# **Features of Party System in India**

**The Party System in India may be characterised by the following features:**

#### 1. One Party Dominance System:

The party system operating in India does not conform to the two party systems of Britain and the USA. At the same time, it is basically different from the multi­party model of countries like France and Italy because one of India’s several parties has over­shadowed all others by having dominated the political scene ever since independence.

The Con­gress system emerged after the country had attained independence. From 1947 to 1967 and from 1971 to 1977 as well as from 1980 to 1989, this system was at the centre of Indian Politics, spanning three distinct stages in its post-independence development.

Thus, the Congress, which functioned as broad-based nationalist movement before independence, transformed itself into the dominant political party of the nation. That is why the observers of Indian politics like Morris Jones described the Indian Party system as a system of “one party dominance” While Rajni Kothari went to the extent of calling “One Party Dominance System” or “The Congress System”.

#### 2. A Multi-Party System:

Since the disintegration of the consensus based Congress system in 1967, the Indian Parties have fit the category of a multi-party system. India has as many as Seven National Parties and 48 State parties.

#### 3. Lack of Strong Opposition:

India lacks a strong well-organised opposition party. A strong opposition is essential for the success of parliamentary democracy. The main function of the opposition is to highlight the shortcomings of the government and to compel it to became responsive to the public opinion.

#### 4. Personality Cult:

Indian Party system values the role of the leader. When a party ceases to have a charismatic leader, it starts declining. After the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi Congress suffered adversely. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee’s death caused irreparable loss to the Jan Sangh. Similarly the Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and C. Rajagopalachari witnessed very fast decline of the socialist forces and Swatantra Party respectively.

#### 5. Lack of Ideological Commitment:

In India politics has become issue oriented rather than based on ideology. The existence of the National Front Government at the centre was a canid example of issue oriented politics which got support from the extreme left CPI (M) to the extreme right (BJP). Since 1971, elections have been won not on the basis of the inherent strength of the ideology of a political party but on the basis of issue of immediate concern to the electorate.

#### 6. Emergence of Regional Parties:

In India, several all-India parties have suffered in strength and regional parties have grown in number and influence. Thus, Tamil Nadu has become a stronghold of the DMK followed by the ADMK; the Punjab is dominated by the Akali Dal; Assam has been ruled by the AGP; Jammu & Kashmir is governed by the National Conference and Shiv Sena has emerged a powerful force in Maharashtra politics.

Some regional parties such as the DMK, Shiromani Akali Dal and National Conference emerged soon after the country’s independence. These parties articulate and seek to defend a regionally-based ethnic or religious-cultural identity.

#### 7. Factions within the Parties:

All political parties tend to be factionalised. In non-communist parties the faction leaders tend to be community, caste or religious leaders who have skillfully built-Patron-client relationship among the members of different castes or communities.

Such factional leaders view among themselves for political influence within the party and the government, entering into political alliances with one another in order to keep their political rivals out of power. Most of these factional alliances are non-ideological; they also tend to shift a good deal, thus keeping the parties in a state of flux.

#### 8. Communalism and Casteism:

Communalism is not a phenomenon confined only to India and other countries of Asia but it can be seen in many parts of the world like Germany, Sweden, and Denmark etc. What is peculiar about India is that even the so called secular persons and parties adopt an opportunist attitude towards communalism.

#### 9. The Use of Extra-Constitutional Means to Power:

Although electioneering and campaigning is an effort to capture a maximum number of seats in public offices are said to be the main functions of the parties, very few parties are able to make a respectable showing using only these legitimate methods. As a result political parties of all ideological persuasions frequently try to exploit political or social discontent to their advantage.

They do not hesitate to use such non- parliamentary means as civil disobedience, mass demonstrations, strikes and protest rallies to embarrass the party in power and some of these tactics may become violent.

#### 10. Politics of Defection and Anti-Defection Act:

Defection is the term used for opportunistic transfer of loyalties from one political party to another. When a legislator is elected on the ticket of one party, but later joins another party, for selfish reasons, without his voters’ consent, it is called defection.

The Anti-Defection Act, 1985 sought to stop defections, so that representatives elected on certain principles and an certain party tickets would not be allowed to betray the trust which was reposed in them by the electorate at the time of their elections.