

Political Parties (Easily find good answers within the notes)

Introduction:

Through this chapter, we are going to know the needs, functions, role and challenges to the political parties. In any democratic country, political parties do not only play a significant role in the *political system* of the country but also have a major role in the *growth of the economy* as well as the *social life* of the people. Let's begin finding out more about political parties through this lesson.

Meaning of Political Parties:

- A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government.
- Here are some more points about political parties which tell the characteristics :-
 - They agree on some **policies and programmes** for the society with a view to promote the collective good.
 - and also **try to persuade people** why their policies are better than others.
 - They **seek to implement these policies** by winning popular support through elections.
 - Parties **reflect fundamental political divisions** in a society through its ideologies. Since parties are the part of society, they involve partisanship.
- A political parties has three **components**:
 - The Leaders
 - The active members
 - The Followers.

1. What does a political party do?

Basically, political parties fill political offices and exercise political power. Parties do so by performing a series of **functions**:

Functions are as follows:

1. Parties contest elections.

- In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties.
- Parties select their candidates in different ways.
 - For example: in the USA, members and supporters of a party choose its candidates.
 - In India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.

2. They put forward different policies and programmes.

- Due to a large number of views (similar or different) and opinions, a party reduces a vast multitude of opinions into a few basic positions which it supports.
- A government is expected to base its policies on the line taken by the Ruling Party.

3. Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country.

4. **Parties form and run governments.** Since parties recruit leaders, train them and then make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.
5. Those parties that lose in the elections play the **role of opposition** to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticizing the government for its failures or wrong policies.
6. They raise and highlight issues to **shape public opinion**. For this, parties have lakhs of members and activists spread all over the country.
7. Parties provide people **access to government machinery and welfare schemes** implemented by governments.

2. Why do we need political parties?

In this modern world, most of the countries where there is democracy, have political parties too. They are very popular as one may not know anything about the constitution but chances are that they would know something about political parties. Why is it so, even though people often tend to blame parties for all that is wrong with our democracy? Why are political parties needed? Let's find out.

Necessity:

An Independent candidate can also contest elections so why political parties are needed to perform all the above given functions and **Why modern democracies cannot exist without political parties?**

- Because if every candidate in the elections will be independent then no one will be able to make any promises to the people about major policy changes.
- The government will be formed but its utility will remain uncertain.
- Elected representatives will be accountable to their constituency for what they do in the locality. But no one will be responsible for how the country will run.

The rise of political parties is directly linked to the emergence of **representative democracies**. This is what large and diverse countries like India need in order to bring various representatives together so that a responsible government could be formed. This is why parties are a necessary condition for a democracy.

3. How many political parties should we have?

In a democracy any group of citizens is free to form a political party due to which a large number of political parties can be seen in each country. It means there should be some to manage these many political parties. Provision for this also has been made. **Election commission** performs the task from registration to declaration of final result.

Election Commission:

- Every party in India has to register with the election Commission.
- The Election commission treats every party as equal to the others but it offers special facilities to **large and established parties**.
 - They are given a unique symbol and are called recognized party
 - It means there can be as many parties in a country but they all are not given

recognition even though they are registered with E.C.

- Usually only a handful of parties are effectively in the race to win elections and form the government.

Again a question arises:

How many major or effective parties are good for a democracy?

1. One party system: There are some countries where only one party is allowed to control and run the government. These are called one-party systems.
 - For Example: China, there is only communist Party that is allowed to rule. There is no such rule that people are not free to form political parties but the electoral system does not permit free competition for power.
2. Two party system: In some countries, power usually changes between two main parties as only these main parties have a serious chance of winning a majority of seats to form government.
 - For Example: United States of America and United Kingdom.
 - In the USA, two main parties are Democrats and Republicans.
3. Multi party system: If several parties compete for power, and more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power either on their own strength or in alliance with others, we call it a Multi party system.
 - *For Example:* In India, there are two main parties at national level; B.J.P and Congress, known by every single person.
 - There are three Alliances also.
 - [United Progressive Alliance. \(U.P.A\)](#) – main party Congress
 - [National Democratic Alliance \(N.D.A\)](#) – main party Bharatiya Janata Party.
 - [Left Front](#)

Is one party system good for a democratic country?

- We **cannot consider** a one-party system as a **good option** because the system must allow at least two parties to compete in elections and provide a fair chance for competing parties to come to power.

A Two-party system fulfills the above mentioned condition in the system. So, Can we consider this one the better option?

- Yes, It is a **better option however it is not for the large countries** like India where there is huge social and geographical diversity.

Is Multi-party system suitable for all the democratic countries?

- It is also **better from a one-party system**, since there are several parties to compete for power therefore, people will have a variety of options to choose from. However it has **demerits** too. This system often appears **messy and leads to political instability**.

Conclusion: Choice of parties is not in the hands of people because it is something which has evolved over a long time. Thus we can conclude that the party system that each country has today, depends on

the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections. This cannot be changed very quickly. Thus, each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances.

4. How many National and State level recognized parties are there in India?

As we know, India follows a federal system where parties are present in all units of the federation.

- National level
- State level
- District level

National Parties:

There are some wide parties, which are called national parties. These parties have their units in various states. But by and large, all these units follow the same policies, programmes and strategy that is decided at the national level.

However, not all parties that are registered in the Election Commission have recognition. Thus, to get recognized as a National party, the Election Commission has laid down detailed criteria of the proportion of votes and seats.

- A party that secures at least 6% of the total votes in [Lok Sabha elections](#) or Assembly elections in four states and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha is recognized as a national party.

There are Six recognized National parties in India (2023) :-

1. All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) (Removed)
2. **Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)**
3. **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**
4. Communist Party of India (CPI) (Removed)
5. **Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M)**
6. **Indian National Congress (INC)**
7. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) (Removed)
8. **National People's Party.**
9. **Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) [2023](#)**

State Parties:

Other than recognized National Parties, most of the major parties of the country are classified by the Election Commission as [State parties](#). These are commonly referred to as regional parties.

To get recognition as regional party, one must fulfill these below given criteria:

- A party that secures at least 6% of the total votes in an election to the legislative Assembly of a

state and wins at least two seats is recognized as a state party.

There are **57 recognized** state level party in India.

- **Note:** Communist Party of India (CPI), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) which were earlier recognized national party, are now in the list of recognized state level party.

5. Challenges to political parties:

Failures of political parties lead to dissatisfaction among people. Therefore, there is a need to find out the challenges to political parties and then overcome the same.

1. The first challenge is the [lack of internal democracy](#) within parties.
2. The second challenge of [dynastic succession](#) is related to the first one.
3. The third challenge is about the growing role of [money and muscle power](#) in parties.
4. The fourth challenge is that very often parties do not seem to offer a [meaningful choice](#) to the voters.

6. How can parties be reformed?

Suggestions to reform political parties and its leaders:

1. **Defection:** The Constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties as If they do so. They will lose the seat in the legislature.
 2. **Affidavit:** To reduce the money and muscle power, The Supreme Court made it mandatory for every candidate who contests elections to file an Affidavit giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him/her.
 3. **Income tax Returns:** The Election Commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organizational elections and file their income tax returns.
- Often, Some other Suggestions are also made to reform political parties:
 - A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of political parties.
 - It should be made mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one-third, to women candidates. Similarly, there should be a quota for women in the decision making bodies of the party.
 - Since parties need money during elections, the government should support their election expenses. Therefore, there should be state funding of elections. (expenses such as petrol, paper, telephone etc.)
 - There are two other ways in which political parties can be reformed:-
 - People can **put pressure** on political parties **through petitions**, publicity (media) and agitations.
 - Second way is to **join political parties** in order to bring reforms in the system. Since the quality of democracy depends on the degree of public participation.

Category

1. Class 10th

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