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Pre-requisites	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To discuss political parties and Duverger's model of its origin and structure. • Describe different parameters of Election Commission of India to determine 'national' or 'state' parties. • To discuss various electoral and parties reforms suggested by various commission and organizations.
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POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

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Political Parties: Theoretical Analysis

Political parties are considered as intermediate organization between state and citizens. In any democratic society, if that is not a direct democracy, presence of political parties are almost compulsory. 'They are carrying the weight of expectation and aspiration upwards from citizen to state, and the burden of policy downwards, from state to citizen. In the process they perform multiple functions and develop multiple personalities' (Sridharan and deSouza 2006: 15). They are central to both, society and government, in the sense that they connect bridges to create a two-way communication process between them. Being the 'primary lubricants' and 'moving forces' of the governmental process, they are central also to modern political system. In one way or the other all forms of governments in all societies have turned to the political parties, and have maintained them as an essential institution of the political system. Thinkers like Edmund Burse, Benjamin Constant and others conceived of parties as an ideological group. According to this school, the members of parties entertain a set of common basic conviction about public interest, and are ready to act in concert in pursuit of these ideals. According to Burke, 'a party is a body of men for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all

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agreed.' (Quoted in, Ashraf and Sharma 1983: 88). At their origin, parties were regarded with some suspicion because of their long association with factions, which were considered an evil. Parties gradually acquired legitimacy as an instrument of government in the nineteenth century. So Burke argues that parties started in the form of factions but in the process it acquired ideological role by attributing a highly ideological orientation. Later on, this doctrine has been challenged. Duverger argues that two socialist parties react in very different ways and find it difficult to collaborate. The fate of socialist and communist parties which are more ideologically based than others may be cited here. Moreover, he argues, often geographical proximity or the desire to defend one's profession and interest lead to the formation of parties (Duverger 1954: 24-25).

Organizational Structure and Functions of Parties: Duverger said 'a party is a community with a particular structure' (Duverger 1954: 15). He also states that 'a party is not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed through the country (branches, caucuses, local associations, etc.) and linked by coordinating institutions' (*Ibid.*: 17). On the basis of basic elements and the functions of parties, Duverger discusses four kinds of parties : Caucus, Branch, Cell and Militia. Caucus is known for its limited nature. It contains limited and small number of members and do not seek any expansion. It is basically a closed group. New membership can be achieved only by a kind of tacit cooption or by formal nomination. It is also notable that their members are chosen because of their quality and influence. It functions in a large geographical area, but their activity is basically seasonal. 'It reaches its peak at election times and is considerably reduced in the intervals between the ballots. In short the caucus is semi-permanent by nature.' (*Ibid.*: 18). The Branch is less decentralised than the caucus. 'The caucus is restricted in nature, but the branch is extensive and tries to enroll members, to multiply their numbers, and to increase its total strength. It does not desire quality, but quantity is the most important of consideration... the branch is wide open' (*Ibid.*: 23). The branch appeals to the masses and tries to keep in touch with them. This is because its geographical basis remains less extensive than that of the caucus (*Ibid.*). It is semi-permanent in nature and its activity is obviously very important at election times but it continues to be active in the intervals between ballots. The branch is basically a socialist invention (*Ibid.*).

The cell has an occupational basis. It unites all party members who work at the same place. This may be factory, workshop, shop, office, and administration cells. To the contrary, branch and caucus have their geographical basis, the branch has its local geographical base

and caucus has its wider geographical spread. The cell is a much smaller group than the branch. Even the cell membership never reaches a hundred. There are cells of between fifteen and twenty members which achieve three times as much work as cells with fifty or sixty members.' (*Ibid.*: 28). This is absolutely permanent in nature, since its party members meet daily in their work. This also may exclude the purely political questions and function like a trade union. As the branches were a socialist invention, cells are a communist invention, particularly they are an invention of the Russian Communist party, and were adopted by all communist parties across the world by the Third International in its resolution of 21 January 1924 (*Ibid.*: 31).

'The Militia is a kind of private army.' Members are enrolled on Military lines and also get military training as well as follow the same discipline, wearing uniforms and badges, ready like military to march in step preceded by a band and flags and ready to meet the enemy with weapons in physical combat. But they are basically civilians and they do not follow this organized discipline permanently, they simply meet for drill frequently. Militia is a fascist creation (*Ibid.*: 36-38). Duverger also agrees with that 'it is also rare a party is based exclusively on one only of the four 'basic elements'- except perhaps the old nineteenth century parties based on caucuses' (*Ibid.* : 37).

While discussing about typologies of political parties, Gunther and Diamond (2001: 3-39) divide it into 15 types and clustered into five broader genres elite parties, mass-based parties, ethnicity-based parties, electoralist parties and movement parties. The traditional elite parties are weakly organized and formed in the parliament. They mobilize support on the basis of their personal resources or through patron-client network. Second, the mass party used to be formed outside the legislature body. Industrial working class party, peasant party, religious party, etc. come under this category. These parties are well organized and have a mass membership. Third, ethnic-based party consists two kinds of parties: Mono-ethnic party that used to be ethnically exclusivist, second, multi-ethnic coalitional party, that is coalition of several ethnic groups and identities. Indian National Congress (INC) up to mid-1960s is good example of the latter (Sridharan and deSouza 2006: 18). Fourth, electoral parties are may be personality-based, programmatic, or catch-all parties. Personalistic parties are basically to fulfill the desires of their top leadership. Programmatic parties are basically programme-oriented. Catch-all parties are election-oriented and they are not bounded with any class or way particular ethnic group. Those parties which evolved from social or political movements come under movement party. Green party in Germany, Canada, Australia and in

other countries are good examples for this. In Indian freedom struggle INC emerged as movement party.

If we try to see Indian parties under this typological classification we may find that some parties are in several categories and some parties are not fit in any one but may be partially included in three to four categories. The INC or the Congress party begins with the tendency of movement Party. Later on, it became a mass party. After independence it lost its character of a movement party, and in mid-1960s it also started losing the features of a mass party. Moreover, while it also emerged as a catch-all party and tried to elicit votes from all class and ethnic sections of the society. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) seems to display the tendency of religious traditionalist, ethnic parties but does not fit in any one. Left parties are ideologically class-related mass-based parties, but they have become practically election-oriented parties. Several regional parties like Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Telgu Desam Party (TDP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), etc. can be considered as linguistic-based and ethnicity-based parties. Parties, considered as Janata family parties, particularly are fragments of Janata Dal and may be considered as mass-parties, but at least some of them are also personality-based parties (*Ibid.*: 18-19). So we may say that India's party politics does not fit completely in any of the theories discussing the typologies, functions and structures of political parties in the West, especially Europe.

On the matter of their origin, most of the parties in India, including Indian National Congress (INC), are 'externally' created, i.e. outside the parliament or legislature to begin with. But within the parties division of wings have been noticed. Out of which one may play its dominant role in parliament and other among the masses. Conflicts between two wings were also evident in the parties. For example, in the Congress the conflict between Nehru and Tandon was evident in 1951, then conflict between Indira Gandhi and Syndicate led to the split in Congress in 1969. Even then, it can be said that for most of the years, the parliamentary wing held its dominance over the mass organization. In the Janata Party also the same trend were found. Despite the heterogeneity and the persistent factional behaviour of its constituents, the preeminent position of the party leadership in the parliament had been asserted (Ashraf and Sharma 1983: 92). But contrary to this, in the communist party of India (CPI) the mass organization appears to have sway over the parliamentary wing. Thus the parties are mainly created outside the parliament by the ongoing activities of parties. But two

wings within the party emerge generally and their activities decide the dominance of a wing on the other. But apparently the dominance of the parliamentary wing is more pronounced in the case of parties in power (*ibid.*: 93).

Emergence of Political Parties in India

The emergence of older political parties in India can be seen in the crucible of freedom struggle. In late nineteenth century there were several organizations which were struggling for the socio-economic welfare of the society. Indian National Congress (INC) is the first institutionalized political party in India, formed in December, 1885, only three decades after the founding of the Republican party in the United States and in the same decade in which the British Labour Party was organized (Weiner 1967: 2). Kochanek (1968: 319-320) divided the development of the Congress in four phases: first, the period of the moderates from 1885 to 1900; second, the period of the extremists from 1900 to 1920; third, the Gandhian period 1920 to 1946; and fourth, the post-independence period from 1946 to the present (1968). Now we may also delineate four phases: first, Congress as dominant party from 1946 to 1967; second, decline of congress in some states from 1967 to 1971; third, reemergence of Congress under Indira regime with her slogan of '*garibi hatao*' from 1971 to 1977; fourth, decline of Congress at the central government due to the anti-Congress and anti-emergency Janata Party's emergence from 1977 to 1980; fifth, reemergence of Congress under Indira and Rajeev regime from 1980 to 1989; sixth, decline of Congress in the new developed multi-party system at the central level from 1989 to 1998; and seventh, development of Congress as one node in emerging bi-nodal party system [the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA)] from 1998 to the present (2013).

Before independence Congress was, basically, a movement party. With the movement of freedom struggle the Congress reached to the masses, earlier it was only limited among the elites. Several other political parties also emerged either within the Congress or outside the Congress. Swaraj Party (1923), Congress Socialist Party (1934) were two important fronts within the Congress. Outside the Congress, after the *Bang-Bhang* in 1905 All India Muslim League (AIML) (1906), Communist Party of India (1920), Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1936 and transformed into the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF) in 1942 to represent the schedule castes were also there. Before independence most of the parties were under the umbrella of INC. The only parties that largely remained outside its umbrella were the Justice

Party/Draivida Kazhagam. But one by one, Congress Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Gandhians, etc. departed from the broader Congress platform. In the Nehru era the Congress practiced internal democracy and major sections of the society found their space and recognition under the Congress umbrella. But the Congress party had also experienced several splits over the years: Jan Congress, Indian National Congress (Requisitionists), Indian National Congress (Organization), Bengal Congress, Kerala Congress, Loktantric Congress parties, Congress for Democracy, Congress (Swaran/Urs), Congress (Pawar), Jan Morcha, All India Indira Congress (Tiwari/Arjun Singh), Trinamool Congress, Tamil Maanila Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, etc. These splits appeared more due to their political ambitions and personal and/or regional rather than programmatic or ideological differences. But very few of them have survived effectively in national or regional politics (Singh and Saxena 2011: 287).

Classification of Political Parties in India

According to the Election Commission Report on the 15th Lok Sabha election held in 2009, a total of 363 political parties participated in the election. Seven of them were classified as national parties, 34 as state or regional parties, and the rest 322 were merely called registered (unrecognized) parties (Election Commission of India 2009). The second basis of classification of major Indian Parties may be the pragmatic or ideological spectrum ranging from the right through the centre to the left.

National and Regional parties: When we classify the political parties as national, state or registered, we follow the criteria fixed by Election Commission of India. Though, it is subject to change after each election so the present criteria should be discussed here. At present, according to Election Commission of India, a political party shall be eligible to be recognized as national party if (a) candidates of party scored not less than six percent of valid votes in any four or more states in last Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly elections and, in addition, it has secured at least four seats in Lok Sabha from any state or states; OR (b) at the last general election to the Lok Sabha, the party has won at least two percent of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha (i.e. 11 seats at present), any fraction exceeding half being counted as one and the party's candidates have been elected to the Lok Sabha from not less than three states; OR (c) the party fulfills the criteria to be recognized as state party in at least four states. A political party shall be eligible to be recognized as state party, if, (a) at the last general election to the State Assembly candidates of the party have secured not less than six

percent of the total valid votes polled in the state and, in addition, the party has secured at least two seats in the State Legislative Assembly; OR (b) at the last general election to the Lok Sabha, the candidates of the party have secured not less than six percent of the total valid votes polled in the state and, in addition, the party has secured at least one seat to the Lok Sabha from that state; OR (c) at the last general election to the State Legislative Assembly, the party has won at least three percent of the total number of seats in the Assembly, where any fraction exceeding half being counted as one, or at least three seats in the Assembly, which ever is more; OR (d) at the last general election to the Lok Sabha in that particular state, the party has secured at least one seat for every 25 seats or any fraction therefore allotted to that state (Election Commission of India, 2010: 2-3). There were only seven national parties that entered the electoral process to the 15th Lok Sabha in 2009. INC, BJP, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). One of these, the RJD, lost its status as a national party subsequent to its performance in 2009 general election to the Lok Sabha. It could not maintain its performance which could fulfill the criteria to be recognized as a national party. In addition no new party could qualify to become a national party in that election (*Ibid.*: 1). Even till now (August 2013) no other party among state or registered parties could fulfill that criteria to be recognized as national party. According to Election Commission's criteria of classification, there are 41 state parties in several states across India. But if we classify them, according to their role and presence in the state as well as the centre, there are only 13 important state parties. These are AIADMK, DMK both in Tamil Nadu, All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) in West Bengal, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha, Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) in Karnataka, Janata Dal-United (JD-U) in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference (JKNC) in Jammu and Kashmir, SAD in Punjab, Shiv Sena (SS) in Maharashtra, Samajwadi Party (SP) in Uttar Pradesh, Telgu Desam Party (TDP) and Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) both in Andhra Pradesh and Asom Gana Parishad (SGP) in Asom. Apart from these there are another group of regional or state parties that may not be despite their marginal presence in the national parliament as they are crucial for government formation and opposition by virtue of their sizeable representation in the respective Vidhan Sabha of the concerned states where they operate. These are: Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in Jharkhand, Nagaland People's Front (NPF) in Nagaland and Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) in Sikkim (Singh 2012: 4-5). The registered unrecognized parties and 'Independents' are practically discounted from this discussion because occasionally they play a balancing role in government formation, maintenance, or destabilization.

Number of national parties in India varied from election to election. But the Congress was only, particularly during its dominance period (1952-1967), actual national party which enjoyed its presence in almost all states in India. The Congress also ruled every state until 1967. However, in the period of Congress dominance large degree of autonomy, from central intervention was enjoyed by the state governments. But after debacle of the Congress in 1967 and the great split in the party in 1969, partly for the personal and partly pragmatic reasons, the Congress started loosing its dominance in every state as it lost its government in eight of the 16 states in the 1967 elections. Again in 1971 and 1981 by Indira Gandhi and in 1984 by Rajeev Gandhi efforts were made for the reemergence of the 'Congress System' but it could not reach upto the earlier level.

As a result of backfire of emergency, in the post-emergency and on the eve of 1977 general election to the Lok Sabha, Janata Party (JP) emerged, but it performed well only in Hindi-speaking areas. The Janata Party was the product or the merger of anti-Indira Congress led by the right-leaning old guard called Congress (Organization), Bharatiya Lok Dal, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Socialist Party and Congress for Democracy (another Congress splinter) and dislodged the Congress for the first time from power in New Delhi (Singh 2012: 8). However, the process of merger was never carried to its logical and substantive conclusion. Organizationally, it was at best a confederal party with a minimal overall central authority. This explains why the Janata Party – which subsequently expanded into Janata Dal in 1988 with the addition of a new Congress splinter, Jan Morcha led by V.P. Singh. But it easily fragmented into half a dozen splinters in several states by the early 1990s (*Ibid.*: 9).

Bhartiya Janata Party (earlier Bhartiya Jana Sangh) emerged gradually on the national scene but it also could not represent all sections and regions of Indian states. Earlier it performed well in Hindi speaking areas but later on it could create strong support base in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and some parts of maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Punjab and Odisha. So it failed to create its space at pan-India level. Performance of left parties was also limited to Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura and among few marginal sections in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Moreover, in the coalition era, since 1989, no party, including the Congress, could achieve the magic number of majority to form the government without coalition. The Narsimha Rao-led Congress government, in 1991, for almost two years remained minority government. Notably, BJP tried to fill the vacuum, created due to the decay of the Congress as a dominant party, by providing

Hindu Nationalist alternative. But the BJP failed to fill this vacuum completely, so the remaining vacuum was filled by various state parties.

Table 1: Performance of national political parties in Lok Sabha elections, 1989-2009

Year (Total seats)	1989 (529)		1991 (521)		1996 (543)		1998 (543)		1999 (543)		2004 (543)		2009 (543)	
	% Vote	Seats Won												
AIIC(T)	--	--	--	--	1.4	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
BJP	11.3	85	20.1	120	20.2	161	25.5	182	23.7	182	22.1	138	18.8	116
BSP	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.6	5	4.1	14	5.3	19	6.1	21
CPI	2.5	12	2.4	14	1.9	12	1.7	9	1.4	4	1.4	10	1.4	4
CPI(M)	6.5	33	6.1	35	6.1	32	5.1	32	5.4	33	5.6	43	5.3	16
ICS(SCS)	0.3	1	0.3	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
INC	39.5	197	36.2	232	28.8	140	25.8	141	28.3	114	26.5	145	25.5	206
JD	17.7	143	11.8	59	8.0	46	3.2	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
JD(S)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.9	1	--	--	--	--
JD(U)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.1	21	--	--	--	--
JNP/JP	--	--	3.3	5	0.1	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
NCP	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.8	9	2.0	9
RJD	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.2	4
SAP	--	--	--	--	2.1	8	1.7	12	--	--	--	--	--	--

Source: Compiled from various reports of the Election Commission of India.

Abbreviations: AIIC(T): ALL INDIA INDIRA CONGRESS (TIWARI), BJP: BHARATIYA JANTA PARTY, BSP: BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY, CPI: COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA, CPI(M): COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST), ICS(SCS): INDIAN CONGRESS (SOCIALIST- SARAT CHANDRA SINHA), INC: INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, JD: JANATA DAL, JD(S): JANATA DAL (SECULAR), JD(U): JANATA DAL (UNITED), JNP/JP: JANTA PARTY, NCP: NATIONALIST CONGRESS PARTY, RJD: RASHTRIYA JANATA DAL, SAP: SAMATA PARTY

In the above Table, only the BJP and the Congress consistently won seats in three digits (except the BJP in 1989 election). Some parties were recognized as national in either one or two elections only. Consistency can also be seen in the CIP's and CPI(M)'s performance but they were consistently low. In this condition an obvious question that arises is that are these 'national' parties really national? The national parties may fulfill the criteria set by the Election Commission but they are not able to have their significant support base across India. Even the Congress lost its support and became marginalized in several states. It is clear that the BJP has its significant support base only in some North Indian states, but fulfilling the technical conditions, it is a national party today. Actually BSP projects its candidates for almost every seat in Lok Sabha elections and do the same in some state legislative elections like in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Bihar, etc. So even if a party is good in one or two states that gets recognition of national party easily. Douglas Verney, in his study, suggests that to get recognition of national party it must be compulsory for parties to nominate their candidates in at least half of the constituencies (272 of 543), in addition, a national party should already have fought elections as a federal or part of an alliance and have

won the five percent of the total valid votes and five percent of the total seats (at present 28 seats of 543) (Verney 2003: 159-160). Report of the National Commission to Review the working of the Constitution (NCRWC) suggests a criteria for national parties that a party must get 10 percent of total votes and seats in Lok Sabha elections (India Republic 2002: Ch. 4).

State or region-based parties also existed in India for a long time. But some parties started giving election winning performance since 1967. In the process, national parties were marginalized, as because adjuncts to the state parties in major state of the country. Out of these state parties, many of them are limited to a particular state or section of the society. Regional parties with an explicitly regional-ethnic character include the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, the DMK and AIADMK both in Tamil Nadu, the AGP in Assam, SAD in Punjab, JMM in Jharkhand (Hasan 2010: 2044). Among these TDP represents Telgu linguistic people in Andhra Pradesh, AGP represents caste Hindu Assamese, Akali Dal presents only Sikhs and JMM represents mostly the tribes of Jharkhand, while BJD and RJD in Odisha, JD(U) in Bihar, SP and BSP in Uttar Pradesh, DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu to lower caste politics. Among them RJD, SP and JD(U) also perform minority politics to attract Muslim votes in their favour. Many of the state parties are not confined to one state, but exist in several states. For example RJD, JD(S), JD(U), SP have the base in more than one state. Some national parties as the NCP, CPI, CPI(M), BSP also limited to few states. Though, they are fulfilling the technical criteria of national party so they are recognized as national.

Ideological Spectrum of Political Parties: The cynical view of Indian politics is that ideology has no place in it. It is supposed to be motivated largely by issueless factionalism and opportunism. Yet, this view does not fit well with the fact that political parties spend so much on manifestoes and other public material and on campaigning which is publically coached in programmatic terms. The reality obviously lies somewhere in between. Indian politics is perhaps neither entirely doctrinaire nor entirely pragmatic (Singh and Saxena 2011: 297). It is also possible to characterize Indian parties although there demarcations are often blurred, especially in more recent times, on account of major shifts in the area of economic policies.

Only three parties appear as subscribing to the right wing: the Hindu Right BJP, the Sikh Right Shiromani Akali Dal, and the Hindu Right and Maharashtra/Mumbai Nationalist Shiv Sena there. Among these, only BJP has a wider national presence. The SAD is mainly

confined to Punjab and Shiv Sena which started as a nativist Mumbai party now has a wider following but mainly in Maharashtra. Only four parties appear as the parties of the left wing: CPI(M), CPI Forward Block (FB) and Revolutionary Socialist party of India (RPI). The first two of these are mainly concentrated in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura and last two in West Bengal only (Singh 2012: 4). A bulk of political parties are centrist-oriented. This may be explained as a result of the powerful pull towards the middle-of-the road liberal progressivism and democratic populism engendered by the anti-colonial nationalist movement in the first half of the twentieth century and persistent centrism of electoral politics following the Independence in 1947. The major centrist parties of Indian politics were the INC and the Janata Dal, now fragmented in several splinters. Most of these splinters also tried to follow the same political line and remained as centrist parties. The Janata Dal splited in several parties like RJD in Bihar, SP in Uttar Pradesh, BJD in Odissa, JD(S) in Karnataka, JD(U) in Bihar. The Janata Parivar Parties, by and large, have their roots either in the Janata Party formed in 1977 (which became the Janata Dal in 1988 following the merger of V.P. Singh's Jan Morcha with it) and the INC (Singh and Saxena 2011: 297). But in the present coalitional era ideological shifts and compromise have been witnessed. When the BJP become the single largest party in 1998 and 1999 elections it shifted towards centre and reached to the point of right-to-the-centre. In the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) BJP, SAD, SS were the rightists parties but BJD, JD(U), TDP, DMK, etc. were the centrist parties when both had no sacrifice with their ideology. Centrist parties accepted BJP with its 'Hindu Nationalism' and BJP had to minimize pitch of its tone on Ram Mandir and Article 370 issue on Kashmir. Again in 2004 general election to the 14th Lok Sabha Left wing parties supported to the congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The left wing parties and the Congress both shifted to the point 'left-to-the-centre'.

Moreover, when we see the manifestos of the Congress, the BJP and of the left wing parties, they are providing almost the same agenda and programmes to the people. Development in terms of industries, agriculture, infrastructure and service (like health, education, jobs, food, etc.) are promised to be ensured by most of the parties. Control over corruption, inflation, price rise of goods and services are also being promised. The BJP in its 2009 manifesto announced its agenda for change guided by three goals: good governance, development and security. Under these heads the BJP promised quality education, good health facility, electricity, roads, drinking water will reach even at the rural areas (Bhartiya Janata Party 2009). The Congress also promised more or less same, in other words. The

Congress talked about quality education, health security, food security minimum 100 days jobs for every one, police reforms, farmer's development, skill development, democratization of cooperatives, etc. (Indian National Congress 2009). The CPI(M) counted the problems created by Congress-led UPA during 2004 to 2009 government, they noticed, price rise, terrorism, Maoist violence, corruption, strategic alliance with the United States, etc. The CPI(M) promised that they will ensure revival of agriculture, financial sector regulation, food security and public distribution system, checking price rise of essential commodities, land-ceiling, industrial and infrastructure development (Communist party of India-Marxist 2009). It is clear that their issues and programmes are much similar. In the post 1989 neoliberal phase, United Front government established 'Disinvestment Commission' to speed up the privatization process. Disinvestment Commission used to analyze the performance of public companies and give its suggestion to government in respect of privatization. The economic reforms have also adopted by the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led UPA governments. The left parties like the CPI and the CPI(M) are considered pro-workers and pro-poor parties. These parties have opposed capitalism and worked for land reforms in states like Kerala and West Bengal. But in recent years Left Front met with some contradiction. They moved to establish Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in West Bengal. Disputes on Nandigram and Singur projects, did not go well with their support base (Murari 2012: 149). Most of the political parties have pursued the economic reforms either as a partner in a coalition at national or state level or as majority party at the state level of government even some of them have increased the pace of the reforms. The left owing to its limited strengths has to witness the rightward shift in the policies at the centre.

Deinstitutionalization and Decay of Parties

In India most of the parties are leader-centered, whether these parties are national or regional. Such leaders are the charismatic personalities in their respective spheres of influence. The Congress has practiced this 'unity of command' system for a long time and other parties are following it, and some parties are far ahead of Congress in this trait. Political parties in the parliamentary democratic system of India are mostly non-democratic. Politicians are encouraging their sons or their relatives to join their party and are also provided higher posts in party and government. To some extent, the BJP and the communist parties are exception to this trend. But authoritarian control of the BJP by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and 'democratic centralism' in Communist parties are the features to be noted. On the question of why are parties becoming family-centered, K.C. Suri

believes that to manage huge fund, especially election expenditure and the mindset of the party chief that they treat their party as their personal property are major reason behind the emergence of family centered party system in India (Suri 2011).

In India, elected representatives are like puppets of the supreme leaders of the parties concerned. Party bosses can issue 'whips' and party members in legislative branches (Lok Sabha or States Legislative Assemblies) are bound to obey those dictates. In the absence of democracy within political parties, this reduces the democratic setup to a 'whipocracy'. Combining this with an ad hoc and opaque system of selection of candidates by political parties, 'whipocracy' seems to be nothing but nascent fascism (Murari 2012: 145). Selection of candidates for elections and for the posts within party, political parties do not operate in a democratic way. The higher authorities decide the list of candidates. Earlier, social support of a person used to be considered as basic criteria of winnability of the candidate. But now wealth, family connections, and muscle power have replaced it.

The role of unaccounted money in elections has become a serious problem. The political parties collect funds from companies and corporate houses and then use this money to influence the voters to vote in their favour. Reports of money and liquor being distributed in poor areas are frequent during elections. Even to get party tickets from the party several candidates are supposed to make donations to the party fund or to some higher leader for his support to get the candidature of the party. In 15th Lok Sabha elected in 2009, out of 545 members 315 members are crorepati. Congress has 146 (out of 206) crorepati MPs and BJP has 59 (out of 116) crorepati MPs (Data compiled from http://adrindia.org/images/pdf/l2009_fullassetdet.pdf; also see, Singh and Murari 2012: 155-158, especially Tables 1 and 2).

Earlier the criminals used to support the candidates by threatening or pressurizing the voters to vote in favour of that particular. Now they have come out openly by contesting or putting his relative forward for the elections leading to criminalization of politics. In the 15th Lok Sabha elected in 2009, out of 545 MPs 162 MPs are accused in criminal cases. 44 MPs (out of 116) of BJP and 44 MPs (out of 206) of Congress are accused in criminal cases (*Ibid.*). The increasing role of money and criminals in party and electoral processes are highly debatable issues today. Now a day money and muscle power has become a means to overcome the 'problems' of mass democracy. These are the issues work not only to undermine the democratic setup of country but also lead to deinstitutionalization and decay of political parties. Vohra Committee report (1993) has mentioned that there is a sinister

collaboration among politicians, bureaucrats, crime syndicates, and mafia groups. They are creating obstacles in the way of enquiry teams and do not let the latter to do their investigation.

A notable shift in political parties and party system has emerged. Decline of the Congress as pan-India national party, noticeable emergence of the BJP and emergence of multi-party system at the national level government have also been noticed. In this changing nature of political system number of parties increased rapidly. The number of parties contesting election in India has varied from 36 in 1980 to 209 in 1996, 176 in 1998, and 169 in 1999. The Election Commission of India revised its classification to identify the political parties as 'national' and 'state'. The Election Commission under T.N. Seshan and his successors brought several changes to regulate and conduct free and fare elections, minimize criminalization, money power, and intervention of business in elections. It tried to ensure internal democracy and transparency of accounts in political parties. Over the past decades a number of parliamentary and constitutional committees have been proposing packages of electoral and party reforms. For instance, Justice (Rtd.) V.M. Tarkunde Committee in late 1970s appointed by Jayaprakash Narayan on behalf of the civil society, Dinesh Goswami Committee in the late 1980s appointed by the Parliament and Indrjeet Gupta Committee in the 1990s appointed by Government of India. A Law Commission Report in 1999 also proposed a comprehensive package of reforms in our electoral and party systems. However, the most comprehensive package of reforms has been proposed by National Commission to Review of Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) in 2002 (Singh 2012: 3839). It proposed a comprehensive legislation regulating the formation and functioning of political parties and alliances of parties in India. It suggested ensuring all-inclusive, democratic constituted and functioning of political parties, maintaining publicly opened and audited systematic accounts with all information of receipts of funds and expenditures. It also gave its suggestion to restrict the increasing number of registered parties. The NCRWC Report recommends that the Election Commission 'should progressively increase the threshold criteria for eligibility for recognition so that *the proliferation of smaller political parties is discouraged*' (India Republic 2002: Ch. 4, emphasis on the source itself). It also recommends disqualifying the candidate and deregistering the party if criminal offence or criminal charge framed against one by the court. But most of these recommendations still need to be implemented and exercised.

