



Mains Practice Question

Q. What are the merits and demerits of the parliamentary system of government? What were the reasons for adopting the parliamentary system in India? (250 Words)

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Approach

- Define parliamentary system
- Discuss the merits and demerits of the parliamentary system of government
- Enumerate the reasons for adopting the parliamentary system in India

Introduction

The parliamentary system of government is the one in which the executive is responsible to the legislature for its policies and acts. The Constitution of India provides for a parliamentary form of government, both at the Centre and in the states.

Body

The parliamentary system of government has the following merits:

Harmony Between Legislature and Executive

- Parliamentary system ensures harmonious relationship and cooperation between the legislative and executive organs of the government.
- The executive is a part of the legislature and both are interdependent at work. As a result, there is less scope for disputes and conflicts between the two organs.

Responsible Government

- The ministers are responsible to the Parliament for all their acts of omission and commission.
- The Parliament exercises control over the ministers through various devices like question hour, adjournment motion, no-confidence motion, etc.

Prevents Despotism

- Under this system, the executive authority is vested in a group of individuals (council of ministers) and not in a single person. This dispersal of authority checks the dictatorial tendencies of the executive.

Ready Alternative Government

- In case the ruling party loses its majority, the Head of the State can invite the opposition party to form the government. This means an alternative government can be formed without fresh elections

Wide Representation

- In a parliamentary system, the executive consists of a group of individuals (i.e., ministers who are representatives of the people). Hence, it is possible to provide representation to all sections and regions in the government.

The parliamentary system suffers from the following demerits:

- **Unstable Government:** The parliamentary system does not provide a stable government. The government depends on the mercy of the majority legislators for their continuity and survival in office. Political defection or evils of the multiparty coalition can make the government unstable.
- **No Continuity of Policies:** The parliamentary system is not conducive for the formulation and implementation of long-term policies. A change in the ruling party is usually followed by changes in the policies of the government.
- **Dictatorship of the Cabinet:** Whenever the ruling party enjoys an absolute majority in the Parliament, the cabinet becomes autocratic and exercises nearly unlimited powers.
- **Against Separation of Powers:** In the parliamentary system, the legislature and the executive are together and inseparable. The cabinet acts as the leader of the legislature as well as the executive. Hence, the whole system of government goes against the letter and spirit of the theory of separation of powers.
- **Government by Amateurs:** The parliamentary system is not conducive to administrative efficiency as the ministers are not experts in their fields. The Prime Minister has a limited choice in the selection of ministers; his choice is restricted to the members of Parliament alone and does not extend to external talent.

Reasons for adopting parliamentary system

- **Familiarity with the System:** The Constitution-makers were somewhat familiar with the parliamentary system as it had been in operation in India during the British rule.
- **Preference to More Responsibility:** Constituent Assembly wanted to adopt a system that was both stable and responsible. The American system gives more stability while the British system gives more responsibility but less stability. The Draft Constitution thereby recommended the system that was more responsible.
- **Need to Avoid Legislative—Executive Conflicts:** The framers of the Constitution wanted to avoid the conflicts between the legislature and the executive which was common in the US Presidential system.
- **Nature of Indian Society:** Parliamentary system offers greater scope for giving representation to various sections, interests and regions in the government. This promotes a national spirit among the people and builds a united India.

Conclusion

In this context, the Swaran Singh committee recommended that the parliamentary system has been doing well and hence, there is no need to replace it with the presidential system.