



Political Parties

MEANING AND TYPES

Political parties are voluntary associations or organised groups of individuals who share the same political views and who try to gain political power through constitutional means and who desire to work for promoting the national interest. There are four types of political parties in the modern democratic states, viz., (i) reactionary parties which cling to the old socio-economic and political institutions; (ii) conservative parties which believe in the status-quo; (iii) liberal parties which aim at reforming the existing institutions; and (iv) radical parties which aim at establishing a new order by overthrowing the existing institutions. In their classification of political parties on the basis of ideologies, the political scientists have placed the radical parties on the left and the liberal parties in the centre and reactionary and conservative parties on the right. In other words, they are described as the leftist parties, centrist parties and the rightist parties. In India, the CPI and CPM are the examples of leftist parties, the Congress of centrist parties and the BJP is an example of rightist parties.

There are three kinds of party systems in the world, viz., (i) one party system in which only one ruling party exists and no opposition is permitted, as for example, in the former communist countries like the USSR and other East European countries; (ii) two-party system in which two major parties exists, as for example, in USA and Britain¹; and (iii) multi-party system in

which there are a number of political parties leading to the formation of coalition governments, as for example, in France, Switzerland and Italy.

PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

The Indian party system has the following characteristic features:

Multi-Party System

The continental size of the country, the diversified character of Indian society, the adoption of universal adult franchise, the peculiar type of political process, and other factors have given rise to a large number of political parties. In fact, India has the largest number of political parties in the world. On the eve of sixteenth Lok Sabha general elections (2014), there were 6 national parties, 47 states parties and 1593 registered – unrecognised parties in the country². Further, India has all categories of parties—left parties, centrist parties, right parties, communal parties, non-communal parties and so on. Consequently, the hung Parliaments, hung assemblies and coalition governments have become a common phenomena.

One-Dominant Party System

In spite of the multiparty system, the political scene in India was dominated for a long period by the Congress. Hence, Rajni Kothari, an eminent political analyst, preferred to call the Indian party system as ‘one party dominance system’ or the ‘Congress system’³. The dominant position enjoyed by the Congress has been declining since 1967 with the rise of regional parties and other national parties like Janata (1977), Janata Dal (1989) and the BJP (1991) leading to the development of a competitive multi-party system.

Lack of Clear Ideology

Except the BJP and the two communist parties (CPI and CPM), all other parties do not have a clear-cut ideology. They (i.e., all other parties) are ideologically closer to each other. They have a close resemblance in their policies and programmes. Almost every party advocates democracy,

secularism, socialism and Gandhism. More than this, every party, including the so-called ideological parties, is guided by only one consideration—power capture. Thus, politics has become issue-based rather than the ideology and pragmatism has replaced the commitment to the principles.

Personality Cult

Quite often, the parties are organised around an eminent leader who becomes more important than the party and its ideology. Parties are known by their leaders rather than by their manifesto. It is a fact that the popularity of the Congress was mainly due to the leadership of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. Similarly, the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu and TDP in Andhra Pradesh got identified with MG Ramachandran and NT Rama Rao respectively. Interestingly, several parties bear the name of their leader like Biju Janata Dal, Lok Dal (A), Congress (I) and so on. Hence, it is said that “there are political personalities rather than political parties in India”.

Based on Traditional Factors

In the western countries, the political parties are formed on the basis of socio-economic and political programme. On the other hand, a large number of parties in India are formed on the basis of religion, caste, language, culture, race and so on. For example, Shiv Sena, Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha, Akali Dal, Muslim Majlis, Bahujan Samaj Party, Republican Party of India, Gorkha League and so on. These parties work for the promotion of communal and sectional interests and thereby undermine the general public interest.

Emergence of Regional Parties

Another significant feature of the Indian party system is the emergence of a large number of regional parties and their growing role. They have become the ruling parties in various states like BJD in Orissa, DMK or AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, Akali Dal in Punjab, AGP in Assam, National Conference in J&K, JD(U) in Bihar and so on. In the beginning, they were confined to the regional politics only. But, of late, they have come to play a significant role

in the national politics due to coalition governments at the Centre. In the 1984 elections, the TDP emerged as the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

Factions and Defections

Factionalism, defections, splits, mergers, fragmentation, polarisation and so on have been an important aspect of the functioning of political parties in India. Lust for power and material considerations have made the politicians to leave their party and join another party or start a new party. The practice of defections gained greater currency after the fourth general elections (1967). This phenomenon caused political instability both at the Centre and in the states and led to disintegration of the parties. Thus, there are two Janata Dals, two TDPs, two DMKs, two Communist Parties, two Congress, three Akali Dals, three Muslim Leagues and so on.

Lack of Effective Opposition

An effective Opposition is very essential for the successful operation of the parliamentary democracy prevalent in India. It checks the autocratic tendencies of the ruling party and provides an alternative government. However, in the last 50 years, an effective, strong, organised and viable national Opposition could never emerge except in flashes. The Opposition parties have no unity and very often adopt mutually conflicting positions with respect to the ruling party. They have failed to play a constructive role in the functioning of the body politic and in the process of nation building.

RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL AND STATE PARTIES

The Election Commission registers political parties for the purpose of elections and grants them recognition as national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance. The other parties are simply declared as *registered-unrecognised* parties.

The recognition granted by the Commission to the parties determines their right to certain privileges like allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on the state-owned television and radio stations

and access to electoral rolls.

Further, the recognized parties need only one proposer for filing the nomination. Also, these parties are allowed to have forty “star campaigners” during the time of elections and the registered–unrecognized parties are allowed to have twenty “star campaigners”. The travel expenses of these star campaigners are not included in the election expenditure of the candidates of their parties.

Every national party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved for its use throughout the country. Similarly, every state party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved for its use in the state or states in which it is so recognised. A registered-unrecognised party, on the other hand, can select a symbol from a list of free symbols. In other words, the Commission specifies certain symbols as ‘reserved symbols’ which are meant for the candidates set up by the recognised parties and others as ‘free symbols’ which are meant for other candidates.

Conditions for Recognition as a National Party

At present (2016), a party is recognised as a national party if any of the following conditions is fulfilled⁴:

1. If it secures six per cent of valid votes polled in any four or more states at a general election to the Lok Sabha or to the legislative assembly; and, in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from any state or states; or
2. If it wins two per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha at a general election; and these candidates are elected from three states; or
3. If it is recognised as a state party in four states.

Conditions for Recognition as a State Party

At present (2016), a party is recognised as a state party in a state if any of the following conditions is fulfilled⁵:

1. If it secures six per cent of the valid votes polled in the state at a general election to the legislative assembly of the state concerned; and, in addition, it wins 2 seats in the assembly of the state concerned; or
2. If it secures six per cent of the valid votes polled in the state at a general

- election to the Lok Sabha from the state concerned; and, in addition, it wins 1 seat in the Lok Sabha from the state concerned; or
3. If it wins three per cent of seats in the legislative assembly at a general election to the legislative assembly of the state concerned or 3 seats in the assembly, whichever is more; or
 4. If it wins 1 seat in the Lok Sabha for every 25 seats or any fraction thereof allotted to the state at a general election to the Lok Sabha from the state concerned; or
 5. If it secures eight per cent of the total valid votes polled in the state at a General Election to the Lok Sabha from the state or to the legislative assembly of the state. This condition was added in 2011.

The number of recognised parties keeps on changing on the basis of their performance in the general elections. On the eve of the sixteenth Lok Sabha general elections(2014), there were 6 national parties, 47 state parties and 1593 registered-unrecognised parties in the country⁶. The national parties and state parties are also known as all-India parties and regional parties respectively.

Table 67.1 *Recognised National Parties and State Parties (First to Sixteenth General Elections)*

<i>General Elections (Year)</i>	<i>Number of National Parties</i>	<i>Number of State Parties</i>
First (1952)	14	39
Second (1957)	4	11
Third (1962)	6	11
Fourth (1967)	7	14
Fifth (1971)	8	17
Sixth (1977)	5	15
Seventh (1980)	6	19
Eighth (1984)	7	19

Ninth (1989)	8	20
Tenth (1991)	9	28
Eleventh (1996)	8	30
Twelfth (1998)	7	30
Thirteenth (1999)	7	40
Fourteenth (2004)	6	36
Fifteenth (2009)	7	40
Sixteenth (2014)	6	47

Table 67.2 *Recognised National Parties and their Symbols (2016)*

<i>Sl.No.</i>	<i>Name of the Party (Abbreviation)</i>	<i>Symbol Reserved</i>
1.	Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	Elephant*
2.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Lotus
3.	Communist Party of India (CPI)	Ears of Corn and Sickle
4.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM)	Hammer, Sickle and Star
5.	Indian National Congress (INC)	Hand
6.	Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	Clock
7.	All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)	Flowers and Grass

* - In all States / U.T.s except in Assam, where its candidates will have to choose a symbol out of the list of free symbols specified by the Election Commission.

Table 67.3 *Recognised State Parties and their Symbols (2016)*

<i>Name of the</i>		
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<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>State / Union Territory</i>	<i>Name of the State Party (Abbreviation)</i>	<i>Symbol Reserved</i>
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1. Telugu Desam (TDP)	Bicycle
		2. Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP)	Ceiling Fan
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	People's Party of Arunachal (PPA)	Maize
3.	Assam	1. All India United Democratic Front (AUDF)	Lock & Key
		2. Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)	Elephant
		3. Bodoland People's Front (BPF)	Nangol
4.	Bihar	1. Janata Dal (United) (JD(U))	Arrow
		2. Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJSP)	Bungalow
		3. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	Hurricane Lamp
		4. Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP)	Ceiling Fan
5.	Goa	Maharashtrawadi Gomantak (MAG)	Lion
6.	Haryana	1. Haryana Janhit Congress (BL) (HJC(BL))	Tractor
		2. Indian National Lok Dal (INLD)	Spectacles
7.	Jammu & Kashmir	1. Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (JKNC)	Plough
		2. Jammu & Kashmir National Panthers Party (JKNPP)	Bicycle

		3. Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party (JKPDP)	Ink Pot & Pen
8.	Jharkhand	1. All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU)	Banana
		2. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)	Bow & Arrow
		3. Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajanatrik) (JVM(P))	Comb
		4. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	Hurricane Lamp
9.	Karnataka	Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S))	A Lady Farmer carrying Paddy on her head
10.	Kerala	1. Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S))	A Lady Farmer carrying Paddy on her head
		2. Kerala Congress (M) (KEC(M))	Two Leaves
		3. Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)	Ladder
		4. Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)	Spade & Stoker
11.	Maharashtra	1. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS)	Railway Engine
		2. Shiv Sena (SHS)	Bow and Arrow
12.	Manipur	1. Naga People's Front (NPF)	Cock
		2. People's Democratic Alliance (PDA)	Crown
13.	Meghalaya	1. United Democratic Party	Drum

		(UDP)	
		2. Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP)	Lion
		3. National People's Party (NPP)	Book
14.	Mizoram	1. Mizo National Front (MNF)	Star
		2. Mizoram People's Conference (MPC)	Electric Bulb
		3. Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)	Sun (without rays)
15.	Nagaland	Naga People's Front (NPF)	Cock
16.	N.C.T. of Delhi	Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	Broom
17.	Odisha	Biju Janata Dal (BJD)	Conch
18.	Puducherry	1. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) or (AIADMK)	Two Leaves
		2. All India N.R. Congress (AINRC)	Jug
		3. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	Rising Sun
		4. Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK)	Mango
19.	Punjab	1. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)	Scales
		2. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	Broom
20.	Sikkim	1. Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF)	Umbrella
		2. Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM)	Table Lamp

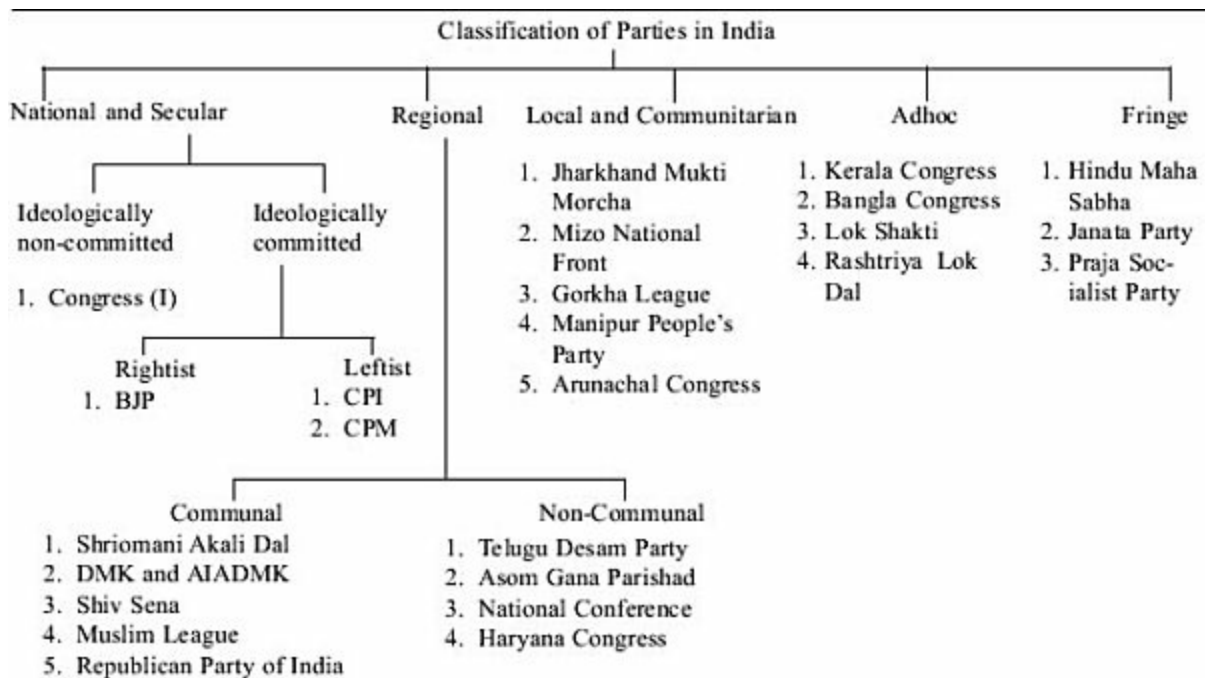
21.	Tamil Nadu	1. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) or (AIADMK)	Two leaves
		2. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	Rising Sun
		3. Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK)	Nagara
22.	Telangana	1. All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM)	Kite
		2. Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS)	Car
		3. Telugu Desam (TDP)	Bicycle
		4. Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP)	Ceiling Fan
23.	Uttar Pradesh	1. Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)	Hand Pump
		2. Samajwadi Party (SP)	Bicycle
24.	West Bengal	1. All India Forward Bloc (AIFB)	Lion
		2. Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)	Spade & Stoker

Table 67.4 *Formation of Political Parties (Chronological Order)*

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name of the Party (Abbreviation)</i>	<i>Year of Formation</i>
1.	Indian National Congress (INC)	1885
2.	Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)	1920
3.	Communist Party of India (CPI)	1925
	Jammu & Kashmir National Conference	

4.	(JKNC)	1939
5.	All India Forward Bloc (AIFB)	1939
6.	Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)	1940
7.	Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)	1948
8.	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	1949
9.	Mizo National Front (MNF)	1961
10.	Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MAG)	1963
11.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM)	1964
12.	Shiv Sena (SHS)	1966
13.	Mizoram People's Conference (MPC)	1972
14.	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)	1972
15.	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)	1972
16.	Kerala Congress (M) (KEC (M))	1979
17.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	1980
18.	Telugu Desam Party (TDP)	1982
19.	Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	1984
20.	Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)	1985
21.	People's Party of Arunachal (PPA)	1987
22.	Samajwadi Party (SP)	1992
23.	Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF)	1993
24.	Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)	1996
25.	Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)	1997
26.	Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	1997

27.	Biju Janata Dal (BJD)	1997
28.	All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)	1998
29.	Indian National Lok Dal (INLD)	1998
30.	Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party (PDP)	1999
31.	Janata Dal (United) (JD (U))	1999
32.	Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S))	1999
33.	Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	1999
34.	Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJSP)	2000
35.	Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS)	2001
36.	Naga People's Front (NPF)	2002
37.	All India United Democratic Front (AUDF)	2004
38.	Desiya Murpokku Dravidar Kazhagam (DMDK)	2005
39.	Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS)	2006
40.	Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik) (JVM – P)	2006
41.	Haryana Janhit Congress (BL) (HJC – BL)	2007
42.	Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP)	2011
43.	All India N.R. Congress (AINRC)	2011
44.	Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	2012
45.	National People's Party (NPP)	2013
46.	Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP)	2013
47.	Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM)	2013



Note: *Adopted from J. C. Johari: Indian Government and Politics, Vishal, 13th Edition (2001), P. 607.*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The two parties in the US are Democratic and Republican, and in Britain are Conservative and Labour.
2. India Votes – The General Elections 2014, The Election Commission of India, p.1.
3. Rajni Kothari: Congress System in India, Asian Survey, Volume 4, No. 12 (December, 1964), pp. 1–18.
4. The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, as amended from time to time. The latest amendment to this order was made in 2011.
5. *Ibid.*
6. See Reference 2 above.