

### Question

Under what conditions was the Bill of Rights (1689) passed by the British Parliament and how it impacted the subsequent politics?

### Answer

UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS THE  
BILL OF RIGHTS 1689 WAS PASSED  
AND ITS IMPACT ON SUBSEQUENT  
POLITICS:

### Introduction:

The Bill of Rights (1689) is one of the

most significant constitutional documents in British history. It marked the end of the struggle between the Crown and parliament, which had begun under the Stuart kings, and the laid ~~at~~ the foundation of Parliamentary Sovereignty in England. Passed after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, it was essentially a lesson-based legislation - Parliament, having suffered under absolute monarchs, learned from experiences and established constitutional safeguards to prevent future misuse of power.

The Bill transformed England from a monarchy based on personal rule to one based on law, liberty, and parliamentary supremacy.

## I. Conditions Under Which The Bill Was Passed:

The passing of the Bill of Rights was not accidental; it was the result of political, religious, and constitutional crises that

had been building up for decades.

### 1- Conflict Between Crown and Parliament:

The Stuart kings, particularly James II, followed the same autocratic path as Charles I, asserting that the king ruled by Divine Right. They often levied taxes without parliamentary consent, dissolved assemblies, and ruled arbitrarily. Parliament saw this as a direct attack on the English constitution.

### 2- Religious Tensions:

James II's open sympathy with Catholicism created widespread fear among the Protestant majority. His attempts to place Catholics in key offices and suspend laws against them led Parliament to believe that the king aimed to restore Catholic dominance in England.

### 3- Violation of Law and Individual Liberties:

The king exercised powers of dispensing and suspending laws, maintained a standing army without consent, and interfered in free elections. These acts were viewed as direct violations of the ancient rights of Englishmen.

#### 4- The Glorious Revolution (1688)

When James II fled to France after losing support, Parliament invited his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange to ascend the throne — but only under certain conditions. They were required to accept constitutional limitations on royal authority. This settlement led directly to the Bill of Rights of 1689.

#### 5- Lessons from The Past

Parliament framed the Bill as a lesson-based legislation, learning from past abuses of monarchy. It sought to

secure the rights of Parliament and ensure that future kings would govern according to law and with parliamentary approval.

## II - Main Provisions of The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights (1689) laid down fundamental constitutional principles that permanently limited the powers of the Crown and safeguarded parliamentary authority.

### 1. No Taxation Without Parliament's Consent

The king could not impose or collect any tax without the sanction of Parliament. This ensured financial control rested in parliamentary hands.

### 2. No Arbitrary Rule

The monarch was to govern strictly according to the law. Arbitrary or

as personal rule was declared illegal.

### 3- Regular Sessions of Parliament

It became mandatory for Parliament to meet regularly to discuss national issues and supervise royal actions.

### 4- No Dispensing or Suspending Power

The king could neither cancel nor suspend laws passed by Parliament on his own authority.

### 5- Right to Petition

Subjects were given the right to petition the government for the redress of grievances - a vital step toward political participation.

### 6- No Standing Army in Peacetime

Maintaining a standing army during peacetime without parliamentary approval was forbidden, ensuring civil supremacy over military power.

### 7. No Interference in Elections

The Crown was prohibited from interfering in parliamentary elections or punishing those who voted against royal interests.

### 8. Religious Clause

The monarch of England could not be a Papist (Catholic), ensuring that the English Crown remained permanently Protestant.

## III. Impact on Subsequent British Politics

The Bill of Rights had far-reaching and lasting effects on the constitutional and political structure of Britain.

### 1. End of Absolute Monarchy

The Bill firmly ended the era of absolutism in England. The king could no longer rule by personal will; he was now subject to law and bound by the constitution.

### 2. Establishment of Parliamentary Sovereignty

The Bill made Parliament the supreme

legislative authority in England - It controlled taxation, military matters, and the national budget, ensuring that the monarchy could not act independently of Parliament.

### 3- Beginning of The Constitutional Monarchy

The political system shifted from monarchy to constitutional monarchy, where the monarch ruled in accordance with the laws and consent of Parliament.

### 4- Strengthening of Civil Liberties

The rights guaranteed by the Bill protected citizens from unlawful taxation, arbitrary arrest, and misuse of power. It promoted freedom of speech within Parliament and political accountability.

### 5- Financial Control of Parliament

Parliament's right to approve annual grants (budget) and conduct annual audits of royal accounts laid the basis for its financial supremacy over the state - a

(3)

Key principle of modern governance -

#### 6 - Foundation for Modern Democratic Institutions

The Bill of Rights led to the gradual development of the Cabinet system and later the office of the Prime Minister. It ensured that ministers were answerable to Parliament rather than to the king alone.

#### 7 - Influence on Other Democracies

The Bill of Rights became a model document for later constitutional developments, especially the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the U.S. Bill of Rights (1791), influencing global democratic thought.

#### IV - An Era of Parliamentary Sovereignty

The Bill of Rights ushered in a new political age in Britain. Parliament now:

- Exercised control over national finances.
- Approved annual taxation and expenditure.
- Conducted annual audits of royal accounts.
- Held regular sessions, which became mandatory by law.

This marked the rise of responsible government, where executive authority was dependent on parliamentary confidence rather than royal favor.

### Conclusion:

The Bill of Rights (1689) was a turning point in British constitutional evolution. It was passed under the urgent need to prevent the return of arbitrary monarchy and to secure Protestant succession. By declaring that the Crown must govern through Parliament, it shifted the balance of power permanently in favor of the people's representatives. The principles it established - rule of law, parliamentary supremacy, and protection of civil rights - became the cornerstones of

British democracy and influenced constitutional developments across the world -

In essence, The Bill of rights transformed England into a constitutional and parliamentary state, ensuring that liberty and law triumphed over tyranny and divine right.

