

# Mastering Mains Answer Writing (Ep-8)

## Governance, GS Paper-II

### Question

Independence of public institutions in a democracy is a barometer of governance. Comment.

### Command Word

'Comment' - requires a brief explanation of the theme followed by your opinion, reinforcing your point of view using facts and reference to relevant evidence.

### Answer Structure

- **Introduction** – We will include a brief description of 'Governance' and its link with the independence of public institutions.
- **Body of the Answer** – Will include, the importance of public institutions as a means of governance and their role in a democracy
- **Conclusion** – We will sum up our answer by mentioning ways to empower public institutions.

### Representative Answer

#### Introduction

Governance refers to government in action. It includes the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. Governance is carried out through various interconnected but independent institutions. These institutions form the bedrock of a democracy because they serve the demos (people) by contributing to their development.

#### Body

##### Importance of Independence of Public Institutions

Independent public institutions ensure good governance by establishing rule of law, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and efficiency through the following tools:

- **Regulation** – Public institution as a regulatory agency implement and enforce specific rules and legislations, which in turn ensures better governance in the country. Independence of these regulatory agencies, from any political or social interference, ensures merit and efficiency in governance.

*Example:* Reserve Bank of India regulates the liquidity in the market to ensure macroeconomic stability. Its independence is necessary from short term political compulsions of the government- so that it can ensure good fiscal health of the economy.

- **Checks and Balances** – Checks and balances is the principle of governance under which each of the branches of the government limits the power of the other branches thereby enforcing democratic ideals in the country. Independence of public institutions plays a significant role in ensuring the principle of checks and balances in letter and spirit, that can be explained through the following example:

*Example:* Judicial autonomy allows checks and balances on the executive and legislature, thereby upholding and strengthening our Constitution. For instance, the National Judicial Appointment Commission was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015 as it infringes upon the independence of the judiciary.

- **Delivery of Services** – The delivery of public services is vital in creating healthier communities with more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. Independent public institutions prevent any kind of nepotism or favouritism and infuse efficiency, inclusivity and professionalism in delivery of services.

*Example:* Election Commission of India is known for its impeccable integrity and professionalism while conducting elections in the largest democracy of the world.

- **Policy Formation** – Independence of public institutions ensures framework for debates and deliberations upon public policy matters.

*Example:* Parliament makes laws and its members are provided independence as they enjoy privileges such as freedom of speech in parliament which cannot be questioned in any court of law.

## Challenges to the Independence of Public Institutions

- Across the board, Indian institutions continually struggle with 3Fs - funding, functions and functionaries. For these they are dependent on the government which makes them vulnerable to political pressure and influence.
- Moreover, internal accountability mechanisms have largely foundered in these institutions. In nearly all Indian institutions, power remains far too centralized in the hands of the chief.
- Also, the lack of security of tenure, opacity in operations and lack of performance based evaluations provide scope for infringement of their independence.

## Conclusion

### Way Forward

- Institutions need to become performance linked, push towards greater efficiency - balanced by effectiveness.
- Media and an aware Civil society can play a role in checking the attacks on institutional autonomy.
- However the autonomy must be counterbalanced by transparency and accountability. There can be no blind trust of the powerful because of the innate corrupting influence of power. Hence, the greater the autonomy of an institution, the greater the need of inserting robust instruments of transparency and accountability.

