

Ch 6 - Political Parties

1. What is a Political Party?

A) A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government. They agree on some policies and programmes for the society, with a view to promoting the collective good.

2. What are the characteristics of a political party?

- A) A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government.
- b) Once they are in power, they try to enact laws and start programmes that promote the well-being of all its citizens.
- c) Every party has like-minded individuals who agree that certain policies are better for the people than other policies.
- d) The parties try to persuade people that their policies are better than others.
- e) Parties reflect fundamental political divisions in society. They involve partisanship.
- f) Partisanship is a tendency to take a side and the inability to take a balanced view on an issue.
- g) A political party has three major components, the leaders, the active members and the followers.

3. "No party system is ideal for all countries and in all situations."

Justify the statement with five arguments.

- A) a) Parties are a necessary condition for a democracy. The rise of political parties is directly linked to the emergence of representative democracies.
- b) Party system is not something any country can choose. It evolves depending on the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its

history of politics and system of elections.

- c) Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances.
- d) For example, India has evolved a multi-party system, because of its social and geographical diversity which cannot be easily absorbed by two or three parties.
- d) Political parties make policies to promote collective good and there can be different views on what is good for all. Therefore no system is ideal for all countries and situations.

4. Describe the three components of a political party.

A Components of a political party are :

The leaders, active members and the followers.

- a) The leaders are recruited and trained by parties. They are made ministers to run the government. The big policy decisions are taken by the political parties executives that come from the political parties.
- b) Parties have lots of Members and activists spread over the country. Many of the pressure groups are the extensions of political parties among different sections of society. But since most of the members belong to a party, they go by the direction of the party leadership, irrespective of their personal opinion.
- c) The followers are the ordinary citizens, who believe in the policies of their respective party and give popular support through elections. Often the opinion of the followers crystallise on the lines parties take.

5. What is a multi-party system? Why has India adopted a multi-party system? Explain. 03

How has the multi-party system strengthened democracy in India?

- A a) Multi-party-system — In this system, the government is formed by various parties coming together in a coalition. When several parties in a multi-party system join hands for the purpose of contesting elections and winning power, it is called an alliance or a front.
- b) For example, in India there were three major alliances in the 2004 parliamentary elections — the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the Left Front. This system on one hand leads to political instability but at the same time allows for a variety of interests and opinions to enjoy (UPA) and the Left Front. This system on
- c) Political representation — Each country develops a party system that is suitable for its special circumstances. India has evolved as a multi-party system because its social and geographical diversity cannot be absorbed by two or three parties. Thus, such representation strengthens democracy. Multi-party systems facilitate representation of regional and geographical diversities. In India, several regional parties are in power at the state levels such as the DMK in Tamil Nadu, Akali Dal in Punjab and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

6. "Lack of internal democracy within parties is the major challenge to political parties all over the world." Analyse the statement.

- A a) Most political parties do not practise open and transparent procedures for their functioning like maintaining membership registers, holding organisational meetings or conducting internal elections regularly. Thus, ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information on the happenings in the party and have no means to influence the decisions.
- b) Also, there are very few chances for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party. Since one or, at the most, a few chances f

leaders exercise paramount powers in the party, those who disagree with the leadership find it difficult to continue in the party.

- c) Those who happen to be leaders are in a position to take undue advantage and favour people close to them or even their family members. And, in many parties, the top positions are invariably controlled by members of one family which is bad for democracy.

7. "Dynastic succession is one of the most serious challenges before the political parties." Analyse the Statement.

- A a) Most political parties do not practise open and transparent procedures for their functioning. So there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party.
- b) Those who happen to be the leaders are in a position of unfair advantage as they favour people close to them or even their family members. In many parties in India, we see a trend of dynastic succession.
- c) The top positions are always controlled by members of a particular family which is unfair to other members of the party, and bad for democracy. This is so because people who do not have adequate experience or popular support come to occupy positions of power.
- d) More than loyalty to party principles and policies, personal loyalty to the leader becomes more important. This tendency is seen all over the world, even in older democracies.

8. What is meant by a 'national political party'? State the conditions required to be a national political party.

- A National Political parties have their units in various states. By and large all these units follow the same policies, programmes and strategy that is decided at the national level.

Conditions required to be a national ^{political} party :

- A party that secures at least 6% of the total votes in general elections of Lok Sabha or assembly elections in four states.
 - A party that wins at least 4 seats in the Lok Sabha.
10. "Nearly every one of the state parties wants to get an opportunity to be a part of one or the other national level coalition." Support the statement with arguments.

- A
- The state parties ~~are~~ also referred to as regional parties are not necessarily regional in ideology. Some of these parties are all India parties that happen to have succeeded only in some states.
 - Over the last three decades, the number & and strength of these parties has expanded.
 - Before the general elections one national party was able to secure on its own a majority in Lok Sabha.
 - As a result, the national parties were compelled to form alliances with state parties.
 - Since 1996, nearly every one of the state parties got an opportunity to be a part of one or the other national level coalition government. This contributed to the strengthening of federalism and democracy.
 - Examples of state parties having national level political organisation with units in several states ~~are~~ are Samajwadi Party (SP), Rashtriya Janata Dal, Samata Party.

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11. Explain any five suggestions to reform political parties in India.

or

Suggest and explain any five effective measures to reform political parties

A Five suggestions made to reform the political parties:

- Law to regulate the internal affairs of political parties like maintaining a register of its members, to follow its own constitution, to have independent authority, to act as judge in case of party dispute, to hold open elections to the highest post.
- It should be mandatory for political parties to give one-third tickets to women candidates. Also there should be a quota for women on the decision-making bodies of the party.
- There should be state funding of elections. The government should give money to parties to support their election expenses in kind (petrol, paper, telephone, etc.) or in cash on the basis of votes secured by the party in the previous election.
- The candidate should be educated, so that he can solve and understand people's problems. His previous record should be cleared. He should be honest and there should be no criminal case against him.
- Citizens can reform politics if they take part directly and join political parties. People can put pressure on political parties through petitions, publicity in media, agitations, etc.

12. Explain the growing role of money and muscle power in political parties.

How do money and muscle power play an important role in elections?

- A
- Political parties need to face and overcome the growing challenge of Money and Muscle power during elections in order to remain effective instruments of democracy.
 - Since parties are focussed only on winning elections, they tend to use shortcut to win elections, for example, like booth-rigging, distribution of food, money, alcohol, etc. to poor voters to get their votes.

- c) Political parties tend to nominate those candidates who have or can raise lots of money.
- d) Rich people and companies who give funds to the parties tend to have influence on the policies and decisions of the party.
- e) These days, parties are supporting criminals who can win elections. This is a major cause of concern to the democrats all over the world who are worried about the increasing role of rich people and big companies in democratic politics.

13. Why do we need political parties? Explain.

or

Describe any five major functions performed by political parties.

- A To fill political offices and exercise political power, political parties are needed to perform a series of functions, which are the following :
- a) Parties contest elections - Elections are fought mainly among candidates put up by political parties. In India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.
 - b) Parties put forward different policies and programmes - Political parties in a democracy group together similar opinions, to provide a direction in which government policies can be formulated.
 - c) Parties make laws for a country - Laws are debated and passed in the legislature.
 - d) Parties that lose elections play the role of the opposition - Opposition parties voice their views by criticizing the government for its failure or wrong policies.
 - e) Parties shape public opinion - They raise and highlight issues and resolve people's problems. Many pressure groups are extensions of political parties.
 - f) Parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes - For an ordinary citizen it is easier to approach a local party leader than a government officer.