



Mains Marathon

Day 36: “In the last few years there has been a decline in the quality of work of Parliament due to its disruption”. Discuss the major causes for the disruption of the working of Parliament. (250 words)

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Approach / Explaination / Answer

- Start your answer by giving a brief introduction about disruption of parliament and mention some report or data about the disruption in parliament's working.
- Discuss the reasons for disruption of the working of Parliament.
- Conclude your answer by giving a Way forward.

Answer:

Disruption is replacing discussion as the foundation of our legislative functioning. The passionate debate is taking place everywhere other than in Parliament.

Parliament's job is to conduct discussions, but in recent years Parliament proceedings are marred by frequent disruptions.

A PRS report said, the **16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) lost 16% of its scheduled time to disruptions**, better than the 15th Lok Sabha (37%), but worse than the 14th Lok Sabha (13%).

The Rajya Sabha lost 36% of its scheduled time. In the 15th and 14th Lok Sabhas, it had lost 32% and 14% of its scheduled time respectively.

Reasons for Disruption:

- **Discussion on Matters of Controversy and Public Importance:** It appears that a number of disruptions in Parliament stem from discussions on either **listed topics that are controversial, or unlisted matters that are of public importance**.
 - Matters such as the **Pegasus Project, Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019** are such examples of causing disruptions.
- **Disruptions May Help Ruling Party Evade Responsibility:** The maximum number of disruptions have been found to take place in the **Question Hour** and the **Zero Hour**.
- **Lack of Dedicated Time for Unlisted Discussion:** Disruptions also get triggered due to lack of adequate time for raising questions and objections in respect of matters that are not listed for discussion in a particular, or during a particular session.
- **Scarce Resort to Disciplinary Powers:** Another systemic reason why disruptions are not

effectively prevented relates to the scarce resort to disciplinary powers by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

▪ **Other Reasons:**

- Dissatisfaction in MPs because of inadequate time for airing their grievances.
- An unresponsive attitude of the government and the retaliatory posture of the treasury benches.
- Political parties do not adhere to parliamentary norms and discipline their members.
- The absence of prompt action against disrupting MPs under the legislature's rules.

▪ **Party Politics:** When a contentious issue crops up, the government dithers on debating it, leading to Opposition MPs violating the conduct rules and disrupting the proceedings of Parliament.

Since they have the support of their parties in breaking the rules, the threat of suspension from the House does not deter them.

Issues:

- **Infringement of Constitutional Right:** The right to ask questions flows from Article 75 of Indian constitution which says that the council of ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the people and people of the country in general.
- **A Hindrance to Representative Democracy:** Parliamentary discussion is a manifestation of a representative kind of democracy in operation, in the sense that representation of the people directly questions the government on matters of governance.

Way Forward:

- **Code of Conduct:** To curb disorder in Parliament there is a need for strict enforcement of code of conduct for MPs and MLAs.
- **Increasing Number of Working Days:** Recommended by the 2001 conference, there should be an increase in the working days of Parliament. It resolved that Parliament should meet for 110 days every year and state legislative assemblies for 90 days.
- **Democratic Participation:** Not all disruptions in Parliament are necessarily counter-productive. Thus, the government of the day needs to be more democratic and allow the opposition to put their ideas in a free manner.
- **Productivity Meter:** The overall productivity of the session also can be studied and disseminated to the public on a weekly basis. It would take into consideration the number of hours that were wasted on disruptions and adjournments, and monitor the productivity of the day-to-day working of both Houses of Parliament.

Democracy is judged by the debate it encourages and sustains. More strengthening of the Parliament is the solution to prevent disruption of its proceedings. There should be a deepening of its role as the forum for deliberation on critical national issues.