Polity & Governance · GS - II

Explain the structure of the Parliamentary Committee system. How far have the financial committees helped in the institutionalisation of Indian Parliament?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Parliamentary committees overcome the limitations of floor debates by enabling detailed, bipartisan scrutiny; financial committees institutionalise legislative control over public expenditure, taxation and governmental accountability.

Model Answer

Introduction

Parliamentary committees are specialised bodies through which Parliament examines legislation, expenditure and executive functioning in greater detail. They enable Parliament to perform complex oversight beyond the constraints of plenary sessions.

Body

Structure of the Committee System

Parliamentary committees broadly include:

Standing Committees: These are permanent or periodically reconstituted committees, including Department-related Standing Committees and financial committees.

Financial Committees: The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)**, **Estimates Committee** and **Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU)** examine different aspects of public finance.

Department-related Standing Committees: They scrutinise demands for grants, bills, annual reports and policies of concerned ministries.

Ad hoc Committees: These are constituted for specific purposes and cease to exist after completing their assigned task, such as certain Select or Joint Parliamentary Committees.

Role of Financial Committees

Public Accounts Committee: Examines government expenditure and CAG reports to determine whether public money has been legally and properly spent.

Estimates Committee: Examines estimates and suggests improvements in economy, efficiency and administrative reform.

Committee on Public Undertakings: Examines the functioning and financial performance of public sector undertakings.

Contribution to Institutionalisation

They strengthen **executive accountability**, encourage evidence-based scrutiny, institutionalise financial discipline and preserve Parliament's control over the public purse.

Their relatively less partisan and detailed deliberations provide space for consensus and expert examination.

Limitations

Committee recommendations are generally advisory, attendance can be inconsistent and limited public visibility can reduce their impact. Departmental committees also face time constraints in examining the large volume of legislation and expenditure.

Conclusion

Financial committees have significantly transformed Parliament from merely a debating institution into an **institution of systematic**

executive and financial oversight. Strengthening committee referral, research support and follow-up mechanisms would further deepen parliamentary institutionalisation.

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