

Read the following passage throughly and try to understand.

Till now, you have learned that in the arena of democratic politics, political parties work as a vehicle of federal sharing of political power and as negotiators of social divisions. In this chapter, you will learn about the nature and workings of political parties in our country. We have covered all the important topics of this chapter in CBSE Notes Class 10 Political Science Chapter 6 – Political Parties. Through these notes, you will get introduced to the national and regional political parties in today's India. Also, this chapter will help you understand what is wrong with political parties and what can be done about it.

Why Do We Need Political Parties?

A **Political Party** is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government. They agree on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promote the collective good. Parties reflect fundamental political divisions in a society. Thus, a party is known by which part it stands for, which policies it supports and whose interests it upholds. A political party has three components:

- The leaders
- The active members
- The followers

Functions of Political Parties

Political parties fill political offices and exercise political power. Parties do so by performing a series of functions mentioned below:

1. Parties contest elections.
2. Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them.
3. Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country.
4. Parties form and run governments.
5. Those parties that lose in the elections play the role of opposition to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticising the government for its failures or wrong policies.
6. Parties shape public opinion.
7. Parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by governments.

The Necessity of Political Parties

We need political parties because they perform all the functions which are mentioned above. Apart from this, political parties help in representing different views on various issues to the government. They bring various representatives together so that a responsible government could be formed. They work as a mechanism to support or restrain the government, make policies, justify or oppose them. Political parties fulfil the needs that every representative government has.

How Many Parties Should We Have?

In a democracy, any group of citizens is free to form a political party. More than 750 parties are registered with the Election Commission of India. But not all these parties are serious contenders in the elections. So the question, then is: how many major or effective parties are good for democracy?

In some countries, only one party is allowed to control and run the government. These are called **one-party systems**. This system is not considered as a good option for democracy.

In some countries, power usually changes between the two main parties. Such a party system is called a two-party **system**. Eg: The United States of America and the United Kingdom.

If several parties compete for power, and more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power either on their own strength or in alliance with others, it is called a **multiparty system**. Eg: India.

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 a front**.

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