



FUNCTIONING OF THE LOK SABHA AND RAJYA SABHA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper provides a detailed comparative analysis of the work of the two Houses of the Indian Parliament- the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. It focuses on their historical backgrounds, the constitutional provisions, composition, powers and legislative procedures and roles in the provisions of executive accountability. Based on doctrinal analysis and empirical information culled out of parliamentary records, committee reports, and performance of the two chambers between 1990 and 2025, the research paper brings into focus the structural asymmetry and functional complementarity between the two chambers. Although the Lok Sabha is superior to the Rajya Sabha when it comes to the Money Bills and executive authority, the latter is crucial in federal representation, legislature scrutiny, and policy discussion. Other challenges such as the rising disruptions, deterioration of the quality of debates, misuse of Money Bill provisions and the failure to use parliamentary committee effectively have also been discussed in the paper. The study ends with the recommendations of practical reforms that promote the reinforcement of institutional mechanisms to support the principles of deliberative democracy and guarantee the successful functioning of the bicameral legislature in India.

Keywords: Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Indian Parliament, Bicameral Legislature, Legislative Process.

INTRODUCTION

The democratic system of India is founded on the ideologies of representative government and the main organ of this system is the bicameral Parliament, which consists of two different but mutually dependent houses, the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States). The Indian Parliament, in the tradition of the British Westminster system, is a combination of popular sovereignty and federalism, and allows a subtle balance between the voice of the people and the states.



The Lok Sabha which is directly elected by the people of India, represents the dynamic pulse of the voters and it has more control over the executive particularly on financial and governance issues. The fact that its term is subject to dissolution gives a certain sense of urgency and political accountability to lawmaking. The Rajya Sabha on the other hand is an elected house, but indirectly by the State Legislative Assemblies, and it is a permanent house, providing continuity, regional representation and a house where greater legislative scrutiny can be carried out. Although it has limited financial powers, it is very instrumental in the revisory and deliberative aspect of the parliamentary process.

This comparative analysis is prompted by the necessity to get a feel of the operations of these two Houses, how they operate both singularly and collectively to execute their mandate as stipulated in the constitution. The paper aims at critically evaluating the efficacy of bicameralism in India through the analysis of its composition, powers, legislative effectiveness, accountability structures and procedural practices. It also reviews contemporary trends and problems which include disruptions in the legislature, circumvention of Rajya Sabha through Money Bills and poor utilization of parliamentary committees, and provides reformative ideas to further the parliamentary democracy in India.

1. HISTORICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS

The bicameral legislature of India has been a result of colonial precedence and local democratic traditions. The dual-chamber system of Parliament has historical origins in the Government of India Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. The 1919 Act brought the idea of dyarchy and legislative councils were expanded, whereas the 1935 Act proposed a bicameral legislature at the center level, which was the first time when the shift in the constitutional design was proposed after independence.

India took a long path to bicameralism, which was developed fully in the debates of the Constituent Assembly (1946-49) when members took great pains to determine whether the country needed a second house as a counterweight to federalism. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and others wanted an Upper House, which would not be the replica of the Lower House, but one that would be a Council of States, or a House of sober second thought, reflective deliberation and representation of regional interests.

This bicameral system was codified in the Constitution of India of 1950 in Articles 79-82, providing the Parliament of India to be composed of the President, Lok Sabha (House of the People), and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States). Although the Lok Sabha is the directly elected house of parliament representing the people of India, the Rajya Sabha acts as a federal role of the house of parliament, where the states and Union Territories are represented in the legislative process.

2. COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

Despite the fact that law-making and oversight are the tasks of both Houses of Parliament, their structure, mode of election, duration of mandate, and the focus of representation are quite different. This conflict has its basis in their constitutional duties and the roles they are supposed to play in the federal and democratic system of India.

Table 1: Comparison of Representation

Criteria	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha
Mode of Representation	Direct, via general elections	Indirect, via State Assemblies

Minimum Age	25 years	30 years
Focus	National/popular representation	Federal/state representation

The Lok Sabha is the house of the common man, and the members are elected directly by the general elections on the first-past-the-post system. The Rajya Sabha, however, is elected by the elected members of the State Legislature Assemblies through the system of proportional representation and this further gives it a federal coloring.

Table 2: Comparative Overview

Feature	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha
Electoral System	First-past-the-post	Proportional representation
Voters	Citizens of India	Members of State Legislatures
Nominated Members	2 (Anglo-Indian quota – now abolished)	12 (nominated by President)
Purpose	People's representation	State representation and expertise

President nominations to the Rajya Sabha are designed to bring in expertise in the areas of literature, science, art and social service-creating legislative depth.

Table 3: Comparison of Tenure and Dissolution

Criteria	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha
Tenure	5 years	6 years (1/3rd members retire every 2 years)
Dissolution	Can be dissolved	Cannot be dissolved
Impact	Political transitions, policy shifts	Institutional continuity

The fixed tenure of the Lok Sabha can be cut short through early dissolution that is usually because of political instability or loss of majority. On the contrary, the permanency of the Rajya Sabha offers institutional continuity- the guarantee of continuity of the legislative role regardless of the changes in the electoral politics.

Table 4: Comparative Insights

Group	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha
SC/ST	Constitutionally reserved seats	No reservation
Women	No reservation (pending implementation of 2023 bill)	No reservation
Anglo-Indian	Nominated (till 2020)	No representation post-104th Amendment

The Lok Sabha has the affirmative action provisions that demonstrate the social justice in India. Indian Parliament has no such strict quotas in Rajya Sabha, but these could be represented, albeit indirectly, through election or nomination by the president.

Table 5: Comparative Composition Table

House	Maximum Strength	Current Strength	Party Control
Lok Sabha	552	543	Usually governed by majority ruling party
Rajya Sabha	250	245	Often more balanced, enabling opposition power

This piece demonstrates that the Lok Sabha is more susceptible to electoral swings and tends to give advantage to the ruling party whereas the Rajya Sabha because of staggered elections has become a place of review and opposition power.

3. POWERS AND LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS

The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have separate and complementary powers whereby Lok Sabha has supremacy over financial and executive. Article 110 provides that only the Lok Sabha can introduce Money Bills and although the Rajya Sabha can suggest amendments, the Lok Sabha could either accept or reject the amendments. The Council of Ministers is answerable to the Lok Sabha only (Article 75) and the Lok Sabha has the sole power to pass No-Confidence Motions and vote on the Annual Budget and Demands of Grants thus giving it the upper hand in financial control. Rajya Sabha on the contrary is a revising house which offers detailed examination of bills. It has special powers under Article 249, to authorize Parliament to legislate on State List subjects in the national interest and under Article 312, to establish new All India Services. It is important to note that both Houses have equal powers in amendment of the constitution (Article 368) which confirms that Rajya Sabha plays a crucial role in preservation of federalism and constitutional integrity.

4. WORKING PROCEDURE AND CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Despite similar procedures being prescribed by the Indian Constitution to both Houses, the way they operate on the ground shows a lot of differences. Lok Sabha is the House of the People and it bears the direct political atmosphere and is more controversial and prone to frequent disruptions. Rajya Sabha, by its staggered membership and continuity, is more likely to provide a more deliberative and policy-focused debate.

Sessions and Sittings: The Houses sit thrice a year i.e. during Budget, Monsoon, and Winter Sessions. But the efficiency of these sessions is not the same. There is a tendency that more bills are introduced and passed in Lok Sabha whereas Rajya Sabha spends more time on debate and scrutiny.

Disruption and Decorum: Walkouts, protests and adjournments are more common in the Lok Sabha because of its majoritarian nature. Rajya Sabha, on the contrary, is less chaotic, although it is not free of disruptions.

Committee Participation: Both Houses get to participate in Parliamentary Committees, but Rajya Sabha members are said to offer expert opinions and long-term policy views. But what has generally happened in both Houses is that there is a decrease in the referral of bills to committees to be scrutinized.

Table 6: Key Parameters for Comparison

Parameter	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha
Sessions per Year	3	3
Average Sitting Days	60–70	60–70
Question Hour Effectiveness	High	Moderate
Debates on National Issues	Frequent but often disrupted	Fewer but substantive
Committee Referrals	Decreasing trend	More participative
Legislative Output	Higher number of bills passed	Higher quality of deliberation
Disruptions	Frequent	Occasional
Public Perception	Politicized but action-oriented	Deliberative but slower

5. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS COMPARISON

The process of legislation in India has three organized readings. The First Reading is the introduction of the bill. The Second Reading enables a discussion and a referral to committees in detail. The Third Reading is the final voting and passing. Only in the Lok Sabha, Money Bills (Article 110) are introduced. The Rajya Sabha can propose changes within fourteen days, however, the Lok Sabha is not bound to accept them. Certification of a Money Bill by the Speaker is conclusive.

Unlike Money Bills, Ordinary Bills may be introduced in either House. In case both Houses cannot agree, under Article 108, the President can call a Joint Sitting. The Lok Sabha is likely to win in joint sitting because of the numerical strength. The recent developments show that there is a concern about the rising number of bills that are termed as Money Bills and thus they are not scrutinized in Rajya Sabha and also the rate at which bills are sent to committees is decreasing.

6. ROLE IN ACCOUNTABILITY

The Lok Sabha performs the major role in the accountability of the executive. The government is directly accountable to the elected representatives through such mechanisms as the Question Hour, No-Confidence Motions (Article 75), and Adjournment or Censure Motions. Rajya Sabha, in spite of its inability to topple the government, plays an important role with its procedural devices like Special Mentions, Short Duration Discussions, and Calling Attention Motions. It is more of a reflective role, making policy analysis to be more in depth. Committees are strong tools of accountability in both Houses. They question budgets, laws and administrative performance. The Lok Sabha provides political control whereas the Rajya Sabha supplements it with policy knowledge.

7. CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

There are some urgent problems which complicate the work of both Houses:

- **Disruptions and Decorum** –There are regular walkouts, sloganeering and political stand-offs in the Lok Sabha that disrupt legislative business. Rajya Sabha used to be more the place of better decorum, however, there have been increased interruptions here as well.



- **Decline in Debate Quality** –The problem of growing partisanship and less time to debate have affected substantive debate. The bills are passed in haste without proper scrutiny which compromises the legislative process.
- **Bypassing Rajya Sabha** – The process of seeking to pass controversial bills as Money Bills (e.g. Aadhaar Act) avoids the revision power of Rajya Sabha and dilutes bicameral checks.
- **Underutilization of Committees** –The number of bills that are referred to committees has been reduced tremendously- in recent years, it is below 20%, as compared to more than 60 percent in the early years of this century. This robs law of professional review and citizen comment.

8. REFORMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to revitalize the efficacy of the parliament and to maintain the bicameralism spirit, a number of reforms are necessary:

- (a) Enhancing Parliamentary Functioning –Parliament ought to sit at least 100 days in a year in order to enable the active passage of laws.
- (b) Strengthening Committee Role –All other non-urgent and complicated bills will be required to be referred to the Standing Committees where they are to be thoroughly scrutinized.
- (c) Preventing Procedural Misuse – Article 110 should be amended to avoid misuse of Money Bill classification.
- (d) Fulfilling Gender Representation – The Women Reservation Bill (2023) after delimitation should be immediately enforced to become inclusive.
- (e) Reducing Whip Rigidity and Defections –Reforms to the Anti-Defection Law can help encourage intra-party democracy and prevent arbitrary disqualifications.
- (f) Such steps can enhance accountability, parliamentary oversight, and citizens confidence in parliamentary democracy.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha brings out the fact that the two Houses play essential roles in the parliamentary democracy of India but the powers and the functions of the two Houses are disproportionate but complementary to each other. The Lok Sabha is directly elected and has a major role in financial legislation and executive oversight and is responsive to the electorate. Conversely, the Rajya Sabha is a stabilizing body that offers federal representation and expert debate and legislative oversight. Nevertheless, the paper also points at the systemic issues of frequent disruptions, undermining of committee procedures, bypassing of Rajya Sabha via procedural mechanisms such as the Money Bill procedure. These problems need to be addressed by institutional reforms, which include making committee scrutiny robust, making it gender-inclusive, and maintaining legislative decorum, to retain the integrity and efficiency of the Indian bicameral legislature. A constitutional concept of a balanced, transparent and deliberative parliament is not only an ideal but a democratic imperative to the changing polity in India.

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