

Political Parties

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (4 MARKS)

Previous Years' Questions

Q.1. Why is there a lack of internal democracy within the political parties in India ? Explain with examples. [AI 2008]

Ans. It is a dilemma that while the political parties are seen as an effective instrument of democratic decentralisation , there is no democracy within the parties i.e. the lack of Internal Democracy.

- All over the world there is a tendency in political parties towards the concentration of power in one or a few leaders at the top.
- Political parties do not keep membership register.
- Parties do not hold organisational meetings and do not conduct internal elections regularly.
- Parties do not have the means or the connections needed to influence the decisions.
- Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information on what happens inside the party.
- As a result the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party. Since one or few leaders enjoy extreme power in the party, those who disagree with the leadership find it difficult to continue in the party. However, more than loyalty to the party principles and policies, personal loyalty to the leaders becomes more important. For example, all the newly formed parties, including BSP and Jana Sangh, suffer from lack of internal democracy.

NCERT Questions

Q.2. What are the characteristics of a political party ?

Ans. Political parties are an organised group of like-minded people with the some views and opinions. The important features or characteristics are as follows :

- (i) Goal-oriented : Political parties are goal-oriented and they put forward their programmes, policies, etc. in their manifesto.
- (ii) Peaceful and Constitutional Means : To capture power is the main aim for which political parties contest elections through peaceful, constitutional means and refrain from electoral malpractices.
- (iii) Promote National Interest : Political parties should place the national interest before their party interest. When a party directs its activities to promote sectional interests it degenerates into faction.
- (iv) Agreement on Fundamental Principles : Another feature is that there must be a certain measure of agreement on fundamental principles which can bind the people together as a political unit.
- (v) Principles and Personalities : There should be a close relationship between the members of the party. For this there must be a clear distinction between Principles and Personalities. All these characteristics are indispensable for the working of a democracy.

Q.3. State the various functions political parties perform in a democracy.

Ans. Basically political parties fill political offices and exercise political powers. Parties do so by performing a series of functions :

- (i) Contest Elections : In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates fielded by political parties—parties select their candidates in different ways.

- (ii) Put Forward Policies and Programmes : Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them. Each of us may have different opinions and views on what policies are suitable for the society.
Provide base to the Ruling Party
- (iii) A party reduces a vast multitude of opinions into a few basic positions which it supports. A government is expected to base its policies on the line taken by the Ruling party.
- (iv) Making Laws : Political parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country. Formally laws are debated and passed in Legislature.
- (v) Running Government : Parties recruit leaders, train them and then make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.
- (vi) Government Machinery and Welfare Schemes : Political parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by governments.
- (vii) Role of opposition : Those parties that lose elections play the role of opposition by voicing different views and criticising government for its failures or wrong policies. Opposition parties also mobilise opposition to the government.
- (viii) Shape Public Opinion : Political parties shape public opinion. They raise and highlight issues. Parties have lakhs of members and activists spread all over the country.

Q.4. What are the various challenges faced by political parties ?

- Ans.** Political parties are the most visible face of democracy, it is natural that people blame parties for whatever is wrong with the working of democracy.
- All over the world people express strong dissatisfaction with the failure of political parties to perform their functions well. This is the case in our country too. Popular dissatisfaction and criticism has focussed on four problem areas in the working of political parties. Political parties need to face and overcome these challenges to remain effective instruments of democracy.
- ⇒ Lack of internal democracy: The first challenge is lack of internal democracy within parties. Parties do not hold organisational meetings and do not conduct internal elections regularly. They do not have the means or the connections needed to influence the decisions. As a result the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party.
 - ⇒ Unfair Advantage and Dynastic Succession : The second challenge of dynastic succession is related to the first one. Since most political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures for their functioning, there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party.
 - ⇒ Money and Muscle Power : The third challenge is about the growing role of money and muscle power in parties, especially during elections. Since parties are focussed only on winning elections, they tend to use shortcuts to win elections. In some cases, parties support criminals who can win elections.
 - ⇒ Absence of Meaningful Choice: The fourth challenge is that very often parties do not seem to offer a meaningful choice to the voters. In order to offer meaningful choice, parties must be significantly different. However, to face these challenges, political parties need to be reformed.

Q.5. Suggest some reforms to strengthen parties so that they perform their function well.

Or

What are the suggestions often made to reform political parties ?

- Ans.** As political parties are facing various challenges so there is need to bring some changes or reforms in the system. Citizens all over the world face this question : 'Are political parties Willing to reforms'.
- Anti-Defection Law : The constitution was amended and a new anti-defection law has been passed to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives were indulging in defection to become ministers or for cash rewards.

Now according to law if any MLA or MP changes parties, he or she will lose the seat in Legislature.

- ⇒ Affidavit : In order to reduce the influence of money and criminal power the Supreme Court has passed an order in the form of 'Affidavit'. Now it is mandatory for a candidate to file an Affidavit detailing of his property and criminal cases pending against him.
- Organisational meeting for political parties :
 - ⇒ The Election Commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organisational elections and file their income tax returns.
 - The parties have started doing so but sometimes it is mere formality.
 - Besides these, many suggestions are often made to reform political parties.
- Regulation of party's internal affairs :
 - ⇒ A law should be made to regulate the Internal affairs of political parties. It should be made compulsory for political parties to maintain a register of their members, to follow their own constitution, to have an independent authority, etc.
 - ⇒ It should be made mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one-third, to women candidates.
- State funding :
 - ⇒ There should be state funding of elections. The government should give parties money to support their election expenses to avoid corruption.

Additional Questions

Q.6. Examine the inception and policies of Indian National Congress.

- Ans.** Indian National Congress popularly known as Congress Party is one of the oldest parties in the world. It was founded in 1885 by Dr. A.O. Hume. It was started as a safety valve to express the increasing feeling of discontent among the Indians against the British rule.
- It played a dominant role in the Indian politics at the national and state level for several decades.
- Ruling party at the centre till 1977 and then from 1980-1989, after 1989 its support declined, but it continues to be present throughout the country. Cutting across social division.
- Aims and Objectives of Congress party :
- ⇒ A centrist party (neither rightist nor leftist) in its ideological orientation, the party espouse secularism as the foremost task to preserve the unity and integrity of India.
 - ⇒ Safeguards educational, religious and cultural rights and to promote welfare of weaker sections and minorities.
 - ⇒ Congress Party also supports New Economic reforms but with a human face.
 - ⇒ The party also advocates continuing with the Policy of non-alignment as its foreign policy. It also follows the principle of Panchsheel.
 - ⇒ It strives to give power to the people at the grass-roots level through Panchayati Raj and Municipal Corporation.
 - ⇒ It works upon to establish big industries as well as small-scale industries for the removal of unemployment.
 - ⇒ Congress Party emerged as the largest party with 145 members in the Lok Sabha elections held in 2004. Hence, currently it leads the ruling United Progressive Alliance coalition government at the centre. (Any four)

Q.7. Write a short note on Bhartiya Janata Party under following headings : Inception, Aims, Policies and Programmes, Present Position.

- Ans.** Bharatiya Janata Party Inception : The Bharatiya Janata Party was founded in 1980 by reviving the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Its support base increased substantially in 1990s. Earlier limited to north and west and to urban areas, now the BJP expanded its support in the south, east, the north-east and in rural areas. It came into

power in 1996 as the leader of the National Democratic Alliance including several state and Regional parties. Main Policies, Aims and Objectives.

- ⇒ It wants to build India a strong and modern nation by drawing inspiration from its ancient culture and values.
- ⇒ "Cultural nationalism" [or Hindutava is an important element in its conception of Indian nationhood and politics.
- ⇒ It advocates full territorial and political integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India.
- ⇒ It stresses a uniform civil code for all people living in the country irrespective of religion.
- ⇒ It supports a ban on religious conversions.
- ⇒ It is favour of in continuing reservation for the SCs/Sts and to provide for other backward classes broadly on the basis of the Mandal Commission Report.

Present Status : The Bharatiya Janata Party lost elections in 2004 and presently it is the principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

Q.8. What are the advantages and disadvantages (drawbacks) of political parties ?

Ans. Political parties have their merits and demerits which are as follows :

Merits :

- ⇒ Promote Unity in Diversity : Political parties aggregate and unite like-minded people belonging to diverse backgrounds to form a wide coalition of people giving unity in diversity.
- ⇒ Impart Political Education : Political parties educate the people politically by popularising the manifesto through campaigning and also by quizzing the government inside the Parliament.
- ⇒ Check the Government : Opposition political parties check the government from becoming corrupt and dictatorial through different means.
- ⇒ Mediate Between Pressure Groups : Political parties mediate between different pressure groups which represent various interests. They strike a compromise between demands of the different groups so as to satisfy the maximum number of them.
- ⇒ Promote national politics : Political parties alone make it possible for the enormous electorate to function effectively.

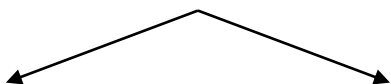
Demerits :

At the same time political parties have demerits too.

- ⇒ Over centralisation : Political party leaders and bosses become so powerful and dominant that they start acting like dictators in the party, shifting the democratic participation of its members. This leads to the over centralization and personalisation.
- ⇒ Corruption and mal practices : Since political parties are obsessed with coming to power, it increases corruption, as the parties will use all possible means to capture votes.
- ⇒ Encourages casteism and communalism : Many political parties encourage casteism and communalism etc. They keep the factors of castes, religion, alive as they act like their vote bank.
- ⇒ Create Factionalism : Sometimes political parties divide people on artificial lines and even the nation into hostile and antagonistic camps. Thus they create factionalism.
- ⇒ Absence of individual independence : The party discipline leaves no room for individual independence. The members become a cog in the party machinery always moving with the whole mechanism but never independently.

Q.9. Examine the role of political parties.

Ans. The role of the political parties can be demarcated into :



Before Elections

After Elections

Role Before Election :

- ⇒ Before elections parties unite like-minded people who belong to diverse backgrounds and thus form a wide coalition of people and give unity in diversity.
- ⇒ They seek to provide the highest common denominator. They aggregate and articulate public opinion.
- ⇒ Parties simplify and stabilise the political process. They seek to broaden the range of interests they represent and harmonise these interests with each other.
- ⇒ Before election by popularising the manifesto (which is a document that consists of all the promises) and in other ways also, parties educate, instruct, mobilise and activate the electorate. Thus they act as a tran of ideas and opinions to social needs and national goals.

Role after Election :

- ⇒ After the elections are over, the party which gets the majority of votes forms the government as "Ruling party" and works for the welfare of the people. The parties which get a minority of votes forms the opposition and checks the government inside the Parliament by debates, question hour, cut motion, adjournment motion, etc.
- ⇒ Political parties provide social support, structure to governmental policies and programmes.
- ⇒ Parties act like a durable two-way link between the citizens and the government and between the electorates and representative institutions. Parties also give national dimensions to local policies and translate public opinion into public policy.

Q.10. "Opposition is important for democracy". Comment.

Ans. An effective, responsible and responsive opposition is the hallmark of a democracy and the lifeblood of a competitive party system. On the whole, opposition plays a two-way role : Positive role, Negative role.

Positive Role :

- ⇒ It acts like a restraining force, as it represents legitimate dissent. The opposition criticises and exposes the mistakes, shortcoming, failures, lapses, etc. of the ruling party and thus acts like a necessary corrective to it.
- ⇒ The opposition helps to ventilate the grievances of the people and helps the government to know their views. In this way they help in the formulation of policy.
- ⇒ The opposition has often checked the financial malpractices on part of the government and exposed the government's various scams like the Bofors deal, Stocks-share scam, etc.
- ⇒ The opposition also acts like an "Alternative government or as the government in waiting" when the government collapse before its five years tenure.

Negative Role :

- ⇒ Opposition party opposes all governmental measures and proposes nothing concrete. It only criticizes without giving constructive suggestions.
 - ⇒ Its main aim is to dislodge and discredit the government.
 - ⇒ Through dharnas and gheraos, it curtails the progress of the country.
- Opposition does not always obstruct and harass the government. It agrees with the government on certain fundamentals like electoral reforms, improved condition of workers and peasants, making panchayat and local bodies autonomous, fighting corruption, judicial reforms, etc.