

3. Political Parties

In the last chapter we studied the working of constitution and election procedure. Political parties are a link that connects common people, democracy, representation and elections. Whatever we read or hear about politics is related to political parties. Political parties exist in all democratic systems. In fact political parties compete with each other only in a democracy. In this chapter we will study the political party system in India.

In your school and the surroundings you must have seen some groups, institutions, organisations working to achieve some objective. Some organisations take initiative in resolving social problems. You may have read about the various movements and their work. Just as there are active groups, institutions and movements, similarly there are political parties who contest elections. Political parties are also a kind of social organisations, but there is a difference between political parties and other institutions and organisations in society. The difference is in the goals and style of working of political parties and other organisations. On this background, we can say that when people form organisations with the objective of achieving political power and participate in the electoral process, such organisations are called political parties. Political parties thus can be described as a group of people who aim to contest elections, win elections and get power and establish the government of their party.

Following are some important

characteristics of political parties :

To be in power : Achieving power through elections is the main objective of political parties. Thus different political parties compete with each other to get power. There is nothing wrong in this competition, but the competition should be fair.

To pursue an ideology : Every political party has some policies and world views. Parties have a particular stand about social issues. These together make party ideology. The people who consider any specific party ideology as acceptable support that political party. Social support received by a political party is called the 'mass base' of political party. In modern days ideologies of all political parties appear to be similar hence it has become difficult to differentiate between the parties on the basis of ideologies.

To have a Party Agenda : Political parties prepare their party's agenda on the basis of party ideology. They implement the agenda after they get political power. Even if they do not get political power, political parties try to get support of people on the basis of this agenda.

To Establish a Government : Political parties establish the government and govern the nation. The political party which gets majority in elections forms the government. The parties which do not get majority act as opposition parties.

To act as a link between the Government and the people : Political parties work as a link between the

Government and the people. Political parties communicate the demands and complaints of the people to the government. The government tries to get support of the people for its policies and programmes through political parties.

What do you understand by the following news in newspapers? Explain in brief

- Opposition parties held a meeting in Mumbai to resist the Ruling party. Will take up the issue of farmers?
- Ruling party organised 'Samvad Yatra' in rural areas.

Imagine you are an opposition party leader and you have observed that the ruling party has not done good work in the field of health. What will you do as a leader of opposition?

Think and write.

Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash Narayan put forth the idea of partyless democracy.

What has to be done to bring such democracy in modern times?

Changing nature of political party system in India :

(1) The Congress was a strong political party in the post-independence period. Congress had a majority at Centre and in most of the States. Indian politics was controlled by the Congress Party. This era was described as Era of 'Single dominant party system'.

(2) The non-Congress parties came together and challenged 'Single dominant party system' in 1977.

(3) After the 1989 Lok Sabha Elections, the system of one party emerging as dominant party came to an end. Since then different parties began to come together to form coalition governments. Both the Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress Party made an experiment of establishing coalition governments. The belief that coalition government brings instability was proved wrong by the political party system in our country. In fact, the coalition government system as stabilised in India.



Do you know?

- If power remains with one political party for a long period and if no other political parties are influential – the party system is called as one party system
- In politics, when two political parties are influential and if political parties enjoy power alternatively, the party system is called two party system
- When many political parties compete for political power and more or less they are equally influential, the party system is called multi-party system.



Do this.

Find out the member parties of the following leading coalitions.

- (1) National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
- (2) United Progressive Alliance (UPA)

Also understand

The national parties and the regional parties.

To get recognition as a national party, the Election Commission has prescribed the following conditions:

- (a) A political party should secure minimum 6% of the valid votes in four or more States in the earlier Loksabha or State Assembly elections and minimum 4 members should be elected in the Loksabha from any state or states in the earlier elections.

Or

- (b) The candidates of a party should be elected from minimum 2% constituencies out of total Loksabha constituencies and from minimum 3 states.

To get recognition as a regional party, the Election Commission has prescribed the following conditions :

- (a) A political party should secure minimum 6% of the valid votes in the earlier Loksabha or State Assembly elections and minimum 2 members should be elected in the Vidhan Sabha (State Assembly).

Or

- (b) A political party should secure minimum 3% of seats out of total seats of Vidhansabha – (State Assembly) or minimum 3 seats.

Let us know about some important political parties in India.

National Parties

(Reference : Election Commission of India, Notification No.56/201/PPS-111, dated 13 December 2016)

(1) Indian National Congress : The Indian National Congress was established in 1885. At the time of its establishment, Congress was an all comprehensive movement working for national independence. Groups with different ideologies had come together in this nationalist movement.



After independence the Congress emerged as the most dominant political party. The party, from the beginning, follows the policy of

secularism, all round development, equal rights and welfare for minorities and disadvantaged sections of the society. Accordingly, Congress has organised various programmes to achieve those objectives. The party believes in democratic socialism, social equality and international peace.

(2) Communist Party of India : This party based on the communist ideology was established in 1925. It is an old party in India. This party works for the



welfare of labourers and workers. The party opposes capitalism. The party leadership developed differences in 1962 over the issue of whether Communist Party of India should accept the leadership of Communist China or the Soviet Union. This led to the split in Communist Party of India and a separate party – Communist Party of India (Marxist) was formed.

(3) Bharatiya Janata Party :

Bharatiya Janata Party is an important party at the national level. Bharatiya Jan Sangh was established in 1951. This party was merged with Janata Party that was established in 1977. The Janata Party could not survive. There was a split in the party and Bharatiya Jan Sangh –the component party of Janata Party established a new party in 1980 –Bharatiya Janata Party. The party stands for the protection of Indian culture and traditions. The party gives importance to economic reforms.

(4) Communist Party of India (Marxist) : This party proclaims socialism, secularism and democracy. The party opposes imperialism. Party's policy is to protect the interests of workers, farmers and landless labourers.



(5) Bahujan Samaj Party : Bahujan Samaj Party professes the Socialist ideology. In 1984 the party was established with the objective of protecting the interest of the 'majority'. Scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, religious minorities and other backward classes together constitute a majority. The party aims to give power in the hands of the 'majority'.

(6) Nationalist Congress Party : In 1999, there was a split in the Congress Party and Nationalist Congress Party was



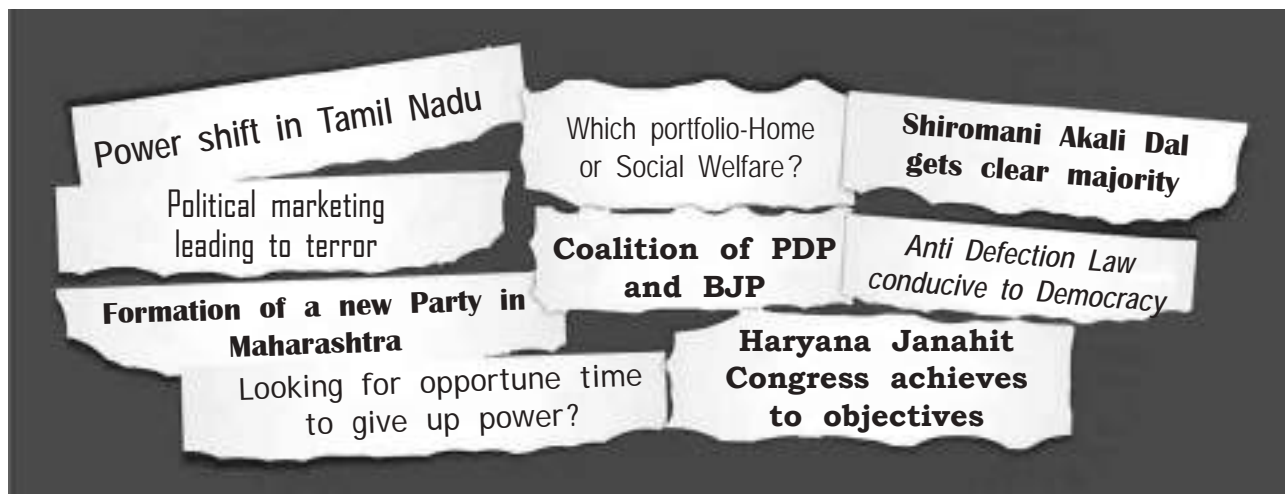
established. The party believes in the values of democracy, equality and secularism. The party was in power in Maharashtra from 1999 to 2014 in coalition with the Congress Party. Nationalist Congress Party for a long period was also a part of coalition government led by Congress at Centre from 2004 to 2014.

(7) Trinamool Congress : All India Trinamool Congress Party was established in 1998. Election Commission gave the party recognition as national party in 2016. The party supports democracy, secularism and protection of interests of weaker sections of the society.



Number of seats secured by National parties in Lok Sabha elections of 2009 and 2014.

National Parties	Number of Seats	
	2009	2014
Indian National Congress	206	44
Communist Party of India	04	01
Bharatiya Janata Party	116	282
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	16	09
Bahujan Samaj Party	21	–
Nationalist Congress Party	09	06



You must be reading different news in newspapers. Through these news items we get information about various parties existing in different states of India.

- Do these parties function only at State level?
- Some state leaders are influential at national level, while some have influence only at state level. Why is it so?

With the help of such questions we will try to get information about various regional parties in India. We will study some of the regional parties from different parts of India.

In India we find people speaking different languages and having different traditions and culture. They belong to different parts of India. We see different regions have their own language. You have already studied different geographical regions in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra there exists geographical and cultural diversity. Maharashtra is different from Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

The feeling of affinity developed about our language and region gradually turns into the identity consciousness and finally gives rise to regionalism. People start thinking primarily about the interest

and development of their own region. They start feeling proud of their language, literature, traditions, history of social reforms, educational and cultural movements and this gives rise to the development of linguistic identity. Regional identity develops from the consciousness about the development of region and the feeling that people belonging to the region should have claim over resources and employment opportunities.

When linguistic, regional, cultural and other identities get connected, regional consciousness emerges as a stronger feeling. Sometimes it gives rise to independent political parties or pressure groups or movements. All such developments aim at the protection of the interests of region.

Regional Parties

Regional parties are those groups in the region who have a proud feeling about the different identity of their region and who compete to get political power with the objective of regional development. The influence of regional parties is limited to a particular region. Though they play a significant role at the regional level, they influence national politics as well. Regional parties give preference to the

resolution of regional problems. For the development of the region they demand more autonomy and authority. Though they cooperate with federal government, they try to protect their autonomy.

Regional parties make several demands such as regional problems should be resolved at regional level; political power should be in the hands of the people from region and residents of the region should get preference in administration and jobs.

Changing nature of regional parties in India : Regional parties came into existence in India in the post independent period. However, over the years their nature and role has changed significantly.

(1) Initially regional identities gave rise to the separatist movements. The demands for independent Khalistan, Dravidistan were made with the objective of parting from the Indian federation and exist as an independent State. Regional parties from Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Jammu and Kashmir have made such demands.

(2) The demands of regional parties gradually changed. Instead of an independent state, they started demanding

more autonomy. This was the second stage in the development of regional parties. This stage began after 1990.

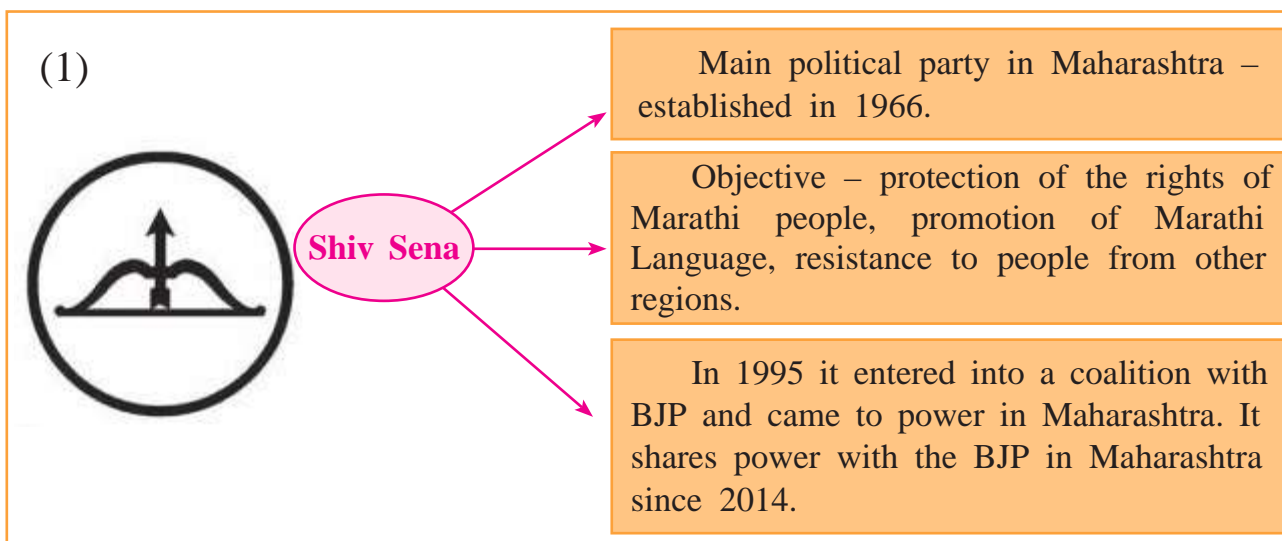
(3) The regional parties demanded that for the development of the region, people from region should get power at State and national level. For example, Shiv Sena, Telugu Desam, etc.

(4) The development of regional parties in North East shows a different trend. They gave up their demand of separatism and have started demanding autonomy. The regional parties from North East are now entering in mainstream of national politics.

In short we can say that role of regional parties in India has passed through various phases - from separatism to autonomy and now towards entry into mainstream national politics. Coalition politics is one of the consequence of their increasing influence in national politics.

In India we have many regional parties. It is not possible to know about all such parties in this chapter. We will study some parties as representative of India's East, West, North and South regions.

Some Major Regional Parties as shown below



(2)



**Shiromani
Akali
Dal**

Established in 1920- a prominent regional party in Punjab

Objective of cultivating religious and regional identity

Assumes power in Punjab for many years.

(3)

**Jammu
and
Kashmir
National
Conference**

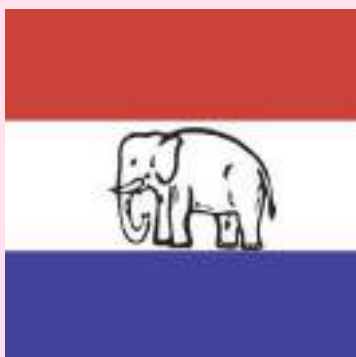
Main regional party in Kashmir - established in 1932.

Protect the interests of Kashmiri people and protection of autonomous status.



(4)

Assam Gan Parishad



Assam agreement was signed in 1985.

Resolve the problems of displaced people. Protect the unique cultural, linguistic and social identity of Assam, economic development of Assam.

Assumes power in Assam for many years.

(5)

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam



Justice Party - a non Brahmin movement in 1920 was transformed into Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam – a political party. In 1944, Justice party came to be known as Dravida Kazhagam. In 1944, a group separated from this party and established another party-Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Another group separated from this party in 1972 and established All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

Protection of Tamil Identity, member of Coalition Government at the Centre for some years.

The party has support of voters from all sections of society. It was in power for a long period and implemented many policies.

In India we have many regional parties in every state that have influenced the state politics. The following chart

shows the performance of regional parties in Maharashtra in the elections of 2009 and 2014.

Regional Parties in Maharashtra (Representation in Vidhan Sabha)

Name of Party	Seats won	
	Election Year 2009	Election Year 2014
Shiv Sena	44	63
Maharashtra Navnirman Sena	13	01
Peasants and Workers Party	04	03
Republican Party of India-Bahujan Mahasangh	01	01
Republican Party of India	-	-
Samajwadi Party	04	01

Name of Party	Seats won	
	Election Year 2009	Election Year 2014
Bahujan Vikas Aghadi	02	03
Rashtriya Samaj Paksha	01	01
All India Majlis-E-Ittehadulla Musalmeen	*	02
Janasurajya Shakti	02	-
Loksangram	01	-
Swabhimani Party	01	-

(* This party did not exist in 2009.)



Can you tell?

Every State in India has regional parties. It is not possible to take review of all those parties. Find out information about other regional parties with the help of a map of India.

In this chapter we took a review of national and regional political parties in India. In the next chapter we will try to understand the importance of social movements in our life.



Exercise

1. Choose the correct option from the given options and complete the sentences.

- (1) When people come together and participate in electoral process, to acquire political power, such organisations are called
(a) Government
(b) Society
(c) Political parties
(d) Social organisations
- (2) National Conference is a party in State.
(a) Orissa (b) Assam
(c) Bihar (d) Jammu and Kashmir
- (3) Justice Party – a non-Brahmin movement was transformed into Political Party.
(a) Assam Gan Parishad
(b) Shivsena
(c) Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam
(d) Jammu and Kashmir National Conference

2. State whether following statements are true or false. Give reasons for your answer.

- (1) Political parties act as a link between government and people.
- (2) Political parties are social organisations.
- (3) Coalition politics leads to instability.
- (4) Shiromani Akali Dal is a national party.

3. Explain the following concepts.

- (1) Regionalism
- (2) National Parties

5. Answer the following questions in brief.

- (1) What are the major characteristics of political parties?
- (2) What changes have taken place in the nature of political parties in India?

Project

- (1) In a map of Maharashtra, point out the Lok Sabha constituency that includes the names of your parents.
- (2) In a map of India, point out the places where national political parties have their influence.

