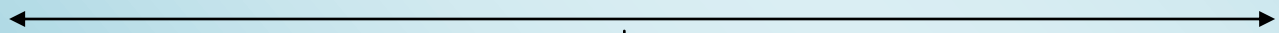


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## ROLE OF OPPOSITION PARTYS IN PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A democracy operates on the basis that there is room for choice all the way up to the selection of the government. This implies that the legislature, which makes the laws for the country, must itself provide an opportunity for various views to be heard throughout the term. These views should encompass not only those on the government benches (some of whom may want to suggest variations in procedure to those envisaged by the Ministers in the Cabinet), but also those who are opposed to the policies underlying the ways of operation. In other words, lawfully elected representatives of the people must be able to present and discuss alternative policy options even if they are not part of the government and do not have an immediate way of making their plans succeed.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Opposition, Parliament, Democracy, Govt., Partys, Cabinet & Role.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In India, we have a large number of political parties. There are a few parties which have a definite socio-economic programme to work for. They have chalked out a definite framework of action to pursue the programmes and policies for which they stand. However, there are many parties which do not have any coherent programme or policy to fall back upon. Their purpose is simply to aspire to come to power by hook or crook. At present, there are many solid political parties in India such as Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P), Congress (I), the Janata Party (Socialist) and the Communist Party

### **OFFICIAL OPPOSITION**

Official Opposition is a term used in India to designate the political party which has secured the largest number of seats in the Lower House of parliament (Lok Sabha) but is not a part of the ruling party or coalition.

A political party is officially accorded the status of an opposition party in Lok Sabha, only if it secures at least 10 percent of the seats.

- 1989 - 1991: Indian National Congress
- 1991 - 1998: Bharatiya Janata Party
- 1998 - 2004: Indian National Congress

- 2004 - 2009: Bharatiya Janata Party
- 2009 - 2014: Bharatiya Janata Party
- 2014 - 2019: None, No opposition party has secured 10% of the total seats (54/543).

The Opposition's main role is to question the government of the day and hold them accountable to the public. The Opposition is equally responsible in upholding the best interests of the people of the country. They have to ensure that the Government does not take any steps, which might have negative implications on the people of the country. The role of the opposition in parliament is basically to check the excesses of the ruling or dominant party, and not to be totally antagonistic. There are actions of the ruling party which may be beneficial to the masses and opposition is expected to support such steps. In Parliament, Opposition Party has a major role and must act to discourage the party in power from acting against the interests of the country and the common man. They are expected to alert the population and the Government on the content of any Bill, which is not in the best interests of the country.

Refers to the non-ruling party or coalition that has secured the highest number of seats in the Lok Sabha. The status of opposition party is given only when a standalone party secures atleast 10 percent of the seats. In India, for the period of 2009-2014, the official opposition party was Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The ruling party for the period of 2014-2019 is BJP. However, there is no opposition party for the period (2014-2019), since not a single party managed to secure atleast 10 percent of the seats.

Leader of the Opposition (India) refers to the political figure who leads the official opposition party. Sushma Swaraj was the leader of the opposition party for the period of 2009-2014. However, this position remains vacant for the period of 2014-2009, since there is no official opposition. Is as important as that of the ruling party, they ensure that the acts of the ruling party are not detrimental to the interest of general public or nation at large. The opposition ensures that the ruling political parties have a definite programme and policy to offer to the people and who can show a progressive path by action and not just by propaganda.

The role of the opposition party is not to oppose every decision of the ruling party. Rather, it is the duty of the opposition party to support the ruling party for the acts that are in the interest of the nation. The political parties should work among the people, win their confidence on the strength of their propounded goals. They must build public opinion in their favour by suggesting alternative programmes and policies which could practically take the country forward to the enjoyment of better standards of living. In this context, there are a few political parties which can aspire to play a constructive role and can hope to come to power with a swing in political education among the masses. The flaws of election process need to be removed. It needs to be ensured that only the right candidate wins the election. Money plays a great role in elections. There are unscrupulous rich politicians who buy the votes with money, throw temporary advantages to poor people at the time of polls. They make false promises which they know they cannot fulfil. It is, therefore, essential that the role of money power should be entirely eliminated from the electoral process.

They opposition should guide the countrymen to more desirable objectives of socio-economic achievement. It's believed that Indian polity has been able to sustain its democratic nature because of the constant scrutinizing by opposition parties. A party might not be able to form the government at the center because of the lack of majority, but that doesn't take away the responsibility of acting as a watchdog of the ruling party. When it comes to questioning the government and preventing them from taking negative strides, parliament is the most suitable platform for the opposition to leverage.



**Source:** election. in

In a parliamentary style of government, the opposition party is judged by the way it conducts itself the House. That's true for India as well. Holding the ruling party accountable to the public should be the prime focus of the opposition. However, there are several other layered responsibilities that they are expected to perform.

Instead of being completely critical of the party in power, the opposition needs to put a check on the excesses. Since the people of the country count on them to uphold people's best interests, they ought to be sure that government's decisions don't have negative implications on the country's overall health. Besides debating legislation in the House and ensuring that it's a well thought out decision, the opposition should also protest any Bill that may go against the interest of the country. The opposition MPs needs to see themselves as representatives of common people who expect justice and freedom from unlawful practices. The opposition members of the parliament need to be proactive enough to raise questions and recommend methodologies to the government. Apart from examining the performance of the executive, it also has to demonstrate its achievements or policies that can contribute towards the efficient running of the country.

### **ROLE OF OPPOSITION PARTIES IN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES**

One of the most important parliamentary committees has an opposition leader as the Chairman. Public Accounts Committee, which investigates the use of finances granted to the government, is led by a member belonging to an opposition party.

Presently, there are 24 Standing Committees of the Parliament segmented as per the departments and ministries. Some of the crucial committees such as finance, external affairs, and home affairs are led by the members of opposition parties. It is under their aegis that the standing committees examine legislations, expenditure plans of ministries and government schemes. Every MP of the House has to go through the recommendations of these committees.

As a chairman of some of these parliamentary panels, an opposition leader contributes towards strengthening legislation in an informed and participatory manner. The Opposition party members also have a significant role to play in the ad hoc committees constituted to scrutinize a specific case. The Joint Parliamentary Committee is an apt example in this regard. The committee, which was constituted to probe 2G scam, had 15 members from the opposition party out of a total strength of 30.

### **ROLE OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE PARLIAMENT**

Both Houses of the Parliament have a Leader of the Opposition, who is chosen from the largest opposition party. The position is recognized by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. The Leader of the Opposition is accorded certain privileges including a separate room in the Parliament with Secretariat and other facilities.

The incumbent has to offer constructive criticism of government policies. He/she has to ensure that House proceeds expeditiously and holds adequate debate on pressing issues. The Leader of the Opposition is expected to apprise the government of the party's stand on certain legislations even before the Bill is tabled in the parliament. This gives government the scope for considering the suggestions and work towards suggested amendments.

### **THE FUNCTIONS OF THE OPPOSITION**

A Member of Parliament plays several roles in the legislature, sometimes summarized as a legislator enacting laws, a representative of his or her constituents, a scrutinizer of the work of the executive, and a supporter or critic of proposals laid before the House. Members of the opposition must accept that opportunities for their work as initiators of legislation will be limited but their role as representatives is undiminished and greater burdens devolve on opposition Members than on government backbenchers in regard to scrutiny and oversight. At the same time, the opposition has a duty to themselves and to their voters to play the role of an alternative government and indeed, the role of a government in waiting. In the more mature democracies, this is well recognized and the leader of the largest opposition party is often given access to sensitive information on the basis that he or she, as the Prime Minister in waiting, has to be ready to perform the role of running the country at comparatively short notice. The opposition has the responsibility to give attention to the continuous development of its policies and to keep these in view before parliament and the people. The major challenge for the opposition is its need to be seen as credible in this role. In order to do that it must be as responsible, respected and united as a political party and it must create policies that are relevant to the day-to-day lives of people. Parliament provides a good forum for an effective opposition and must be used as such. The government also has its responsibilities to the opposition. In the first instance, sufficient resources should be provided for carrying out the work of a 'loyal opposition'. There must be an adequate level of access to sources of information including those available to

Ministers and their civil servants and for fair advice from parliamentary officials including parliamentary counsel or draftsmen where such persons are available. There must be some funding for publicity and for use of the media. Finally there must be recognition of the special place of the Leader of the Opposition and front-bench opposition spokespersons. It is instructive to note that, while the role of the opposition has been recognized for centuries, the payment of a salary to the Leader of the Opposition has been a practice for only a few decades even in the older parliaments.

## **LEGISLATION AND THE OPPOSITION**

A common frustration among Members of the opposition is that, while the central task of a legislature is to carry out a program of legislation, they can only play what may seem a peripheral part in it. The frustration lies in the perception rather than in the reality because there are various ways in which the opposition can influence legislation and help or hinder its passage through parliament.

Much of this work will depend on the ways in which the opposition whips relate to their opposition counterparts on the government benches and the relationship with the Speaker in regard to fulfilling his or her function of permitting business to proceed expeditiously, but with adequate debate. While there will be debate in committees after a bill has been presented to the House discussion behind the scenes prior to the first reading can help to ensure that the government is fully apprised of the opposition's position on the bill and is prepared to accept certain amendments. The opposition can also present bills themselves, as can a government backbencher, under certain limited procedural conditions. However, they cannot be money bills. Only a Minister may present these in most Commonwealth parliaments. In addition, unless they are of the type that is classifiable as private bills or, related to granting a benefit to some private individual or group, and are not controversial in nature, they have very little chance of success because they are usually constricted by a time limit as much as by the lack of numerical support. It is the duty of the opposition to make known in parliament the feelings of those sectors of society whose views may otherwise be ignored or unknown to the government.

## **THE OPPOSITION AND COOPERATION WITH GOVERNMENT**

The opposition often has a difficult decision to make in regards to supporting government on a piece of legislation or in working to a consensus on a policy matter. This could be a statesmanlike approach and in the national interest, but the possibility of negative perception of such stances by civil society and the people can be damaging to the opposition. In particular important minority interests that the opposition represents may feel aggrieved or neglected if consensus is too easily reached. This may result in the opposition putting forward an alternative view even if the national interest dictates otherwise. The opposition may have to be careful in how it presents itself in relation to particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These may have their own disagreements with the government and will seek to engage the opposition in their cause. If the opposition espouses the position of the NGO, this may be misunderstood by others to mean that the opposition agrees with the objectives and methods of action of the NGO. This may be far from the truth and could damage the interests of the opposition in relation to other components of society. The opposition must be willing to argue out its position with civil society and pressure groups.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that Opposition's main role is to question the government of the day and hold them accountable to the public. The Opposition is equally responsible in upholding the best interests of the people of the country. They have to ensure that the Government does not take any steps, which might have negative implications on the people of the country. The role of the opposition in parliament is basically to check the excesses of the ruling.

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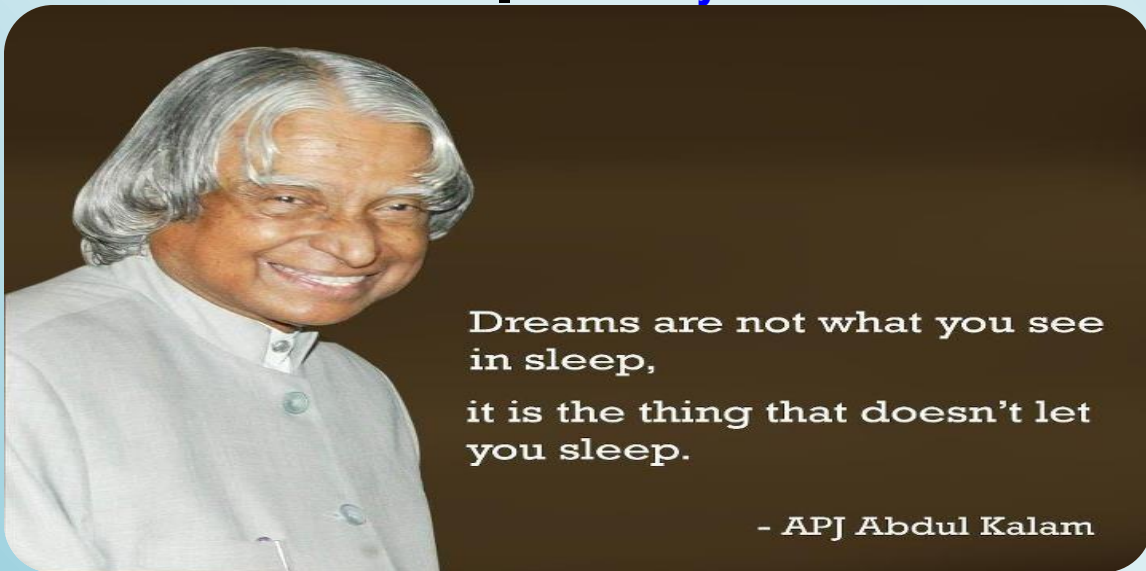
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Dreams are not what you see  
in sleep,  
it is the thing that doesn't let  
you sleep.

- APJ Abdul Kalam