

Political processes

Political Structure of India

- ▶ The Constitution of Independent India came into effect on 26th January, 1950. With its adoption India officially became a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. The Indian Constitution has established a parliamentary form of government both at the Centre and the State.
- ▶ Though the President is the head of the executive, the real powers are vested with the Cabinet and the Prime Minister who are responsible to the Lok Sabha.
- ▶ Similarly Governor is the executive head of the States, but the real powers are exercised through Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers, who are responsible to the Legislative Assembly.
- ▶ The members of Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies are elected through elections by citizens of the country.
- ▶ Hence elections are the base for the formation of governments.
- ▶ Therefore the political parties who contest the elections become part and parcel of political system of the country.
- ▶ In India we have multi party system to ensure the representation of varied variety of people who reside in it.
- ▶ The party System in India is as follows.

THE PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

- ▶ The party system is the base of democracy. It is a link between people and the government.
- ▶ A political party serves as a platform for people with common ideologies.
- ▶ Every political party aims to contest elections to be a part of legislative and executive organs of the government.
- ▶ Through representation in the parliament the party members function as agents of people and voice the grievances and challenges of the society.
- ▶ India has a multi-party system with the existence of parties at the national and State level.
- ▶ In order to contest elections every party must register itself to the Election Commission of India.
- ▶ The party that wins majority seats in elections forms the government and implements the policies designed by its election manifesto.
- ▶ The party with second majority votes plays the role of opposition in the parliament and keeps a close eye on the functioning of the government.

CLASSIFICATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

- ▶ The types of political parties can be broadly classified into following categories:
- ▶ **National Parties :**
- ▶ Any party to be called as national level political party must fulfill following conditions:
 - ▶ a. It must have had its candidates stood for last elections in at least four or more States for Lok Sabha or for Legislative Assembly and secured not less than 6 % of total valid votes in those elections. In addition win at least four seats in Lok Sabha from any State or States.
 - ▶ b. It must have won at least 2 % seats in Lok Sabha from at least three different States.
- ▶ Some of the present national parties are; Indian National Congress, Bhartiya Janta Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Communist Party of India etc.
- ▶ **State Parties:**
- ▶ The State parties promote regional languages, culture and interest of people of that region. To be recognized as a State party, it must fulfill following conditions:
 - ▶ In the last general elections to legislative assembly, the party candidates must have secured not less than 6% of total valid votes and must retain at least 2 members to State Legislative Assembly.
- ▶ Some of the well known State political parties are; Shiv Sena (Maharashtra), AIADMK and DMK (Tamil Nadu), Telgu Desam (Andhra Pradesh), Rashtriya Janata Dal (Bihar), the National Conference (Jammu and Kashmir) etc.

FEATURES OF PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

- ▶ **Dominance of Single Party:**
- ▶ The party system was introduced in India as an influence of western education.
- ▶ The Indian leaders had realized the importance of united efforts to achieve independence.
- ▶ The political parties, thus, were established to demand for reforms from the British government and eventually complete self government.
- ▶ Various political parties had emerged before independence as well but it was Indian National Congress (INC) that remained one of the most popular and dominant political party.
- ▶ After independence except for a brief period in the late 1970s the congress dominated the political scene till late 1980s.
- ▶ Congress leaders like J. Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi had dominated the Indian politics for decades.
- ▶ Though many other political parties emerged during that period, Congress was regarded as the largest representative party of the country.

▶ **Emergence of multi- party system:**

- ▶ Internal factions led to the split in the Congress and by 1970s many new parties had emerged.
- ▶ In 1977, Janata party was formed which was a coalition of at least five parties.
- ▶ This new party formed the first non-Congress government after independence.
- ▶ The rise of BJP and many regional parties in States reduced the dominance of Congress over Indian politics to a greater extent.

▶ **Coalition Party System:**

- From 1990s an era of coalition started.
- Failure of big national parties like Congress and BJP to win majority seats in elections has brought numerous small parties to the forefront.
- The large parties came to be dependent upon smaller parties for the formation of governments.
- In 1996 the elections led to the formation of ‘United Front’, a coalition of as many as 13 political parties.
- Similarly in 1999 a coalition party government of ‘National Democratic Alliance’ (NDA) was formed with BJP as a largest member of coalition.

► **Based on Personalities:**

- Instead of emphasizing on the strong organizational structure, the leaders or powerful personalities of the party are given more importance.
- Many people join the party because of the charisma of a party leader
- For ex; Balasaheb Thackeray, Mamta Banerjee, Mayawati, Jayalalitha, Lalu Prasad Yadav etc.

► **Absence of loyalty to ideology:**

- Every party is based on some ideology and when people join the party they are committed to its ideology.
- But the situation is changing fast. Most of the parties are interested in capturing power.
- Many candidates shuffle between parties to grab position in the government keeping aside the ideological commitment of the party.

► **Emergence of Regional Parties:**

- One of the reasons for the decline in the strength of national parties is the emergence of numerous regional level parties.
- As selfish motives and desire to grab power has prompted many politicians to form independent parties.

- Each state has almost 2 to 3 strong regional parties.
- Tamil Nadu has become stronghold of DMK and AIADMK; Punjab is dominated by Shiromani Akali Dal; Shivsena is a powerful party in Maharashtra; National Conference is popular in Jammu and Kashmir etc.

► **Factions within the party:**

- Personality clashes, race to acquire power, and clashes amongst each other has led to the weakness of the party.
- Frequent changing of party has increased factions within the party.
- Caste and regional loyalties also play a role in dividing the party further.

► **Emergence of Bi-polar party System:**

- By 1990s the one party dominance ended giving rise to coalition party government.
- The politics of alliances led to the polarization of parties.
- It reflects the diverse political interests.
- The regional parties are playing important role in the formation of government at the Centre.

- The non-Congress national as well as regional parties acquired popularity and became viable alternatives.
- The rise of BJP and BJP led United Front dominated the Centre by creating the second 'pole' in the Indian politics.
- However, Sonia Gandhi's entry into active politics brought Congress back into the suitable alternatives.
- The formation of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the control over central government by this Congress led coalition government in recent years has transformed Indian politics into bipolar party system.

► **Conclusion:**

- The recent trend of offering support to the government from outside is causing a serious concern to the stability of the government both at the Centre and state level.
- As the parties get to enjoy all the powers without participating in the government and sharing any responsibility.
- They dominate the government and influence the decision making by giving threat of withdrawal of support in case of failing to comply with their demands.

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

- ▶ The concept of local self government is known to Indian since ancient times. During the Vedic age, there existed village assemblies known as 'Sabha' and 'Samiti'. Gradually cities and towns came into prominence. They also enjoyed greater level of autonomy in administration as witnessed during the Mauryan and Gupta period.
- ▶ The system of local self government in its modern sense was revived during the British period.
- ▶ In a democratic country power is decentralized and shared at different levels. Apart from the Central and State Government, the administration at the local level is handled by the local government in urban as well as rural areas.
- ▶ The local Self- Government ensures effective people's participation and ensures overall development. These small units of government enable people to feel a sense of responsibility and understand values of democracy.
- ▶ In India the Local Self Government is broadly classified into two categories that is Rural and Urban.
- ▶ The Urban local bodies include Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayat. The rural local bodies incorporate Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat.

THE URBAN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

- ▶ In urban areas a variety of local self-government institutions are found. They are as follows;
- ❑ **The Municipal Corporation:**
- ▶ The system was introduced by the Britishers first in Madras in 1688 and then in Bombay and Calcutta by 1762. The current structure of Municipal administration is largely based on Lord Ripon's reforms on local self government introduced in 1882.
- ▶ The 1992 Act brought uniformity in municipal bodies. The Municipal Corporations were set up for highly urbanized areas, Municipal Councils for smaller urban areas and Nagar Panchayat for areas in transition phase from rural to urban. The State legislature is empowered to make laws related to functioning and powers of the local government.
- ▶ The Municipal Corporation consists of the **Council**, wherein representatives from every ward are elected by the people known as **Councilors** for the term of five years.
- ▶ The **Mayor** and **Deputy Mayor** are elected by the Councilors for a period of two and half years. They enjoy great honor in the city. Mayor is regarded as the first citizen of the city.
- ▶ The **MPs, MLAs** are the ex-officio members of the corporation.
- ▶ The Chief Executive Officer is appointed through the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) known as the **Municipal Commissioner**.
- ▶ The entire administrative staff is also appointed by the State.
- ▶ The corporation also nominates some selected citizens as its members.

Functions of the Municipal Corporation

- ▶ It includes wide variety of duties to be performed by the corporations to ensure overall development of the city i.e. economic, social, health and sanitation, infrastructure etc.
- ▶ The functions of Municipal Corporations are classified as obligatory and voluntary. Some of them are listed as follows;
 - ❑ **Obligatory Functions:**
 - ▶ 1. Sanitation of hospitals, roads, maintenance of drainage of city,
 - ▶ 2. Water supply for public and private purposes,
 - ▶ 3. Providing healthcare facilities, public vaccination and prevention of diseases,
 - ▶ 4. Establishing hospitals, child and maternity welfare centers,
 - ▶ 5. Providing street lights, cleaning of garbage from the city roads,
 - ▶ 6. Registration of birth and death,
 - ▶ 7. Maintenance of bridges and public buildings,

- ▶ 8. Providing primary education by setting up schools,
- ▶ 9. Naming of streets and numbering of streets and houses,
- ▶ 10. Maintaining and managing electricity supply,
- ▶ 11. Providing transport facilities to the city.

❑ **Voluntary Functions:**

- ▶ 1. Constructing and maintaining public parks, gardens, libraries, museums, swimming pools, recreation centers etc.,
- ▶ 2. Providing shelter to old, street children, destitute, orphans etc.,
- ▶ 3. Survey of buildings, lands etc.

❑ **Municipal Council:**

- ▶ The smaller cities are looked after by Municipal Councils.
- ▶ When the cities grow in size of population it is transformed under the administration of Municipal Corporations. The Council consists of;
 - ▶ i. The Council members are elected by the people for the term of five years.
 - ▶ ii. President and Vice-President are elected by the members of the Council for the term of two and half years. The President is honored as the first citizen of the town.
 - ▶ iii. Each Council has among its appointed Staff, one Executive Officer and its subordinate staff and nominated selected citizens of the town.

❑ **Functions of the Municipal Council:**

- ▶ The functions of the Municipal Council are similar to that of Municipal Corporations which includes some obligatory functions and some voluntary functions.
- ▶ To perform these functions various committees are created, namely, Public Works Committee, Education Committee, Sanitation Committee, Water Supply Committee, Planning and Development Committee, Women and Child Welfare Committee.

❑ **Nagar Panchayat:**

- ▶ The composition and functions of the Nagar Panchayat are similar to Municipal Councils.
- ▶ Nagar Panchayats are established in those rural areas to be soon transformed into urban.
- ▶ Nagar Panchayat is formed according to the 74th constitutional Amendment.

THE RURAL LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

- ▶ The rural local self government in India is also described as ‘Panchayat Raj’. It was a major step taken to uplift rural areas and to ensure rural development.
- ▶ On the basis of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayat Raj in India..
- ▶ Thereafter entire rural India came under this system.
- ▶ The main aims of the Panchayat Raj system was to promote social and economic development of rural areas, to make villages self reliant and to provide with political education and training to rural people.
- ▶ Under the committee’s recommendation a three tier system of local government was established which is as follows:
- ▶ **Zilla Parishad:**
- ▶ It is a local government body at the district level. It looks after the administration of rural areas in a district. The members to the Parishad are elected by the people for the term of five years.

- ▶ Some seats are reserved for SC, ST, OBC and women. The President and Vice- President are elected for the term of two and half years. The Chief Executive Officer is appointed by the State government through Indian Administrative Services.
- ▶ The main functions of the Zilla Parishad include providing of facilities and initiating development programmes for the rural people. It houses various committees like Finance, Education, Health, Agriculture, Child Welfare, Animal Husbandry, Public works, Water supply and irrigation etc.

❑ **Panchayat Samiti:**

- ▶ The Panchayat Samiti is formed at the Taluka level. Every Panchayat Samiti is headed by the Chairperson. In the absence of Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson performs his functions.
- ▶ The Block Development Officer (BDO) is the executive head of the Panchayat Samiti.
- ▶ He is appointed by the State government and belongs to Indian Administrative Services.

❑ **Gram Panchayat:**

- ▶ It works at the village level. It is formed in a village which has minimum 300 population or else two or more villages are clubbed together.
- ▶ Sarpanch is the head of the Gram Panchayat who enjoys the term of five years. He supervises and implements the resolutions passed by the Gram Panchayat.
- ▶ In his absence Deputy Sarpanch looks after the affairs of the village.
- ▶ The functions of the Gram Panchayat includes looking after the basic amenities of the village.
- ▶ Gramsevak is appointed by Zilla Parishad to carry out the routine work of the Gram Panchayat.

THE 73RD AND 74TH AMENDMENTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE POLITICS

- ▶ The 73rd constitutional amendment provided more powers to local self governments and created a three tier system for the rural areas.
- ▶ It empowered and brought about better functioning of the Panchayat Raj.
- ▶ The 74th constitutional amendment provided similar guidelines for the urban areas.
- ▶ Both the amendments provided guidelines to the States to form the local governments at the rural and urban level. It provided decentralization and democratization of power with greater participation of the people.
- ▶ **The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992:**
- ▶ This amendment was passed in 1992 to provide constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj institutions. Following are its salient features:
 - A uniform three-tier structure of Panchayat Raj was created, namely, Zilla Parishad at district level, Panchayat Samiti at intermediate level and Gram Panchayat at village level.

- All the seats at the Panchayat level are elected by elections for the term of five years.
- Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes.
- 33% reservations of seats for women in these local self governments.
- To hold and control the smooth elections to Panchayats, a State Election Commission has to be formed in every State.
- Appointment of State Finance Commission to make recommendations regarding financial powers of the Panchayats.
- To set up District Planning Commission to plan for the development of the district.
- Formation of 'Gram Sabha' to bring necessary changes in the village.

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992

- ▶ The 74th amendment act brought stability and efficiency to the urban local self government. Following are its main provisions:
- Formation of three types of Municipalities namely; Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council and Nagar Panchayat.
- Adequate representation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Women.
- It also introduces schedule 12th in the Constitution, which lists 18 subjects that comes under the jurisdiction of municipalities.
- Greater financial and functional responsibilities to the municipalities.
- Constitution of State Finance Commission to review financial position of the municipalities and suggest measures to improve their financial condition.
- Regular and fair conduct of elections.
- Creation of Ward Committees, District Planning Committees, Metropolitan Planning Committees for the preparation of development plans.

- ▶ All the above provisions aimed at making the municipal bodies an effective instrument of local administration.
- ▶ According to the 74th amendment several State governments amended their legislations to bring uniformity with the constitutional provisions.
- ▶ However the State governments are entrusted with the final decision making authority.

ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

- ▶ The participation of women in politics is not a new phenomenon.
- ▶ In ancient times during early Vedic period women could become members of Sabha and Samiti.
- ▶ However her position declined considerably after the end of Vedic age as she was not only denied the political rights but was confined to the four walls of the house.
- ▶ She faced many inequalities and was regarded inferior to men.
- ▶ Attempts were made to improve her condition during the 19th century by many social reformers.
- ▶ Gradual improvement was seen thereafter. Many women participated in the struggle for independence as well. However their participation remained less in number.

❑ **Enactment of Laws after Independence:**

- ▶ After independence various laws have been enacted and various provisions have been made to empower women. To bring about more of women's participation in politics provisions are made for the reservation of seats in the legislature.
- ▶ In spite of this the participation of women in politics is not satisfactory. As per the UN survey the parliamentary representation of women in the 15th Lok Sabha is 10.7%. This is much less as compared to other countries (South Africa- 44.5%, Britain- 17.12%)
- ▶ The representation of women at the Panchayat Raj is nearly 50% after passing of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992. The women's reservation bill is passed in Rajya Sabha which provides 33% seats to women in parliament, however, the bill is yet to be passed in Lok Sabha.

❑ Participation of women at the Centre:

- ▶ In the first-ever election, only 5% of the House consisted of women. Now, that has increased to 14%
- ▶ The 15th Lok Sabha had the largest women members as compared to the earlier ones. The 14th Lok Sabha had 45 women and 15th Lok Sabha had a record of 64 women as Members of Parliament. Gradually younger women are entering the Lok Sabha.
- ▶ Three of the prestigious positions were in the hands of women. Meira Kumar was the speaker of Lok Sabha, Sonia Gandhi was the Chairperson of ruling UPA coalition party, Sushma Swaraj was the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha.
- ▶ The 16th Lok Sabha had Sumitra Mahajan as the speaker of the Lok Sabha. There were a total of 68 women members in the Lok Sabha.
- ▶ The 17th Lok Sabha has the highest ever number of women politicians with a total of 78 which is nearly 14%.

❑ **Role of women in the States:**

- ▶ State Assembly elections were held in May 2011 for four States and it gave us two female Chief Ministers i.e. Mamta Banerjee became Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jayalalitha became Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Mayawati is another strong woman leader of Uttar Pradesh. At the age of 39, in 1995 Mayawati became the youngest politician to be elected as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and the first Dalit woman Chief Minister of any State in India. In addition Sheila Dixit became the Chief Minister of Union Territory of Delhi for the third consecutive term in 2009.
- ▶ Mamta Banerjee is currently the Chief minister of West Bengal.

❑ **Role of women in Local Self Government Bodies:**

- ▶ After the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, the representation of women at the grass root level has increased by nearly 50%. Pioneering efforts in this direction were taken by the State of Karnataka in 1983 by offering reservations for women at the Panchayat level. Several States like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand have increased women's participation in Panchayats to 50%. Women members of Panchayats have done remarkable work in improving the conditions of villagers in matters of healthcare, education, sanitation etc.

Obstacles faced by women in the participation of Politics

❑ **Male Domination:**

- ▶ Male domination mindset is one of the major obstacle for women as politics is regarded as man's area of interest and caliber.
- ▶ There is a lack of family support or co operation because the political participation is time consuming as one has to attend party meetings, organize workers, gathering mass support for the party by undertaking different activities to promote party requires women to stay out of the house for a long time. In such scenario women face opposition from her family.

❑ **Role of Political Parties:**

- ▶ Many political parties have failed to offer enough representation to women. They are less likely to involve them in party's organizational bodies.
- ▶ Men are preferred while giving party tickets for contesting elections. At times those tickets are offered to them where party has less chances of victory.

- ▶ After elections, the parties are also not willing to offer key portfolios to women Members of Parliament.
- ▶ Thus political parties also act like a hurdle in women's active participation in politics.
- ❑ **Corruption and Criminalization of Politics:**
 - ▶ Politics and contesting elections has been a costly affair in recent times. Corruption in elections and sabotaging of electoral booths are the methods adopted by many. Many criminal minded people are entering politics as they have huge chunk of black money. Women are regarded as misfit in such changing trends in politics.
- ❑ **Approach of Government officials:**
 - ▶ The elected members need to meet government officials in order to fulfill the promises to the electorate.
 - ▶ However women representatives often face non cooperation from the government officers due to their biased approaches towards women which causes hurdle in their work and reduces their efficiency.

❑ **Poverty, Unemployment and Illiteracy:**

- ▶ Poverty is the major problem faced by India and women's condition is even more bad as the unemployment rate is high among women.
- ▶ Many women work in unorganized sector and hence are paid low wages.
- ▶ Literacy rate is also low in case of women as compared to men.
- ▶ Such issues are the major obstacles in her political growth.

❑ **Psychological Barrier:**

- ▶ In general it has been observed that due to all above factors they have low self esteem and lack confidence in themselves.
- ▶ Many women accept that politics is man's world and they have no role to play in it.
- ▶ The traditional approach of family members as well as their own beliefs stops them from participating in active politics.