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THE CHANGING ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

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ABSTRACT :

This research paper explores the role and responsibilities of political parties within democratic systems, examining their historical development, organizational structures, and contributions to political processes. Political parties are crucial to the functioning of representative democracies, acting as intermediaries between the electorate and the government. This study analyzes the various types of political parties, from ideologically driven entities to those formed around single issues or personalities, and explores their impact on electoral systems, policy formation, and governance. Additionally, the paper investigates the challenges faced by political parties in modern democracies, such as party fragmentation, voter disengagement, and the rise of populist movements. By drawing on case studies from different political environments, the paper offers a comprehensive understanding of how political parties shape political landscapes, influence public policy, and adapt to the changing demands of society. Ultimately, the research highlights the dynamic nature of political parties and their ongoing evolution in response to shifting political, social, and technological landscapes.

KEYWORDS: Political Parties, Types of political parties, Functions of political parties, Political party system, Changing role of political parties.

INTRODUCTION:

Political parties are organized groups of people who share similar political beliefs and work together to influence government policies, win elections, and govern a country. They play a crucial role in democratic systems by representing different sections of society and providing voters with choices in governance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology in history involves various approaches and techniques to investigate, analyze, and interpret historical events, processes, and trends. In this research paper , I used investigation model through whichmany primary sources like government, parliament and Election commission etc. website and books used by me.

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DESCRIPTION:
Functions of Political Parties:
1. Representation – They represent different ideologies, social groups, and economic interests in the parliament because they have elected on the basis of such agenda.
2. Policy Formulation – They develop policies and programs to address national issues as per their party agenda.
3. Election Participation – They select candidates, organize campaigns, and contest elections and try to win maximum candidate.
4. Government Formation – The winning party (or coalition) (those who won at least 51% seats) forms the government and implements policies.
5. Opposition Role – The losing parties hold the ruling party accountable and provide alternative policies.They may form shadow cabinate to check on government.
6. Political Education – They inform citizens about political issues and encourage political participation as well as create political awareness among people.

Types of Political Parties:
1. Major Parties – Dominant parties that have a realistic chance of forming a government. (e.g., Democratic and Republican parties in the U.S.)
2. Minor/Third Parties – Smaller parties that influence political debates but rarely win elections.
3. Ideological Parties – Parties based on specific ideologies, such as socialism, communism, or liberalism.
4. Single-Issue Parties – Focus on a single policy issue (e.g., environmental parties).
5. Regional Parties – Represent specific geographic or ethnic interests.

Political Party Systems:
1. One-Party System – Only one legal political party exists (e.g. China: Communist Party of China).
2. Two-Party System – Two major parties dominate politics (e.g.1) U.K.: Labour party and Conservative party   2) U.S.A.: Republic party and Democratic party).
3. Multi-Party System – Multiple parties compete for power (e.g. India).
    Political parties shape governance and democracy, influencing how policies are made and how people participate in political life.

CHANGING ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES:
    The role of political parties in India has undergone significant changes since independence due to evolving political, social, and economic conditions. Here's how their role has transformed over time:

1. From Dominance of a Single Party to Multi-Party Competition (1950s–1980s)
    The Indian National Congress (INC) was dominant in the early decades after independence.
    Opposition parties existed but had limited influence, but from 1967 regional political parties starts rising.
    The Emergency (1975–77) and the rise of regional parties led to a decline in Congress's dominance.

2. Rise of Coalition Politics (1989–2014)
    No single party could secure a majority after 1989, leading to coalition governments (NDA, UPA 1&2).
    Regional parties like DMK, AIADMK, TMC, BSP, SP, and Shiv Sena gained prominence.
    The role of political parties shifted from ideology-based politics to alliances and power-sharing.

3. Centralization of Power & Presidential-Style Politics (2014–Present)
    After the gap of 30 years ,the BJP under Narendra Modi secured a majority in 2014 and 2019, reducing the need for coalitions, they formed single handed government. But in 2024 once again there was coalition government of NDA.
    Politics became more personality-driven, with leaders like Narendra Modi shaping electoral narratives i.e. politics of majority.
    Strong central leadership and weakened opposition characterized this phase, like there was no proper leader of opposition from 2014-2024 due to lack of quorum.

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4. Role of Social Media & Digital Campaigning

Political parties now use social media platforms, data analytics, and digital outreach for campaigning.

Election strategies have shifted from traditional rallies to WhatsApp groups, Twitter trends, and digital narratives.

5. Ideological Polarization & Identity Politics

Political discourse is increasingly centered on religious and nationalistic narratives.

Caste and regional identity politics remain crucial in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamilnadu, North-east states etc.

Debates around secularism, Hindutva, and federalism dominate party strategies and winning criteria.

6. Electoral Reforms & Changing Voter Behavior

The rise of voter awareness, EVMs and VVPAT, electoral bonds, and Supreme Court interventions has impacted party strategies. Ex. Steps taken by T.N sheshan, Supreme court verdict regarding electoral bond, ECI awareness regarding EVM and VVPAT.

There's increasing demand for internal democracy within parties, though dynastic politics continues in many.

7. Weakening of Regional Parties & Opposition Challenges

While regional parties still hold power in states, their national influence has declined. Most probably in the north we have not seen strong political opponent as compare to south.

Opposition unity remains a challenge, leading to BJP's electoral dominance.

8. Role of RTI

Day by day citizen of India is becoming aware about it's right and responsibilities, reflection of that thing we can see in the use of RTI has increased as a instrument to check on government and to shape political policy.

CONCLUSION:

The role of political parties in India is shifting towards centralized leadership, majority based politics, digital outreach, and ideological narratives. While coalition politics is still relevant in some statesas well as after the gap of a decade i.e. from 2014-2024 coalition government once again formed in the center, but the national trend favors strong leadership , rightest politics and party organization.

The future will likely see further changes with electoral reforms, youth participation, and emerging regional dynamics as the India is passing through the stage of demographic dividend because of that there is huge young population who is demanding corruption free, transparent and fair government.

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