

1. Introduction to the Parliamentary System

In this chapter, we will learn the machinery or the system of government as given in the Indian Constitution.

Have you thought of this ?

- What is a parliamentary system of government?
- In India we have Prime Minister but why is there no Prime Minister in the United States of America?
- What is the difference between a Parliamentary and a Presidential system of government?

These questions would lead us to conclude that every country has a different form of government. Before we go ahead to understand different types of Government systems, let us get information about the main branches of government.

The function of the Legislature is to make laws. The Executive implements the law and the Judiciary provides justice. The functions of these organs, their jurisdiction and limitations on their power and the interrelationship between these organs are decided by the Constitution. It is the nature of their interrelationship that determines the system of government adopted in a particular country.

There are two main types of government systems that are followed. (1) Parliamentary System (2) Presidential System.

Parliamentary System of government

The Parliamentary System of government developed primarily in England. In England, the Constitution is an unwritten Constitution. The governance is carried out in accordance with traditions and customs and conventions. The 'British Parliament' is an institution that has

evolved over a period of time. The Parliamentary system of Government having its roots in 'Parliament' is considered as a contribution of England. India has adopted this Parliamentary System. We can see some broad similarities in the Parliamentary system of England and the Parliamentary system of India. But when looked at an institutional level, the Indian Parliamentary system is different in its content.

Let us understand the characteristics of the Indian Parliamentary system of government in India.

- The Parliamentary system is a system of governance. The legislature of the Central government is known as the Parliament. The Indian Parliament is composed of the President, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
- Members of the Lok Sabha are directly elected by the people. The number of members in the House is fixed.
- Elections to the Lok Sabha are held at regular intervals. All political parties contest these elections. The party which gets more than half of the seats is considered as the majority party. The majority party forms the government.
- Sometimes, when no party gets a clear majority, some parties come together to form a majority and they can establish the government. This kind of a government is known as a coalition government.
- In this way, candidates directly elected by people become members of the legislature and the party in majority gets a chance to form the government.

- The leader of the majority party becomes the Prime Minister. He/She selects candidates for ministerial positions from among his/her colleagues.
- The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers chosen by the Prime Minister together forms the 'Executive' in the Parliamentary system of government. In Parliamentary system, the Executive has a dual responsibility: (1) As an Executive they have to implement laws. (2) As they are the members of the legislature, they also have to fulfill responsibilities of the Legislature.

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers is responsible to the legislature for all their actions and policies. It means that the Council of Ministers has to work with the legislature. It is for this reason that the parliamentary system is known as 'responsible system of government'. Another distinct characteristic of parliamentary system of government is collective responsibility. Decision taken by any ministry/department is considered as decision of the government. The entire council of ministers is responsible for the decision. In the next two chapters, we will see with examples, how the principle of collective responsibility is brought into practice.

In the Parliamentary System, the Executive is dependent upon the confidence of the legislature in them. This means that the Council of Minister remains in power till it enjoys the support or confidence of the legislature. If the legislature feels that the Executive does not work in accordance to its wishes, it removes the executive from power by passing a no-confidence motion against the executive. No-confidence motion is an effective tool of keeping a check over the

executive.

In the Parliamentary form of government, the legislature is a supreme institution. Elected representatives of people express demands and aspirations of common people in the Parliament. The Parliament decides upon issues of public welfare. Since it is the house of representatives of people and expresses sovereign authority of the people, it is considered as the supreme body.

Why did India adopt a Parliamentary System of government?

India adopted the parliamentary system of government for several reasons. The development of parliamentary institutions started during the British rule. The British rulers governed in accordance with this system. The parliamentary system of government in India is also in a way a product of the freedom movement. Indians were familiar to this system of government. Many discussions took place in the Constituent Assembly over the system of government. The framers of the Constitution made few changes in the parliamentary system to suit the Indian situation.

Discussions and deliberations are an integral part of the parliamentary form of government. Questions related to public welfare are discussed in the legislature. Members from the opposition party also take part in these discussions. Opposition parties may support the government wherever appropriate, point out shortcomings in policies and laws, put up studied arguments and questions etc. This helps the legislature to make proper laws.

Presidential system of government

Presidential system of government can be said to be another important system of government. This type of system exists in countries such as United States

of America. This system is different from the parliamentary form. The system, in which the Executive is independent of the legislature and as the Head of the State (the President) is directly elected by people, is known as the Presidential system of government. Though the three organs are independent from each other, there are enough connections between them to work in harmony/coordination. The United States of America has adopted the presidential system of government.

Following are some features of this system of government.

- In a Presidential form of government, the legislature and the executive are not directly dependent on each other. The Houses of the Legislature and the President are directly elected by the

people. The President is the executive head and has lot of powers including power to implement laws.

- In spite of such a structure, the legislature and the executive keep a check on each other. This mutual control over each other can lead to a responsible government.

Apart from the Parliamentary and the Presidential systems of government there are other forms of government systems that are followed in France, Switzerland, Germany, etc. Several countries owing to their unique circumstances have evolved different systems of government.

In the next chapter, we will study the structure, working and role of the Indian Parliament.

Exercise

1. Choose the correct option and rewrite the statements.

1. Parliamentary System of government developed in
(a) England (b) France
(c) United States of America (d) Nepal
2. In the Presidential system is the executive head.
(a) The Prime Minister
(b) The Lok Sabha Speaker
(c) The President (d) The Governor

2. Complete the information in the following table.

Sr. No.	Name of the Institution	Functions
1.	Legislature	
2.	Executive	
3.	Judiciary	

3. Explain the following statements with reasons.

1. India adopted the parliamentary system of government.

2. Discussion and deliberations are important in a parliamentary system of government.

4. Answer the following in 25 to 30 words.

1. What is a responsible government?
2. Enumerate the characteristics of the Presidential system of government.

5. Why is the role of opposition parties important? Write your opinion.

Project

Watch the live telecast proceedings of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the national channel Doordarshan and write your observations.

