



Mains Practice Question

Q. Since independence only a few private member bills have been passed. Does it imply that a discourse dominated by a majority restrict individual voices? Critically examine. (250 Words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by describing the private member bill briefly.
- Critically examine whether private member bill is being obstructed by majoritarian form of government.
- Conclude accordingly

Introduction

- Any Member of Parliament (MP) who is not a minister is referred to as a private member.
- Its drafting is the responsibility of the member concerned. Its introduction in the House requires one month's notice.
- The government bills/public bills can be introduced and discussed on any day, private member's bills can be introduced and discussed only on Fridays.
 - In case of multiple Bills, a ballot system is used to decide the sequence of bills for introduction.
 - The Parliamentary Committee on Private Member's Bills and Resolutions goes through all such Bills and classifies them based on their urgency and
- **Reasons for this Poor Track Record:**
 - **Limited Time slot:** While any MP can introduce a private member bill, it is difficult to get the bill passed for a number of reasons. These bills get low priority, with both Houses allotting a fixed day and limited time slot for these bills, thus providing little time for them to be taken up for discussion.
 - **Lack of Government Support:** A successful passing of Private Member Bill (PMB) is perceived by many as incompetence on part of the government and intrusion into the respective ministry's domain.
 - A perception also seems to have been built that the passage of such a Bill would mean that the government is incompetent and far removed from the needs of the people.
 - Without support from the ruling party of the alliance, that command majority, it becomes impossible to pass the bill, especially in the Lok Sabha.
 - The earlier governments often displayed features of bipartisanship, with the cabinet ministers themselves holding opposing views. This resulted in healthy debates and respect towards viewpoints held by others and therefore, a greater acceptance of Private Member legislation.
 - Subsequent governments have not upheld this trait as much, and this shows in the way Private Member Bills are treated.

Conclusion

- Private Member Bills were designed to empower MPs to bring attention to issues that were willingly

or unwillingly ignored by the party at the helm. Further, various countries across the world effectively empower their Private Members and respect their initiative in the lawmaking process.

- For instance, in the UK, since 1948, as many as 775 Private Members' Bills have received Royal Assent and the Canadian Parliament has passed 290 Private Members' Bills till date. Therefore, there is need to promote individual voice of Parliamentarians that does not get silenced in the lawmaking process.

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