



Rise of Regional Parties In India

In a democracy, political parties provide an agency to the society to gather different views on various issues and to present these to the government. They bring various representatives together so that a responsible government could be formed. They provide a mechanism to support or restrain the government, make policies, justify or oppose them. **India has a multi-party system.**

Political Parties in India

- Every political party in India has to register with the [Election Commission](#).
- The Election Commission registers political parties for the purpose of elections and grants them **recognition as national or state parties** on the basis of their poll performance
- **Recognised Parties:**
 - Are given a unique symbol - only the official candidates of that party can use that election symbol
 - **National Parties:** A party that secures at least 6% of the total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly elections in four States and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha is recognised as a national party.
 - **State Parties:** 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 two seats is recognised as a State party.
- According to the **Election Commission of India**, there are **over 2000 political parties in India, which include eight "recognized national" and more than 50 "recognized state"** parties.

Regional Parties in India

- Other than the **8 national parties**- Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Nationalist Congress Party, Communist Parties, Bahujan Samaj Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, All India Trinamool Congress and National People's Party; most of the major parties of the country are classified by the Election Commission as **'State parties'**. **These are commonly referred to as regional parties.**
- Yet these parties need not be regional in their ideology or outlook. Some of these parties are all India parties that happen to have succeeded only in some states .
- The presence of a number of **ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and caste groups** within the Indian society is greatly responsible for the origin and growth of regional parties.
- In India regional parties are based on themes like- **Identity, Statehood, Autonomy and Development etc.**
 - **Autonomy** consists of demanding greater powers to the states (like the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir).
 - **Statehood** consists of fighting for an independent state within the country (like the Telangana Rastra Samiti demanded a separate state of Telangana).
 - **Identity** consists of fighting for recognition of cultural rights of a group (like the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra or the DMK fighting for the identity of the Dalits).
 - **Development** consists of regional parties believing that only they can bring development to the people of a particular region.
 - Sometimes regional parties create these **'cultural specificities'** for **electoral gains**.

Evolution of Regional Party

- Over the last four decades, the number and strength of regional parties has expanded.
- This has made the Parliament of India **politically more diverse**. Regional political parties have emerged to **fulfill regional aspirations**.
- No one national party is able to secure on its own a majority in Lok Sabha. As a result, the national parties are compelled to form alliances with State parties. The regional political parties started playing a crucial role in coalition politics since 1989.
- It is because of the regional political parties that our **party-system has been federalized**. The Centre has begun to address their problems and respond their aspirations through accommodation.
- The evolving nature of our party system has **strengthened the cooperative trends of our federal system**.

Various Stages of Indian Party System

1952-64 :The Nehruvian era of national consensus

The Congress Party was the dominant party and Indian democracy was essentially a **one party system** also **termed as 'Congress system'**.

- Congress evolved as the party that was like a **big umbrella** under which all communities and interests and ideologies sought and got a place.
- There were **many small parties competing with the Congress** but they acted mainly as a **kind of pressure groups**.

1964-77: An Uneasy Transition

- With the **death of Jawahar Lal Nehru**, and **1967 elections** posed challenge to dominance of the congress system.
 - The Congress **failed to secure majorities in eight states** and its majority in the Lok Sabha was reduced to very narrow 54% of the seats.
- **Regional parties started growing all over the country**.
- The dismal performance of the Congress led to a series of **power struggles with in congress**.
- Ultimately, the party was split in 1969 and Indira Gandhi's supremacy was established both in the party and the government.
- However, some leaders like Morarji Desai in Gujarat and JP (Jaiprakash Narain) in Bihar carried out a **successful movement against Congress** corruption and arbitrary rule.
- Their movement peaked in 1975 when **Indira Gandhi for the first and only time in Indian history decided to impose in Internal emergency**.

1977-80: A Period of a New Consensus and Increasing Inter-Party Conflict

- New coalition emerged led by **Janata Party** in 1977.
- This led to **Emergence of a Multi-Party System in India**.
- Many **smaller parties** had come together to fight the Congress dominance rather than any ideological consensus.
- But, the lack of ideologically coherent policy led to **fall of Janata party** and congress gained rise of power in 1980.

1980-89: Tussle between the Congress at the centre and the newly emerged regional parties at the state level

- Frivolous use of **President's rule under Article 356**.
- However, the regional parties got strengthened and started playing a more assertive role in centre politics.
 - In the eighth Lok Sabha Elections (1984), **the Telugu Desam**, a regional party of Andhra

Pradesh, **emerged as the main opposition party.**

1989 to 2014: Multi-party system and Coalition politics

- The death of Rajiv Gandhi, corruption cases (Bofors scandal), economic crisis, all set the tone for an **era of coalitions** that has lasted for almost **twenty five years** of coalition governments.
- The **modern era of coalition politics** has come into being as a consequence of the **development of the multi-party system.**
- However, this period is marred by **compulsions of coalition.**
 - Growth of Regional Parties also lead to **'rainbow' coalitions**, so called because like the rainbow, they last only a short time.
 - **The period of 1996 - 1999 had 3 general elections, which cost a lot of public money.**
 - **Policy paralysis** and delay in decision making and bills all result from coalitions.
 - In times of emergency, coalition coordination can lead to **unacceptable delays.**
 - Coalition government can **obstruct the process of decision making** and the conduct of decision implementation.
 - Coalition government has turned politics of north India into one of **competition for vote banks** based on caste and community etc.
- **On the contrary**, during times of coalitions, regional parties served as a **moderating force upon exclusionary national parties.**
 - Regional parties fill a vacuum for **protecting minorities.**
 - The coalition politics has led to empowerment for regional parties from the states and has added to India's search for **true federalism.**
 - Thus, it paves the way for a kind of **'electoral federalism'.**
 - Since 1996, twenty three regional parties have been sharing power at the national level. there is a strong sense of Indianness, or what is called a **federal unifier.**

2014 to now: Resurgence of One-party System?

- Two general elections 2014 and 2019, saw a single party (BJP) on its own getting the full majority, **breaking the 25 years of compulsions of coalition politics.**
- However the Government is still formed out of alliance of many political parties.
- But the outlook of regional parties, now appears to be changing from **conflictual orientation to a tendency of co-operative bargaining** in respect of Centre-state relations.
 - Now the **financial problems** in the Centre-State relations are the main focus of attention.
- Today, the regional parties have provided **a new dimension to the process of national integration and nation building**

The regional parties have made a strong impact on the nature of Centre-State relations in India. They are a natural **consequence of a democratic system** based on adult franchise in multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-linguistic societies like India. **Thus, their growth is in synergy with entire spirit of democracy.**

[For Mind Map](#)