

STATE/REGIONAL PARTIES

Since the 1960s, the regional political parties have been playing influential role

in politics of several states. Indeed, on several occasions, they have been partners

in running national governments through coalition politics.

There is not a singular pattern for the emergence of regional parties in north, south,

east and West. Regional parties are reflection of certain developments in society.

These developments are the formation of the linguistic state, a decline of Congress

system, uneven economic development, mobilisation, ethnicity, entry of new

groups into politics and politics of recognition. Emergence of these parties varies

from North to South. Regional political parties represent aspiration of regional

identities in terms of culture, social groups, development patterns, leadership,

patterns of mobilization and other issues. Emergence of regional parties and

their support bases in different regions also indicate nature of social transformation

in those regions. Impact of land reforms, green revolution in the 1950s-1960s,

and later impact of reservation for backward classes and farming communities

resulted in emergence of regional leaders and political parties in north India. The

most important examples of such leaders include Charan Singh, Karpooori Thakur,

Mulayam Singh, Laloo Yadav or Nitish Kumar in UP and Bihar. They formed or

led regional parties known by different names – BKD/BLD, LD, SP, RJD, JD(U).

These parties articulated demands of farming communities and backward classes.

These parties along with the regional parties from other states played decisive

role getting reservation introduced for backward classes at national level in government jobs and admission in public academic institutions. It was done according to the recommendations of Mandal Commission Report.

Leadership Political Parties in India

of such parties belong to the backward classes and farming communities.

There

are 36 recognized state parties active in different states in India. In this subsection, you will read about the programmes, leadership, social bases, patterns

of mobilization and ideologies of some regional parties existing in different regions of India.

2.4.1 SP, BKD/BLD and Janata Dal (U)

Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal, parties from UP and Bihar, were the

product of the socio-cultural process. Leaders of both parties have actively participated in the JP movement. Later, they formed their own parties and became

representative of OBCs. However, RJD in Bihar gained support not only from

OBCs but also from Muslim and other minority communities. Lalu Prasad, the

founder of RJD and staunch activist of JP movement, emphasises on the politics

of recognition and dignified life for the deprived sections.

2.4.2 DMK, AIADMK and TDP

Three political parties in south India are among the examples of the regional

parties in south India, i.e, DMK, AIADMK and TDP. In Tamil Nadu, Dravida

Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) emerged from Dravidian movement which sought

to get self-respect to the Dravidian or non-Brahmin communities. The DMK split in 1972 when a popular film star, M.G Ramachandran formed the All India

Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). Although there are several parties

in Tamil Nadu, two regional parties, the DMK and AIADMK are the most dominant parties in the states. These parties have been forming governments

alternatively. When the DMK became a ruling party, the AIADMK became opposition party, and the AIADMK became a ruling party, the DMK became opposition party. The DMK emerged first headed government in 1967 in Tamil

Nadu when it replaced the Congress Party. It was replaced by the AIADMK in

1977, and the two parties have dominated state politics since the 1970s. The

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is active in Andhra Pradesh. It was founded in 1982

in the name of Telugu Bidda or Telugu Pride by Telugu film actor NT Ramarao

(NTR). It sought to restore Telugu pride which according to NTR was hurt by

the Congress (I) which had dominated the politics of Andhra Pradesh till then.

The TDP's programme included issues such as implementation of land reforms,

ceiling on urban income, low-priced rice and other populist measures. After NTR's

death, NTR's son-in-law, Chandra Babu became the chief of the TDP. The latter

became the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh in 1995. The largest support to the

TDP comes from the farming community, the Kammas. After the formation of

Telangana state in 2014, the TDP's areas of activities and support base got confined

to Andhra Pradesh, i.e, that part of the state which was left after the formation of

Telangana. It consists of Rayalaseema and Andhra regions. The TDP faces formidable challenge from another regional party, YSR congress party in Andhra

Pradesh. In 2019 legislative assembly election, it defeated the TDP and its leader

Jaganmohan Reddy became the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh.

2.4.3 The AGP

Assam Gana Parishad was founded in 1985. Prior to its emergence, organizations

such as All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (ASGP) launched a six year (from 1979 till 1985) long movement against

the illegal migrants, especially those from Bangladesh. The movement ended

with the signing of an accord between central government and AASU. The principal clause of the Assam Accord was that names of those foreigners who

entered Assam on 31 March 1971 will be detected, deleted from electoral roles

and deported from India. After the Assam accord, the AASU and ASGP founded

AGP for the purpose of contesting elections and forming government. The AGP

contested Assembly election in 1986 in Assam. Following its victory Prafulla

Kumar Mahanta, who led the AASU against the foreigners became the chief

minister of Assam. The AGP led government in Assam two times under the chief

ministership of Mahanta.

2.4.4 AAP

In the contemporary period, the formation of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is the outcome of the anti-corruption movement (different from the earlier movements)

led by Anna Hazare in 2011 where middle classes, irrespective of caste, ethnicity

and language, participated in the movement. Arvind Kejriwal, the founder member

of the AAP party, became the face of the anti-corruption movement. AAP is different from other state parties because of two reasons: it is not an ideologically

driven-party, and second, it is not representative of any socio-cultural or ethnic

movements that have been the important factors of forming a party in India.

The

AAP formed government led by Arvind Kejriwal twice, from December 2013

to February 2014 and 2015 to present. It won 67 out of 70 seats in Assembly

elections held in Delhi in 2015. In 2020 assembly election it won 62 seats in Delhi and with that AAP formed government for the third time under the leadership

of Arvind Kejriwal.

2.4.5 The Shiromani Akali Dal

The Shiromani Akali Dal or Akali Dal was product of movement of the Sikhs which took place in the 1920s against the corrupt practices of Mahants in the

Gurudwaras. Following the movement against the Mahants, the Government

passed in 1925 an Act about the management and control of Gurudwaras.

This

act gave the right to manage the affairs of Gurudwara to body known as Shiromani

Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). The Akali Dal maintained

coordination and grip over the SGPC. It espoused the cause of the Sikh community.

Before Independence, it fought against the injustices of the British. After the Independence, it demanded creation of Punjabi Suba, and in November 1966 the

central government created Punjab state with the majority of Sikh by separating

Haryana from it. The Akali Dal has been mobilising people of Punjab and articulating their demands such as granting of full regional autonomy to Punjab,

protection of interests of farmers, distribution of river water, declaration of Amritsar as a Holi city. From the 1980s, Akali Dal got split into different parties

among which The Akali Dal led by Prakash Singh Badal continued to remain

active as a regional party in Punjab. It has been an ally of the National Democratic

Alliance (NDA) and member of central governments led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee

and Narendra Modi.

2.4.6 The Shiv Sena

The support base and areas of activities of Shiv Sena are confined to the state of

Maharashtra. It was established by Bala Saheb Thakre in 1966. It seeks to protect the interests and identity of Marathi people or Marathi Manus which include

Marathi language and culture, economic issues, interests of Maharashtra state.

Along with the regional demands it articulated the issues relating to Hindu identity.

The Shiv Sena started its activities in the 1960s by seeking to protect the economic

interests of Marathis in Mumbai. It had argued and campaigned that the non-

Marathis, south Indians, especially Tamils were dominating economic

opportunities that was depriving the Marathis. Consequently, many Tamils had to leave Mumbai. In the 1970s, the Shiv Sena shift its focus to the communists considering them as anti-national. From the 1980s, it has been involved in mobilisation on symbols relating to Hindu religion. It participated in movement for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. The Shiv Sena had been a member of the BJP-led NDA since the beginning of the alliance. It had been a member of the NDA led governments. Following the Assembly election of 2019, it left the NDA alliance and formed government with the support of NCP, Congress (I) and other party with Udhav Thakre as chief minister of Maharashtra.