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Q5

"Once a speaker, Always a speaker"! Do you think the practice should be adopted to impart objectivity to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha? What could be its implications for the robust functioning of parliamentary business in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · GS II · 10 marks · Parliament and State Legislatures

Parliament and State legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges and issues arising out of these.

Core demand of the question

- 'Once a Speaker, Always a Speaker'! Do you think this practice should be adopted to impart objectivity to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha? What could be its implications for the robust functioning of parliamentary business in India?
- Honour the official stem. Use the UK convention, [Article 93](#), and the [Tenth Schedule](#)
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

The UK Speaker leaves party combat; India elects a majority Speaker who remains in the party stream.

[Tenth Schedule](#) adjudication and Money Bill certification are where a partisan Chair most hurts the House.

A neutrality convention plus no post-Chair ministry would aid objectivity.

Defection petitions should leave the Speaker if the office is to be believed.

Robust parliamentary business needs a trusted referee, not only a new slogan.

Introduction

The British convention that a Speaker, once elected, leaves party combat and is often returned unopposed is a device for chair neutrality. India's Lok Sabha Speaker is elected under [Article 93](#) from the ruling majority and returns to party life after the Chair. Adopting 'once a Speaker, always a Speaker' would help objectivity, but it would not by itself fix anti-defection and House-management problems.

Body**Why the UK practice looks attractive**

- A Speaker who will not seek a ministerial future from the same party has less incentive to tilt Question Hour, gag debates, or rush money bills.
- Unopposed return in the constituency, where it holds, reduces the need to please the party machine at the next election.

- **Objectivity of the Chair is a condition of robust parliamentary business:** opposition time, adjournment motions, and committee referrals only work if the referee is believed.

Indian constraints

- The **Tenth Schedule** makes the Speaker the first tribunal on defection; **Kihoto Hollohan (1992)** left that with judicial review only at the end. A party Speaker judging party splits is the structural wound, as Karnataka 2019 and earlier Assembly crises showed.
- Money Bill certification (Aadhaar in Lok Sabha, later scrutinised in K.S. Puttaswamy / Roger Mathew debates) showed how a partisan Chair can shrink Rajya Sabha.
- Coalition arithmetic and a hung House make a permanently non-party Speaker harder to elect without a cross-party deal that India has rarely institutionalised.

Should India adopt it - and implications

- **Yes, as a parliamentary convention plus a statute or rules amendment:** Speaker resigns party membership; no ministerial office afterwards; defection petitions go to an independent tribunal.
- **Implications for robust business:** more credible Question Hour, fewer walkouts over 'bias', and a cleaner separation of the Chair from the whip.
- **Risks:** a lifetime-style Speaker in a young democracy could freeze a House culture; constituency unopposed returns need all-party honour, not a one-sided diktat.
- **Recommendation:** import the neutrality ethic and remove defection adjudication from the Speaker; do not expect British social convention to transplant without rules.

Flow diagram

UK Speaker convention Speaker convention -> Party-neutral Chair
 Art 93 plus Tenth Schedule -> Party Speaker
 Party Speaker -> Defection and Money Bill tilt
 Party-neutral Chair -> Robust House business

Conclusion

'Once a Speaker, always a Speaker' should be adopted in spirit because objectivity of the Lok Sabha Chair is a public good. Its implication for robust business is a trusted referee. Without taking defection cases off the Speaker's table, the slogan alone will not de-party the office.

Facts & figures

Article 93

Lok Sabha chooses its Speaker and Deputy Speaker; no constitutional bar on party membership.

Tenth Schedule

Speaker decides defection disqualification; the sharpest conflict of interest in the office.

Kihoto Hollohan (1992)

Upheld the Schedule; judicial review of the Speaker's order is not a first-instance substitute.

UK Speaker convention

Political detachment, often unopposed re-election, and a career that does not return to the front bench.

Money Bill, Article 110

Speaker's certificate is final in the House; a partisan call can sideline Rajya Sabha.

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