

## Chapter-6

### Political Parties

\* Political parties - 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 to promote public good.
- They try to persuade people why their policies are better than others.
- They seek to implement the policies by winning popular support through elections.
- Parties are about a part of society and thus involve partisanship.

\* Partisanship - A person who is strongly committed to a party, group or faction. It is marked by a tendency to take a side and inability to take a balanced view on an issue.

⇒ A political party has 3 components:

- (i) The leaders - They contest elections and, if they win, perform the administrative jobs.

(ii) The active members- They attend the party meetings and are close to party leaders.

(iii) The followers- The followers are the dedicated workers of the party. They work under the guidance of active members.

"Political parties are one of the most visible institutions in a democracy."  
— NCERT

### Functions of a political party-

⇒ The main functions of a political party are as follows:

- 1) Parties contest elections. In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties.
  - In some countries, such as USA, members and supporters of a party choose its candidates.
  - In other countries, such as India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.
- 2) Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them.
  - A party reduces a vast multitude of opinions



into a few basic positions which it supports.

- A govt. base its policies on the line taken by ruling party.

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

4> Parties form and runs government.

- Parties recruit leaders, train them and then make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.

5> The parties that lose in the elections play a the role of opposition to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticising govt. for its failures or wrong policies.

6> Parties shape public opinions. They raise and highlight issues.

- Many of the pressure groups are the extensions of political parties.

- Parties sometimes also launch movements for the resolution of problems faced by people.

7> Parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by governments.

\* Ruling party - Political party that runs government.

### Necessity -

- We need political parties because they perform all these functions.
- If there will not be a political party then there will not be any major policy change.
- The elected representative, if there is no political party, will only make change and develop his/her own locality.
- No one will be responsible for how the country will be run.

Example - Non-party based elections held in panchayats.

- That is the reason, the political parties are present in almost every democratic country.
- The rise of political parties is directly linked to the emergence of representative democracies.

\* Parties are a necessary condition for a democracy.



## How many political parties should we have?

- There are more than 750 registered national parties with Election Commission of India.

\* One-party system- The countries in which only one party is allowed to control and run the government, are known as one-party systems.

Example- In China, only Communist Party is allowed to rule.

- It is not a good option because this is not a democratic option. People are not provided a choice in this system.

\* Two-party systems- In some countries, power usually changes between two main parties. Other parties may exist and win a few seats, but only the two main parties have serious chances to win elections. Such a party system is called a two-party system.

Examples- USA and United Kingdom.

\* Multiparty 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, it is called a multiparty system.

Example- India.



- 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.

Example - In India, in 2004 Lok Sabha elections, there were 3 such major alliances - National Democratic Alliance (NDA), United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and Left Front.

- The multiparty system often appears very messy and leads to political instability.
- At the same time, this system allows a variety of interests and opinions to enjoy political representation.

Answer for this topic -

- Party system is not something any country can choose. It evolves over time, depending on the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections.
- Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances.

Example - India has evolved a multiparty system, it is because the social and geographical diversity in such a large country is not easily absorbed by even 2 or 3 parties.

⇒ No system is ideal for all countries and all



situations.

## National political parties -

⇒ Democracies that follow federal system has 2 kinds of parties.

(i) National Party - The parties which are country-wide and are elected for central government, are called national party.

(ii) State / Regional Party - It is a political party which takes care of regional concerns and state interests only.

- Every party in the country has to register with the Election Commission.

- ECI treats all parties equally, but it offers some special facilities to large and established parties.

(i) These parties are given a unique symbol - only the official candidates of that party can use that election symbol.

(ii) Parties that get this privilege and some other facilities are 'recognised' by ECI. That's why they are also called recognised political parties.

## Criteria for being a national party:-

- It should secure at least 6% votes of total votes in Lok Sabha elections or in Assembly elections in 4 states.
- And if it wins at least 4 seats in the Lok Sabha is recognised as a national party.

## Criteria for being a state party:-

- It should secure at least 6% votes in the elections to the legislative Assembly of a state.
- And also, if it wins 2 seats in legislative Assembly is recognised as a state party.

⇒ According to this classification, there were 7 national recognised parties in 2019 in our country.

## National parties of India

1) Indian National Congress (INC).

- Popularly known as Congress party.
- Founded in 1885.
- Ruling party at centre till 1977 and then from 1980 - 1989.
- It is a centrist party.



- Under the leadership of Pt. Nehru, it sought to build a modern secular democratic republic in India.
- By the ideological orientation, the party espouses secularism and welfare of weaker sections and minorities.
- INC supports new economic reforms but with a human face.
- Leader of UPA from 2004-2013.
- In 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it won 19.5% votes and 52 seats.

## 2) Communist party of India (CPI)-

- Formed in 1925.
- Believes in Marxism-Leninism, secularism and democracy.
- Opposed to the forces of sessionism and communalism.
- Became weak after split in 1964.
- Significant presence in Kerala, WB, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Tamil Nadu.
- Advocates the coming together of all left parties to build a strong left front.

### 3) Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M) -

- Founded in 1964 by split from CPI.
- Believes in Marxism-Leninism. Supports socialism, secularism and democracy.
- Opposes imperialism and communalism.
- Accepts democratic elections as a useful and helpful means for securing the socio-economic justice in India.
- Present in Tripura, Kerala, WB, especially among peasants, workers, farmers, agricultural labourers.
- Critical of new eco. policies that allow free flow of foreign capital in India.
- Was in power in WB without a break for 34 years.

### 4) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -

- Founded in 1980, by reviving Bharatiya Jana Sangh, formed by Syama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951.
- Wants to build a strong modern India by drawing inspirations from India's ancient culture and values, and Deendayal Upadhyaya's ideas of integral humanism and Antyodaya.



- Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_
- Cultural nationalism (Hindutva) is an imp. element.
  - Wants a full territorial and political integration of J and K with India.
  - Wants a ban on religious conversions.
  - Came to power in 1998 as leader of NDA.
  - Emerged as largest party with 303 members in 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

#### 5) Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)-

- Formed in 1984 under leadership of Kanshi Ram.
- Seeks to represent and secure power for the bahujan samaj which includes dalits, adivasis, OBCs and religious minorities.
- Draws inspiration from the ideas of Sahu Maharaj, Mahatma Phule, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker and BR Ambedkar.
- Present in UP and neighbouring states like MP, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Punjab.

#### 6) Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)-

- Formed in 1999 by a split from INC.

- Espouses democracy, Gandhian secularism, equity, social justice and federalism.
- Wants that leaders should be the natural born citizens of country (India).
- Coalition partner with INC in Maharashtra.
- Since 2004, a member of UPA.

#### 7) All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) -

- Launched on 1 January 1998 under leadership of Mamata Banerjee. Recognised as national party in 2016.
- Party's symbol - Flowers and grass.
- Committed to secularism and federalism.
- It has been in power in West Bengal since 2011.
- Also present in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura.
- 4<sup>th</sup> largest party in Lok Sabha.



## Challenges to political parties-

- ⇒ All over the world, people express strong dissatisfaction with the failure of political parties to perform their functions well. The main challenges faced by political parties are:
- 1) Lack of internal democracy. The power is concentrated in one or few leaders at the top.
  - 2) The second challenge is the dynastic succession. The top positions in a party is acquired by the relatives and close friends of the leaders.
  - 3) Growing role of money and muscle power in parties, especially during elections. Parties give chance to only those who can spend lots of money or criminals.
  - 4) Very often, parties do not offer a meaningful choice to the voters. Many political parties have very commonness and have only significant difference, such as Labour Party and Conservative Party in Britain.

## State Parties

- These are commonly known as regional parties.
- Some of these parties are all India parties that happen to have succeeded in some states. Parties like Samajwadi party and Rashtriya Janata Dal have national level political organization with units in several states.
- Some state parties like Biju Janata Dal, Sikkim Democratic front and Mizo National front are only upto their states.
- In 2014, BJP became the first ~~ex~~ party to win on its own majority in Lok Sabha elections.
- Over the past 3 decades, the no. of these parties has increased which made the parliament of India more diverse.
- This has strengthened the federalism and democracy in our country.



## How can parties be reformed?

⇒ The efforts taken to reform political parties and its leaders are as follows:

- The Constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties.

This was done because elected members were indulging in defection.

Drawback ⇒ This has made any dissent more difficult. MPs and MLAs have to accept whatever the leaders decide.

- Supreme court made it mandatory for every candidate who contest elections to file an affidavit giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him/her.

Drawback ⇒ There is no system to check if the info. given by the candidates is true.

- The Election Commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organisational elections and file their income tax returns.

⇒ The suggestions to reform political parties are:

- 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.
- There should be state funding of elections. This support could be given in kind (petrol, paper, telephone, etc.) or in the form of cash.
- People can put pressure on political parties. This can be done through petitions, publicity and agitations.
- Political parties can improve if those who want this, join political parties.

\* Defection ⇒ Changing party allegiance from the party on which a person got elected to a different party.

\* Affidavit ⇒ A signed document submitted to an officer, where a person makes a sworn statement regarding her personal information.