



Mains Practice Question

Q: Critically examine the role and relevance of Rajya Sabha in the Indian parliamentary system. Suggest some reforms to enhance its effectiveness and accountability. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer with a brief introduction of Rajya Sabha.
- Explain role and relevance of Rajya Sabha.
- Suggest some reforms in Rajya Sabha.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Rajya Sabha or the Council of States is the upper house of the Indian Parliament, which represents the interests of the states and the union territories in the federal system. It is a permanent house that is not subject to dissolution, but one-third of its members retire every two years.

Body:

- **Role and relevance:**
 - **Law-making:**
 - Rajya Sabha participates in the legislative process along with Lok Sabha or the lower house.
 - It can initiate, amend or reject any bill, except money bills, which are the exclusive domain of Lok Sabha. It can also make recommendations on money bills within 14 days.
 - However, in case of a deadlock between the two houses on any bill, a joint sitting can be convened, where Lok Sabha has an advantage due to its larger size and numerical strength.
 - Moreover, Rajya Sabha cannot initiate or amend constitutional amendment bills, which require a special majority in both houses.
 - **Oversight:**
 - Rajya Sabha exercises oversight over the executive by asking questions, raising motions, passing resolutions, demanding discussions, etc.
 - Rajya Sabha does not have any role in the formation or dissolution of the government, which depends on the majority support in Lok Sabha only.
 - **Representation:**
 - Rajya Sabha represents the federal principle and diversity of India by giving voice to the states and union territories in the national legislature.
 - It also reflects the pluralism and heterogeneity of India by accommodating various parties, groups and interests in its composition.
 - However, the representation of Rajya Sabha is not proportional to the population of the states and union territories, as there is a cap of 250 elected members and a minimum of one member for each state and union territory.
 - Moreover, some states and union territories are over-represented or under-

represented in Rajya Sabha due to historical reasons or political calculations.

◦ **Deliberation:**

- Rajya Sabha acts as a chamber of debate and discussion on various issues of national and international importance.
- It provides a forum for expressing diverse views and opinions, as well as for scrutinizing and refining policies and laws.
- It also benefits from the expertise and experience of its members, especially the nominated ones, who enrich its deliberations with their knowledge and insights.
- However, the quality and quantity of deliberation in Rajya Sabha has declined over time due to factors such as frequent disruptions, partisan politics, lack of decorum, absence of quorum, misuse of rules, etc.

▪ **Reforms:**

◦ **Strengthening law-making:**

- Rajya Sabha should be given more powers and autonomy in law-making, especially on matters concerning the states and union territories. It should also be consulted before convening a joint sitting or passing a constitutional amendment bill.
- It should also have more say on money bills, which often include non-financial matters that affect its jurisdiction.

◦ **Enhancing oversight:**

- Rajya Sabha should be more proactive and effective in overseeing the executive by using various parliamentary tools and mechanisms.
- It should also have more role and influence in the appointment and removal of key constitutional functionaries, such as judges, election commissioners, CAG, CVC, etc.
- It should also have more access to information and documents from the executive to enable informed scrutiny.

◦ **Improving representation:**

- Rajya Sabha should be reformed to ensure fair and equitable representation of the states and union territories in proportion to their population.
- It should also ensure adequate representation of women, minorities, backward classes, etc. in its composition.
- It should also avoid nomination of persons with political affiliations or conflicts of interest.

◦ **Promoting deliberation:**

- Rajya Sabha should foster a culture of debate and dialogue among its members by adhering to the rules and norms of parliamentary conduct.
- It should also encourage more participation and attendance of its members by imposing penalties for absenteeism or indiscipline.
- It should also leverage technology and innovation to enhance its deliberative capacity and outreach.

Conclusion:

Rajya Sabha is an integral and indispensable part of the Indian parliamentary system that performs various roles and functions in the governance and development of the country. It is also a symbol of India's federalism and diversity that reflects its constitutional values and vision. However, it also faces some challenges and limitations that hamper its effectiveness and accountability. Therefore, it needs to be reformed and revitalized to meet the expectations and aspirations of the people and the nation.