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Harivansh Narayan Singh Nominated to Rajya Sabha — Article 80 Explained

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Harivansh Narayan Singh Nominated to Rajya Sabha — Article 80 Explained

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WHY IN NEWS

President Droupadi Murmu nominated veteran journalist-parliamentarian Harivansh Narayan Singh to the Rajya Sabha through a Gazette notification on April 10, 2026, filling a nominated seat vacancy created after former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi retired from his nominated tenure.

The nomination of Harivansh Narayan Singh — a former Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha known for both his journalistic career (Prabhat Khabar) and his steady-handed presiding over Opposition disruptions — brings renewed attention to Article 80(1)(a) of the Constitution, which empowers the President to nominate twelve members to the Upper House for their expertise in literature, science, art, or social service.

WHO IS HARIVANSH NARAYAN SINGH?

PARAMETER	DETAILS
Full name	Harivansh Narayan Singh
Known as	Harivansh
Journalism	Editor, Prabhat Khabar (Hindi daily, Bihar and Jharkhand)
Political affiliation	JD(U) → supported NDA
Previous RS role	Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha (2018–2022; 2022–2024)
Known for	Calm, dignified presiding; “chai session” during farm bill protests (2020)

The “Chai Session” Episode

In September 2020, eight Opposition MPs were suspended from the Rajya Sabha after disrupting proceedings during the passage of the farm laws. The suspended MPs staged a dharna (sit-in protest) on the Parliament premises, fasting overnight. Deputy Chairman Harivansh personally brought tea (chai) to the fasting MPs the

next morning — an act of dignity widely noted as a symbol of parliamentary courtliness amid bitter political acrimony.

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK — ARTICLE 80

Article 80(1): Composition of the Council of States

The Rajya Sabha (Council of States) consists of:

- **Article 80(1)(a):** Twelve members nominated by the President
- **Article 80(1)(b):** Not more than 238 representatives of States and UTs

Total strength: 245 (233 elected + 12 nominated) **Current effective strength:** 245 (includes all nominated seats when filled)

Article 80(3): Qualification for Nominated Members

The twelve nominated members must have special knowledge or practical experience in **literature, science, art, and social service** — making the nominated category a constitutional instrument for bringing non-political expertise into the legislative process.

Who Can Be Nominated?

Any person with special knowledge/experience in:

- **Literature:** Writers, journalists, poets, scholars
- **Science:** Scientists, technologists, researchers
- **Art:** Painters, musicians, filmmakers, dancers
- **Social Service:** Activists, community leaders, NGO heads

Notable past nominees include:

- **Sachin Tendulkar** (cricket — arts/sports)
- **Lata Mangeshkar** (music)
- **Sonal Mansingh** (classical dance)
- **Ranjan Gogoi** (former CJI — jurisprudence)
- **Mary Kom** (boxing)
- **Rekha** (film — arts)

Can Nominated Members Vote?

PURPOSE	CAN NOMINATED RS MEMBERS VOTE?	WHAT THE CONSTITUTION ACTUALLY SAYS	REFERENCE
Ordinary Bills	Yes — full voting rights; treated identically to elected members in all legislative business	Article 107 does not distinguish between elected and nominated members in voting — both Houses must pass the Bill	Article 100 (voting procedure + quorum = 1/10 of total membership), Article 107
Money Bills	Yes, but limited — RS can vote on its recommendations, but Lok Sabha is not bound by them; RS cannot amend or reject a Money Bill	Article 109: “If the Rajya Sabha does not return the Bill within 14 days... it shall be deemed to have been passed by both Houses” — RS’s vote is advisory only	Article 109
Constitutional Amendments	Yes — counted in both conditions of the special majority; their presence or absence directly affects whether the threshold is met	Article 368: Special majority = 2/3 of members present and voting AND majority of total membership of each House — nominated members are part of total membership	Article 368
Vice Presidential Election	Yes — nominated RS members are part of the electoral college; formerly, nominated LS members (Anglo-Indian seats, abolished by 104th Constitutional Amendment, in force January 25, 2020) were also eligible	Article 66(1): Electoral college = “ members of both Houses of Parliament ” — uses <i>members</i> , not <i>elected members</i> ; this includes nominated members of both Houses	Article 66
Presidential Election	No — explicitly excluded by the Constitution’s own language	Article 54: Electoral college = “ elected members of both Houses of Parliament ” — the word <i>elected</i> expressly excludes nominated members. This is the only place the Constitution draws this distinction	Article 54

PURPOSE	CAN NOMINATED RS MEMBERS VOTE?	WHAT THE CONSTITUTION ACTUALLY SAYS	REFERENCE
Impeachment of President	Yes — both Houses participate; nominated members vote on the resolution	Article 61: Resolution must be passed by majority of not less than 2/3 of the total membership of the House — stricter than Article 368 (which counts only those present and voting)	Article 61
Removal of Vice President	Yes — RS passes the resolution; nominated RS members vote	Article 67(b): VP removable by “a resolution of the Council of States passed by a majority of all the then members” and agreed to by Lok Sabha — no <i>elected</i> qualifier; simple majority of total RS membership suffices	Article 67(b)
No-confidence Motion	N/A — the Constitution does not mention “no-confidence motion” by name anywhere	Article 75(3) only says: <i>“The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People”</i> — the motion itself is a procedural instrument under Lok Sabha Rule 198 , not a constitutional provision	Article 75(3) + LS Rule 198

Where the Constitution says **“members”** → nominated members included (VP election, impeachment, RS removal). Where it says **“elected members”** → nominated members excluded (Presidential election). Where it is silent on procedure → the rule lives in parliamentary rules, not the Constitution (no-confidence motion).

The exclusion from Presidential elections is consistent with the principle that the President is elected by an electoral college representing the people’s will — nominated members, who have not been elected, do not represent any electorate.

Rajya Sabha — Key Constitutional Provisions

ARTICLE	PROVISION
Article 80	Composition of Rajya Sabha
Article 84	Qualification for RS membership
Article 89	VP of India is ex-officio Chairman of RS
Article 90	Deputy Chairman of RS (elected by RS members)
Article 91	Power of Deputy Chairman to act as Chairman (when Chairman is absent)
Article 100	Voting in Houses; quorum (1/10 of total membership)
Article 249	RS can empower Parliament to legislate on State List (2/3 majority)
Article 312	RS can create new All India Services (2/3 majority)

Rajya Sabha — Special Powers (Distinguished from Lok Sabha)

The Rajya Sabha has two exclusive powers that no other House possesses:

- 1 **Article 249:** By 2/3 majority, can authorise Parliament to legislate on a State List subject for national interest (resolution lasts 1 year; renewable)
- 2 **Article 312:** By 2/3 majority, can pass a resolution creating new All India Services (e.g., Indian Forest Service was created this way in 1966)

These powers make Rajya Sabha constitutionally critical — it cannot be bypassed on matters affecting federalism.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS2: Parliament — Composition, Powers, Procedures

Key distinctions for Prelims:

- Nominated RS members: 12 (Article 80) — Literature, Science, Art, Social Service
- Nominated LS members: 2 (Anglo-Indian community — but this provision was abolished by 104th Amendment, 2019)
- Nominated RS members CAN vote in VP election but NOT in Presidential election

Mains angles:

- 1 Is the nominated category being used for its constitutional purpose (expertise) or political purposes?

- 2 How does Rajya Sabha's composition (nominated + indirectly elected) affect its role as a "House of Elders"?
- 3 Rajya Sabha's federalism role vs its evolution into a partisan chamber

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

HARIVANSH NARAYAN SINGH:

Former Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha | Journalist: Prabhat Khabar (Hindi daily)

Nominated under Article 80(1)(a) by President Droupadi Murmu, April 10, 2026

Vacancy: After former CJI Ranjan Gogoi's nominated term ended

ARTICLE 80 — RAJYA SABHA COMPOSITION:

Total strength: 245 (233 elected + 12 nominated)

Nominated: Experts in Literature, Science, Art, Social Service

Nominated members CAN vote in RS + VP election | CANNOT vote in Presidential election

RAJYA SABHA EXCLUSIVE POWERS:

Article 249: Parliament can legislate on State List (2/3 RS majority)

Article 312: New All India Services can be created (2/3 RS majority)

104TH AMENDMENT (2019):

Abolished nominated Anglo-Indian seats in Lok Sabha (2 seats) and state assemblies

RS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:

Article 90: Elected by RS members from among themselves

Previous Deputy Chairmen: Harivansh (2018–2024), P.J. Kurien (Congress, 2012–2018)

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