire to appreciate these problems and to see the parliament functions better has prompted me to pursue this thesis.

A Ph.D research is never successfully completed without the goodwill and intellectual support from several individuals and institutions. In the list of such people and institutions, one’s supervisor is always the first and foremost. I am most thankful and grateful to Prof. B. Vivekanandan for his invaluable guidance and patience in handling the supervision of my thesis. Amongst individuals, to mention only a few, I would like to thank, Mr Ramacharyalu, Under Secretary in the Parliament Secretariat (Rajya Sabha) who provided me with unlimited access to the Parliament Library in New Delhi, and to his personal collections from England, and Dr. Tom Burden, Principal Lecturer, Political Science, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, for providing me with valuable bibliographical references. I am also thankful to Ms. Pat Strickland in the Parliament and Constitution Centre, House of Commons, Library in London for providing me with appropriate parliamentary documents and introducing me with some officials of the British House of Commons who work for important parliamentary committees in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

In Britain, I was longing to meet the Members of Parliament, the Committee Members, the academics I had read, and generally to have a feel of the oldest parliament of the world. A field trip lends legitimacy to a PhD
research in accessing primary sources, and in cross checking other material. I am thankful to the Charles Wallace India Trust, London, for facilitating my field trip to Britain with a maintenance grant. I am further thankful to a number of important persons who gave me time for interview and shared their experiences on the working of the Committee systems in Britain and India: Mr. Piare Khabra, Member of Parliament, House of Commons and member in the Select Committee for International Development; Dr. Ashok Kumar, Member of Parliament, House of Commons and member in the Select Committee in the Trade and Industry Select Committee; Mr. Barry Gardiner, Member of Parliament, House of Commons and member in the Public Account Committee; Mr. Keith Vaz, Member of Parliament, House of Commons; The Lord Philip Norton of Louth, Professor of Government, the University of Hull, UK; The Lord Bhiku Parekh, Professor in the University of Hull, UK; Dr. Peter J. Laugharne, Department of Law Governance and International Relations, London Metropolitan University, London; Professor G.W. Jones, Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Science; Mr. Liam Laurence Smyth, Clerk of the Education and Skill Committee, House of Commons; Mr. David Harrision, Clerk of the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, House of Commons; Mr. David Natzler, in-charge of three clerks of the Select Committee, House of Commons; Mr. Crispin Poyser, Clerk in the Public Bill Office, House of Commons; Former MP Bhakta Charan Das, a member of Standing Committee on Industry, Petroleum and
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