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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.

Political parties that wish to contest local, state or national elections are required to be registered by the Election Commission of India (EC).

A political party has three components: (i) the leaders, (ii) the active members and (iii) the followers.

Functions of a Party

- they nominate candidates during elections;
- they campaign to obtain support for their candidates in the elections;
- they place objectives and programmes before the voters through their manifestos;
- those securing the majority in elections form the government and enact and implement the policies;
- Those not in power form opposition and keep a constant check on the government;
- they form opposition when they are in minority in the legislature and constantly put pressure on the government for proper governance;
- they educate people and help in formulating and shaping public opinion;
- they articulate peoples' demands and convey them to the government; and
- they provide a linkage between people and governmental institutions.

Types of Political Systems in the World

There are three kinds of political system in the world mentioned below:
- One party system in which only one party exist and rule the country; opposition parties are not allowed. This kind of system is followed in China.
- Two party system in which only two major parties exist such as in the USA and the UK.
- Multi-party system in which includes multiple parties, for example, in India and France.

India follows multi-party system and has the largest number of political parties in the world. This kind of system provides a multiple option to the people to choose from. It also gives opportunity to the regional parties to participate in national politics. On the other hand, the negative aspects of this system are the hung parliaments, hung assemblies, coalition governments and unstable governments.

Indian governance system has multi-party system and the political parties are categorized as − National Political Party; State or Regional (level) Political Party. The recognition and status of political parties are reviewed and authorized by the Election Commission of India.

There are currently 8 National Parties in India:

1. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
2. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
3. Communist Party of India (CPI)
4. Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M)
5. Indian National Congress (INC)
6. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)
7. Trinamool Congress (TMC)
8. National Peoples' Party (NPP)

NPP is the first national party from the North-East region.

Eligibility of National Political Party

To be eligible for a 'National Political Party of India,' the Election Commission has set the following criteria –

- It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in any four or more states, at a general election to the House of the People or, to the State Legislative Assembly; and
- In addition, it wins at least four seats in the House of the People from any State or States.

OR

- It wins at least two percent seats in the House of the People (i.e., 11 seats in the existing House having 543 members), and these members are elected from at least three different States.

Eligibility of State Political Party

To be eligible for a 'State Political Party,' the Election Commission has set the following criteria –

- It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in the State at a general election, either to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned; and
- In addition, it wins at least two seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned.

OR

- It wins at least three percent (3%) of the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, or at least three seats in the Assembly, whichever is more.

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