

Political Parties, Elections & Pressure Groups**POLITICAL PARTIES****Meaning and Types**

- Political parties are voluntary associations or organised groups of individuals who share the same political views and who try to gain political power through constitutional means and who desire to work for promoting the national interest.
- There are four types of political parties in the modern democratic states, viz.,
 - Reactionary parties which cling to the old socio-economic and political institutions;
 - Conservative parties which believe in the status-quo;
 - Liberal parties which aim at reforming the existing institutions; and
 - Radical parties which aim at establishing a new order by overthrowing the existing institutions. In their classification of political parties on the basis of ideologies, the political scientists have placed the radical parties on the left and the liberal parties in the centre and reactionary and conservative parties on the right. In other words, they are described as the leftist parties, centrist parties and the rightist parties. In India, the CPI and CPM are the examples of leftist parties, the Congress of centrist parties and the BJP is an example of rightist parties.
- There are three kinds of party systems in the world, viz.,
 - One party system in which only one ruling party exists and no opposition is permitted, as for example, in the former communist countries like the USSR and other East European countries;
 - Two-party system in which two major parties exist, as for example, in USA and Britain; and
 - Multi-party system in which there are a number of political parties leading to the formation of coalition governments, as for example, in France, Switzerland and Italy.

Party System in India

The Indian party system has the following characteristic features:

Multi-Party System

- The continental size of the country, the diversified character of Indian society, the adoption of universal adult franchise, the peculiar type of political process, and other factors have given rise to a large number of political parties.
- In fact, India has the largest number of political parties in the world. On the eve of sixteenth Lok Sabha general elections (2014), there were 6 national parties, 47 states parties and 1593 registered – unrecognised parties in the country.
- Further, India has all categories of parties—left parties, centrist parties, right parties, communal parties, non-communal parties and so on.
- Consequently, the hung Parliaments, hung assemblies and coalition governments have become a common phenomena.

One-Dominant Party System

- In spite of the multiparty system, the political scene in India was dominated for a long period by the Congress.
- Hence, Rajni Kothari, an eminent political analyst, preferred to call the Indian party system as ‘one party dominance system’ or the ‘Congress system’.
- The dominant position enjoyed by the Congress has been declining since 1967 with the rise of regional parties and other national parties like Janata (1977), Janata Dal (1989) and the BJP (1991) leading to the development of a competitive multi-party system.

Lack of Clear Ideology

- Except the BJP and the two communist parties (CPI and CPM), all other parties do not have a clear-cut ideology.
- They (i.e., all other parties) are ideologically closer to each other.
- They have a close resemblance in their policies and programmes.

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- Almost every party advocates democracy, secularism, socialism and Gandhism.
- More than this, every party, including the so-called ideological parties, is guided by only one consideration—power capture.
- Thus, politics has become issue-based rather than the ideology and pragmatism has replaced the commitment to the principles.

Personality Cult

- Quite often, the parties are organised around an eminent leader who becomes more important than the party and its ideology.
- Parties are known by their leaders rather than by their manifesto.
- It is a fact that the popularity of the Congress was mainly due to the leadership of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.
- Similarly, the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu and TDP in Andhra Pradesh got identified with MG Ramachandran and NT Rama Rao respectively.
- Interestingly, several parties bear the name of their leader like Biju Janata Dal, Lok Dal (A), Congress (I) and so on.
- Hence, it is said that “there are political personalities rather than political parties in India”.

Based on Traditional Factors

- In the western countries, the political parties are formed on the basis of socioeconomic and political programme.
- On the other hand, a large number of parties in India are formed on the basis of religion, caste, language, culture, race and so on.
- For example, Shiv Sena, Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha, Akali Dal, Muslim Majlis, Bahujan Samaj Party, Republican Party of India, Gorkha League and so on.
- These parties work for the promotion of communal and sectional interests and thereby undermine the general public interest.

Emergence of Regional Parties

- Another significant feature of the Indian party system is the emergence of a large number of regional parties and their growing role.

- They have become the ruling parties in various states like BJD in Orissa, DMK or AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, Akali Dal in Punjab, AGP in Assam, National Conference in J&K, JD(U) in Bihar and so on.
- In the beginning, they were confined to the regional politics only.
- But, of late, they have come to play a significant role in the national politics due to coalition governments at the Centre.
- In the 1984 elections, the TDP emerged as the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

Factions and Defections

- Factionalism, defections, splits, mergers, fragmentation, polarisation and so on have been an important aspect of the functioning of political parties in India.
- Lust for power and material considerations have made the politicians to leave their party and join another party or start a new party.
- The practice of defections gained greater currency after the fourth general elections (1967).
- This phenomenon caused political instability both at the Centre and in the states and led to disintegration of the parties.
- Thus, there are two Janata Dals, two TDPs, two DMKs, two Communist Parties, two Congress, three Akali Dals, three Muslim Leagues and so on.

Lack of Effective Opposition

- An effective Opposition is very essential for the successful operation of the parliamentary democracy prevalent in India.
- It checks the autocratic tendencies of the ruling party and provides an alternative government.
- However, in the last 50 years, an effective, strong, organised and viable national Opposition could never emerge except in flashes.
- The Opposition parties have no unity and very often adopt mutually conflicting positions with respect to the ruling party.
- They have failed to play a constructive role in the functioning of the body politic and in the process of nation building.

Recognition of National and State Parties

- 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.
- The other parties are simply declared as registered unrecognised parties.
- The recognition granted by the Commission to the parties determines their right to certain privileges like allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on the state-owned television and radio stations and access to electoral rolls.
- Further, the recognized parties need only one proposer for filing the nomination.
- Also, these parties are allowed to have forty “star campaigners” during the time of elections and the registered–unrecognized parties are allowed to have twenty “star campaigners”.
- The travel expenses of these star campaigners are not included in the election expenditure of the candidates of their parties.
- Every national party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved for its use throughout the country.
- Similarly, every state party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved for its use in the state or states in which it is so recognised.
- A registered-unrecognised party, on the other hand, can select a symbol from a list of free symbols. In other words, the Commission specifies certain symbols as ‘reserved symbols’ which are meant for the candidates set up by the recognised parties and others as ‘free symbols’ which are meant for other candidates.

Conditions for Recognition as a National Party

At present (2016), a party is recognised as a national party if any of the following conditions is fulfilled:

- If it secures six per cent of valid votes polled in any four or more states at a general election to the Lok Sabha or to the legislative assembly; and, in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from any state or states; or

- If it wins two per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha at a general election; and these candidates are elected from three states; or
- If it is recognised as a state party in four states.

Conditions for Recognition as a State Party

At present (2016), a party is recognised as a state party in a state if any of the following conditions is fulfilled:

- If it secures six per cent of the valid votes polled in the state at a general election to the legislative assembly of the state concerned; and, in addition, it wins 2 seats in the assembly of the state concerned; or
- If it secures six per cent of the valid votes polled in the state at a general election to the Lok Sabha from the state concerned; and, in addition, it wins 1 seat in the Lok Sabha from the state concerned; or
- If it wins three per cent of seats in the legislative assembly at a general election to the legislative assembly of the state concerned or 3 seats in the assembly, whichever is more; or
- If it wins 1 seat in the Lok Sabha for every 25 seats or any fraction thereof allotted to the state at a general election to the Lok Sabha from the state concerned; or
- If it secures eight per cent of the total valid votes polled in the state at a General Election to the Lok Sabha from the state or to the legislative assembly of the state.
- This condition was added in 2011.
- The number of recognised parties keeps on changing on the basis of their performance in the general elections.
- On the eve of the sixteenth Lok Sabha general elections (2014), there were 6 national parties, 47 state parties and 1593 registered-unrecognised parties in the country.
- The national parties and state parties are also known as all-India parties and regional parties respectively.
- At present there are 6 national parties.

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UNIT – V – INDIAN POLITY
ELECTION

Representation of the People Act, 1950

- Articles 81 and 170 of the Constitution of India lay down the maximum number of seats in Parliament and in Legislative Assemblies of States and also certain principles to be followed in allocating seats in the House of People among the States and in the State Legislative Assemblies, but have left the actual allocation of such seats to be provided by the law.
- Similarly, Article 171 of the Constitution of India lays down the maximum and minimum number of seats in the Legislative Council of a State, and also specify the various methods in which the seats shall be filled, but the actual number of seats to be filled by each such method has been left to be provided by law.
- Therefore, the Representation of the People Act, 1950, was enacted to provide for the allocation of seats in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils of States.
- The Act also sought to confer on the President the powers to delimit, after consultation with the Election Commission, the various constituencies for the purpose of elections to fill seats in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils of States.
- The Act further provided for the registration of electors for Parliamentary Constituencies and for the Assembly and Council Constituencies, and the qualifications and disqualifications for such registration.
- To sum-up, the Act makes the following provisions relating to the elections:
 - Allocation of seats in the House of the People, the State Legislative Assemblies and the State Legislative Councils.
 - Delimitation of Parliamentary, Assembly and Council Constituencies.
 - Election officers like chief electoral officers, district election officers, electoral registration officers and so on.
 - Electoral rolls for Parliamentary, Assembly and Council constituencies.
 - Manner of filling seats in the Council of States to be filled by representatives of union territories.

- Local authorities for purposes of elections to the State Legislative Councils.
- Barring the jurisdiction of civil courts.

Representation of the People Act, 1951

- The Representation of the People Act, 1950 did not contain all the provisions relating to elections but merely provided for the allocation of seats in and the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of elections to the House of People and Legislatures of States, the qualifications of voter at such election and the preparations of electoral rolls.
- The provisions for the actual conduct of elections to the Houses of Parliament and to the House or Houses of the Legislature of each State, the qualifications and disqualifications for the membership of these Houses, the corrupt practices and other election offences, and the decision of election disputes were all left to be made in a subsequent measure.
- In order to provide for these provisions, the Representation of the People Act, 1951 was enacted.
- Broadly speaking, this Act contains provisions relating to the following electoral matters:
 - Qualifications and disqualifications for membership of Parliament and State Legislatures
 - Notification of general elections
 - Administrative machinery for the conduct of elections
 - Registration of political parties
 - Conduct of elections
 - Free supply of certain material to candidates of recognised political parties
 - Disputes regarding elections
 - Corrupt practices and electoral offences
 - Powers of Election Commission in connection with inquiries as to disqualifications of members.
 - Bye-elections and time limit for filling vacancies.

- Miscellaneous provisions relating to elections.
- Barring the jurisdiction of civil courts.
- The conduct of elections includes the following matters:
 - Nomination of candidates
 - Candidates and their agents
 - General procedure at elections
 - The poll
 - Counting of votes
 - Multiple elections
 - Publication of election results and nominations
 - Declaration of assets and liabilities
 - Election expenses
- The provisions of the Act with respect to disputes regarding elections are related to the following matters:
 - Presentation of election petitions to High Court
 - Trial of election petitions
 - Withdrawal and abatement of election petitions
 - Appeals to Supreme Court
 - Costs and security for costs

Delimitation Act, 2002

- Articles 82 and 170 of the Constitution of India provide for readjustment and the division of each State into territorial constituencies (Parliamentary constituencies and Assembly constituencies) on the basis of the 2001 census by such authority and in such manner as Parliament may, by law, determine.
- Further, Articles 330 and 332 of the Constitution of India provide for re-fixing the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and Legislative Assemblies of the States on the basis of the 2001 census.
- The present delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies is based on the 1971 census.

- The uneven growth of population in different constituencies in different parts of the country as well as within the same State as also continuous migration of people / electorate from one place to other especially from rural areas to urban areas have resulted in strikingly differing sizes of electoral constituencies even within the same State.
- Therefore, the Delimitation Act, 2002, was enacted to set up a Delimitation Commission for the purpose of effecting delimitation on the basis of the 2001 census so as to correct the aforesaid distortion in the sizes of electoral constituencies.
- The proposed Delimitation Commission would also re-fix the number of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes on the basis of the 2001 census, without affecting total number of seats based on the 1971 census.
- The Act sought to lay down certain guidelines as to the manner in which such delimitation would be undertaken.
- In the Act, the new Delimitation Commission was given the task of carrying out delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies.
- It had been specifically provided that the Delimitation Commission shall endeavour to complete the work within a period not later than July 31, 2008.
- The proposed delimitation would apply to every general election to the House of the People or to a State Legislative Assembly held after the final orders of the Commission are published and to every bye-election arising from such general election.

Other Acts Relating to Elections

- Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959 declares that certain offices of profit under the Government shall not disqualify the holders thereof for being chosen as (or for being) members of Parliament.
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 provides for the inclusion in, and the exclusion from, the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, of certain castes and tribes, for the

readjustment of representation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies.

- Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.
- Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991.
- Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952 regulates certain matters relating to or connected with elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India.

Rules Relating to Elections

- Registration of electors Rules, 1960 provide for the preparation and publication of electoral rolls.
- Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 facilitates conduct of fair and free elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures.
- Prohibition of Simultaneous Membership Rules, 1950.
- Members of Lok Sabha (Disqualification on Ground of Defection) Rules, 1985.
- Members of Rajya Sabha (Disqualification on Ground of Defection) Rules, 1985.
- Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974.
- Members of Lok Sabha (Declaration of Assets and Liabilities) Rules, 2004.
- Members of Rajya Sabha (Declaration of Assets and Liabilities) Rules, 2004.

Orders Relating to Elections

- Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 provides for the specification, reservation, choice and allotment of symbols at elections in parliamentary and assembly constituencies, for the recognition of political parties in relation thereto.
- Registration of Political Parties (Furnishing of Additional Particulars) Order, 1992 provides for furnishing of additional particulars by associations or bodies of individual citizens of India seeking registration as a political party with the Election Commission of India.

Electoral Reforms Before 1996

Lowering of Voting Age

- The 61st Constitutional Amendment Act of 1984 reduced the voting age from 21 years to 18 years for the Lok Sabha as well as the assembly elections.
- This was done in order to provide to the unrepresented youth of the country an opportunity to express their feelings and help them become a part of political process.

Deputation to Election Commission

- In 1988, a provision was made that the officers and the staff engaged in preparation, revision and correction of electoral rolls for elections are deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission for the period of such employment.
- These personnel, during that period, would be under the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission.

Increase in Number of Proposers

- In 1988, the number of electors who are required to sign as proposers in nomination papers for elections to the Rajya Sabha and state legislative council has been increased to 10 per cent of the electors of the constituency or ten such electors, whichever is less.
- This was done in order to prevent non-serious candidates from contesting frivolously.

Electronic Voting Machines

- In 1989, a provision was made to facilitate the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in elections.
- The EVMs were used for the first time in 1998 on experimental basis in selected constituencies in the elections to the Assemblies of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.
- The EVMs were used for the first time in the general elections (entire state) to the Assembly of Goa in 1999.

Booth Capturing

- In 1989, a provision was made for adjournment of poll or countermanding of elections in case of booth capturing. Booth capturing includes:
 - seizure of a polling station and making polling authorities surrender ballot papers or voting machines
 - taking possession of polling station and allowing only one's own supporters to exercise their franchise
 - threatening and preventing any elector from going to polling station and
 - seizure of the place being used for counting of votes.

Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC)

- The use of electors' photo identity cards by the Election Commission is surely making the electoral process simple, smoother and quicker.
- A decision was taken by the Election Commission in 1993 to issue photo identity cards to electors throughout the country to check bogus voting and impersonation of electors at elections.
- The electoral roll is the basis for issue of EPICs to the registered electors.
- The electoral rolls are normally revised every year with 1st January of the year as the qualifying date.
- Every Indian citizen who attain the age of 18 years or above as on that date is eligible for inclusion in the electoral roll and can apply for the same.
- Once he is registered in the roll, he would be eligible for getting an EPIC.
- The scheme of issuing the EPICs is, therefore, a continuous and ongoing process for the completion of which no time limit can be fixed as the registration of electors is a continuous and ongoing process (excepting for a brief period between the last date for filing nomination and completion of electoral process) on account of more number of persons becoming eligible for the right of franchise on attaining the age of 18.
- It is the continuous effort of the Election Commission to provide the EPICs to the electors who have been left out in the previous campaigns as well as the new electors.

Electoral Reforms of 1996

Disqualification for Insulting the National Honour Act

- A person who is convicted for the following offences under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act of 1971 is disqualified to contest in the elections to the Parliament and state legislature for 6 years.
 - Offence of insulting the National Flag
 - Offence of insulting the Constitution of India
 - Offence of preventing the singing of National Anthem

Prohibition on the Sale of Liquor

- No liquor or other intoxicants are to be sold or given or distributed at any shop, eating place, hotel or any other place whether public or private within a polling area during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll.
- Any person who violates this rule is to be punished with imprisonment up to 6 months or with fine up to ₹2,000 or with both.

Number of Proposers

- The nomination of a candidate in a Parliamentary or assembly constituency should be subscribed by 10 registered electors of the constituency as proposers, if the candidate is not sponsored by a recognised political party.
- In the case of a candidate sponsored by a recognised political party, only one proposer is required.
- This was done in order to discourage non-serious people from contesting the elections.

Death of a Candidate

- Earlier, in case of death of a contesting candidate before the actual polling, the election used to be countermanded.
- Consequently, the election process had to start all over again in the concerned constituency.
- But now, the election would not be countermanded on the death of a contesting candidate before the actual polling.

- However, if the deceased candidate belonged to a recognised political party, the party concerned would be given an option to propose another candidate within seven days.

Time Limit for By-Elections

- Now, by-elections are to be held within six months of occurrence of the vacancy in any House of Parliament or a state legislature.
- But, this condition is not applicable in two cases:
 - Where the remainder of the term of the member whose vacancy is to be filled is less than one year; or
 - When the Election Commission in consultation with the Central Government, certifies that it is difficult to hold the byelections within the said period.

Effective Campaigning Period Reduced

- The minimum gap between the last date for withdrawal of candidature and the polling date has been reduced from 20 to 14 days.

Electoral Reforms After 1996

Free Supply of Electoral Rolls, etc.

- According to a 2003 provision, the Government should supply, free of cost, the copies of the electoral rolls and other prescribed material to the candidates of recognised political parties for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
- Further, the Election Commission should supply specified items to the voters in the constituencies concerned or to the candidates set up by the recognised political parties.

Introduction of Braille Signage Features in EVMs

- The Commission received representations from the various associations of visually impaired persons for introduction of Braille signage features in the EVMs to facilitate the visually impaired voters to cast their votes without the help of attendant.

- The Commission considered the proposal in detail and tried the Braille signage feature in the EVMs during the bye-election to the Asifnagar Assembly Constituency of Andhra Pradesh held in 2004.
- In 2005, it was tried in one of the constituency during the Assembly elections of Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana.
- In 2006, it was tried in one of the constituency of the States of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala during Assembly elections.
- In 2008, it was tried in all the assembly constituencies of NCT of Delhi during Assembly elections.
- The Commission introduced similar Braille signage features on the Electronic Voting Machines during the General Elections to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha (2009) and simultaneous Assembly elections in some States.

Electoral Reforms Since 2010

Restrictions Imposed on Exit Polls

- According to a 2009 provision, conducting exit polls and publishing results of exist polls would be prohibited during the election to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- Thus, no person shall conduct any exit poll and publish or publicise by means of the print or electronic media or disseminate in any other manner, the result of any exit poll during the period notified by the Election Commission in this regard.
- Further, any person who contravenes this provision shall be punishable with imprisonment of upto two years or with fine or with both.
- “Exit-poll” is an opinion survey regarding how electors have voted at an election or how all the electors have performed with regard to the identification of a political party or candidate in an election.

Time-Limit for Submitting a Case for Disqualification

- In 2009, a provision was made for the simplification of the procedure for disqualification of a person found guilty of corrupt practices.
- It provided for a three-month time-limit within which the specified authority will have to submit the case of a person found guilty of corrupt

practice to the President for determination of the question of disqualification.

Voting Rights to Citizens of India Living Abroad

- In 2010, a provision was made to confer voting rights to the citizens of India residing outside India due to various reasons.
- Accordingly, every citizen of India –
 - whose name is not included in the electoral roll
 - who has not acquired the citizenship of any other country
 - who is absent from his place of ordinary residence in India owing to his employment, education or otherwise outside India (whether temporarily or not) - shall be entitled to have his name registered in the electoral roll in the Parliamentary / Assembly constituency in which his place of residence in India as mentioned in his passport is located.

Introduction of NOTA Option

- According to the directions of Supreme Court, the Election Commission made provision in the ballot papers / EVMs for None of the Above (NOTA) option so that the voters who come to the polling booth and decide not to vote for any of the candidates in the fray, are able to exercise their right not to vote for such candidates while maintaining the secrecy of their ballot.
- The provision for NOTA has been made since General Election to State Legislative Assemblies of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, NCT of Delhi and Rajasthan in 2013 and continued in the General Election to State Legislative Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim in 2014 along with the General Elections to the Sixteenth Lok Sabha (2014).
- The voters polled against the NOTA option are not taken into account for calculating the total valid voters polled by the contesting candidates for the purpose of return of security deposits to candidates.
- Even if the number of electors opting for NOTA options is more than the number of votes polled by any of the candidates, the candidate who secures the largest number of votes has to be declared elected.

- In 2001, the ECI had sent a proposal to the Government to amend the law so as to provide for a neutral vote provision for the electors who did not wish to vote for any of the candidates.
- In 2004, PUCL (People's Union for Civil Liberties) filed a petition seeking a direction to provide the necessary provision in ballot papers and EVMs for protection of the right to not vote for any candidate, secretly.
- The Supreme Court in 2013 held that the ECI may provide for the None of the Above (NOTA) option on EVMs and ballot papers.

Introduction of VVPAT

- The Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail is an independent system attached with the EVMs that allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended.
- When a vote is cast, a slip is printed and remains exposed through a transparent window for seven seconds, showing the serial number, name and symbol of the
- candidate. Thereafter, the receipt automatically gets cut and falls into the sealed dropbox of the VVPAT.
- The system allows a voter to challenge his/her vote on the basis of the paper receipt.
- As per rules, the Presiding Officer of the polling booth will have to record the dissent of the voter, which would have to be taken into account at the time of counting, if the challenge is found to be false.
- The law for using VVPATs was amended in 2013.
- In 2013, the Supreme Court of India had permitted the ECI to introduce VVPAT in a phased manner, calling it 'an indispensable requirement of free and fair elections'.
- The Court had felt that introducing VVPAT would ensure the accuracy of the voting system and also help in manual counting of votes in case of dispute.
- VVPATs were first used in byelection to the Noksen Assembly Constituency of Nagaland held in 2013.

- Thereafter, VVPATs have been used in selected constituencies during every General Election to State Legislative Assemblies. VVPATs were used in eight selected Parliamentary Constituencies in the country in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election.
- EVMs with VVPAT ensure the accuracy and transparency of the voting system.

Persons in Jail or Police Custody Can Contest Elections

- In 2013, the Supreme Court upheld an order of the Patna High Court declaring that a person who has no right to vote by reason of being in jail or in police custody, is not an elector and is, therefore, not qualified to contest the elections to the Parliament or the State Legislature.
- In order to negate this order of the Supreme Court, the following two new provisions have been included in the Representation of the People Act, 1951:
 - The first provision expressly provides that by reason of the prohibition to vote (either due to in jail or in police custody), a person whose name has been entered in the electoral roll shall not cease to be an elector.
 - The second provision expressly provides that a Member of Parliament or the State Legislature shall be disqualified only if he is so disqualified under the provisions contained in the Act and on no other ground.
- Consequently, the persons in jail or in police custody are allowed to contest the elections.

Immediate Disqualification of Convicted MPs and MLAs

- In 2013, the Supreme Court held that charge sheeted Members of Parliament and MLAs, on conviction for offences, will be immediately disqualified from holding membership of the House without being given three months' time for appeal, as was the case before.
- The concerned Bench of the Court struck down as unconstitutional Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act (1951) that allows convicted lawmakers a three-month period for filing appeal to the higher court and to get a stay of the conviction and sentence.

- The Bench, however, made it clear that the ruling will be prospective and those who had already filed appeals in various High Courts or the Supreme Court against their convictions would be exempt from it.
- **The Bench said:** “A reading of the two provisions in Articles 102 and 191 of the Constitution would make it abundantly clear that Parliament is to make one law for a person to be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a Member of either House of Parliament or Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of the State. Parliament thus does not have the power under Articles 102 and 191 of the Constitution to make different laws for a person to be disqualified for being chosen as a member and for a person to be disqualified for continuing as a Member of Parliament or the State Legislature.”
- **The Bench said:** “Section 8 (4) of the Act which carves out a saving in the case of sitting members of Parliament or State Legislature from the disqualifications under the Act or which defers the date on which the disqualification will take effect in the case of a sitting member of Parliament or a State Legislature is beyond the powers conferred on Parliament by the Constitution.”
- **The Bench held:** “Looking at the affirmative terms of Articles 102 and 191 of the Constitution, we hold that Parliament has been vested with the powers to make law laying down the same disqualifications for person to be chosen as a member of Parliament or a State Legislature and for a sitting member of a House of Parliament or a House of a State Legislature. We also hold that the provisions of Article 101 and 190 of the Constitution expressly prohibit Parliament to defer the date from which the disqualification will come into effect in case of a sitting member of Parliament or a State Legislature. Parliament, therefore, has exceeded its powers conferred by the Constitution in enacting sub-section (4) of Section 8 of the Act and accordingly sub-section (4) of Section 8 of the Act is ultra vires the Constitution.”

- In order to nullify the above ruling of the Supreme Court, the Representation of the People (Second Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2013 was introduced in the Parliament. However, the Bill was later withdrawn by the Government.

Ceiling on Election Expenditure

- Increased In 2014, the Central Government raised the maximum ceiling on election expenditure by candidates for a Lok Sabha seat in bigger states to ₹70 lakhs (from earlier ₹40 lakhs).
- In other states and union territories, it is ₹54 lakhs (from earlier ₹16–40 lakhs).
- Similarly, the limit for an Assembly seat in the bigger states was increased to ₹28 lakhs (from earlier ₹16 lakhs).
- In other states and union territories, it is 20 lakhs (from earlier ₹8–16 lakhs).

Photos of Candidates on EVMs and Ballot Papers

- According to an Election Commission order, in any election being held after May 1, 2015, the ballot papers and EVMs will carry the picture of the candidate with his or her name and party symbol to avoid confusion among the electorates in constituencies where namesakes are contesting.
- The June 2015 by polls to six seats in five states were the first elections where photographs of candidates were used on ballot papers.
- The Commission has noted that there are many cases where candidates with same or similar names contest from the same constituency.
- Although appropriate suffixes are added to the names of candidates in the event of two or more candidates having same name, the Commission considers that additional measures are required for removing confusion in the minds of electors at the time of voting.
- The photograph will appear between the name of the candidate and his or her election symbol.
- The Commission explained that if a candidate fails to provide the photograph, it “shall not be a ground for the rejection of the nomination of the candidate”.

- The candidates will now be required to submit their recent photograph, either black and white or coloured, to the election authorities at the time of filing nomination.
- No uniforms would be allowed and caps and dark glasses have to be avoided.

Introduction of Electoral Bonds:

- In 2018, the central government notified the Electoral Bond Scheme.
- This scheme was announced in the 2017 budget.
- It is touted as an alternative to cash donations made to the political parties.
- It is aimed at bringing clean money and substantial transparency into the system of political funding. The salient features of the scheme are:
 - The electoral bond means a bond issued in the nature of promissory note which is a bearer banking instrument and does not carry the name of the buyer or payee.
 - The electoral bonds may be purchased by a citizen of India or entities incorporated or established in India.
 - The electoral bonds can be used for making donations to only those registered political parties which have secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last general election to the Lok Sabha or the State legislative Assembly.
 - The electoral bonds can be encashed by an eligible political party only through a bank account with the authorized bank.
 - The electoral bonds are issued in the denomination of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1,00,000, ₹10,00,000 and ₹1,00,00,000.
 - The information furnished by the buyer is treated confidential by the authorized bank and is not to be disclosed to any authority for any purposes, except when demanded by a competent court or upon registration of criminal case by any law enforcement agency.

Foreign Funding Allowed:

- In 2018 budget, the receiving of foreign funds by the political parties has been allowed.

- In other words, the political parties can now receive funds from the foreign companies.
- Accordingly, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, has been amended.
- Under this amendment, the definition of a foreign company has been modified.

ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

- The 52nd Amendment Act of 1985 provided for the disqualification of the members of Parliament and the state legislatures on the ground of defection from one political party to another.
- For this purpose, it made changes in four Articles of the Constitution and added a new Schedule (the Tenth Schedule) to the Constitution.
- This act is often referred to as the ‘anti-defection law’.
- Later, the 91st Amendment Act of 2003 made one change in the provisions of the Tenth Schedule.
- It omitted an exception provision i.e., disqualification on ground of defection not to apply in case of split.

Provisions of the Act

- The Tenth Schedule contains the following provisions with respect to the disqualification of members of Parliament and the state legislatures on the ground of defection:

Disqualification

- **Members of Political Parties:**
 - A member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified for being a member of the House,
 - If he voluntarily gives up his membership of such political party; or
 - If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days.

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- From the above provision it is clear that a member elected on a party ticket should continue in the party and obey the party directions.
- **Independent Members:**
 - An independent member of a House (elected without being set up as a candidate by any political party) becomes disqualified to remain a member of the House if he joins any political party after such election.
- **Nominated Members:**
 - A nominated member of a House becomes disqualified for being a member of the House if he joins any political party after the expiry of six months from the date on which he takes his seat in the House.
 - This means that he may join any political party within six months of taking his seat in the House without inviting this disqualification.

Exceptions

- The above disqualification on the ground of defection does not apply in the following two cases:
 - If a member goes out of his party as a result of a merger of the party with another party. A merger takes place when two thirds of the members of the party have agreed to such merger.
 - If a member, after being elected as the presiding officer of the House, voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office. This exemption has been provided in view of the dignity and impartiality of this office.
- It must be noted here that the provision of the Tenth Schedule pertaining to exemption from disqualification in case of split by one-third members of legislature party has been deleted by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003.
- It means that the defectors have no more protection on grounds of splits.

Deciding Authority

- Any question regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be decided by the presiding officer of the House.
- Originally, the act provided that the decision of the presiding officer is final and cannot be questioned in any court.

- However, in Kihoto Hollohan case (1993), the Supreme Court declared this provision as unconstitutional on the ground that it seeks to take away the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the high courts.
- It held that the presiding officer, while deciding a question under the Tenth Schedule, function as a tribunal.
- Hence, his decision like that of any other tribunal, is subject to judicial review on the grounds of mala fides, perversity, etc.
- But, the court rejected the contention that the vesting of adjudicatory powers in the presiding officer is by itself invalid on the ground of political bias.

Rule-Making Power

- The presiding officer of a House is empowered to make rules to give effect to the provisions of the Tenth Schedule.
- All such rules must be placed before the House for 30 days.
- The House may approve or modify or disapprove them.
- Further, he may direct that any willful contravention by any member of such rules may be dealt with in the same manner as a breach of privilege of the House.
- According to the rules made so, the presiding officer can take up a defection case only when he receives a complaint from a member of the House.
- Before taking the final decision, he must give the member (against whom the complaint has been made) a chance to submit his explanation.
- He may also refer the matter to the committee of privileges for inquiry.
- Hence, defection has no immediate and automatic effect.

Evaluation of the Act

- The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution (which embodies the antidefection law) is designed to prevent the evil or mischief of political defections motivated by the lure of office or material benefits or other similar considerations.
- It is intended to strengthen the fabric of Indian parliamentary democracy by curbing unprincipled and unethical political defections.

- Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, described it as the ‘first step towards cleaning-up public life’.
- The then Central law minister stated that the passing of the 52nd Amendment Bill (anti-defection bill) by a unanimous vote by both the Houses of Parliament was ‘a proof, if any, of the maturity and stability of Indian democracy’.

Advantages

- The following can be cited as the advantages of the anti-defection law:
 - It provides for greater stability in the body politic by checking the propensity of legislators to change parties.
 - It facilitates democratic realignment of parties in the legislature by way of merger of parties.
 - It reduces corruption at the political level as well as non developmental expenditure incurred on irregular elections.
 - It gives, for the first time, a clear-cut constitutional recognition to the existence of political parties.

Criticism

- Though the anti-defection law been hailed as a bold step towards cleansing our political life and started as new epoch in the political life of the country, it has revealed may lacunae in its operation and failed to prevent defections in toto.
- It came to be criticised on the following grounds:
 - It does not make a differentiation between dissent and defection.
 - It curbs the legislator’s right to dissent and freedom of conscience.
 - Thus, ‘it clearly puts party bossism on a pedestal and sanctions tyranny of the party in the name of the party discipline’.
 - Its distinction between individual defection and group defection is irrational.
 - In other words, ‘it banned only retail defections and legalised wholesale defections’.

- It does not provide for the expulsion of a legislator from his party for his activities outside the legislature.
- Its discrimination between an independent member and a nominated member is illogical.
- If the former joins a party, he is disqualified while the latter is allowed to do the same.
- Its vesting of decision-making authority in the presiding officer is criticised on two grounds.
 - Firstly, he may not exercise this authority in an impartial and objective manner due to political exigencies.
 - Secondly, he lacks the legal knowledge and experience to adjudicate upon the cases.
- In fact, two Speakers of the Lok Sabha (Rabi Ray–1991 and Shivraj Patil–1993) have themselves expressed doubts on their suitability to adjudicate upon the cases related to defections.

91st Amendment Act (2003)

Reasons

- The reasons for enacting the 91st Amendment Act (2003) are as follows:
 - Demands have been made from time to time in certain quarters for strengthening and amending the Anti-defection Law as contained in the Tenth Schedule, on the ground that these provisions have not been able to achieve the desired goal of checking defections.
 - The Tenth Schedule has also been criticised on the ground that it allows bulk defections while declaring individual defections as illegal.
 - The provision for exemption from disqualification in case of splits as provided in the Tenth Schedule has, in particular, come under severe criticism on account of its destabilising effect on the Government.
 - The Committee on Electoral Reforms (Dinesh Goswami Committee) in its report of 1990, the Law Commission of India in its 170th Report on “Reform of Electoral Laws” (1999) and the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) in its report of 2002

have, inter alia, recommended omission of the provision of the Tenth Schedule pertaining to exemption from disqualification in case of splits.

- The NCRWC was also of the view that a defector should be penalised for his action by debarring him from holding any public office as a minister or any other remunerative political post for at least the duration of the remaining term of the existing Legislature or until, the next fresh elections whichever is earlier.
- The NCRWC has also observed that abnormally large Councils of Ministers were being constituted by various Governments at Centre and states and this practice had to be prohibited by law and that a ceiling on the number of ministers in a state or the Union Government be fixed at the maximum of 10% of the total strength of the popular House of the Legislature.

Provisions

- The 91st Amendment Act of 2003 has made the following provisions to limit the size of Council of Ministers, to debar defectors from holding public offices, and to strengthen the antidefection law:
 - The total number of ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the Central Council of Ministers shall not exceed 15 percent of the total strength of the Lok Sabha.
 - A member of either House of Parliament belonging to any political party who is disqualified on the ground of defection shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a minister.
 - The total number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a state shall not exceed 15 percent of the total strength of the Legislative Assembly of that state.
 - But, the number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, in a state shall not be less than 12.
 - A member of either House of a state legislature belonging to any political party who is disqualified on the ground of defection shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a minister.

- A member of either House of Parliament or either House of a State Legislature belonging to any political party who is disqualified on the ground of defection shall also be disqualified to hold any remunerative political post.
- The expression “remunerative political post” means
 - Any office under the Central Government or a state government where the salary or remuneration for such office is paid out of the public revenue of the concerned government; or
 - Any office under a body, whether incorporated or not, which is wholly or partially owned by the Central Government or a state government and the salary or remuneration for such office is paid by such body, except where such salary or remuneration paid is compensatory in nature.
- The provision of the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) pertaining to exemption from disqualification in case of split by one-third members of legislature party has been deleted. It means that the defectors have no more protection on grounds of splits.

PRESSURE GROUPS

Meaning and Techniques

- The term ‘pressure group’ originated in the USA.
- A pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest.
- It is so called as it attempts to bring a change in the public policy by exerting pressure on the government.
- It acts as a liaison between the government and its members.
- The pressure groups are also called interest groups or vested groups.
- They are different from the political parties in that they neither contest elections nor try to capture political power.

- They are concerned with specific programmes and issues and their activities are confined to the protection and promotion of the interests of their members by influencing the government.
- The pressure groups influence the policy-making and policy implementation in the government through legal and legitimate methods like lobbying, correspondence, publicity, propagandising, petitioning, public debating, maintaining contacts with their legislators and so forth.
- However, some times they resort to illegitimate and illegal methods like strikes, violent activities and corruption which damages public interest and administrative integrity.
- According to Odegard, pressure groups resort to three different techniques in securing their purposes.
- First, they can try to place in public office persons who are favourably disposed towards the interests they seeks to promote.
- This technique may be labelled electioneering. Second, they can try to persuade public officers, whether they are initially favourably disposed toward them or not, to adopt and enforce the policies that they think will prove most beneficial to their interests.
- This technique may be labelled lobbying.
- Third, they can try to influence public opinion and thereby gain an indirect influence over government, since the government in a democracy is substantially affected by public opinion.
- This technique may be labelled propagandizing

Pressure Groups in India

- A large number of pressure groups exist in India.
- But, they are not developed to the same extent as in the US or the western countries like Britain, France, Germany and so on.
- The pressure groups in India can be broadly classified into the following categories:

Business Groups:

- The business groups include a large number of industrial and commercial bodies.
- They are the most sophisticated, the most powerful and the largest of all pressure groups in India. They include:
 - **Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI);** major constituents are the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay, Indian Merchants Chamber of Calcutta and South Indian Chamber of Commerce of Madras. It broadly represents major industrial and trading interests.
 - **Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM);** major constituents are the Bengal Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta and Central Commercial Organisation of Delhi. ASSOCHAM represents foreign British capital.
 - **Federation of All India Food grain Dealers Association (FAIFDA).** FAIFDA is the sole representative of the grain dealers.
 - **All-India Manufacturers Organisation (AIMO).** AIMO raises the concerns of the medium-sized industry.

Trade Unions

- The trade unions voice the demands of the industrial workers.
- They are also known as labour groups.
- A peculiar feature of trade unions in India is that they are associated either directly or indirectly with different political parties. They include:
 - All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)—affiliated to CPI;
 - Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)—affiliated to the Congress (I);
 - Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)—affiliated to the Socialists;
 - Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)—affiliated to the CPM;
 - Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)—affiliated to the BJP;
 - All India Central Council of Trade Unions (Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation);

- All India United Trade Union Centre (Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist));
- New Trade Union Initiative (Independent from political parties, but left);
- Labour Progressive Federation (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam);
- Trade Union Coordination Committee (All India Forward Bloc);
- United Trade Union Congress (Revolutionary Socialist Party);
- All India Centre of Trade Unions (Marxist Communist Party of India (United));
- Anna Thozhil Sanga Peravai (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam);
- Bharatiya Kamgar Sena (Shiv Sena);
- Hind Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat (Janata Dal (United));
- Indian Federation of Trade Unions (Communist Party of India Marxist Leninist) New Democracy);
- Indian National Trinamool Trade Union Congress (All India Trinamool Congress);
- Pattali Trade Union (Pattali Makkal Katchi);
- Swatantra Thozhilali Union (Indian Union Muslim League); and
- Telugu Nadu Trade Union Council (Telugu Desam Party).

First Trade Union in India:

- All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was founded in 1920 with Lala Lajpat Rai as its first president.
- Upto 1945, Congressmen, Socialists and Communists worked in the AITUC which was the central trade union organisation of workers of India.
- Subsequently, the trade union movement got split on political lines.

Agrarian Groups

- The agrarian groups represent the farmers and the agricultural labour class. They include:
 - Bhartiya Kisan Union (under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Tikait, in the wheat belt of North India)

- All India Kisan Sabha (the oldest and the largest agrarian group)
- Revolutionary Peasants Convention (organised by the CPM in 1967 which gave birth to the Naxalbari Movement)
- Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (Gujarat)
- R V Sangham (led by C N Naidu in Tamil Nadu)
- Shetkhari Sanghatana (led by Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra)
- Hind Kisan Panchayat (controlled by the Socialists)
- All-India Kisan Sammelan (led by Raj Narain)
- United Kisan Sabha (controlled by the CPM)

Professional Associations

- These are associations that raise the concerns and demands of doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers.
- Despite various restrictions, these associations pressurise the government by various methods including agitations for the improvement of their service conditions. They include:
 - Indian Medical Association (IMA)
 - Bar Council of India (BCI)
 - Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ)
 - All India Federation of University and College Teachers (AIFUCT)

Student Organisations

- Various unions have been formed to represent the student community. However, these unions, like the trade unions, are also affiliated to various political parties. These are:
 - Akhila Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) (affiliated to BJP)
 - All India Students Federation (AISF) (affiliated to CPI)
 - National Students Union of India (NSUI) (affiliated to Congress (I))
 - Progressive Students Union (PSU) (affiliated to CPM)

Religious Organisations

- The organisations based on religion have come to play an important role in Indian politics.
- They represent the narrow communal interest. They include:

- Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS)
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)
- Jamaat-e-Islami
- Ittehad-ul-Mussalmeen
- Anglo-Indian Association
- Associations of the Roman Catholics
- All-India Conference of Indian Christians
- Parsi Central Association
- Shiromani Akali Dal
- The Shiromani Akali Dal should be regarded as more of a religious pressure group rather than a political party in view of the fact that it has been concerned more with the mission of saving the sikh community from being absorbed into the ocean of hindu society than with fighting for the cause of a sikh homeland”.

Caste Groups

- Like religion, caste has been an important factor in Indian politics.
- The competitive politics in many states of the Indian Union is in fact the politics of caste rivalries:
- Brahmin versus Non-Brahmin in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, Rajput versus Jat in Rajasthan, Kamma versus Reddy in Andhra, Ahir versus Jat in Haryana, Baniya Brahmin versus Patidar in Gujarat. Kayastha versus Rajput in Bihar, Nair versus Ezhava in Kerala and Lingayat versus Okkaliga in Karnataka.
- Some of the caste-based organisations are:
 - Nadar Caste Association in Tamil Nadu
 - Marwari Association
 - Harijan Sevak Sangh
 - Kshatriya Maha Sabha in Gujarat
 - Vanniyakul Kshatriya Sangam
 - Kayastha Sabha

Tribal Organisations

- The tribal organisations are active in MP, Chattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the North Eastern States of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and so on.
- Their demands range from reforms to that of secession from India and some of them are involved in insurgency activities.
- The tribal organisations include:
 - National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)
 - Tribal National Volunteers (TNU) in Tripura
 - People's Liberation Army in Manipur
 - All-India Jharkhand
 - Tribal Sangh of Assam
 - United Mizo Federal Organisation

Linguistic Groups

- Language has been so important factor in Indian politics that it became the main basis for the reorganisation of states.
- The language along with caste, religion and tribe have been responsible for the emergence of political parties as well as pressure groups.
- Some of the linguistic groups are:
 - Tamil Sangh
 - Anjuman Tarraki-i-Urdu
 - Andhra Maha Sabha
 - Hindi Sahitya Sammelan
 - Nagari Pracharani Sabha
 - Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

Ideology Based Groups

- In more recent times, the pressure groups are formed to pursue a particular ideology, i.e., a cause, a principle or a programme.
- These groups include:
 - Environmental protection groups like Narmada Bachao Andolan, and Chipko Movement

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- Democratic rights organisations
- Civil liberties associations
- Gandhi Peace Foundation
- Woman rights organisations

Anomic Groups

- **Almond and Powell observed:** By anomic pressure groups we mean more or less a spontaneous breakthrough into the political system from the society such as riots, demonstrations, assassinations and the like.
- The Indian Government and bureaucratic elite, overwhelmed by the problem of economic development and scarcity of resources available to them, inevitably acquires a technocratic and anti-political frame of mind, particularistic demands of whatever kinds are denied legitimacy.
- As a consequence interest groups are alienated from the political system.
- Some of the anomic pressure groups are:
 - All-India Sikh Student's Federation.
 - Nava Nirman Samithi of Gujarat.
 - Naxalite Groups.
 - Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).
 - All Assam Student's Union.
 - United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).
 - Dal Khalsa.

Meaning of Public Opinion

- Public opinion is generally understood as the opinion of public, common people or the voice of the people.
- But public exactly does not mean people.
- There is no single public.
- In fact, there are several 'public'.
- The total people as a whole do not constitute one single homogeneous public, having similar views or opinion.
- The public is not a fixed body of individuals.
- The term 'public' means a section of society, sharing common interests.

- It holds similar views and opinions on matters of public concern.
- It is therefore, not necessary that public opinion will be the opinion of all the people.
- It is not even the opinion of the majority.
- As there are many publics, there are also different opinions and different problems.
- Public opinion necessarily reflects diversity of opinion.
- It is also important to understand that public opinion is not the opinion of an individual, though he or she may be a highly respected person.
- It is not a private opinion.
- It is also not an expert opinion, irrespective of the wisdom of the expert.
- Public opinion is an organised and considered opinion of a section or many sections of the people on any public issue or concern.
- It is genuinely both public and opinion.
- It is neither a propaganda nor a public relations exercise.

Characteristics of Public Opinion

- Public opinion is not the unanimous opinion but there is a general agreement on the issue.
- It may change with the circumstances, time and new information.
- Public opinion is logical and considered view of a section of society.
- Public opinion necessarily reflects diversity of opinion.
- There is no fixed territory or area for public opinion.
- Public opinion ensures democratic communication.

Significance and Role of Public Opinion

- Public opinion is considered to be the essential element for successful working of democratic communication in the system.
- Public Opinion is the expression of the views of citizens.
- No government can afford to ignore it.
- A sound and effective public opinion can even shake the structures of dictators.

- The strength of democratic system lies in respecting the mind power of the people.
- There should be free and fair interaction of thoughts for solving the collective problems.
- Public opinion acquires great relevance in realising this democratic goal.
- It promotes wider awareness and invites citizens to examine issues from different points of view.
- The significance and role of public opinion can be explained as follows:

(a) Guide to the Government:

- Public opinion acts as the guide to the government in respect of policy formation.
- Government functions in general on the basis of mandate received in elections and tries to win over the masses to fulfil the promises made during elections.

(b) Helping in Law Making:

- Government is always under pressure of public opinion and takes note of the same in formulating laws for the common good.
- Governmental policies are invariably affected by people's opinion on various issues.
- Public opinion helps the government to enact laws in the given situation.

(c) Acts as a Watchdog:

- Public opinion acts as a watchdog.
- It controls and checks the government from becoming irresponsible.
- While criticizing the wrong policies of the government, public opinion always keeps the government alert.
- Government is always conscious of the fact that people would not vote for it or bring it back to power again if it goes against the wishes of the people.

(d) Protects the Rights & Liberties:

- Public opinion acts as the protector of rights and liberties of citizens.

- In a democratic country, people have the right to criticize or support the government in their own way.
- More effective and positive use of this right not only encourages or motivates the government but also keeps the government alive towards the rights and liberties of the people.

(e) Acts as a Powerful Force in International Sphere:

- Public opinion has acquired worldwide importance.
- In fact, international relations are influenced by public opinion.
- In the age of globalization, the issues like promotion and protection of human rights, environment and discrimination based on race, religion or sex, prevention of child labour, terrorism etc.
- Hold international community answerable to public opinion.
- Therefore, the governments remain conscious of such international public opinion also.
- In fact, no democratic government can afford to ignore public opinion.

Formation of Public Opinion

- There is no definite and automatic process for the formation of public opinion.
- Whenever an issue of public concern emerges, various sections of society express their views.
- In the process some views receive larger attention and emerge as public opinion.
- There are informal and formal processes that mould public opinion.

Political Socialisation

- Political socialisation is the basic process through which every individual is oriented with respect to political issues.
- A human being lives and grows in family, neighbourhood, friends, the locality and the region.
- The orientation of attitudes, beliefs and values towards the political system acquire shape in association of their groups.

- The most influential in personality formation and character building are the family and the peer group.
- They provide the basic mould in influencing the ideas and opinions of the individual.
- The orientation of individuals through this process determines their views and reactions towards political issues.

Press

- Democracy at Work The print media includes newspaper, periodicals, pamphlets, journals, leaflets etc.
- Press or print media supplies the news regarding all political and social happenings in the world.
- It throws a flood of light on current issues.
- In fact press is regarded as the watchdog of democracy by carrying the voice of the public to the government.
- People express their criticism or support in the form of articles, or comments through press.
- Hence, make the government responsible and answerable.
- In fact, government also propagates its policies and programmes through media.
- It tries to highlight its achievements to make public opinion in its favour.

Radio and Television

- Electronic media i.e. radio and television act as a mirror of social life. Print media influences only the educated.
- The electronic media plays an important part in collecting the information and moulding the thoughts of the uneducated masses also.
- The audio-visual media is used as a powerful means for bringing about social transformation and setting up a new social order free from social evils.
- It is used to educate the masses on certain sensitive issues like casteism, communalism violence etc.
- Through radio and television masses communicate their feelings and opinions towards various government policies and programmes.

Cinema

- Cinema has been the traditional medium of entertainment and awareness.
- The cinema caters to the artistic and intellectual needs of the people.
- It cultivates new ideas and norms in the society on political and social problems.
- Feature films and documentary films have their natural impact on the thinking of the people.
- This audio visual method can even influence the illiterates.

Public Meetings

- Public meetings or platforms are effective means of moulding public opinion for different social, cultural, intellectual and political activities.
- They address the public issues and are able to gather huge crowd through lectures, seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences.
- They try to establish personal and emotional bond with the public and motivate them towards positive and healthy steps.

Political parties and their activities

- Political parties formulate and organize public opinion.
- They are called mobilisers of opinion.
- Political parties not only make the people aware of various public issues.
- Their purpose is to make the people politically conscious to think about public problems.
- Political parties publish journals, pamphlets, leaflets, manifestoes, posters etc. to mould the public opinion in their favour.

Opinion Polls

- Opinion polls serve to indicate public opinion at the time of their being taken.
- They are a very effective way of gathering information about public attitude and opinion on various political, social, cultural, economical etc. matters.
- They are normally conducted by professional agencies selecting representative samples of population.

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- Of late they are becoming a very useful and popular method to understand and analyse public opinion.

