House of Lord

The membership of the House of Lords is not fixed. It has more than 1100 members and this number varies through deaths and creation of new peers. As of May 2009, the House of Lords had 738 members. Now its members are 650. It is a permanent chamber and most of the peers hold office for the whole life. All these members are grouped in the following seven distinct categories- Princes of the Royal Blood, Hereditary Peers, Representative Peers of Scotland Representative Peers of Ireland, Lords of Appeal in Ordinary or Law Lords, Lords Spiritual, Life Peers.

Lord Chancellor is the presiding officer of the House of Lords who sits on the woolsack. He is appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. He has a very limited power. But he acts as an adviser to the Queen. The Lord Chancellor does not have a casting vote.

**Privileges of house of Lord**

Following are privileges to the house of Lord;

1. **Freedom to speech:** The Lords can express their views freely are without any person generally is no fix time for speech.
2. **Free access to the convergent:** It is also a great privilege to the lord that every member of house of lord can access to the sovereignty discuss public affairs.
3. **Right to determine its own composition:** It is a privilege to the member of house that he can easily express his concept about public affair. He can express his speech freely without any presser. He can explain his views and concept, whether positively or rigidly.
4. **Right to publish opinion:** The lords can publish then opinion in official paper. It means right of publishing there discussion in the house of lord. They are no enforcement on the reprehensive of house of lord. For their concept they can easily publish in govt. documents for public affair.
5. **Freedom for Arrest:** No member can be arrested by parliamentary in section. After the end of section the representative can be arrested legally.
6. **Trial of impeachment:** There are also right of impeachment cause. If any impeachment causes prelate before the house of lord then the representatives of this house have right to decided these impeachment causes.

**Power and function of house of Lord**

The power and function of House of Lords are explained as follows;

1. **Legislative Powers:** Legislative power can be discussed into two phases – control over financial bills and non-financial bills. As regard control over money bills the House of Lords is practically ineffective. If the House of Lords withhold their assents to a money bill for more than a one month it would be presented to the king and become a law on receiving the Royal assent despite the fact that lords did not concur with it. The money bill cannot be introduced in the Lords. Thus, it does not control the purse.

So far as non-money bills are concerned the same may be introduced in the Lords but usually ninety percent bills are introduced in the House of Commons. As non-money bills passed by the House of Commons in two successive sessions with an interval of at least one year between its first reading in the first session and its last reading in the second session will become a law after having received the Royal assent irrespective of its having been rejected by the House of Lords. Thus, in both financial and non-financial fields the final authority rests with the House of Commons and the House of Lords now lost all its effectiveness in these fields.

1. **Executive powers:** The Lords have the power to ask questions from the government and have a full right to debate its policies. It enjoys a share in the cabinet membership. Some lords are included in the Cabinet. It may be noted that the Lords have no power to pass a censure against the ministry. The Cabinet is not responsible to the House of Lords. The later can only cross examine the ministers

1. **Judicial Powers:** The House Lords enjoys the original powers to try peers in case they are involved in any treason or felony against national interest. It is also authorized to hear impeachment sent to it by the House of Commons. But, now days this original jurisdiction has lost all its importance.

House of Lords also acts as the highest court of appeal in Great Britain. So far as theory is concerned, the ordinary members have the right attend the meeting of the House at the time of trial and can decide the judgment by a division of vote but actually they never do so. At present only the Law Lords hear appeals. The whole House never meets a Court of Appeal

To conclude, it can be stated that composition and power of House of Lords have been severely criticized. But reality is that its undemocratic composition has also paved a way for democratic development in Great Britain. If House of Lords had been made democratic in composition and equal in powers with House of Commons, the results would have been undemocratic.

**Necessity of the House of Lords**

1. **A Historical Institution:** It is a historical institution which represent the British way of life. Though there happened many revolutions against the monarchical system, the people of Britain did not fully discard this historical institution from their mind. They are mostly conservative in nature and therefore, they dislike to over through their old aged monarchial institution. Similar is the case with the House of Lords.

1. **Save Time:** The Lords save the time of the House of Commons by initiating non-controversial Private Bills.
2. **Public Opinion Crystallized:** Introduction of delay is made possible. That enables the public to express its opinion. Accordingly the Bill is amended.
3. **Bicameralism:** Bicameralism is the order of the day and England like other countries cannot do away with its second chamber.
4. **Able Membership:** Although the attendance in the Lords is thin, yet it hardly means that its member is of ordinary caliber. Its members are belongs to aristocratic section of society. They are either rich people or retired Prime Ministers, Judges, Speakers, Ambassadors, Governor Generals, Ministers etc. They are men of fame. They helped in maintaining the high standard of its debates.
5. **Highest Court of Appeal:** The House of Lords has well performed its judicial functions. Another Supreme Court have to be established in case of House of Lords is abolished. No other second chamber has performed so important judicial functions as the House of Lords.
6. **Revolution unlikely:** The House of Lords symbolizes the fact that there is no likely hold of revolution in Great Britain. So long as it possesses any power, England will not face a revolution. It acts as a saucer where the passions are cold.
7. **Role in Private Bill:** The Bills which are related to particular region or related to section of society is called Private Bill. Mostly the Private Bills are introduced in House of Lords. It is often observed that in case of Private Bill the House of Lords plays a significant role. After the fully inquiry the Bill are approved by the Lords and sent to House of Commons.
8. **Role in Foreign Policies:** The House of Lords also plays significant role in the foreign policy of England. The House of Lords is free from partisan politics and mostly of its members are experienced persons. Therefore it can take quick decision in foreign policy which it greatly helps the government.
9. **Free From partisan Politics:** The House of Lords is free from partisan politics. The member is appointed on the basis of hereditary. They no need to contest in elections or no any pressure group or political party can influence them. Therefore, their functions are neutral which helps them to establish a transparence administrative system in England.
10. **Full and Free Discussion:** The House of Lords, as at present constituted, has its own advantages. The debates in the House of Lords are full and free which can and at times do stir public opinion, or they may ventilate true public grievance.

**Criticisms against the House of Lords:**

The following are some of the criticisms leveled against the House of Lords–

1. The members of the House of Lords are basically from the royal family who are not the representatives of the people.
2. The marginal attendance of the Lords shows their indifference to the political happenings of the country. Generally eighty to ninety peers participate in the decisions of the House of Lords.
3. The House of Lords is always more inclined to one party i.e. the Conservative party. It is this party that wants to keep the House of Lords unaltered and it is the House of Lords that wants to pass all the bills proposed by the Conservative party.
4. It represents the interest of the landed aristocracy. Property is the basis of the membership in the House of Lords. Some of them are related with the main industries of the country, some of them with real estate.
5. It basically looks after the interest of the rich people, not the common people.

**Conclusion**

The above are some of the major criticisms against the House of Lords. Yet it has been in existence for the last many centuries. People have accepted it even though it is not in tune with democracy. Like many other countries such as the United States of America, France or India where there is the provision for a second chamber, in Britain too, the House of Lords fulfils the place of the upper House of the Parliament.