**Democratic Politics**

**Chapter – 6**

**Political Parties**

**1. What is a Political Party ?**

Ans. A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in government. They agree on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promote the collective good. They seek to implement these policies by winning popular support through elections.

The three components of a political party are the leaders, active members and followers.

**2. Who is partisan ?**

Ans. 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.

**3. State the various functions political parties perform in a democracy.**

Ans. The political parties performs a series of functions:

1. **Contest Elections:**

* In most democracies elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties.
* Parties select their candidates in different ways. Example, in USA members and supporters choose candidates of a party. But in India, the candidates are chosen by the top party leaders

1. **Parties put forward different policies & programmes and the voters choose from them:**

* Voters may have different opinions and views on what policies are suitable for the society.
* A party reduces a vast multitude of opinions into a few which it supports.
* A govt. is expected to base its policies on the line taken by ruling party.

1. **In making laws:**

Formally laws are debated and passed in legislature. But since most of the members belong to a party, they go by the direction of party leadership instead of personal opinions.

1. **Form & run government:**

Big policy decisions are made by political executives that come from political parties. Parties recruit leaders, train them and make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.

1. **Role of opposition:**

The parties that lose elections play the role of opposition to parties in power, by voicing different views and criticizing governments for its failure or wrong policies.

1. **Shape public opinion:**

They raise and highlight issues. Parties have lakhs of members and activists spread all over the country. Some of the pressure groups are also part of political parties. They understand the problems faced by people or public.

1. **Access to govt. machinery and welfare scheme:**

For a normal person it is more easy to approach local party leader than a govt. officer. These leaders attend to peoples need. That is why people feel more close to parties even though they don’t fully trust them.

**4. What are the characteristics of political party?**

1. **Goal Oriented**:

Parties are goal oriented and they put forward their programme in their manifesto

1. **Promote national interest:**

They should place the national interest before their party interest.

1. **Common programmes:**

Its members believe in some common programme to which they have already agreed.

1. **Common aim of getting power:**

Every party has one common aim and that is to attain power in one way or other. For this they contest the elections and try to win over the majority.

1. **Agreement on fundamental principles:**

There must be certain measure of agreement on fundamental principle which can bind the people together as a political unit.

**5. What is the necessity of political parties in a democratic set up?**

1. They unite and aggregate like-minded people from diverse backgrounds, religion etc. to form a wide coalition of people and bring unity in diversity.
2. They provide a two way link between the government and people. This way they keep them in close touch with people.
3. The majority political party form the government and undertake socio-economic and cultural reforms. The opposition party check the government through different means.

**6. How has multi-party strengthened democracy in India.**

1. Multi-party system has given the opportunities to a variety of interests and opinions to enjoy political representation, For eg.in India more than 750 political parties are registered with election commission.
2. Multi-party is more representative and accountable to democratic ideals.
3. It creates a system of internal checks and balances within a coalition government.

**7. What are advantages of multi-party system?**

1. **More democratic in nature:** It is a very democratic system of representating government as various opinions of the people are represented. There is a wide spectrum of choice for the voters.
2. **Represents interest of various groups :** In multi-party system, the coalition government works keeping in mind the interest of various groups and sections.
3. **Absence of Cabinet Dictatorship:** The dictatorship of cabinet is avoided and legislature is not a puppet in the hands of the cabinet.

**8. How are regional parties different from the national parties?**

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| NATIONAL PARTIES | REGIONAL ( STATE ) PARTIES |
| 1. They have influence all over the country | 1. The influence of regional parties is mostly limited to particular states. |
| 2. National parties deal with national problems | 2. These are concerned with problems /demands of a particular region only. |
| 3. Eg. INC, BJP, CPI etc. | 3. Eg. Biju Janata Dal, Kerala congress, Sikkim democratic Front |

**9. What are the various challenges faced by political parties?**

1. **Lack of Internal democracy within parties:**

* There is a tendency in political parties towards concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top.
* Parties do not keep membership registers and do not conduct internal elections regularly.
* Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information on what happens inside the party.

1. **Dynastic succession:**

* In many parties the top positions are always controlled by members of one family.
* It is difficult for an ordinary worker to rise to the top position in a party.

1. **Growing role of Money & Muscle Power in parties:**

* The parties tend to nominate those candidates who have or can raise lots of money.
* In some cases parties support criminals who can win elections.

1. **Parties do not seek to offer a meaningful choice to voters:**

* Sometimes people cannot even elect very different leaders either because the same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another.
* In recent years there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in most parts of world.
* Example. The differences between the Labour party and Conservative party in Britain is very little.

**10. Suggest some reforms to strengthen parties so that they perform their functions well.**

1. A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of political party.
2. It should be made mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets to women candidates.
3. There should be state funding of elections.
4. The governments should give parties money to support their election expenses.

**11. Explain the recent efforts and suggestions in our country to reform political parties and its leaders.**

**Defection:** The constitution was amended to prevent elected MLA’s and MP’s from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives were indulging in defection in order to become ministers or cash rewards.

**Affidavit:** It is mandatory for every candidate who contest elections to file an affidavit giving details of his properties and criminal cases.

**Organisational Elections :** The election commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organizational election and file their income tax returns.

**12. Name the 6 national recognized parties in the country in 2006 ?**

1. INC-Indian National Congress
2. BJP-Bharatiya Janata party
3. BSP – Bahujan Samaj party
4. CPI (M) – Communist party of India-Marxist
5. CPI – Communist party of India
6. NCP – Nationalist Congress party

**13. “Increase in the number of State or regional parties strengthen democracy in India”. Comment.**

1. Over the last three decades the number and strength of these parties have expanded. This made parliament of India more and more diverse.
2. No one party is able to secure on its own a majority in Lok Sabha. As a result the national parties are compelled to form alliances with State parties.
3. Since 1996, nearly every one of the state parties has got an opportunity to be a part of one or the other coalition government. This has contributed to the strengthening of federalism and democracy in our country.

**14. What is an Election commission? Explain the role played by it in dealing with** **political parties.**

Ans. It is an independent multi-member body, which is constituted for the supervision, direction and conduct of elections.

1. Every party in the country has to register with EC.
2. The large and established parties are given unique symbol.
3. The EC has laid down detailed criteria of the proportion of votes and seats a party must get in order to be a recognized party.

State party : 6% of total votes and 2 seats in Assembly election

National party : 6% total votes and 4 seats in Lok Sabha election

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