

## NATURE AND OBJECTIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

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### Abstract:

*Political parties perform a number of functions in a political entity. Chief among these functions is that of representation. In modern liberal democratic theory the electorate votes for people to represent them. Most times the platform for election is provided by political parties. India has a multi-party system, where political parties are classified as national, state or regional level parties. The status of party is accorded by the Election Commission of India, and the same is reviewed occasionally. All parties are registered with the Election Commission. Despite the large number of political parties operating in India, very few are able to make their presence felt at the national level except when it comes to alliances. The natural reason for this is that it takes a long time for any party to evolve from its regional moorings and have its ideology accepted by a large enough segment of the population. The table below lists political parties that boast of a pan-India presence. These have been listed in alphabetical order, and not necessarily in the order of their influence.*

### Introduction

In a modern democratic political system of India, with governments based on Parliamentary model, political parties are central to the working of the political system. Political parties in Indian Democracy grow up to be the spokesman of organized interests. Thus, a Political party system in India is an organization of likeminded people based together either to preserve and promote group interests or to promote a particular ideology. Usually every party seeks to promote some particular interest and ideology. The political party constantly seeks to capture governmental powers to secure its ends. In a democracy, the party gets into power through elections.

In a Parliamentary system such of India, the political party winning the majority of seats in the Lower House of the Parliament forms the Government, while the Party or Parties failing to get the majority constitutes the opposition. Thus the Parliamentary government is always a Party government. It may be the government of a single party or it may be the government of a coalition of parties. The existence of different political parties has many advantages. The citizens of our country can experiment with the different parties alternately. They give chance to one party with a set of programs. They can see whether these political parties are doing good work for the country. After sometimes they try another party with another set of programs and see how far these are superior to their predecessors.

The nature of political party system in India was characterized by Morris Jhones as a dominant one party system. It means that India basically has a multi-party system but one among the many parties is dominant party and monopolizes governmental power. Since independence up to the 4th general election in 1947 this was precisely the picture. The Congress party was in power during all the twenty years from 1947-67 both at the centre and in the states with a brief exception in Kerala in 1958. The 1967 elections saw the fall of the Congress monopoly in several states where unstable coalitions were established. The sixth General Election in 1977 witnessed the fall of the Congress at the centre. The Janata

Government was established. But the Janata experiment soon failed. For Janata was in reality an unstable coalition. The Congress gained back its power in 1980. Then there was a B.J.P. coalition government at the centre and in few states. Then, Congress remained in power from 2004 to 2014. In the election of 2014, B.J.P got the majority and formed the central Government under the leadership of Shri Narendra Modi.

On the basis of their influence and aspirations, parties in India fall into two categories:

- All India political parties and
- Regional political parties.

Thus the Congress (I) or the Jananta Dal or the Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P) are truly All India parties having some sort of influence throughout India and having All India aspirations.

There are some other political parties which are professedly All India parties but their influence is limited to particular regions. They may be classed as regional parties with All India aspirations. The Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India, the Forward Block, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (R.S.P), Trinamool Congress etc. fall into this category. The influence of the C.P.I. (M) for example is concentrated in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura.

The regional political parties are those which are frankly regional in their aspirations emphasizing their ethnic or linguistic identities. The D.M.K. or the A.I.A.D.M.K. in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desham in Andhra, and the A.G.P. in Assam or the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir fall into this category.

On the basis of ideology, there is existence of various types of political parties in India such as conservative, liberal democratic and revolutionary parties.

### **MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTY**

**Political parties** are indispensable for the working of modern democratic governments. The importance of Political parties lies in the fact that democracies cannot function without the existence of political parties.

In the absence of organized political parties one just cannot think of the working of representative government. In the light of the analysis of the functions of political parties by Merriam and Munro they may be discussed as follows.

**1. It makes the working of parliamentary government possible.** A parliament consists of the representatives of the people. The political parties organize these representatives on party lines. The electorate chooses their representatives on the basis of their party affiliation. The party which gets the majority of votes forms the government and runs the state and the other parties in the legislature constitute the opposition and try to find fault with the government,

thus making it more responsible. In the absence of political parties, the elected representatives may work at cross purposes just making the formation of a government or opposition an impossibility.

**2. Political Parties formulate public policies.** Each political party fights the election to achieve its objectives incorporated in their political manifesto. Soon after the election the majority party forming the government seeks to formulate its policies of administration on the basis of promises made in the election manifesto. These policies are made keeping in mind the interest of general public. The most important objective behind most policies remains the betterment of general condition. Other than this, they make policies on national security, internal law and order, etc. Besides, each party has its own ideology. It is assured that the majority party gets the mandate of the electorate to implement its own political programme.

**3. Political parties educate Public opinion.** Parties in any system of government educate, formulate and organize public opinion. They also help in the growth of the level of political consciousness of common citizens, who otherwise have no time to peruse and study issues of the state. The political parties in their effort to come closer to the people organize public rallies, meetings, press conferences on important issues and make their views clear. The common people is made aware of the economic, social, and political condition of the country. The general public is made aware of their voting rights. This provides the common people with an opportunity to analyze the pros and cons of various important issues. This process leads to organize and formulate public opinion on important issues. The common people who otherwise have no time to devote to politics immensely benefit by these meetings, etc. and understand different aspects of the basic issues involved in administration.

**4. Political parties provide political stability.** The political parties in more than one way unite, simplify and stabilized the political process of the country. The destabilizing forces of localism, regionalism, section, interests and geographical situations are tackled by political parties by making these parts of their party ideology thus pacifying the disintegrating forces and inducing cohesion. The political parties mainly perform the functions of 'aggregation of interests'. Besides the political parties in a representative democracy play a great role in maintaining the stability by performing their roles in the legislature. The majority party forms the government and the other small parties in the opposition.

The party in power has to conduct itself very responsibly. The opposition party keeps a close eye on the working of the ruling party. Because any unwise move on their part would throw it off the power and help the opposition (parties) to take over the reins of administration. Opposition not merely criticizes the government; it also provides an alternative program and alternative government in the eventuality of any crisis in the government. As such it contributes to the stability of the government. Hence, healthy opposition is very important for the success of democracy.

**5. It helps in the recruitment of leaders:** The essential function of any party is to recruit men of integrity, letters, action, leadership to its fold as members and prepare them for election in future. Because it is these members of party who propagate the party ideologies, discuss the burning issues and hold meetings and press conferences to mobilize public

support. It is these leaders again who contest in the election and form government if elected to power. Such leaders being drawn from public life are expected to understand expectations of the common people and formulate public policies accordingly. Parties always get popularity and recognition through their leaders only.

### **Growth of Party System in India**

From a triumphant national movement, the Indian National Congress became a dominant political party. Other parties and groups emerged later. For example, The Muslim League in 1906, the All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1916 and the Communist party in 1925.

For over six decades (1875-1947), under the shadow of the British Raj, the growth and role of the Indian party system was conditioned by the communalization of politics which fragmented national unity, divided the people on caste and community lines disrupting the development of a secular party system in India. Therefore, when India became independent, our party system was in disarray. After the adoption of a democratic Constitution (in 1950), a new and different party system emerged in the wake of the first General election based on the universal adult franchise in 1952.

In the Republic India, the party system is a part of our larger political system. It is a product not only of its political environment but also of its history, culture, geography and economy. Many aspects of the Indian political system have a bearing on the nature of our party system. These aspects include the character of the State, the declared national goals, the diversities of India's regional cultures and compulsions of social change and economic development.

### **The democratic India:**

- maintains an open society,
- promotes secular politics,
- respects free media,
- follows the pattern of separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary and
- adheres to the principle of rule of law.

It is also the most stable and evolving democratic federal polity among the comity of the newly liberated countries of the world.

### **NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS**

In this background, three factors are important:

1. National unity and political integration, national socio-economic development and national defense and security. This characteristic has facilitated the emergence of the Congress as the dominant party in the Indian political system after independence;

2. The Indian polity has never been ideologically polarized. India is a classic example of depolarized polity. This aspect of Indian political culture has provided the frame-work for the growth of the multi-party situation in India and

3. The regions in India are sub-national units. Naturally, the rise and persistence of regional demands has resulted in the emergence and popularity of the regional parties.

As a consequence of these three factors, the Indian party system has exhibited its two main features:

1. One party dominance, within the framework of the multi-party situation in the Centre, and
2. A multi-party system in some States run by a combination of regional parties, or coalition of national and regional parties.

It is true that the party system is the life breadth of the successful working of Indian Parliamentary democratic system.

**Conclusion:** These are some of the functions of political parties which make them significant in modern democracy. Educated people can judge the working of political parties in a more rational manner. They are less likely to get trapped with false promises. If the voters are uneducated, political parties may mislead them to choose the wrong candidate. The parties behave responsibly in states where the people in general are well educated and politically conscious. This is evident from the working of political parties in western countries, where the political culture is easily discernible than the non-European countries.

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