

POLITICAL PARTIES

UNIT – 3

CHAPTER- 6

WHAT ARE 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 with a view to promote the collective good.
- ▶ Since there can be different views on what is good for all, parties try to persuade people why their policies are better than others.
- ▶ They seek to implement these policies by winning popular support through elections.

SOME IMPORTANT FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

- ▶ parties reflect fundamental political divisions in a society.
- ▶ Parties are about a part of the society and thus involve PARTISANSHIP.
- ▶ Thus a party is known by which part it stands for, which policies it supports and whose interests it upholds.
- ▶ A political party has three components:
 - ▶ 1) the leaders,
 - ▶ 2) the active members and
 - ▶ 3) the followers

FUNCTIONS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

1) Parties contest elections. In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties.

2) Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them.

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

4) Parties form and run governments.

5) Those parties that lose in the elections play the role of opposition to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticising government for its failures or wrong policies.

6) Parties shape public opinion. They raise and highlight issues. Parties have lakhs of members and activists spread all over the country.

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

WHAT ARE THE NECESSITIES OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES?

- ▶ We can understand the necessity of political parties by imagining a situation without parties. Every candidate in the elections will be independent. So no one will be able to make any promises to the people about any major policy changes. The government may be formed, but its utility will remain ever uncertain.
- ▶ The rise of political parties is directly linked to the emergence of representative democracies. As we have seen, large societies need representative democracy. As societies became large and complex, they also needed some agency to gather different views on various issues and to present these to the government. They needed some ways, to bring various representatives together so that a responsible government could be formed.
- ▶ They needed a mechanism to support or restrain the government, make policies, justify or

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

SINGLE PARTY SYSTEMS

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

We cannot consider one-party system as a good option because this is not a democratic option. Any democratic system must allow at least two parties to compete in elections and provide a fair chance for the competing parties to come to power.

BI- PARTY SYSTEMS

In some countries, power usually changes between two main parties.

Several other parties may exist, contest elections and win a few seats in the national legislatures. But only the two main parties have a serious chance of winning majority of seats to form government.

Such a party system is called two-party system.

MULTI PARTY SYSTEMS

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, we call it a multiparty system.

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

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.

SO WHICH POLITICAL PARTY IS THE BEST? CAN WE SAY ?

Perhaps the best answer to this very common question is that this is not a very good question. Party system is not something any country can choose. It evolves over a long time, depending on the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections. These cannot be changed very quickly. Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances. For example, if India has evolved a multiparty system, it is because the social and geographical diversity in such a large country is not easily absorbed by two or even three parties. No system is ideal for all countries and all situations.

NATIONAL PARTIES V/S STATE PARTIES

NATIONAL PARTIES

- ▶ There are some countrywide parties, which are called 'national parties'. These parties have their units in various states.
- ▶ A party that secures at least six per cent of the total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly elections in four States and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha is recognized as a national party.

STATE PARTIES

- ▶ Parties that are present in only one of the federal units are called state parties.
- ▶ A party that secures at least six per cent of the total votes in an election to the Legislative Assembly of a State and wins at least two seats is recognized as a State party.

NATIONAL PARTIES OF INDIA

- ▶ There are currently seven recognized political parties in India:

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

BHARTIYA JANTA PARTY

BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA - MARXIST

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY

ALL INDIA TRINAMOOLOO CONGRESS

ALL INDIA TRINAMOOL CONGRESS PARTY

- ▶ Launched on 1 January 1998 under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee. Recognised as a national party in 2016.
- ▶ The party's symbol is flowers and grass. Committed to secularism and federalism. Has been in power in West Bengal since 2011.
- ▶ Also has a presence in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura.
- ▶ In the General Elections held in 2014, it got 3.84% votes and won 34 seats, making it the fourth largest party in the Lok Sabha.

BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY

- ▶ Formed in 1984 under the leadership of Kanshi Ram. Seeks to represent and secure power for the bahun samaj which includes the dalits, adivasis, OBCs and religious minorities.
- ▶ Draws inspiration from the ideas and teachings of Sahu Maharaj, Mahatma Phule, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker and Babasaheb Ambedkar.
- ▶ Stands for the cause of securing the interests and welfare of the dalits and oppressed people. It has its main base in the state of Uttar Pradesh and substantial presence in neighbouring states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Punjab.
- ▶ Formed government in Uttar Pradesh several times by taking the support of different parties at different times. In the Lok Sabha elections held in 2014, it polled about 4 per cent votes but did not secure seat in the Lok Sabha.

BHARTIYA JANTA PARTY

- ▶ Founded in 1980 by reviving the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh, formed by Syama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951. Wants to build a strong and modern India by drawing inspiration from India's ancient culture and values; and Deendayal Upadhyaya's ideas of integral humanism and Antyodaya.
- ▶ Cultural nationalism (or 'Hindutva') is an important element in its conception of Indian nationhood and politics.
- ▶ Wants full territorial and political integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India, a uniform civil code for all people living in the country irrespective of religion, and ban on religious conversions. Its support base increased substantially in the 1990s.
- ▶ Earlier limited to north and west and to urban areas, the party expanded its support in the south, east, the north-east and to rural areas.
- ▶ Came to power in 1998 as the leader of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) including several regional parties. Emerged as the largest party with 282 members in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Currently leads the ruling NDA government at the Centre.

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

- ▶ Popularly known as the Congress Party. One of the oldest parties of the world. Founded in 1885 and has experienced many splits. Played a dominant role in Indian politics at the national and state level for several decades after India's Independence. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the party sought to build a modern secular democratic republic in India.
- ▶ Ruling party at the centre till 1977 and then from 1980 to 1989. After 1989, its support declined, but it continues to be present throughout the country, cutting across social divisions.
- ▶ A centrist party (neither rightist nor leftist) in its ideological orientation, the party espouses secularism and welfare of weaker sections and minorities.
- ▶ Supports new economic reforms but with a human face.
- ▶ Leader of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government from 2004 to 2014. Currently it is the principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA – MARXIST

Founded in 1964. Believes in Marxism Leninism.

Supports socialism, secularism and democracy and opposes imperialism and communalism.

Accepts democratic elections as a useful and helpful means for securing the objective of socioeconomic justice in India.

Enjoys strong support in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, especially among the poor, factory workers, farmers, agricultural labourers and the intelligentsia.

Critical of the new economic policies that allow free flow of foreign capital and goods into the country.

Was in power in West Bengal without a break for 34 years. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it won about 3 per cent of votes and 9 seats.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

- ▶ : Formed in 1925. Believes in Marxism-Leninism, secularism and democracy. Opposed to the forces of secessionism and communalism.
- ▶ Accepts parliamentary democracy as a means of promoting the interests of the working class, farmers and the poor.
- ▶ Became weak after the split in the party in 1964 that led to the formation of the CPI(M).
- ▶ Significant presence in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- ▶ Its support base had gradually declined over the years. It secured less than 1 per cent votes and 1 seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Advocates the coming together of all left parties to build a strong left front.

NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY

- ▶ Formed in 1999 following a split in the Congress party.
- ▶ Espouses democracy, Gandhian secularism, equity, social justice and federalism.
- ▶ Wants that high offices in government be confined to natural born citizens of the country.
- ▶ A major party in Maharashtra and has a significant presence in Meghalaya, Manipur and Assam. A coalition partner in the state of Maharashtra in alliance with the Congress. Since 2004, a member of the United Progressive Alliance.

STATE PARTIES

Other than these seven parties, most of the major parties of the country are classified by the Election Commission as 'State parties'. These are commonly referred to as regional parties. Parties like the Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal have national level political organisation with units in several states. Some of these parties like Biju Janata Dal, Sikkim Democratic Front, Mizo National Front and Telangana Rashtra Samithi are conscious about their State identity.

Since 1996, nearly every one of the State parties has got an opportunity to be a part of one or the other national level coalition government. This has contributed to the strengthening of federalism and democracy in our country

CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL PARTIES

LACK OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

DYNASTIC SUCCESSION IN THE POLITICAL PARTIES

USE OF MONEY AND MUSCLE POWER IN PARTIES

LACK OF MEANINGFUL CHOICE OFFERED TO THE
VOTERS

LACK OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

- ▶ All over the world there is a tendency in political parties towards the concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top.
- ▶ Parties do not keep membership registers, do not hold organizational meetings, and do not conduct internal elections regularly.
- ▶ Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information on what happens inside the party.
- ▶ They do not have the means or the connections needed to influence the decisions.
- ▶ As a result the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party.
- ▶ Since one or few leaders exercise paramount power in the party, those who disagree with the leadership find it difficult to continue in the party. More than loyalty to party principles and policies, personal loyalty to the leader becomes more important.

DYNASTIC SUCCESSION IN PARTIES

- ▶ Since most political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures for their functioning, there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party.
- ▶ Those who happen to be the leaders are in a position of unfair advantage to favor people close to them or even their family members.
- ▶ In many parties, the top positions are always controlled by members of one family.
- ▶ This is unfair to other members of that party. This is also bad for democracy, since people who do not have adequate experience or popular support come to occupy positions of power.

USE OF MONEY AND MUSCLE POWER

- ▶ In parties, especially during elections. Since parties are focused only on winning elections, they tend to use short-cuts to win elections.
- ▶ They tend to nominate those candidates who have or can raise lots of money.
- ▶ Rich people and companies who give funds to the parties tend to have influence on the policies and decisions of the party.
- ▶ In some cases, parties support criminals who can win elections. Democrats all over the world are worried about the increasing role of rich people and big companies in democratic politics.

LACK OF MEANINGFUL CHOICE OFFERED TO THE VOTERS

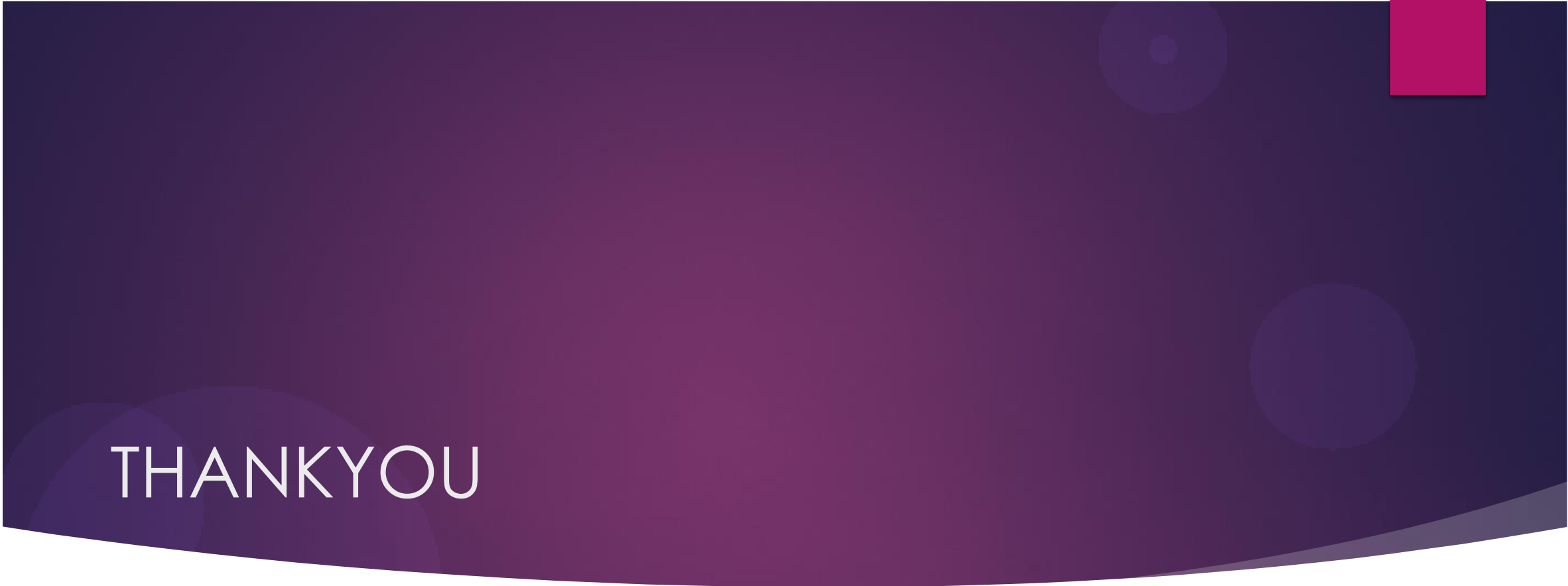
- ▶ In order to offer meaningful choice, parties must be significantly different.
- ▶ In recent years there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in most parts of the world.
- ▶ For example, the difference between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in Britain is very little. They agree on more fundamental aspects but differ only in details on how policies are to be framed and implemented.
- ▶ Those who want really different policies have no option available to them. Sometimes people cannot even elect very different leaders either, because the same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another.

REFORMING THE POLITICAL PARTIES

- ▶ The Constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives were indulging in DEFECTION in order to become ministers or for cash rewards.
- ▶ Now the law says that if any MLA or MP changes parties, he or she will lose the seat in the legislature. This new law has helped bring defection down.
- ▶ Supreme Court passed an order to reduce the influence of money and criminals. Now, it is mandatory for every candidate who contests elections to file an AFFIDAVIT giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him.
- ▶ The Election Commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organizational elections and file their income tax returns.

SOME MORE REFORMS SUGGESTED

- ▶ A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of political parties. It should be made compulsory for political parties to maintain a register of its members, to follow its own constitution, to have an independent authority, to act as a judge in case of party disputes, to hold open elections to the highest posts.
- ▶ It should be made mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one-third, to women candidates. Similarly, there should be a quota for women in the decision making bodies of the party.
- ▶ There should be state funding of elections. The government should give parties money to support their election expenses. This support could be given in kind: petrol, paper, telephone etc. Or it could be given in cash on the basis of the votes secured by the party in the last election.



THANKYOU