

Chapter 6: Political Parties

Intext Questions

Question 1: So, you agree with me. Parties are partial, partisan and lead to partitions. Parties do nothing but divide people. That is their real function!

Answer: The above statement is biased towards anti-political attitude. Generally political parties act as negotiators in decreasing social divisions in the country.

Only the rightist parties which are formed on communal ideology lead to partition for which reforms are being suggested by the Election Commission.

Question 2:



A) What is shown in the given cartoon?

Answer: The famous cartoonist R.K. Lakshman is seen reading news paper which shows that country is facing lot of problems but politicians are not taking care of them. Politicians are not willing to take responsibility for the peril situation of the country. They are busy in contesting elections.

B) What issue can be seen being discussed here?

Answer: One of the major issues that can be seen being discussed here are the 'Mandal commision' for quota reservations, the Ayodhya 'Ram mandir' case, the problems of Coalition government etc.

Question 3: Okay granted that we can't live without political parties. But tell me how do we live with the kind of political parties we have?

Answer: Political parties came from society only. They simply represent what we are. There is nothing wrong with any of the political parties. It is we people who have everything in our hands in a democracy. Even if they do not work rightly, remember, people have voting power in their hands.

Question 4: Categories these photographs by the functions of political parties they illustrate. Find one photograph or news clipping from your own area for each of the functions listed above.



(i) **Left:** Playing the role of opposition.



(ii) **Top(Right):** Implementation of policies and programmes.



(iii) **Bottom (Right):** Contesting elections.



Question 5: Kishenji is no more. What would be your advice to these four activists? Should they form a new political party? Can a political party become a moral force in politics? What should that party be like?

Answer:

(i) These activists should move ahead with the idea of formation of a new political party. It is obvious that initially they will not gain popular support, but if they continue to put moral force in their party, very soon they will win faith of the people. It is only then they can do anything good for the society, which is the urgent need of today's politics.

(ii) Yes. It can do so by translating its promises into actions. Once the party does so, very soon it will gain popular support.

(iii) Yes. It can do so by translating its promises into actions. Once the party does so, very soon it will gain popular support.

(iv) That party should focus on the immediate problems of the people. The party should select only those candidates who are willing to serve the society in the true sense. If it does not get elected also, it can act as opposition party.

Question 6: I wonder how politicians manage these coalitions. I can't even remember the names of all the parties

Answer:

Several political parties with almost similar agenda come together to form a government and if voted to power, all such parties as a coalition from the government. Generally, all the major decision making is done by biggest party in the coalition, like that of BJP in the general election of 2014. Ministries are allotted keeping in mind all the members of coalition. Though at times difficult to manage, such system allows all interests and opinions for political representation.

Ministries are allotted keeping in mind all the members of coalition. Though at times difficult to manage, such system allows all interests and opinions for political representation.

Question 7: Let us apply what we have learnt about party systems to the various states within India. Here are three major types of party systems that exist at the state level. Can you find the names of at least two states for each of these types :

Two- party system

Multi- party system with two alliances

Multi – party system

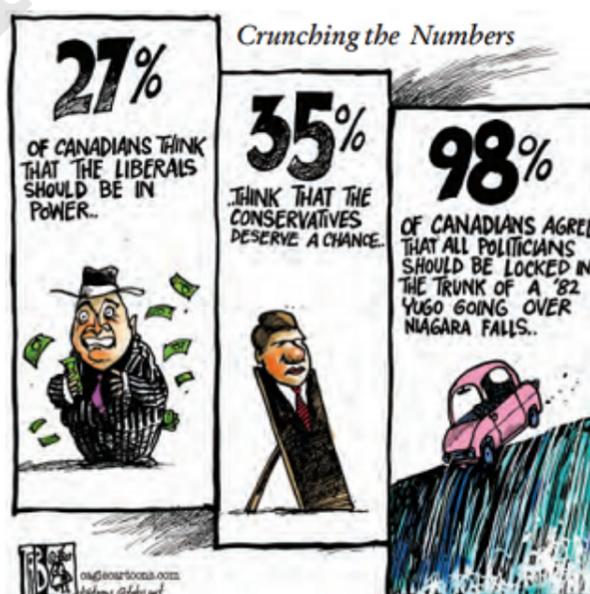
Answer:

(i) Two- party system : Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh.

(ii) Multi- party system with two alliances : Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, West Bengal.

(iii) Multi- party system : Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu.

Question 8: Does the cartoonist reflect the data graphics shown in the previous page?



Answer: Yes.

Question 9: Why don't parties give enough tickets to women? Is that also due to lack of internal democracy?

Answer:

(i) Men always tend to use authority and politics is not an exception. Patriarchal society is the reason for men authority in politics. If the parties give tickets to women, steadily the power will go into their hands, which is not acceptable in the Indian society.

(ii) Yes, this is an example of lack of internal democracy. At least one- third of the seats, for which the party is contesting, should be allocated to the women.

Question 10: Does this suggest that in democracies people contest elections only to make money? But isn't it true that there are politicians committed to the well-being of the people?



Answer:

Most of the democracies are being generated their power from the Constitution. Hence it is not correct to say that all Politicians participate in elections only for the money. Some politicians contest the elections to serve the needy. As written in Artha shastra by Chanakya, it's a fact that corruption is Invisible like a fish in the water drinking the water or not. It should be controlled by reforms in the politics and behavioral changes of the public.

Question 11:

Explain the given cartoon?



Answer:

This cartoon shows how a person in India is filling his nomination as a candidate in the election to the Election Commission of India. It's now mandatory to show your assets in an affidavit before elections. The woman is shown to mention 50 crores as her assets, and the officer is surprised to see that. He's seen asking her, if she has so much money, why is she contesting the elections. This is because it is a general view that the politicians in India, after winning an election and coming to power, amass a lot of wealth through corrupt practices instead of working for the welfare of the people.

Question 12: Most cartoons caricature politicians. From the cartoons (on page 83 to 85), can you identify which of the challenges described in this section is being

highlighted in these cartoons. They relate to Italy, US, and India.

Answer:

The cartoons highlight the challenge of the frequent use of money and muscle power in politics faced by the political parties.

Question 13: Do you agree that this form of reforming political parties will be acceptable to them?



Answer:

Election code is good for strengthening democracy. But sometimes political leaders fail to follow election code against whom Election Commission of India takes action. A fair politics is need of the hour in India.

Exercises

Question 1: State the various functions political parties perform in a democracy.

Answer:

The various functions of the political parties in a democracy are:

(A) Contest elections :

In democracies, elections are contested by the political parties by putting up their candidates. The candidates are selected in different ways. In India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.

(B) Put forward different policies and programmes :

Political parties put forward their own ideologies and programmes before the voters at the time of elections in the form of a manifesto.

(C) Role in making laws for a country :

Laws are passed according to the directions of the ruling party or alliance in case of a coalition government. Members of political party vote in the legislature according to the decision of the party, irrespective of their personal opinions.

(D) Formation of governments :

Majority party or coalition parties form and run the government. In a parliamentary democracy, this function is so important that government is known by the name of the party like Congress or BJP government etc.

(E) Role of opposition :

Political parties that lose in the elections play the role of opposition to the government. They criticise government for its failure or wrong policies.

(F) Role in shaping public opinion :

Movements are launched by the political parties in support of demands of public interest.

(G) Access to government machinery and welfare schemes :

Ordinary citizens approach local party leaders about their demands and grievances. Local leaders of parties have to be responsive to people's needs and demands. Otherwise people can reject these parties the next elections.

Question 2: What are the various challenges faced by political parties ?

Answer:

Political parties play an important role in a democracy. So, it is natural for the people to blame parties for its failures to perform their functions well. Main challenges faced by the political parties are:

(A) Lack of internal democracy :

There is lack of internal democracy within parties. For example organisational elections are not held regularly. Most of the decisions are taken by the President or top leaders in the party. Ordinary members do not have any say in the decision making process of the party. As a result of it, there is tendency towards the concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top.

(B) Dynastic succession:

Family members or people more close to top leaders are favoured at the time of granting tickets for contesting elections. Sometimes deserving members are denied tickets. Political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures. Top positions such as President or General Secretary are always controlled by members of one family.

(C) Use of money and muscle power :

Political parties use money power to purchase votes and finance high pitched campaigns. Rich candidates are nominated so that they may win elections. Muscle power is also used during elections. It is used to coerce voters, capture booths and threaten opposition campaign. In some cases, political parties support and select criminals who can win elections.

(D) Hardly any meaningful choice :

In recent years there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in most parts of the world. In our country too, the differences among all the major parties on the economic policies have reduced. People have no option available to them because same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another.

Question 3: Suggest some reforms to strengthen parties so that they perform their functions well.

Answer:

Suggestions to reform political parties are:

(A) Regulate the internal affairs of political parties : It should be made mandatory for political parties to regulate that internal affair. It should be made compulsory for political parties in maintain a register of its members and have periodic elections of office bearers.

(B) Representation to women candidates : Parties should be asked to nominate women candidates for at least one-third of the seats in elections.

(C) State funding of elections : In order to put curb on money power, there should be state funding of elections like the government should give parties money to support their election expenses. This support could be given in kind such as petrol, paper and telephone.

(D) Pressure by people : Ordinary citizens, media, and movements can play an important role by pressurizing parties to bring in reforms in their functioning.

(E) People should join political parties large number so that they may improve the working of political parties being members of that party. It is easier to reform a party from within rather than from outside.

Question 4: What is a political party ?

Answer:

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. A political party, therefore, possesses features like an organisation, definite views on political issues, a well formulated line of action, a will and desire to implement the policies announced by them in their manifestoes.

Question 5: What are the characteristics of a political party ?

Answer:

The characteristics of a political party are as given below :

- A political party is an organised body. Each party has its organisation.
- It has definite views on various issues.
- It has a general ideological identity. For example, a party may be a leftist or rightist party.
- It represents a part of society. For example, a party may represent the capitalists, the poor, the upper class or a lower class. A party, therefore, may represent a particular part of a society.
- A party has three components i.e., the leaders, the active members and the followers.

Question 6: A group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government is called a_____ .

Answer: political party

Question 7: Match List I (organisations and struggles) with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists :

	List I	List II
1.	Congress Party	A. National Democratic Alliance
2.	Bharatiya Janata Party	B. State party
3.	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	C. United Progressive Alliance
4.	Telugu Desam Party	D. Left Front

	1	2	3	4
(a)	C	A	B	D
(b)	C	D	A	B
(c)	C	A	D	B
(d)	D	C	A	B

Answer: (c) C, A, D, B.

Question 8: Who among the following is the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party ?

- A. Kanshi Ram
- B. Sahu Maharaj
- C. B.R.Ambedker
- D. JyotibaPhule.

Answer: (A) Kanshi Ram.

Question 9: What is the guiding philosophy of the Bharatiya Janata Party ?

- A. Bahujan Samaj
- B. Revolutionary democracy
- C. Integral humanism
- D. Modernity

Answer: (C) Integral humanism.

Question 10: Consider the following statements on parties :

- A. Political parties do not enjoy much trust among the people.
- B. Parties are often rocked by scandals involving top party leaders.
- C. Parties are not necessary to run governments.

Which of the statements given above are correct ?

- (a) A, B and C
- (b) A and B
- (c) B and C
- (d) A and C

Answer: (b) A and B.

Question 11: Read the following passage and answer the questions given below :

Muhammad Yunus is a famous economist of Bangladesh. He received several international honours for his efforts to promote economic and social development for the benefit of the poor. He and the Grameen Bank he started jointly, received the Nobel Peace Prize for the 2006. In February 2007, he decided to launch a political party and contest in the parliamentary elections. His objective was to foster proper leadership, good governance and build a new Bangladesh. He felt that only a political party different from the traditional ones would bring about new political culture. His party would be democratic from the grassroots level.

The launching of the new party, called Nagarik Shakti (Citizens' Power), has caused a stir among the Bangladeshis. While many welcomed his decision, some did not like it. "Now I think Bangladesh will have a chance to choose between good and bad and eventually have a good government", said Shahedul Islam, a government official. "That government, we hope, would not only keep itself away from corruption but also make fighting corruption and black money a top priority."

But leaders of traditional political parties who dominated the country's politics for decades were apprehensive. "There was no debate (over him) winning the Nobel, but politics is different - very challenging and often controversial", said a senior leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Some others were highly critical. They asked why he was rushing into politics. "Is he being planted in politics by mentors from outside the country", asked one political observer.

- (a) Do you think Yunus made a right decision to float a new political party ?
- (b) Do you agree with the statements and fears expressed by various people ?
- (c) How do you want this new party organised to make it different from other parties ?
- (d) If you were the one to begin this political party how would you defend it ?

Answer:

(a) Yunus made a right decision to float a new political party because in a democracy every citizen has a right to form political party or join a political party of his own choice. Also, Yunus is a Nobel Peace Prize winner and is known in Bangladesh as well as by people all over the world. He has his own political ideology. He has set an example by setting up the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. People may support him and enable him to form a good government and build a new Bangladesh of his dreams.

(b) Even though politics is different from other fields but Yunus has achieved success by establishing Grameen Bank for the welfare of the people. There is no meaning in the fears expressed by people. After all democracy is also for the welfare of the people.

(c) The new party should be organised on democratic lines. Organisational elections should be held regularly. There should be transparency in the working of the party. Due representation should be given to all sections of the society including women and minorities.

(d) I would defend the formation of the party on the ground that in a democracy, every citizen has a right to join or form a political party of his choice.

Champstreet