

## Chapter - 6 Political Parties

What is a political party?

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 or programmes for the society with a view to promote collective goods. They try to persuade people why their policies are better than others and seek to implement these policies by winning election.

What is a partisan?

A partisan is a person who is strongly committed to a party, group or faction.

Partisanship is marked by a tendency to take a side and inability to take a balanced view on an issue.

Functions of a political party →

To contest elections:

In most democracies elections are fought among the candidates. Candidates <sup>are</sup> put up by political parties and these candidates are usually chosen by top party leaders.

To put forward various policies and programmes:

Different people have different views on various matters and issues but different opinions can't

form a sound delay or delays decision making. Hence a large no. of similar opinions have to be grouped together.

### 3) Making laws:

Laws are debated and passed in the legislature where most members belong to a political party and are governed by party leader and the law is not based on a personal opinion.

### 4) Form and run government:

Policy decisions are taken by policy political executives. Political parties recruit leaders, train them and make them minister to run the government.

### 5) Role of opposition:

Those parties that lose in elections play the role of opposition to the parties in power by voicing different views and criticising government for its failure or wrong policies. Opposition parties also mobilise opposition to the govt.

### 6) Shape public opinion:

Party members and activists spread all over the country, usually the extensions of different sections of society. They sometimes also launch movements for the resolution of problems faced by people.

### 7) Access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by the govt:

For an ordinary citizen it is easy to approach a local party leader than a govt. officer. That is why they feel close to parties even when they do not fully trust them.

do we need a political party?

If there are no political parties then every vote in the elections will be independent although elected representatives would be accountable to their constituency but no one will be responsible for the country would run, for eg: usually there is no party at the village level elections but the village gets into more than one faction each of which announces a candidate just as a political party does. As the societies grow and complex they need some agencies to gather views on different issues and represent these to govt., political parties are needed to do it. They support the govt. make policies, justify or oppose them.

What are one party systems?

In some countries, only one party is allowed to control and run the govt. These are called one-party systems.

China - Communist Party.

People are free to form parties but it does not happen because the electoral systems doesn't allow competition for power.

What is two-party system?

In some countries, power usually changes between two main parties i.e. only two parties have a serious chance of winning elections such a party system is called two-party system. Eg: USA, UK

What is multi-party systems?

Several parties compete for power and more than one party have a reasonable chance of coming to power either on their own ~~own~~ strength or in alliance with others. We call it a multi-party. Thus, India we have multi party system.

What is an alliance or front?

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.

e.g: In India in 2004 there were three major alliances,

↳ The National Democratic Alliance

↳ The United Progressive Alliance

↳ The Left Front.

Multi party system appears to be messy and lead to political instability but at the same time it allows a variety of interest and opinions to enjoy political representation.

What are recognised political party?

Parties that get a unique symbol that its candidate can use for the purpose of election and are given certain privileges and other special facilities recognised by the election commission are called recognised political parties.

9) what are state parties?

A party that secures atleast 6% of the total votes in an election and wins atleast two seats in legislative assembly is recognised as a state party.

10) what is national party?

A party that secures atleast 6% of total votes in the lok sabha elections or assembly elections in four states and wins atleast four seats in the lok sabha is known as national party.

11) what are the challenges to current political parties.

a) lack of internal democracy:-

i) Parties don't keep membership, registration, do not hold organisational meeting and conduct internal elections regularly

ii) Ordinary members don't get sufficient information and a few leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of party.

In case of dynastic succession political parties don't practise open and transparent procedures for their functioning. Here an ordinary worker can't rise to the top of the party.

c) Role of money and muscle power:-

Parties use short-cut to win elections and ~~not~~ nominate those candidate who can raise lots of money. In some cases criminals are supported by parties who can win election.

d) Parties fail to provide meaningful choice to the voters.

There is a tendency in political parties towards the concentration of power in one or more leaders at the top.

In recent years, there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in the house.

They agree on more fundamental aspects and differ only in details on how policies are to be framed. Sometimes, people can't even elect different leaders. The same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another party.

How can political parties be reformed?

One of the recent efforts and suggestions are as follows. The constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs changing parties. This was done because many representatives were <sup>inducting in</sup> <sup>→</sup> <sup>election</sup> in order to become minister or for cash rewards. Now the rules say that any MLA or MP changes party, he/she would lose <sup>his/her</sup> seat in the legislature.

Now it is mandatory, for every candidate who contests elections to file an affidavit giving details of property and criminal cases pending against him. This will reduce the power of money and muscle.

The election commission has made it compulsory for parties to hold their organisational elections and file their income tax returns.

Fourth coming suggestion →

A law should be made to regulate internal affairs of the political parties and it should be made compulsory for them to maintain a register of the members, follow its own constitution, have an independent authority etc.

It should be made compulsory to give a minimum no. of tickets to women candidates.

There should be a state funding of elections so that each party is given a fair chance of winning elections even those with less resources.

<sup>Once</sup> One's people can put pressure on political parties, this can be done through petitions, publicity and agitation

If political parties feel that they would lose public support by not taking reforms they would become more serious about reforms. Political parties can improve if those who want this political parties