

Political Parties: Role in India's Political System

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Introduction

Elections and political parties are crucial to understanding politics in developing nations, especially when analyzing democratization and the strengthening of democratic political regimes. Regular free and fair elections are seen by political scientists as the essential need for a democracy (democratic government). A political party is characterized as a political organization that is formally acknowledged as participating in the electoral process and that has the authority to regularly endorse candidates for elections, whether they are free or not. Elections and political parties (the party system) are thus used to gauge how stable a society's democracy is. The "two-turnover" requirement is an external standard. According to this criterion, a democracy can be deemed consolidated if a party that wins an election during the transition to democracy loses a subsequent election (which need not happen right away), and if the ruling party then loses another election. From a deeper angle, the advancement of democratic consolidation occurs when elections feature genuine competition between political parties based on their platforms and policies, rather than the popularity of specific people or voting based on special interests. Political parties are an essential concomitant of elections in a representative parliamentary democracy. The quintessential precondition for the success of the Westminster model is a political system of two major parties based on ideological and programmatic orientation. The origin and growth of political parties in India can be traced to the days of her struggle for freedom. The overriding passion with the fighters for India's freedom and the founding fathers of her Constitution was to build a united nation and an integrated society while retaining its rich diversity and pluralism. They expected that an ideologically oriented healthy party system would soon evolve in independent India and that it would contribute to societal integration, nation building and strengthening the edifice of democracy. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The source of many of our troubles during the post independence period has been our failure to evolve a healthy party system based on a just and widely acceptable political-economic national agenda.

Constitution and Law in relation to Political Parties

The presence of some well-organized political parties was assumed because they were already in operation, even though political parties were not named in the Constitution until the 52nd constitutional amendment of 1985. The only fundamental right protected by the Constitution was freedom of association. Associations and groups comprising individual Indian nationals may register as political parties with the Election Commission under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Political parties are only mentioned in the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution, which was added by the Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act, 1985, with the express intent of disqualifying an individual for membership in the House of Parliament, the Legislative Assembly, or the Legislative Council of a State due to their defection from their political party. With that exception, there is currently no legislation controlling the creation, registration, operation, or control of political parties.

The Election Commission accords recognition to political parties as national or state parties in accordance with the norms laid down in the Election Symbols (Reservation and

Allotment) Order, 1968. This is for the very limited purpose of allocation of symbols. The number of parties recognised as national parties has been varying from 14 to 4 owing to continuous review of the status based on their performance at the polls.

The Present Scenario

After independence, the party system evolved from a one-party dominant system to a complex multi-party system with strong trends of regionalism, factionalism, and fragmentation as well as a growing desire to form alliances in order to gain a share of power. Following the most recent general elections, this pattern culminated in "hung" Houses. The rise of coalition politics is another important phenomenon that has an impact on the party system. The electorate's political mobilization has sharply increased in recent years due to social divisions based on ascriptive identities, particularly caste and religion. The primary pillars on which the division of political parties has occurred have been casteism, communalism, and personality dominance. In order to win over people, political parties have always taken use of these feelings. A review of the political parties' operations, roles, and performances within the framework of Indian politics and the Constitution has become necessary as a result of these developments.

Institutionalization of political parties - need for a comprehensive legislation to regulate party activities, criteria for registration as a national or State party - dereconingtion of parties.

Identifying the Problem Areas

- Structural and organizational reforms - party organizations - National, State and local levels - inner party democracy - regular party elections, recruitment of party cadres, socialization, development and training, research, thinking and policy planning activities of the party.
- Problems of party funding - need for a legislation to regulate party funds - distribution and spending of party funds during non-election and election times.
- Maintenance of regular accounts by the political parties - auditing and publishing - making audited accounts available for open inspection.
- To what extent and in what way party system could be reformed so as to pave the way for the establishment of stable governments based on the concept of two party system or dual party alliance system.

Law for Political Parties

The Commission suggests that the registration and operation of political parties or party coalitions in India be governed by comprehensive legislation, which could be called the Political Parties (Registration and Regulation) Act.

All political parties and pre-election alliances should be required to register under the proposed legislation. It should specify requirements for a political party or alliance's constitution as well as for registration, recognition, de-registration, and derecognition.

The Commission recommends that every political party or alliance should, in its Memoranda of Association, Rules and Regulations provide for its doors being open to all citizens irrespective of any distinctions of caste, community or the like. It should swear allegiance to the provisions of the Constitution and to the sovereignty and integrity of the nation, regular elections at an interval of three years at its various levels of the party, reservation/representation of at least 30 percent of its organizational positions at various levels and the same percentage of party tickets for parliamentary and State legislature seats to women. Failure to do so should invite the penalty of the party losing recognition.

The parties should be required by law to keep regular and methodical records of the money they receive and spend. An independent body of Accounts & Audit specialists established under the proposed Act may dictate the format of accounts of receipt and expenditure as well as a declaration on the sources of funds. The same independent agency established by the law should also be required to audit the accounts. This body should also prepare a report on the political party's financial situation, which should be accessible to the public for review and inspection.

The Commission suggests that a suitable clause be passed requiring political parties to mandate that their candidates disclose their assets and liabilities when submitting their nomination to the returning officers for any office at any level of government. The Election Commission should have the power to register, de-register, recognize, and derecognize parties as well as to choose the body of auditors. Its decisions should be final and subject to legal review by the Supreme Court.

Recognition of Parties

Minimizing less serious political activity and encouraging gradual polarization of political views are good goals. An essential and useful tool in this endeavor is the Election Commission's process for recognizing political parties. The Commission recognizes that "political parties, with all their well-known human and structural shortcomings, are the only devices (that can) generate countervailing collective power on behalf of the many individually powerless against the relatively few who are individually – or organizationally – powerful," even though the growth of smaller political parties contributes to political confusion. As a result, the strategy must strike a compromise between the requirement to represent the goals of a plural society and stability issues.

At present, for the allotment of an exclusive symbol, State Parties need 6% of the votes polled plus 2 members in the Legislative Assembly. The alternative criteria for recognition is at least 3% of the seats in the Lower House. At the national level such a recognition would require 6% of the votes polled in at least 4 States plus 4 members in the Lok Sabha, or alternatively at least 2% of membership of the Lok Sabha drawn from at least 3 States.

In order to prevent the growth of smaller political parties, the Commission suggests that the Election Commission gradually raise the eligibility criteria for recognition. To run for the Lok Sabha, only political parties or pre-poll alliances that are registered as national parties or alliances with the Election Commission will be given a common emblem. To run in elections for State Legislatures and the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), state parties may be given symbols.

Needs for Stability

It might involve preferable to let the House itself determine majority support for a leader in the event that no single political party or pre-election coalition of parties is able to secure a clear majority in the Lok Sabha following elections, rather than involving the President's highest office in the disputes surrounding who could command the House's confidence. It would eliminate ambiguity and eliminate the requirement for the President to request a vote of confidence from the Prime Minister within a predetermined time frame. Therefore, the Commission suggests that the Rules of Procedure in the Lok Sabha may allow for the election of the Leader of the House by the Lok Sabha along with the election of the Speaker and in a similar manner in the event that no single political party or pre-poll alliance of parties is able to secure a clear majority in the Lok Sabha following elections. After then, the Leader can be named Prime Minister. The Chief Minister's office in the relevant State may use the same process. The Commission also suggests changing the Rules of Procedure to implement a constructive vote of no confidence procedure. At least 20% of the House's members must give notice in order for a motion of no confidence to be presented against a government. Also, the motion should be accompanied by a proposal of alternative Leader to be voted simultaneously.

Scourge of Criminalisation

The Commission suggests that if a candidate has been found guilty of a crime or has been charged with a crime by a court, no political party should sponsor him or provide him a ticket to run for office. The legislation should expressly state that any party that violates this clause faces disqualification, deregistration, and immediate derecognition.

Funding Political Parties

There are no solutions to the complicated issue of political fundraising. Political parties require large donations from businesses and other undesirable sources. The likelihood of reliance, corruption, and a lack of integrity in public life increases with the amount contributed. In order to prevent any improper influence of money in politics, the need for transparency must be seen as a democratic ideal in and of itself. Laws should be generic in nature and applied to everyone, not just political parties or candidates, but also donors, if they are to be effective in promoting openness. If not, other or indirect methods of avoiding control will be developed. In actuality, strengthening regulations as well as the systems and capacities of oversight and controlling organizations is crucial, but it only solves a portion of the issue. Funding and pledges frequently flow straight to the candidate and his or her inner group of supporters rather than the parties. This is especially true in light of the party organizations' ongoing image and credibility crisis and the rise of regional leaders brought about by the regionalization process. Transactions between contributors and beneficiaries typically become even more covert as a result. As a result, party members or senior leaders may frequently be unaware of private contributions, many of which have questionable provenance and substantial amounts.

The flow of money to political parties from both internal and foreign sources is now governed by a number of Acts. The Commission suggests that these regulations be combined to create a comprehensive law that regulates contributions to political parties and election expenditures. The goal of the new law should be to make political fundraising more transparent. Corporate donations should be public and allowed within higher specified limitations. It should recognize this tax loss to the state as its contribution to state sponsorship of elections and exempt all legitimate and transparent donations up to a predetermined level. For instance, if contributions are made to party finances rather than to individuals, tax exemptions might be restricted to, say, Rs. 25,000 for individuals and Rs. 10,000,000 for businesses. The Board of Directors may authorize corporate contributions up to, say, Rs. 10,000,000, after which the shareholders may approve any additional amount. The company's financial statements and yearly reports should have a distinct heading for political funding. This will guarantee openness. This will be in addition to the current requirements for donations to political parties outlined in the Companies Act of 1956.

Leadership Conventions

Parties ought to give the leadership convention system careful thought. The first benefit of this would be that it would make the process of choosing leaders more transparent, democratic, and federal. Second, the public will be aware of potential prime ministerial contenders beforehand. Third, it would stop the trend of regionalization and fragmentation and implement a nationally aggregative process in major parties. Major parties may host a series of staggered State conventions with their individual slates of candidates (common for all the States in one party) if the national convention proves to be too costly. Parties will become more functional in a parliamentary federal system of government as a result of this.

Conclusion

In India, political parties have been essential to the development of the country. The great old Indian National Congress was a key player in the liberation struggle. Indian political parties were actively working on creating the country's future road map by starting to create the constitution while negotiating the terms of freedom with the colonial master. Parties, especially the Indian

National Congress, successfully carried out the duty of nation-building and maintaining democracy in the post-independence era. In the early years of India's independence, INC and Nehru were recognized by many academics with instilling democratic ideas in the country's populace. INC has made significant contributions to India's unity, integrity, secular polity, and democratic federalism while maintaining the idea of inclusive democracy. peaceful and regular change of administration: The representatives of the political parties chosen through elections are in charge of both the legislative and executive branches of the government. The Indian people elect representatives and political parties to rule their country. Political parties effectively perform this role since independence by contesting elections, forming governments and respecting the principles of parliamentary democracy in case of no confidence or in cases when no party achieves majority. Only at one occasion, party in power set this principle aside during 1975-77 (national emergency imposed) by PM Indira Gandhi. However, this stands as exception. The pressure from united opposition parties in form of Janata Party brought democracy back. In elections, if no party gains majority in the lower house, governments are formed through negotiating coalitions. As with any other democracy, Indian political parties represent different sections and classes of Indian population such as Dalit, Tribal, linguistic groups, regional groups, minority religious groups etc. Many Indian political parties are based on these identities, such as Samajwadi party, Bahujan Samaj party, Akali Dal, Asom Gana Parishad, DMK, AIDMK, Indian Muslim League etc. The most vulnerable members of society benefit from democracy because these parties uphold and advance the interests of marginalized groups. Opposition parties have successfully held the governments accountable since independence. Opposition parties actively criticized governmental policy even when Congress was dominated by a single party. Opposition parties at the time served as pressure groups to keep the government in check because they were unable to offer a viable alternative to the ruling party. Later on, the opposition's influence in Indian politics only increased.

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