

## ***Political Parties***

**Q1: 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:

1. **Contest election:** In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates fielded by political parties select their candidates in different ways.
2. **Put forward political programmes:** Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them.
3. **Provide base to the ruling party:** 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 take by the ruling party.
4. **Making laws:** Political parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country.
5. **Running government:** To run the government political parties (ruling party) prepares the council of ministers by training and recruiting the leaders.

6. **Government machinery and welfare schemes:** Political parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare scheme implemented by government.
7. **Role of opposition:** The party which loses election plays the role of opposition. Opposition party tries to put check on the ruling party by criticizing government for its unjust policies.
8. **Shape public opinion:** One of the most important functions of the political parties is to shape public opinion on relevant issues for proper functioning of the government and to deepen the concept of democracy.

**Q2: What are the various challenges faced by political parties?**

**Ans:** As political parties are the essence of democracy so, it is very natural that they are often blamed for the failure of any policy or the working of democracy. Mostly political parties face four challenges in their working area such as:

- a) **Lack of internal democracy:** Political parties face the problem of internal democracy which implies
  - Power is concentrated in one or few leaders of the party at top.
  - Parties do not hold organizational meeting.
  - No regular election to elect their party leaders.
  - Membership of the party members is not fairly registered.
- b) **Dynastic succession:** Another challenge is that in most of the political parties the top posts are always assigned to the members of one family which is very unjust for democratic principles.

- This also reveals that other members do not have capability or popular support to hold that position.
  - The challenge of dynastic succession is present in most of the dominant democratic countries of the world which is very unfair to other experienced party members.
- c) **Money and muscle power:** Nowadays elections are focused mainly on winning at any cost so parties try to use shortcuts like using money and muscle power.
- They try to select or rather nominate those candidates who can raise money or provide muscle power.
  - Sometimes wealthy people and big companies also get involved in the democratic politics for their own interests and like to influence decision making process.
- d) **Absence of meaningful choice:** In the present politics scenario, there is no ideological difference among the political parties so they do not provide meaningful choice to voters. • Those voters who really want a change in the government and its policies never get any positive option.
- For instance, in Britain having Bi-party system there is a little difference between the “Labour Party and Conservative Party”.

Even in India having multiparty system the differences between the parties over the economic matter have got decline and people do not have any meaningful choice.

**Q3: Suggest some reforms to strength parties so that they perform their functions well?**

**Ans:** As political parties are facing various challenges so there is need to bring some changes or reforms in the system. Some reforms are as under

1. **Anti Defection law:** The constitution was amended and a new anti-defection law has been passed to prevent elected MLA's and MP's from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives were indulging in defection not become ministers or for cash rewards.
2. **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.
3. **Organizational meeting for political parties:** The election commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organizational elections and file their income tax returns. The parties have started doing so but sometimes it becomes a mere formality. Besides these many suggestions are often made to reform political parties.
4. **Regulation of party's internal affairs:** A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of political parties. It should be mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one third, to women candidates.

5. **State funding:** There should be state funding elections. The government should give parties money to support their election expenses to avoid corruption.

**Q4: What is a political party?**

**Ans:** A political party is a political association or a voluntary group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government. They agree on some policies and programmes.

**Q5: What are the characteristics of a political party?**

**Ans:** The Characteristics of political party are:

1. A Political party is an organised group
2. They share the common views on political and social – economic problems of the country.
3. They aim at capturing political power through a peaceful and constitutional means.
4. They agree on some policies and programmes for promoting the national interest.
5. Political parties reflect fundamental political division of a society.
6. Parties are a part of society and this involve partnership.
7. A political party has three components: leaders, the active members and the followers.