

The standing committees <sup>(SCs)</sup> are a successful innovation of the parliamentary form of governance. They perform functions that the Parliament can't carry out due to either lack of time or want of expertise.

Although many SCs have been mentioned in the rules of Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha, the functions performed by the following are of extreme importance -

- ① The Public Accounts Committee - scrutinises the report by the CAG on the parameters of economy, propriety & legitimacy of expenditure.
- ② The Estimates Committee - takes a careful view of the expenditures laid out in the budget & advises on economy & alternative policies.
- ③ The Committee on Public Undertakings ensures autonomous functioning of PSUs through analysis of the CAG's report.

Hence, it is obvious that the standing committees' role in ensuring responsible governance is indispensable.

It is for this reason that their proceedings need to be brought out under public scrutiny from behind the closed doors <sup>where</sup> they currently occur.

- ① The quality of parliamentary functioning has deteriorated due to smaller sessions & non-scrutiny of bills & budget, etc. - the SCs through their continuous functioning have the ability to fill this lacuna.
- ② Public vigilance would make the members of SCs more disciplined & responsible & would improve quality of their work.
- ③ The standing committees through mobilisation of public opinion can serve as effective checks on executive excess of power and may also rein in the fiscal deficit.

Standing committees being extended aims of the Parliament need to be made transparent on a priority basis.

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