

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic country, institutions play a significant role. Political parties represent such institutions through which people participate in legislative processes by electing parties' nominees into legislative bodies. They also mobilise people into political activities. Through such activities parties raise concerns of people. Therefore, political parties are essential features of a democratic political system. India has several political parties. In the post-Independence period, India has witnessed transformation from dominance of single party, the Congress in the 1950s-1960s, into multiplication of parties in the later period. The unit discusses the evolution of political parties and party system and relationships of political parties and party systems with democracy in India.

MEANING OF POLITICAL PARTY AND PARTY SYSTEM

Political Party

Political party forms an important component of a political system. A political party is an institution which consists of leaders, followers, policies and programmes. Its followers may have formal membership of the party or may support it without being formal members. There are different parties. Parties can be differentiated on the bases of leaders, policies and programmes, ideologies and internal functioning. The principal feature of a political party which distinguishes it from other organizations is that its main purpose is to capture power. Unlike a political party, a pressure group, interest group or non-party civil society organization, generally do not seek power. However, sometime such organizations also contest elections. Political parties are the important links

between individuals, state and society. Political parties provide the crucial connection between social process and policy-makers, and influence debates and policies on issues affecting the interests of various social groups in a political system.