

Read the following passage throughly and try to understand.

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**.

National Parties

Every party in the country has to register with the Election Commission. It offers some special facilities for large and established parties. The Election Commission has laid down detailed criteria of the proportion of votes and seats that a party must get in order to be a recognised party.

1. A party that secures at least 6% of the total votes in an election to the Legislative Assembly of a State and wins at least 2 seats is recognised as a **State Party**.
2. A party that secures at least 6% of the total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly elections in 4 States and wins at least 4 seats in the Lok Sabha is recognised as a **National Party**.

Major National Parties in India

There were 7 recognised national parties in the country in 2018. Here are the details of these parties:

1) All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)

- Launched on 1 January 1998 under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee.
- Recognised as a national party in 2016.
- The party's symbol is flowers and grass.
- Committed to secularism and federalism.
- Has been in power in West Bengal since 2011 and has a presence in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura.
- In the General Elections held in 2014, it got 3.84% votes and won 34 seats, making it the fourth-largest party in the Lok Sabha.

2) Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP):

- Formed in 1984 under the leadership of Kanshi Ram.
- Seeks to represent and secure power for the Bahujan samaj which includes the Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs and religious minorities.
- Stands for the cause of securing the interests and welfare of the Dalits and oppressed people.
- It has its main base in the state of Uttar Pradesh and substantial presence in neighbouring states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Punjab.
- Formed government in UP several times by taking the support of different parties at different times.

3) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

- Founded in 1980, formed by Syama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951.
- Wants to build a strong and modern India by drawing inspiration from India's ancient culture and values and Deendayal Upadhyaya's ideas of integral humanism and Antyodaya.
- Cultural nationalism (or 'Hindutva') is an important element in its conception of Indian nationhood and politics.
- Earlier limited to north and west and to urban areas, the party expanded its support in the south, east, the north-east and to rural areas.
- Emerged as the largest party with 282 members in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

4) Communist Party of India (CPI):

- Formed in 1925. Believes in Marxism-Leninism, secularism and democracy.
- Opposed to the forces of secessionism and communalism.

- Accepts parliamentary democracy as a means of promoting the interests of the working class, farmers and the poor.
- Significant presence in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- It secured less than 1 per cent votes and 1 seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

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