

Semester 3, MJC 4

Changing Roles of Political Parties in the Functioning of Indian Democracy

Introduction

Political parties are the backbone of democratic systems, playing a crucial role in shaping the governance and political landscape of a country. In India, political parties have been instrumental in the functioning of democracy since independence. However, over the years, their roles have undergone significant changes, impacting the democratic fabric of the nation. This

note explores the changing roles of political parties in the functioning of Indian democracy.

Historical Context

After independence, India's political landscape was dominated by the Indian National Congress, which played a key role in shaping the country's democratic institutions. Other parties, such as the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), also emerged, but the Congress party's dominance was evident. The party system in India was characterized by a single-party dominance, with the Congress party

at the center.

Changing Roles of Political Parties

From Single-Party Dominance to Multi-Party System

The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of opposition parties, which challenged the Congress party's dominance. The 1980s witnessed the rise of regional parties, such as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP), which further fragmented the political landscape. Today, India has a multi-party system, with several national and regional parties playing important

roles.

Shift from Ideology-Based to Coalition Politics

The 1990s saw a significant shift in Indian politics, with the rise of coalition governments. Parties began to prioritize power-sharing over ideological differences, leading to the formation of alliances and coalitions. This shift has continued, with parties often putting aside their ideological differences to achieve power.

Increased Focus on Populism and Welfare Schemes

In recent years, political parties have increasingly focused on populist measures and welfare schemes to gain electoral support. Parties have promised various benefits, such as freebies, subsidies, and financial assistance, to voters. This shift has raised concerns about the sustainability of such schemes and their impact on the economy.

Growing Importance of Leadership and Personality Politics

The role of leadership has become increasingly important in Indian politics. Parties are often centered around charismatic leaders, who play a significant role in shaping the

party's agenda and electoral fortunes. This trend has led to the personalization of politics, with leaders' personalities and images becoming crucial in electoral campaigns.

Changing Nature of Party Politics and Electoral Campaigns

The advent of social media and digital technologies has transformed the way parties campaign and engage with voters. Parties now use social media platforms, online advertising, and data analytics to target voters and shape public opinion.

Impact on Indian Democracy

Increased Fragmentation and Polarization

The changing roles of political parties have led to increased fragmentation and polarization in Indian politics. The rise of regional parties and coalition governments has resulted in more diverse representation, but it has also led to political instability and fragmentation.

Challenges to Governance and Accountability

The shift towards coalition politics and populist measures has raised

concerns about governance and accountability. Parties often prioritize power over policy, leading to compromises on governance and accountability. The decline of ideology-based politics has led to a lack of clear policy direction. Parties often prioritize short-term gains over long-term policy goals, which can have negative consequences for the economy and society.

