



POLITICAL PROCESS IN INDIA

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course seeks to introduce students to some important political processes in India. The course has 14 units which are grouped into 6 blocks according to thematic unity. The first block has units about political parties and party systems. Block 2 is about determinants of voting behaviour. Block 3 deals with regional aspirations and movements. Block 4 has units which discuss relationship between religion and politics. Block 5 consists of units on caste and politics. Block 6 is about affirmative action with reference to reservation and development.

The unit-wise description of blocks is like this. The block 1 has three units. Unit 1, 2 and 3 are about political parties, party systems and democracy; political parties in India; and party systems in India, respectively. Two units in block 2 are about the determinants of voting behaviour in India: unit 4 is about caste, class, gender, and tribes; and unit 5 is about ethnicity, religion, and language. In block 3 which is on broad theme of regional aspiration and movements, units 6, 7 and 8 are about autonomy movements, insurgency, and movements for separate statehood, respectively. Block 4 has two units in which unit 9 discusses about secularism and unit 10 deals with communalism in the context of Religion and Politics. Two units in block 5 are: unit 11 about caste organizations and political formations; and, unit 12 about caste and politics. In block 6, units 13 and 14 discuss reservation and development respectively under the broad theme of affirmative action.

Each unit has inbuilt *Check Your Progress Exercises*. After having read the units, you can try to answer the questions given in these exercises. At the end of these units, there are answers to the questions mentioned in the *Check Your Progress Exercises*. You can match your answers with the questions given in the unit. But be careful to write answers in your own words. The course ends with the list of *references*. You are advised to go through them.



BLOCK 1
POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY
SYSTEM

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BLOCK 1 INTRODUCTION

In a democratic political system, political parties are important institutions. They are devices through which people participate in political processes. Political parties mobilize people on the issues which concern them. People elect their representatives to the legislative bodies as candidates of political parties. There are various political parties in India. They represent various ideologies, issues, leaderships, policies and programmes, regions, and social groups. Based on extent of their influence in the states or at all India levels, political parties can be identified as national, state/regional, or registered parties. And on the basis of their numbers in India or in the states, they can be viewed as party systems such as one-party system, two-party system or multi-party system. The three units in this block deal with political parties and party systems in India. Unit 1 is about political parties, party systems and democracy. Units 2 and 3 discuss political parties, and party systems in India respectively.



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THE PEOPLE'S
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UNIT 1 POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY SYSTEMS AND DEMOCRACY*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Meaning of Political Party and Party System
- 1.3 Evolution of Political Parties and Party System in India
 - 1.3.1 One-party Dominance System
 - 1.3.2 Bi-polar and two-party system
 - 1.3.3 Multi-party and Multi-party System
- 1.4 Political Parties, Party System and Democracy in India
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 References
- 1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define party system and political parties;
- Understand main attributes of party system and political parties in India; and
- Explain relation between Political Party, Party System and Democracy.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In a democratic country, institutions play a significant role. Political parties represent such institutions through which people participate in legislative processes by electing parties' nominees into legislative bodies. They also mobilise people into political activities. Through such activities parties raise concerns of people. Therefore, political parties are essential features of a democratic political system. India has several political parties. In the post-Independence period, India has witnessed transformation from dominance of single party, the Congress in the 1950s-1960s, into multiplication of parties in the later period. The unit discusses the evolution of political parties and party system and relationships of political parties and party systems with democracy in India.

1.2 MEANING OF POLITICAL PARTY AND PARTY SYSTEM

Political Party

Political party forms an important component of a political system. A political party is an institution which consists of leaders, followers, policies and

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programmes. Its followers may have formal membership of the party or may support it without being formal members. There are different parties. Parties can be differentiated on the bases of leaders, policies and programmes, ideologies and internal functioning. The principal feature of a political party which distinguishes it from other organizations is that its main purpose is to capture power. Unlike a political party, a pressure group, interest group or non-party civil society organization, generally do not seek power. However, sometime such organizations also contest elections. Political parties are the important links between individuals, state and society. Political parties provide the crucial connection between social process and policy-makers, and influence debates and policies on issues affecting the interests of various social groups in a political system.

Party System

The meaning of party system is related to number of political parties in a country. Based on the numbers of parties present in political system, party systems generally can be categorized as single party system, two-party system or multiparty system. As their names suggest, the single party, two-party and multiparty systems denote presence of single, two or several parties in a democracy. The most common way to identify party systems in India generally is the level of performance of parties in elections and their presence in the governments. Presence of more than one party is a feature of a democratic and plural society. Presence of several parties has been an important aspect of party system in India. However, number of party systems changed in India since the 1950s. As you will read section 1.3, the party system which existed during the first decades following Independence was marked by the dominance of the Congress a single party. It was a period of one party dominance but not of the absence of more than one parties. The period of 1950s-1960s was described as an era of single party dominance by Rajni Kothari. During this period the Congress was the single dominant party in India. This period was known as era of Congress dominance. The single party dominance did not mean that there existed only one party in India. What it means was that apart from the Congress there existed several parties such as the Communist Party of India (CPI), different socialist parties, Swatantra Party, Republican Party of India, Jana Sangha, etc., in different states of India. But among these, it was only the Congress Party, which had presence in all states and led governments at the same time at the centre and in most states of India. From the late 1960s, the Congress did not remain a single dominant party. It was defeated by the non-Congress parties in eight states in the assembly elections held in 1967. Since then, apart from Congress, non-Congress parties formed governments in the centre and several states. It signified the presence of multi-party system in India. Two-party system denotes presence of predominantly two parties. In India, two-party system generally prevails in some states. Presence of two-party system does not mean that more than two parties are not present in such states. What it means that among several parties, two parties are most influential. In such system, two parties form governments at different times: one being a ruling party in one government, and opposition in another, and vice-versa. Some scholars such as Sanjay Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav prefer to categorise party systems in terms of poles. Meaning of party system should not be confused with categorization of parties such as national, state/regional or registered. The two are different. The political system, as you have just read is

about number of parties, and their performance in elections and participation in governments. The categorization of parties is done on the basis of their registration with Election Commission of India. Election commission has categorised three kinds of political parties in India: National, State/Regional and Registered Parties. You will read about the categorization of parties in unit 2. At present, India has almost 2400 political parties of which there are 7 National Parties, 36 state-recognized parties, 329 regional parties and almost 2044 registered/unrecognized parties.

1.3 EVOLUTION OF PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

Political parties in India were born during the Indian national movement. At that time, they were involved in the Indian national movement. They had also contested elections to legislative assemblies under restricted adult franchise. After Independence, the Congress emerged as a dominant party. Indeed, during the Independence movement the Congress was a movement and it became a party after Independence. It means that the Congress did not have to be involved in a movement like national movement, and its main concern was to contest elections and form government. The party systems in India evolved over a several years after Independence. However, there did not exist single party system. Instead, during the 1950s-1960s, the system was marked by the dominance of a single party, i.e., the Congress, which existed along with other parties. The latter lacked support and presence across all states of India. Since Independence, India has seen the presence of three types of party systems: One Party Dominance System, two-party and bi-polar party System, and multiparty and multi-polar party system. You can read below the phases of evolution of party system.

1.3.1 One Party Dominance System

For around two decades, the party system in India was dominated by Congress party. Although several non-Congress parties had existed at that time, it was the Congress which headed government not only at the centre but in most of the states. Thus, the non-Congress parties were opposition parties at the centre and in states, except in Kerala where the CPI was a ruling party for some years in the late 1950s. Since the Congress was single party having support in most states of the country, Rajni Kothari conceptualised the party system of this period as an era of One-party dominance. He even termed the Congress party as 'Congress System'. As the leading party, Congress had obtained an absolute majority of seats in parliament in the first four general elections. Congress party enjoyed this position till 1967. In 1977 General election, the Janata Party replaced the Congress at the centre, and in following years it replaced the Congress in several states as well. By this time, the party system in India, ceased to be dominated by the single party system.

1.3.2 Bi-polar and Two-party system

India does not have two-party system in ideal sense of the term. Rather, it has bi-polar political system. In this system, three or more parties come together to form pre-election or post-election alliance, form a coalition government and/or adopt a common minimum programme. Such alliances generally occur around

two major parties, which work as competing poles or alliance. As there are two poles of such alliances, the party system in such alliance is called bi-polar party system. This system can exist both at state and national levels. While the principal parties in such alliances generally remain same, their allies can change. Emergence of bi-polar system in India is linked with coalition politics in India. Its first major example was formation of non-Congress SVD governments in eight states in India following Congress's defeat in 1967 elections. There were two poles in such bi-polar system: On the one hand pole was the Congress party and on the other it was a group of non-Congress parties such as Bhartiya Kranti Dal, the Samyukta Socialist party, Praja Socialist party and Jana Sangh. Its first example at national level was associated with the formation of the Janata Party government following Janata Party's victory in 1977 Lok Sabha election. At that time, the Congress became an opposition party, and the Janata Party became the ruling party. But these two parties represented two-party system, not the bi-polar system because Janata Party was not a coalition of parties. It was party formed out of merger of five parties – Congress (O), BKD, CFD, Jana Sangha and Swatantra Party. The Congress became its main rival. Thus, Janata Party and the Congress represented two-party system. Such system existed roughly from 1977-1980, till Janata Party ran the central government. However, competing alliances which took place later at the centre and state levels were actually the bi-polar, not two-party systems. Since the 1990s, India has witnessed many coalition governments. Failure of major national parties like the Congress and the BJP to win majority seats in elections brought numerous small parties to the forefront. 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 the largest member of the coalition. The Governments formed in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 were coalitions of several parties. However, from 2004 there is one major party in the coalition government. For example, in 2004 and 2009 it was a coalition government of UPA in which Congress was the leading among other parties in the alliance and in 2014, in NDA government; BJP had supremacy in a coalition of alliance parties. These included the parties led by the BJP in NDA alliance, and those led by the Congress in the UPA alliance with the BJP on the one pole and the Congress/non-Congress parties on the other poles. In states, the bi-polar party systems revolves around the regional parties: for example, in Odisha between the BJD and the Congress; in Jammu and Kashmir until August 5, 2019 when it was a state between the NCP and the PDP, in Kerala between the left and the Congress, etc.

1.3.3 Multi-Party and Multi-Polar Party System

Since 1967 elections, Indian political system has undergone changes. The Congress's defeat in the elections and split in it weakened the party. This happened with the simultaneous rise of regional parties. It marked the rise of multiple parties in India. Although multiple parties had existed during the era of Congress's dominance, in comparison to the Congress, they played marginal role in Indian politics. Emergence of multiple parties in several states was result of changes which had occurred in the society. The rise of new issues and regional leaders in different states show such changes. These leaders formed regional political parties. Rise of leaders such as Charan Singh in UP, Rao Virendra Singh in

Haryana, Biju Patnaik in Odisha, Bal Thakre in Maharashtra in the 1960s and 1970s who formed regional parties are some of the early examples marking multiplication of political parties in India. Their number further multiplied in coming decades. The rise of BSP and SP in north India, TMC in West Bengal and BJP in Odisha in the 1980s and 1990s, and several such examples show presence of multiparty system in India. Multiple parties exist at the national as well as local levels. Such parties reflect the social, economic, cultural and political diversity of India. An important aspect of the multiple party system in India is formation of multiple alliances of political parties not only based on policies, programmes and ideologies but also political expediency. Different parties enter alliances in which one party seems to become a nodal party. Such alliances show the existence of multi-polar parties. Multi-party system exists in the form of multi-polar systems.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Define Political Party and Party System.

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2) Briefly explain the evolution of party systems in India

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1.4 POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY SYSTEM AND DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Political parties and democracy are closely related. This relationship is reflected in various indicators of democracy: people's participation in decision-making, their political mobilization, generating political consciousness among them, articulation of their issues and providing a vision to meet their needs. Peoples participate in decision-making process of the government through political parties. And political parties do so by fielding candidates in elections. Thus, political parties and the candidates fielded by them become channel through which people participate in decision-making process. These candidates represent people as members of Parliament or the state legislature. Political parties are practical

devices which enable peoples’ participation in decision-making. It is not possible for everybody to directly participate in elections because of large number of population. They do so indirectly by electing candidates in elections who are given tickets by political parties. Apart from the candidates from political parties, people can even elect their representatives the candidates who do not belong to political parties. Such candidates are known as independent candidates. But political parties are more common and effective devices to represent people than the independent candidates. Political parties also play democratic role in mobilizing people into movement. In a democracy, the opposition parties are expected to critique the policies and functioning of the government. Elected members from different parties, along with the independent candidates, participate in the legislative bodies, contribute to strengthening democracy. The policies framed by a government are result of debate among people’s representatives generally fielded by political parties. The parties also contribute to generating democratic consciousness among people. They make people aware of their ideologies and vision about the welfare of the people. Studies show that since the 1990s multiple parties have fielded candidates in elections from various segments of society including marginalised communities such as Dalits, OBCs, women, etc. According to Jaffrelot and Sanjay Kumar the increasing participation of people in election shows the rise of “plebeians”. Ashutosh Varshney opines that India is becoming more democratic. Similarly, Yogendra Yadav has argued that there has been democratic upsurge in India. These observations are about democratisation through electoral politics. Since political parties are the main players in electoral politics, it can be said that political parties and party systems have strengthened democracy in India. The situation in the past three decades has been different from what that of the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, parties’ contribution to democracy was limited in the sense that the elected leaders generally belonged to the elite sections of the society, and patron-client relationship played a decisive role in mobilization of the voters. Changes in the party systems, their multiplication and rise of parties espousing the cause of Dalits, OBCs, and growth of consciousness among the people have strengthened democracy during the past few decades.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the relationship of political parties and political systems with democracy.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

In democracy, institutions are essential and political processes are important to run institutions, especially representative governments. Political parties are main organs in a party system and promoting democracy. In India, multiparty system represents diversity and plurality. Especially after 1970s, democratization of political parties and enhancement of competitive politics have changed the features of party system in India. Democratization of parties has provided an opportunity to all section of the society to participate in electoral politics through their representatives. It has made country more democratic and participation of the lower and vulnerable section of the society in election has provided new definition of democracy. The democratization of political parties has occurred with emergence of new parties and coalition government in centre.

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1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) A political party is the most important agency through which people participate in political process in a democratic country. It is an organization

that works as a medium between the people and their representatives to participate in decision-making processes in the legislative bodies. Political parties have features such as organizational structure, leadership, support base or social bases, programmes, ideologies, etc. Party system denotes existence of a number of political parties in a political system. On the basis of their number, party systems can be categorised as single party, two-party or multi-party systems.

- 2) There are three important phases of evolution of Political Party and Party System in India. First was as categorised by Rajni Kothari as phase of Congress party dominance which existed during 1950-60s. During the phase of Congress party or single party dominance, the opposition parties existed but their support base was limited. The second phase was in the 1970s, when there was emergence of many political parties at regional level. This was outcome of politics of recognition and social and political movement of the backward classes, minorities and ethnic groups. This was also a phase of two-party or bi-polar party system. Third phase is related to emergence of coalition politics as a dominant feature of party systems since the late 1980s. During this phase, multi-party and multi-polar party system became a significant feature of party system in India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Political parties and party systems are important agencies that promote democracy. Its positive impact is that it has democratized the party system and encouraged competitive electoral politics that has provided a platform to vulnerable sections of the society to come to forefront. It has promoted politics of recognition. Studies generally agree that party system has empowered the marginalised groups and strengthened democracy. Rising number of political parties indicate a phenomenon in which larger sections find political parties as devise for political recognition. Political parties contribute to strengthening democracy by mobilization of people on their demands and making them politically conscious, by including their issues in programmes and manifestoes, by discussing them in legislatures, etc.

UNIT 2 POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Types of Political Parties in India
 - 2.2.1 National Party
 - 2.2.2 State Party/Regional Party
 - 2.2.3 Registered Party/Unrecognized
- 2.3 National Parties
 - 2.3.1 The Indian National Congress (I) or The Congress (I)
 - 2.3.2 The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
 - 2.3.3 The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
 - 2.3.4 The Communist Party of India (CPI) and The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M))
 - 2.3.5 Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and All India Trinamool Congress (AITC or TMC)
- 2.4 State/Regional Parties
 - 2.4.1 SP, BKD/BLD and Janata Dal (U)
 - 2.4.2 DML, AIADMK and TDP
 - 2.4.3 The AGP
 - 2.4.4 The AAP
 - 2.4.5 The Shiromani Akali Dal
 - 2.4.6 The Shiv Sena
- 2.5 Registered or Unrecognized Parties
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 References
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define national, state and regional Parties;
- Analyse the role of some major parties of India; and
- Explain the reason behind the formation of a new party

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In unit 1, you have read about the meaning of a political party. India has multiple parties. They operate at all India and state levels. Election commission of India (EC) has categorised three kinds of political parties in the country: National, State/Regional and Registered/unrecognized Parties. At present, India has almost 2300 political parties which include seven national parties, 36 state-recognized parties, 329 regional parties and almost 2044 registered/unrecognized parties. Depending on their electoral performance, number of these parties keeps changing. In this unit you will read about different types of parties.

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2.2 TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

This sub-section of the unit explains the criteria given by the Election Commission of India to categorise the political parties as national, state/regional and registered/unrecognized parties.

2.2.1 National Party

According to the Election Commission, for being considered as a national party a political party should at least have one of the following qualifications:

- i) It has to win a minimum of two percent of the seats in the Lok Sabha from at least three different States;
- ii) In general elections, the party must manage to win six percent of the votes and win at least four Lok Sabha seats;
- iii) It should be recognised as a state-level party in four or more states.

In 2020, there are seven national Parties in India: Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI(M)), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and All India Trinamool Congress.

2.2.2 State Party/Regional Party

Election Commission does not use the concept of regional party. Instead, it uses the notion of state party. However, in academic discourse and general parlance, state and regional parties are used interchangeably. But there are differences in ways the Election Commission and academic discourse define state and regional parties. The election commission identifies a regional party on the basis of its electoral performance in a number of states. Academic discourse defines a regional or state party in terms of its policies, activities, support-bases and leadership in specific regions or states. According to EC, to be considered as state party, a party should have one of the qualifications to be acknowledged as a state party:

- i) It must have engaged in political activity for at least five years;
- ii) It must have won either four percent of the seats in a general election or three percent in a state election;
- iii) In addition, it must have had the support of six percent of the votes cast;
- iv) The status of a state party can still be bestowed upon an entity even if it fails to win any seats in the Lok Sabha or the Assembly if it manages to win at least eight per cent of the total votes cast in the entire state.

In 2020, there are 36 recognized state parties in India that represent their respective states. Some of the recognised state parties include Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), All India Anna Dravida MunnetraKazhagam (AIADMK), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Biju Janata Dal(BJD), Janata Dal (United) JD(U), Rashtriya Janata Dal(RJD), Samajwadi Party (SP).

2.2.3 Registered /Unrecognized Party

Registered party is a party that is neither recognised as a state nor a national party, but it is registered with the election commission. It is also called unrecognized party. At present, there are more than 2000 registered parties in India.

2.3 NATIONAL PARTIES

Out of seven national parties, two parties – the Congress and the BJP have had support base in maximum states in India at different points of time since Independence. For the first two decades after Independence, the Congress was the single dominant party in India. Indeed, on account of its having support base in most parts of India, Rajni Kothari described the period from the 1950s-1960s as the period of one party dominance, i.e., the dominance of the Congress. Since 2010s, the BJP has emerged as the single dominant national party like the Congress was in the first decade after Independence.

2.3.1 The Indian National Congress (I) or The Congress (I)

Established in 1885, India's oldest party, the Indian National Congress was born out of India's freedom struggle. As stated in unit 1, it is generally believed that the Congress was a movement during the Indian national movement. It eventually became a political party after Independence. Its main purpose became to contest elections in Independent democratic India. During the period of its dominance, the Congress drew support from social groups including all castes groups and religious minorities. The Congress-led governments introduced several welfare policies aiming at social change. Most important among them included land reforms, reservations of SCs and STs, community development programmes. Although these policies faced several challenges, they made the Congress popular among the large sections of Society. The Congress's popularity could not remain intact for long. In the 1960s, dissatisfaction brew among people in several states against the Congress-led governments policies. As a result, the Congress lost in 1967 assembly elections in eight states leading to the formation of non-Congress governments. This ended the dominance of the Congress in India's party system. In 1969, the Congress was divided into two parties: Indian National Congress (Organisation) or Congress (O) led by Kamraj and Indian National Congress (Requisition) or Congress (R) led by Indira Gandhi. The Congress led by Indira Gandhi again emerged as the largest winning party in 1971 General Election getting 352 out of 518 seats in Lok Sabha. As you have read in unit 1, while the Congress's dominance was challenged by the emergent regional parties and leaders since the late 1960s in several states. And it was challenged by the Janata Party at the level of centre in the late 1970s. The Congress remained a strong political force during 1980s. But in the coming decades, though Congress remained a national party, it lost the status of a single dominant party. It retains its influence through coalition with regional and other national parties known as United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

2.3.2 Bharatiya Janata Party

The roots of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can be traced to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The Bharatiya Jana Sangha (BJS) was established in 1951 as the political

wing of the Hindu nationalist organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The BJS was founded by a renowned advocate, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. The BJS gained substantial support in the Hindi speaking regions in India in the 1960s. As mentioned in unit 1, in 1977, it got merged with Janata Party along with four other parties. Following the disintegration of the Janata Party, its segment, the BJS emerged as a party with a different name the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on April 5, 1980. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was its first president. From its marginal position in the 1980s, when the BJP was a small localized party with a political presence restricted to just a few states in the Hindi heartland, the acquisition of new territory and new allies has transformed it into being the main political force in India with a mass national following. The expansion of the BJP occurred along with the decline of the Congress as the dominant party. At the national level in the Lok Sabha, it increased its seats from 2 seats in 1984 to 303 seats in 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Its growth has been more spectacular since 2014 Lok Sabha election in which it had won 282 seats. It mobilised popular support through mobilization on issues such as movement for construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya, abolition of Article 370, abolition of triple talaq, etc. The BJP as a major member of the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) has been heading central governments in India since 2014, and the NDA runs government in most states which expanded from 8 states in 2014 to 20 states in 2018. In 2019, 11 state governments were headed by the BJP chief ministers.

2.3.3 Bahujan Samaj Party

The Bahujan Samaj symbolises social transformation in India. It emerged as an influential political force in north India. In UP, it was in the government five times, and its leader Mayawati was chief minister of four times in the state. As its name suggests it mobilized support base among the *Bahujan Samaj* or majority sections of society consisting largely the marginalised groups such as Dalits, tribal communities, OBCs, and religious minorities (Christians, Sikhs and Muslims). The BSP was founded on April 14, 1984 by Dalit leader Kanshi Ram. Before forming the BSP, Kanshi Ram mobilised the marginalised communities through organizations such as BAMCEF (All India Backward and Minority Employees Federation) founded in 1978, and DS4 (*Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti*). The BAMCEF had support of the central government employees. The BSP's prime aim was to empower the marginalised communities or the *Bahujan samaj*. The BSP's principle slogan underscores this thrust: *mat hamara raj tumhara, nahi chalega, nahi chalega* (You (the high castes) will not be allowed to rule us [the Bahujan samaj] with our votes) or, *vote se lenge PM/CM, arakshan se SP/DM* (we will become MP/CM with votes, and get jobs with reservation). The BSP has made rapid growth on the electoral front. By 1996, the BSP achieved status of a national party. The BSP leader Mayawati became chief minister of Uttar Pradesh four times, first in 1995. During the political regimes in UP headed by Mayawati, the BSP-led government introduced several programmes for the welfare of the weaker sections. Among these Ambedkar Village Programmes have been the most important. Under the Ambedkar Village Programmes the BSP government introduced welfare policies in the Ambedkar villages. Ambedkar villages had substantial population of the Scheduled Castes. The BSP governments gave cultural recognition to icons, heroes and symbols associated with social cause or with marginalized communities.

2.3.4 Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI (M))

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded in 1925. It is inspired by Marxism. The CPI became the principal opposition party in the first Lok Sabha (1952-1957). Its agendas include demand such as social equality of women, nationalization of privately owned enterprises, land reforms, social justice for the lower castes and the right to protest through demonstrations and strikes. In 1957 election, the CPI became the first communist party in the world to win election in a parliamentary democracy by winning election to Kerala legislative assembly. Following the victory in this election, E.M.S. Namboodiripad became chief minister of Kerala. It was also the first non-Congress government in India. There were differences within the CPI on nature of Independence achieved in India, nature of Indian state, and attitude towards Soviet Union and China. The differences led a group of leaders to come out of the CPI and formed a separate party in 1964 with different name, i.e., the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M). Namboodiripad was one of the leaders who formed CPI (M). The immediate reason for the split in the CPI included ideological differences within CPI following the Indo-China war in 1962. The communist parties consider nature of state as an important issue of analysis. And both parties had differences on their understanding of nature of Indian state. In CPI's understanding the Indian state represents the national bourgeoisies, and in CPI(M)'s understanding, the Indian state represents a nexus of bourgeoisie, landlords and foreign capital. They have largest support base in three states of India – West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Apart from the first communist government of Namboodiripad in Kerala in 1957, they formed governments several times in the state in alliance with other left and democratic parties since 1977. However, there is a gradual decline in the support of these parties in West Bengal and Tripura. The decline has occurred with rise predominantly of All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, and BJP in Tripura. The CPI and CPI(M) have membership structure and are cadre-based parties like BJP and DMK.

2.3.5 Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and All India Trinamool Congress (AITC or TMC)

The NCP was formed on 25 May 1999, and Sarad Pawar, P.A. Sangma, and Tariq Anwar were the founder members of the party. P.A. Sangma left the party in 2012. They formed the party against the expulsion of these members from Indian National Congress because they questioned the nationality of Sonia Gandhi as an Indian. The party described itself as a “millennial party with a modern and progressive orientation and believed in holistic democracy, Gandhian secularism and federalism based national unity”. Sarad Pawar was a famous leader of the party and had a very strong vote base in Maharashtra. During UPA I and UPA II, NCP was one of the alliance parties of Congress in Centre.

The TMC was established on 1 January 1998 by Mamta Banerjee. She was politically active in the Congress party for 26 years before forming her own party. The party has stronghold in West Bengal. Kerala, Manipur, Tripura, Assam, Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha are other states where TMC participated in the assembly elections.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the different types of political parties in India defined by Election Commission?

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2) Write a note on the BSP.

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2.4 STATE/REGIONAL PARTIES

Since the 1960s, the regional political parties have been playing influential role in politics of several states. Indeed, on several occasions, they have been partners in running national governments through coalition politics.

There is not a singular pattern for the emergence of regional parties in north, south, east and West. Regional parties are reflection of certain developments in society. These developments are the formation of the linguistic state, a decline of Congress system, uneven economic development, mobilisation, ethnicity, entry of new groups into politics and politics of recognition. Emergence of these parties varies from North to South. Regional political parties represent aspiration of regional identities in terms of culture, social groups, development patterns, leadership, patterns of mobilization and other issues. Emergence of regional parties and their support bases in different regions also indicate nature of social transformation in those regions. Impact of land reforms, green revolution in the 1950s-1960s, and later impact of reservation for backward classes and farming communities resulted in emergence of regional leaders and political parties in north India. The most important examples of such leaders include Charan Singh, Karpoori Thakur, Mulayam Singh, Laloo Yadav or Nitish Kumar in UP and Bihar. They formed or led regional parties known by different names – BKD/BLD, LD, SP, RJD, JD(U). These parties articulated demands of farming communities and backward classes. These parties along with the regional parties from other states played decisive role getting reservation introduced for backward classes at national level in government jobs and admission in public academic institutions. It was done

according to the recommendations of Mandal Commission Report. Leadership of such parties belong to the backward classes and farming communities. There are 36 recognized state parties active in different states in India. In this sub-section, you will read about the programmes, leadership, social bases, patterns of mobilization and ideologies of some regional parties existing in different regions of India.

2.4.1 SP, BKD/BLD and Janata Dal (U)

Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal, parties from UP and Bihar, were the product of the socio-cultural process. Leaders of both parties have actively participated in the JP movement. Later, they formed their own parties and became representative of OBCs. However, RJD in Bihar gained support not only from OBCs but also from Muslim and other minority communities. Lalu Prasad, the founder of RJD and staunch activist of JP movement, emphasises on the politics of recognition and dignified life for the deprived sections.

2.4.2 DMK, AIADMK and TDP

Three political parties in south India are among the examples of the regional parties in south India, i.e., DMK, AIADMK and TDP. In Tamil Nadu, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) emerged from Dravidian movement which sought to get self-respect to the Dravidian or non-Brahmin communities. The DMK split in 1972 when a popular film star, M.G Ramachandran formed the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). Although there are several parties in Tamil Nadu, two regional parties, the DMK and AIADMK are the most dominant parties in the states. These parties have been forming governments alternatively. When the DMK became a ruling party, the AIADMK became opposition party, and the AIADMK became a ruling party, the DMK became opposition party. The DMK emerged first headed government in 1967 in Tamil Nadu when it replaced the Congress Party. It was replaced by the AIADMK in 1977, and the two parties have dominated state politics since the 1970s. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is active in Andhra Pradesh. It was founded in 1982 in the name of *Telugu Bidda* or Telugu Pride by Telugu film actor NT Ramarao (NTR). It sought to restore Telugu pride which according to NTR was hurt by the Congress (I) which had dominated the politics of Andhra Pradesh till then. The TDP's programme included issues such as implementation of land reforms, ceiling on urban income, low-priced rice and other populist measures. After NTR's death, NTR's son-in-law, Chandra Babu became the chief of the TDP. The latter became the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh in 1995. The largest support to the TDP comes from the farming community, the Kammas. After the formation of Telangana state in 2014, the TDP's areas of activities and support base got confined to Andhra Pradesh, i.e., that part of the state which was left after the formation of Telangana. It consists of Rayalaseema and Andhra regions. The TDP faces formidable challenge from another regional party, YSR congress party in Andhra Pradesh. In 2019 legislative assembly election, it defeated the TDP and its leader Jagannathan Reddy became the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh.

2.4.3 The AGP

Assam Gana Parishad was founded in 1985. Prior to its emergence, organizations such as All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram

Parishad (ASGP) launched a six year (from 1979 till 1985) long movement against the illegal migrants, especially those from Bangladesh. The movement ended with the signing of an accord between central government and AASU. The principal clause of the Assam Accord was that names of those foreigners who entered Assam on 31 March 1971 will be detected, deleted from electoral roles and deported from India. After the Assam accord, the AASU and ASGP founded AGP for the purpose of contesting elections and forming government. The AGP contested Assembly election in 1986 in Assam. Following its victory Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who led the AASU against the foreigners became the chief minister of Assam. The AGP led government in Assam two times under the chief ministership of Mahanta.

2.4.4 AAP

In the contemporary period, the formation of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is the outcome of the anti-corruption movement (different from the earlier movements) led by Anna Hazare in 2011 where middle classes, irrespective of caste, ethnicity and language, participated in the movement. Arvind Kejriwal, the founder member of the AAP party, became the face of the anti-corruption movement. AAP is different from other state parties because of two reasons: it is not an ideologically driven-party, and second, it is not representative of any socio-cultural or ethnic movements that have been the important factors of forming a party in India. The AAP formed government led by Arvind Kejriwal twice, from December 2013 to February 2014 and 2015 to present. It won 67 out of 70 seats in Assembly elections held in Delhi in 2015. In 2020 assembly election it won 62 seats in Delhi and with that AAP formed government for the third time under the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal.

2.4.5 The Shiromani Akali Dal

The Shiromani Akali Dal or Akali Dal was product of movement of the Sikhs which took place in the 1920s against the corrupt practices of Mahants in the Gurudwaras. Following the movement against the Mahants, the Government passed in 1925 an Act about the management and control of Gurudwaras. This act gave the right to manage the affairs of Gurudwara to body known as Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). The Akali Dal maintained coordination and grip over the SGPC. It espoused the cause of the Sikh community. Before Independence, it fought against the injustices of the British. After the Independence, it demanded creation of Punjabi Suba, and in November 1966 the central government created Punjab state with the majority of Sikh by separating Haryana from it. The Akali Dal has been mobilising people of Punjab and articulating their demands such as granting of full regional autonomy to Punjab, protection of interests of farmers, distribution of river water, declaration of Amritsar as a Holi city. From the 1980s, Akali Dal got split into different parties among which The Akali Dal led by Prakash Singh Badal continued to remain active as a regional party in Punjab. It has been an ally of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and member of central governments led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi.

2.4.6 The Shiv Sena

The support base and areas of activities of Shiv Sena are confined to the state of Maharashtra. It was established by Bala Saheb Thakre in 1966. It seeks to protect

the interests and identity of Marathi people or *Marathi Manus* which include Marathi language and culture, economic issues, interests of Maharashtra state. Along with the regional demands it articulated the issues relating to Hindu identity. The Shiv Sena started its activities in the 1960s by seeking to protect the economic interests of Marathis in Mumbai. It had argued and campaigned that the non-Marathis, south Indians, especially Tamils were dominating economic opportunities that was depriving the Marathis. Consequently, many Tamils had to leave Mumbai. In the 1970s, the Shiv Sena shift its focus to the communists considering them as anti-national. From the 1980s, it has been involved in mobilisation on symbols relating to Hindu religion. It participated in movement for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. The Shiv Sena had been a member of the BJP-led NDA since the beginning of the alliance. It had been a member of the NDA led governments. Following the Assembly election of 2019, it left the NDA alliance and formed government with the support of NCP, Congress (I) and other party with Udhav Thakre as chief minister of Maharashtra.

2.5 REGISTERED/ OR UNRECOGNIZED PARTIES

In India, there are more than 2000 registered or unrecognized parties. Such parties are generally established by leaders within a regional or national party who have differences with leadership, functioning or policies of such parties, by community leaders or by some ideologically motivated individuals not previously affiliated to political party. Such leaders quit their earlier party due to the differences and form their own parties. Since the late 1990s, such parties have marked their presence in eastern UP and Bihar. Generally, such parties are founded by the leaders belonging to backward classes. These parties address the social, economic, cultural and political concerns of the marginalised communities, especially the backward classes. In comparison to the national and regional parties, their electoral performance is limited to certain areas. However, they strike a bargain with the former to support their agendas and for allotment of tickets to them in the elections. Following are the examples of such parties in eastern UP, they include Apna Dal, PMSP, Rajbhars' party and in Bihar – UpendraKushwah-led Rashtriya Lok Samata Party.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the main reasons behind the formation of a regional party? Answer this question with the reference of any Regional party?

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2) Formation of AAP party is different from the formation of other state parties. Why?

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

Political parties are an important organ of the party system in India. There are more than 2300 parties in the country. Despite having a huge number of political parties, there are only seven national parties. As we have multiparty system where coalition government are norms, the regional and registered parties are playing a crucial role, especially after the late 1980s, in formation of coalition of government both in the centre and the states. Regional Parties are becoming important determining factors in electoral politics. Regional parties represent the aspirations of people at state or local levels.

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) There are three types of political parties in India: National Party, State/ Regional Party and Registered/Unrecognised Party.
- 2) Bahujan Samaj Party was formed by Kanshi Ram in 1984, which was a part of an ethnic movement started in Punjab and expanded to UP. Its goal was to create a coalition minority that actually constituted a majority: the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes, OBCs, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs. However, as a representative of an ethnic party, BSP was unable to establish itself as a party of all the minorities. The predominant base of the BSP came from the Dalits who were receptive to its radical message of political empowerment. Kanshi Ram, the founder member of the party and an Ambedkarite by ideology, emphasised on the political gain of the community.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Important reasons behind the formation of parties are ethnicity, socio-cultural issues, social and political movement, political representation and politics of recognition. You can answer this with the reference of formation of any regional party mentioned in the unit.
- 2) Formation of AAP party is different from the formation of other regional parties because of two reasons: first, it is not an ideologically driven party, and second, it is not representative of any socio-cultural or ethnic movements that have been the important factors of forming a party in India.

UNIT 3 PARTY SYSTEMS IN INDIA*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Types of Party System
 - 3.2.1 One-Party System
 - 3.2.2 Two-Party System
 - 3.2.3 Multi-Party System
- 3.3 Different Phases of Party System in India
 - 3.3.1 Congress Dominance Era (One party vs Multiple parties)
 - 3.3.2 Breakdown of Congress System and Emergence of the Non-Congress Parties (1967-1989)
 - 3.3.3 Rise of Coalition Politics
- 3.4 Limitations of Indian Party System
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 References
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Differentiate between single, two-party and multi-party systems;
- Analyse different phases of the party system in India; and
- Explain the limitation of party system in India.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have read in unit 1, political parties are important features of a political system. In a democratic political system, they are important tools in strengthening democracy. And their characteristics consist of organizations, leaderships, ideologies, policies and programmes, support bases and patterns of mobilization of support. Party system indicates number of political parties in a political system, and nature of coalition which political parties forge before and after elections, and in forming governments. You also have read in unit 2, about political parties and their types in India. This unit will explain how the political parties in India can be grouped in terms of political systems. The contemporary party system in India originally developed in the context of the struggle for freedom. The purpose of political parties changed after Independence. Before Independence, the political parties were part of national movement with the main purpose of achieving Independence. After Independence, their purpose shifted to gain power and form government. For this purpose, they competed. Consequently, the party system in India underwent transformation from the dominance of a single party to emergence of multiple parties. Although India has a multi-party system, the party system has gone through many phases. For instances, in the first two decades of

independence the country had one dominant party vs multiparty system. The concept of the multi-party system and coalition government at the centre became popular after 1989. Political parties and party system in India have been greatly influenced by cultural diversity, social, ethnic, caste, community and religious pluralism, traditions of the nationalist movement, contrasting style of the party leadership, and clashing ideological perspectives. The Indian Constitution has established a parliamentary form of government both at the Centre and at the State. The members of the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha are elected through elections by citizens of the country. Therefore, the political parties which contest the elections become part and parcel of the political system (party system) of the country. The party system is a link between people and the government.

3.2 TYPES OF PARTY SYSTEM

There are mainly three categories of Party system:

3.2.1 One-Party System

The one-party system or single party system is ruled by only one party; there is no opposition. This authoritarian principle was first found in monarchies and later in a dictatorship, and now this system exists in a few democratic countries. However, elections are conducted even in such regimes only to show the façade of popular support, the voter's choice is limited to only one candidate. The essential function of the one-party system is not to elicit decisions from the mass electorate on the issues concerning people, but to ensure discipline and obedience among them. In a system ruled by single party, the governance is marked the system totalitarian and that curtails democratic rights: the hand of the ruling party or king. In many cases, this system involves the abolition of the freedom of speech and expression, press and associations. In this system, there is no opposition, in terms of opposition party or other means of opposing voice against the ruling government. China has a One-party System.

3.2.2 Two-Party System

A two-party system is one where only two parties, despite the presence of other parties, have substantial support of the electorate. One of them is ruling party, another opposition. It depends on which party gets majority in elections. The United States and the United Kingdom are examples of the two-party system. In the US, the Democratic and Republican parties are main parties, and in the UK, are the Labour Party and the Conservative Party are two main parties.

3.2.3 Multi-Party System

Multi-party system indicates existence of several parties in a political system. India and many European countries have a multi-party system. In a multi-party system, several parties come together to form a coalition government and adopt a common minimum programme for governance. The multi-party system is of two types: unstable and working. The unstable party system does not provide stability, and the best example of this system can be seen in India during 1996-98. The working multi-party system behaves like a two-party system and thereby tends to provide stability to the government, even though they have more than two major political parties. The multiparty system promotes the coalition

government, and since the 1990s India has been governed by the coalition governments. The drawback of this system is that the members of the Council of Ministers instead of working under the leadership of the Prime Minister seek guidance from their party heads, and even a single Member of Parliament tries to blackmail or manipulate government by threatening to withdraw its support. Government instability is a major problem in this kind of party system.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What is the difference between two-party and multi-party system?

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3.3 DIFFERENT PHASES OF PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

The party system in India evolved in different phases from the dominance of single party, the Congress to multiplication of several parties. The following section discusses different phases of the system:

3.3.1 Congress Dominance Era (One-party Dominance vs. Multiple Parties)

As you have read in unit 1, various political parties had emerged before independence. After Independence, except a brief period of the Janata Party rule (1977-1980), it was the Indian National Congress (INC) that remained one of the most popular all India level parties in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Rajni Kothari the concept of One-party dominance explained India's party system during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, he described the Congress party as 'Congress System'. As the leading party, the Congress had obtained an absolute majority of seats in parliament in the first four general elections. Congress party enjoyed this position till 1967. The Congress was such a dominant force that it secured comfortable majorities in the almost all the elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies in 1952, 1957 and 1962. Though it never secured more than 48 per cent of the votes in the Lok Sabha elections (the highest being 47.78 in 1957), it always secured comfortable majorities in terms of seats (364 seats in 1952, 371 seats in 1957 and 361 in 1962). In the state assemblies, except for a few, it secured comfortable majorities almost in all the assembly elections. First three general elections saw Congress domination in the system that was marked by multiparty system vs one dominant party in the country. This trend had changed after the fourth General election, Nehru's demise and split in the party had affected the Congress dominance in party system. Even though the Congress was the single dominant party at the centre and in most states, it faced competition from

the non-Congress parties in several states. There are several instances of it. The strongest opposition it came from the CPI in Kerala in the second general election held in 1957. During the 1960s, the socialist parties, BKD/BLD/LD, left parties, the Jana Sangha, Republican Party of India, DK, and several other parties in different states posed a challenge to the dominance of the Congress as a single party system. They mobilized people on social, economic and political issues. This resulted in the defeat of the Congress in eight states and formation of the non-Congress government. With this, ended the dominance of the Congress which it had enjoyed at the same time both at the centre and in most states. However, it did not result in complete erosion in the support base of the party. The Congress continued to enjoy support in several states and at the centre on several occasions. But it ceased to be a single dominant party after the 1960s.

3.3.2 Breakdown of Congress System and Emergence of the Non-Congress Parties (1967-1989)

From the fourth general election of 1967 onward, there was a change in the Indian political system. This change was indicated in the decline of Congress party dominance in Lok Sabha elections and assembly elections, emergence of regional parties and leaders in several states. The regional parties and leaders not only challenged the dominance of the Congress, they also represented aspirations and interests of different regions and groups. The strongest challenge came from the leaders and parties that represented farming communities and backward classes. In north India, Bihar and UP, Charan Singh-led parties bearing different names such as BKD, BLD, or LD and socialists emerged as alternative to Congress. They gave priority to the issues of farming communities and backward classes. The introduction of reservation for backward classes in Bihar and UP in the 1970s, and setting up of Mandal Commission to introduce reservation for backward classes in the central government institution were the example of agenda which was different from that of the Congress. During 1967-1989, bipolarisation of political parties in the states formed a significant feature of political system. In Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, the competition was between the Congress and the BJS/BJP. In Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal it had been the Congress and the left the principal competitors. In Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Goa, Congress or a regional party- led alliance emerged, though the BJP also gained substantially. In the North-Eastern states, the contest was mainly between the Congress and a variety of regional parties or their alliances. In Tamil Nadu, competition has been mainly between the DMK and the AIADMK.

Besides, split in the Congress in 1969, erosion of the credibility of public institutions during Indira Gandhi's regimes, student's movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan in the 1974 and imposition of emergency in 1975-1977 added to the decline of the Congress. For the first time, the challenge to the Congress at the centre level was posed by the Janata Party. It defeated the Congress. The Janata Party which was formed out of merger of five parties on the eve of general election of 1977. The defeat of the Congress in this election was considered as the harbinger of a new era in the party system. However, there was a temporary ascendancy of the Congress during the post-Janata Party phase in the 1980s. Congress' popularity reached peak with its victory in 1984 Parliamentary election after Indira Gandhi's assassination. Following the

Congress victory in this election, Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister of the country. But within a few years of the formation of Rajiv Gandhi government, the government was beset with several challenges. These challenges included agitation for creation of temple at Ayodhya, led by ex-Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government, V.P Singh against corruption in purchase of guns from Bofors. Since the government was led by Congress leader, the challenges to it impacted the Congress adversely. Besides, some traditional supporters of Congress such as Dalits and some other marginalised communities rallied behind the newly formed party the BSP (founded in 1984). In 1989, the Congress party lost the Lok Sabha election, and Janata Dal-led coalition known as National Front formed government at the centre with VP Singh as Prime Minister. Since the late 1980s, The Congress party has failed to generate a popular leadership capable of accommodating varied interests and blunting the counterattack of its rivals. In the following decades while the BJP emerged as the most dominant political party in India, unlike in the preceding decades the Congress needed allies to retain its influence. This set a long process of formation of coalition governments in India. You will read about coalition politics in the sub-section given below.

3.3.3 Rise of Coalition Politics

The intensification of competitive politics has changed the party system. The competition shifted from rivalry between national parties into rivalry between alliances and coalitions of national and state parties. Although coalition governments in the states and at the centre were formed in 1969 and 1977 led by the SVD alliances and the Janata Party respectively, it was since 1989 that coalition politics became a pattern in Indian politics. Political parties made pre- and post-election alliances. In 1996, 13 non-BJP parties formed an alliance known as the United Front. Some of the parties which formed this alliance included Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Telugu Desam Party, Asom Gana Parishad, and Left Front. The United Front ran two governments at the centre with H.D Devegowda and I.K. Gujaral as the Prime Ministers in 1996 and 1997-98 respectively. Similarly, in 1999 coalition government of National Democratic Alliance (NDA)' was formed with BJP as the largest member of the coalition. The Governments formed in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 consisted of several parties. However, from 2004 there emerged predominantly two poled-alliance of political parties which formed governments at the centre and in states.. One of the alliances has been led by the Congress known as the United Front Alliance (UPA), another led by the BJP known as National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The UPA formed two central governments with Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister from 2004-2009 and from 2009-2014. The NDA also formed two governments with Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister, from 2014-2019, and in 2019. There also emerged the alliance of parties excluding the members of the UPA and NDA, especially the Congress and the BJP. This came to be known as the Third Front. But the Third Front has not been a stable alliance unlike the UPA and the NDA. There also emerged alliances in the states such as Assam, Bihar, MP, Nagaland and Sikkim.

3.4 LIMITATIONS OF INDIAN PARTY SYSTEM

A well-knit organisation, ideology, internal democracy, democratic leadership and policies and programmes are important features of a political parties in

democracy. Most political parties in India generally do not satisfy these criteria. Even though some parties have organisations, all kinds of parties – national, state or unregistered parties have rallied behind a personality. Most parties in the states are known by their leaders, not by their policies or the parties as such. Political parties largely lack internal democracy in which decisions are not taken in democratic way or an individual or group of individuals within the parties take major decisions. Some parties articulate interests of specific sections of the society, rather than those of the all. In India, weakening of party structure started in the post-Nehru era. Factionalism and internal rivalries within the parties have resulted in split and multiplication of parties in India. Nexus between political parties, criminals, corporate sector and the corrupt also constitute a limitation of party system in India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What do you understand by ‘one dominant party vs multiparty system’ in the Indian context?

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2) What is coalition government?

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

Indian political system has features to all the three kinds of party system. However, the basic characteristics are different from the conventional concept. India had a One-party dominance system but not a one-party system. In the era of post-Congress dominance, there are both a two-party system and a multiparty system in India. The two-party system is more prevalent in States (assembly) and multiparty (coalition government) in the centre. The emergence of many regional parties and their active participation in General and Assembly elections make the political institutions more democratic and pluralist. Now, many marginalised sections, social group, and minorities have their representative and parties that represent their interests. In one multiparty system has made party system more transparent and accommodative, in another way it has made existence of e coalition government unstable. The coalition governments always face constant threat of withdrawing support by the coalition partners from the government. Despite this limitation, the multi-party system has made political institutions more democratic and inclusive.

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3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) A two-party system is one in which only two parties, despite the presence of other parties, have substantial support of the electorate and expectation of forming the government. Under this, the majority of the elected candidates at a given time belong to any one of the two major parties which form the government, while the other party remains in the opposition. The United States and the United Kingdom are good examples of the two-party system. Multiparty System is a system in which more than two major parties exist, which compete for power. India and many European countries have a multi-party system. In a multi-party system, several parties form coalition government and adopt a common minimum programme for governance.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Since independence except for a brief period of the 1970s, Congress had enjoyed the dominant position in the party system with the multiparty system in India. This system is known as one-party dominance vs multiparty system.
- 2) In a multiparty system, many parties come together to form a government on the basis of alliances that is called coalition government. Since the 1990s, India has witnessed many coalition governments. Failure of major national parties like Congress and BJP to win majority seats in elections has brought numerous small parties to the forefront. The Governments formed in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 were coalitions of many parties. The advantage is that this kind of government does not run on a particular ideology but the common minimum programme, so it makes the system more democratic. The disadvantage of this system is instability in government because of manipulation and withdrawn of support of parties from the ruling party.