Polity & Governance · GS - II

“Once a Speaker, Always a Speaker”! Do you think the practice should be adopted to impart objectivity to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha? What could be its implications for the robust functioning of parliamentary business in India?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Impartiality of the Speaker; British convention; anti-defection law; party neutrality; parliamentary democracy; continuity and experience; constitutional amendments; accountability; implications for legislative functioning

Model Answer

Introduction

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is expected to function impartially while maintaining parliamentary order. The convention of a former Speaker remaining politically neutral after leaving office, followed in the UK, offers a possible model for strengthening this impartiality.

Potential advantages

- **Neutrality:** Separation from active party politics could reduce partisan behaviour in procedural decisions.
- **Fair proceedings:** Opposition members may have greater confidence in rulings on debates, motions and disciplinary matters.
- **Institutional credibility:** A visibly impartial Speaker can strengthen parliamentary legitimacy.

- **Continuity:** Experience gained in the office could contribute to institutional memory and procedural stability.

Challenges and implications

- **Political feasibility:** Indian political parties may resist a convention that limits the future political role of former Speakers.
- **Accountability:** A lifetime convention of neutrality may raise questions about the former Speaker's freedom to participate in public debate.
- **Insufficient by itself:** Neutrality after leaving office would not automatically resolve concerns about partisan conduct during the Speaker's tenure.
- **Anti-defection disputes:** The Speaker's role under the Tenth Schedule requires timely decisions and safeguards against political delay.

Way forward

A more impartial office could be supported through transparent procedures, time-bound decisions on disqualification petitions, fair recognition of opposition business and stronger conventions governing the Speaker's conduct. A consensus-based election of the Speaker could also improve legitimacy.

Conclusion

“Once a Speaker, Always a Speaker” could strengthen impartiality if adapted to India's political context. However, broader procedural and institutional reforms are necessary to ensure fair and effective parliamentary functioning.

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