

Political Parties

Short Answer Questions

1. Why do we need political parties?

Ans. (i) Political parties are easily one of the most visible institutions in a democracy.
(ii) For most ordinary citizens, democracy is equal to political parties.
(iii) Political parties in a populated country like India helped in forming the government and have become omnipresent in democracies all over the world.

2. What are the characteristics of a political party?

Ans. **Characteristics:**

They agree on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promoting the collective good.

(ii) Since there can be different views on what is good for all, parties try to persuade people why their policies are better than others.

(iii) They seek to implement these policies by winning popular support through elections.

(iv) Parties reflect fundamental political divisions in a society.

(v) Parties are a part of society and thus involve partisanship.

(vi) Thus, a party is known by which part it stands for, which policies it supports and whose interests it upholds.

3. What party system can be ideal for any country? Why did India choose to have a multi-party system?

Ans. (i) Party system is not something any country can choose. It evolves over a long time, depending on the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections.

(ii) These cannot be changed quickly. Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances.

(iii) India has evolved a multi-party system. It is because the social and geographical diversity in such a large country is not easily absorbed by two or even three parties.

No system is ideal for all countries and all situations.

4. What is the difference between a national party and a state party?

Ans. There are three major differences between a national party and regional, state party:

(i) National parties have influence all over the country or in several states of India. The influence of a state party is limited to a state or a region.

(ii) National parties take interest in national as well as international issues- whereas regional or state parties are interested in promoting regional, state interest only.

(iii) The national parties have to harmonise the national as well as state interests; whereas state parties usually stand for greater autonomy for states.

5. What is the role of an ordinary citizen in reforming the political parties?

Ans. There are two ways in which political parties can be reformed:

(i) People can put pressure on political parties. This can be done through petitions, publicity and agitations. Ordinary citizens, pressure groups and movements and the media can play an important role in this.

(ii) Political parties can improve if those who are interested, also join the political parties. The quality of democracy depends on the degree of public participation.

It is difficult to reform politics if ordinary citizens do not take part in it and simply criticise it from the outside. The problem of bad politics can be solved by more and better politics.

6. What is the role of the opposition party in a democracy?

- Ans. (i) Opposition party mobilises opposition to the government.
(ii) It puts its different views in the parliament and criticises the government for its failures or wrong policies.
(iii) By doing this, it can keep a check on the ruling party, which is made to move on the track.

7. Give one merit and one demerit of a single-party system.

- Ans. Merit: There is no competition between parties but there is competition between candidates.
Demerit: One-party system is not a democratic option. Any democratic country must allow at least two parties to compete.

8. What are the major differences between the policies of CPI(M) and CPI?

Ans.

Policies of CPI (M)	Policies of CPI
1 Accepts democratic elections as a useful and helpful means for securing the objective of socio-economic justice in India	Accepts parliamentary democracy as a means of promoting the interests of the working class, farmers and the poor
2 Critical of the new economic policies that allow free flow of foreign capital and goods into the country	Opposed to the force of secessionism and communalism
3 It was formed in 1964	It was formed in 1925

9. Who is a partisan? What does partisanship mean?

- Ans. Partisan is a person who is strongly committed to a party, group or faction.
Partisanship is marked by a tendency to take a side and inability to take a balanced view on an issue.
Parties are about a part of the society and thus involve partisanship.

10. What are the main components of a political party?

- Ans. (i) The leaders: A political party consists of leaders who contest elections and, if they win, perform the administrative job.
(ii) The active members: They are the ones who climb a ladder from being the follower and become the assistants of the leaders to gain knowledge about the politics.
(iii) The followers: They are simply the ardent followers of the leaders and work under the able guidance of the active members.

11. How do parties perform the job of making laws for the country?

- Ans. (i) Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country.
(ii) Formally, laws are debated in the form of first, second and third readings and then by popular voting, the bill is passed.
(iii) But since most of the members belong to a party, they follow what their leader says, irrespective of their personal opinions.

12. How is a government of alliances formed?

- Ans. (i) When several parties in a multi-party system join hands for the purpose of contesting elections and winning power, it is called an alliance or front.
(ii) In India, there were three major alliances in 2004 parliamentary elections.
(iii) These are the National Democratic Alliance or NDA formed by BJP and its allies. Then the United Progressive Alliance or UPA led by Congress and its allies. The third one is the Left Front which is formed by Communists or their parties like CPI and CPI(M).

13. How does a country choose a party system?

Ans. Party system is not something any country can choose:

- (i) It evolves over a long time, depending on the nature of its society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections.
(ii) These cannot be changed very quickly.
(iii) Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances. No system is ideal for all countries and all situations.

14. What are national parties?

- Ans. (i) A party that secures at least six per cent of total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly elections in four states and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha is recognised as a national party.
(ii) These parties have their units in various states. But by and large all these units follow the same policies, programmes and strategies that are decided at the national level.
According to this classification, there were six national recognised parties in the country in 2006.

15. In what way lack of internal democracy is seen in the political parties?

- Ans. (i) All over the world, there is a tendency in the political parties towards the concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top.
(ii) Parties do not keep membership registers. Neither they hold organisational meetings nor internal elections are held regularly.
(iii) Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information as to what happens inside the party. As a result, the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party.

16. State the various functions political parties perform in democracy.

- Ans. (i) The constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives would indulge in defection, in order to become ministers or to gain monetary benefits.
(ii) The Supreme Court passed an order to reduce the influence of money and criminals. Now, it is mandatory for every contestant to file an affidavit giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him.
This new system has made a lot of information available to the public.
(iii) 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 it but sometimes it is mere formality.

17. What suggestions are often made to reform political parties?

- Ans. (i) 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 its members, to follow its own constitution, to act as a judge in case of party disputes and to hold open elections to the highest post.
(ii) It should be made mandatory for political parties to give minimum number of tickets, about one-third to the women candidates.
(iii) There should be state funding of elections. The government should give parties money to support their election expenses. This support could be given in kind; petrol, paper, telephone, etc. Or, it could be given in cash on the basis of votes secured by the party in the last elections.