# Class 10 Political Science Chapter 4: Political Parties - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Political Parties Class 10 notes cover Class 10 Political Science Chapter 4 completely as per the 2026-27 NCERT book: the meaning, components and functions of political parties, why we need them, one-party, two-party and multiparty systems, popular participation, recognition by the Election Commission, the six national parties (2023), state parties, challenges to political parties and how they can be reformed.

You also get a national parties table with founding years and ideas, recognition criteria, party systems comparison, a challenges vs reforms table, NCERT-style questions with answers, 10 MCQs and a free PDF with no signup.

Use the table of contents below to jump to the part you need, or read top to bottom for a complete revision of the chapter.

## Table of Contents

- Chapter Overview
- Important Topics and Concepts
- Party Systems Compared
- Challenges and Reforms at a Glance
- National Parties of India (as per ECI notification, 2023)
- Important Definitions and Terms
- Short Answer Questions
- Long Answer Questions
- MCQs with Answers
- Quick Revision Points
- Chapter Summary
- Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion

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## Chapter Overview

Political parties are among the most visible institutions in a democracy; for many citizens, democracy means political parties. Yet visibility does not mean popularity: people often blame parties for what is wrong with democracy.

The chapter asks why we need parties and how many parties are good for a democracy, introduces India’s national and state parties, and examines what is wrong with parties and how they can be reformed.

# Important Topics and Concepts

## Meaning and components of a political party

- A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government. They agree on policies and programmes to promote the collective good.
- Parties try to persuade people that their policies are better and seek to implement them by winning elections. They reflect fundamental political divisions in society and involve partisanship.
- A party is known by which part of society it stands for, which policies it supports and whose interests it upholds.
- Three components: the leaders, the active members and the followers.

## Functions of political parties

- Contest elections: in the USA, members and supporters choose candidates; in India, top party leaders choose them.
- Put forward different policies and programmes, reducing a vast range of opinions into a few basic positions; the government bases its policies on the ruling party's line.
- Play a decisive role in making laws, since most legislators follow the party leadership.
- Form and run governments: parties recruit and train leaders and make them ministers.
- Parties that lose play the role of opposition, criticise the government and mobilise opposition.
- Shape public opinion by raising issues, through lakhs of activists and pressure groups, and sometimes launching movements.
- Provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes; it is easier to approach a local party leader than an officer.

## Why do we need political parties?

- Without parties, every candidate would be independent; no one could promise major policy changes, and no one would be responsible for running the country.
- Even in non-party panchayat elections, villages split into factions that put up 'panels', which is what parties do.
- The rise of parties is linked to representative democracy: large, complex societies need an agency to gather views, bring representatives together to form responsible governments, and support or restrain governments. Parties are a necessary condition for democracy.

## Party systems

- More than 750 parties are registered with the Election Commission of India, but only a handful are serious contenders.
- One-party system: only one party is allowed to control and run the government, as in China (Communist Party). It is not a democratic option.
- Two-party system: power usually changes between two main parties, as in the USA and UK.
- Multiparty system: more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power alone or in alliance, as in India. Governments are often coalitions; an alliance or front is formed when parties join to contest elections (in 2004: NDA, UPA and Left Front).
- A multiparty system may look messy and unstable but lets diverse interests be represented.

- No system is ideal everywhere; a party system evolves from a country's society, regional divisions, political history and electoral system. India's diversity cannot be absorbed by two or three parties.

## Popular participation in political parties

Surveys (State of Democracy in South Asia, 2007) show that parties do not enjoy much trust in South Asia or most democracies and are among the least trusted institutions worldwide. Yet participation in party activities is fairly high in India: the proportion of party members is higher than in Canada, Japan, Spain and South Korea, and the share of members and of those who feel close to a party has risen steadily over three decades.

## Recognised parties: national and state

- Every party must register with the Election Commission, which treats all parties equally but gives large, established parties a unique symbol and other facilities. These are 'recognised political parties'.
- State party: secures at least 6 per cent of total votes in a State Legislative Assembly election and wins at least two seats.
- National party: secures at least 6 per cent of total votes in Lok Sabha or Assembly elections in four States and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha.
- As per the Election Commission's 2023 notification, there are six recognised national parties.

## The six national parties

- Aam Aadmi Party (AAP): formed on 26 November 2012 after the 2011 anti-corruption movement; stands for accountability, clean administration, transparency and good governance; formed governments in Delhi and Punjab; won one Lok Sabha seat in 2019.
- Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP): formed in 1984 under Kanshi Ram; represents the bahujan samaj (dalits, adivasis, OBCs, religious minorities); inspired by Sahu Maharaj, Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar; main base in Uttar Pradesh; 3.63% votes and 10 seats in 2019.
- Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): founded in 1980 by reviving the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (formed by Syama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951); draws on ancient culture, Deendayal Upadhyaya's integral humanism and Antyodaya; cultural nationalism (Hindutva); wants full integration of J&K, a uniform civil code and a ban on religious conversions; led the NDA from 1998; largest party with 303 seats in 2019; leads the ruling NDA.
- Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPI-M): founded in 1964; believes in Marxism-Leninism, supports socialism, secularism and democracy, opposes imperialism and communalism; strong in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura; ruled West Bengal for 34 years; 1.75% votes and 3 seats in 2019.
- Indian National Congress (INC): founded in 1885, one of the oldest parties in the world; dominant after Independence; under Nehru sought a modern secular democratic republic; ruled the centre till 1977 and 1980–1989; centrist; supports secularism, welfare of weaker sections and economic reforms with a human face; led the UPA from 2004; 19.5% votes and 52 seats in 2019.
- National People's Party (NPP): formed in July 2013 under P.A. Sangma; first party from North-east India to become a national party; believes in diversity and education, employment and empowerment for all; formed government in Meghalaya; one Lok Sabha seat in 2019.

## State parties

- Most other major parties are classified as State parties, commonly called regional parties, though they need not be regional in ideology.
- Some, like the Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal, have national organisations; others, like Biju Janata Dal, Sikkim Democratic Front, Mizo National Front and Telangana Rashtra Samithi, are conscious of state identity.
- Their number and strength have grown over three decades, making Parliament more diverse. No single national party won a Lok Sabha majority on its own until 2014, so national parties formed alliances with State parties.
- Since 1996, nearly every State party has been part of a national coalition government, strengthening federalism and democracy.

## Challenges to political parties

- Lack of internal democracy: power concentrates in a few top leaders; parties do not keep membership registers, hold meetings or conduct regular internal elections; ordinary members lack information and influence; personal loyalty to the leader matters more than principles.
- Dynastic succession: with no open procedures, leaders favour family members; top positions are controlled by one family, which is unfair and brings inexperienced people to power.
- Money and muscle power: parties nominate candidates who can raise money; rich donors and companies influence policies; some parties support criminals who can win.
- Lack of meaningful choice: ideological differences have declined (e.g. Labour and Conservative parties in Britain; economic policies of major Indian parties); the same leaders keep shifting parties.

## Efforts to reform political parties

- The Constitution was amended to stop defection: an MLA or MP who changes parties loses the seat. This reduced defection but made dissent harder.
- The Supreme Court made it mandatory for every candidate to file an affidavit giving details of property and pending criminal cases. More information is public, but its truth is not checked.
- The Election Commission made it necessary for parties to hold organisational elections and file income tax returns; often this is a mere formality.

## Suggestions for reform

- A law to regulate the internal affairs of parties: compulsory membership registers, following their own constitution, an independent authority to act as judge in disputes, and open elections to the highest posts.
- Compulsory for parties to give about one-third of tickets to women, and quotas for women in decision-making bodies.
- State funding of elections: the government gives parties money for election expenses, in kind (petrol, paper, telephone) or in cash based on votes secured.
- Caution: too many legal rules may backfire, so parties may find ways to cheat.
- Other ways: people, pressure groups, movements and the media can put pressure on parties; people who want reform can join parties themselves, since quality of democracy depends on public participation.

## Party Systems Compared

Use for comparison questions.

| System | Feature | Example |
|---|---|---|
| One-party | Only one party allowed to control government; not democratic | China |
| Two-party | Power alternates between two main parties | USA, UK |
| Multiparty | More than two parties can come to power alone or in coalitions | India |

## Challenges and Reforms at a Glance

Link each challenge with a reform in long answers.

| Challenge | Reform / suggestion |
|---|---|
| Lack of internal democracy | Law to regulate internal affairs; EC order on organisational elections |
| Dynastic succession | Open elections to top posts; membership registers |
| Money and muscle power | Affidavits on assets and criminal cases; state funding of elections |
| Defection | Anti-defection constitutional amendment |
| Lack of meaningful choice | Public pressure, media scrutiny, citizens joining parties |
| Low representation of women | One-third tickets to women; quotas in decision-making bodies |

## National Parties of India (as per ECI notification, 2023)

| Party | Founded | Key ideas / base | 2019 Lok Sabha |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) | 26 Nov 2012 | Accountability, clean governance; governments in Delhi and Punjab | 1 seat |
| Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) | 1984 (Kanshi Ram) | Bahujan samaj; ideas of Phule, Periyar, Ambedkar; base in UP | 3.63% votes, 10 seats |
| Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) | 1980 (from Jana Sangh, 1951) | Integral humanism, Antyodaya, cultural nationalism; leads NDA | 303 seats |
| CPI (Marxist) | 1964 | Marxism-Leninism, socialism, secularism; West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura | 1.75% votes, 3 seats |
| Indian National Congress (INC) | 1885 | Centrist, secular, welfare of weaker sections; led UPA 2004–2014 | 19.5% votes, 52 seats |
| National People’s Party (NPP) | July 2013 (P.A. Sangma) | First North-east national party; government in Meghalaya | 1 seat |

## Important Definitions and Terms

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Political party | A group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government |
| Partisan | A person strongly committed to a party, group or faction |

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Ruling party | Political party that runs the government |
| Opposition | Parties that lose elections and criticise the government |
| One-party system | System where only one party controls the government |
| Two-party system | System where power usually alternates between two main parties |
| Multiparty system | System where more than two parties can come to power |
| Alliance or front | Parties joining hands to contest elections and win power |
| Recognised party | Party given a unique symbol and facilities by the Election Commission |
| State party | Party with at least 6% votes and 2 seats in a state assembly election |
| National party | Party with at least 6% votes in four states and 4 Lok Sabha seats |
| Defection | Changing party allegiance from the party on which one was elected |
| Affidavit | A signed sworn statement, such as a candidate’s declaration of assets and criminal cases |
| Dynastic succession | Top party posts controlled by members of one family |

## Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is a political party? Name its three components.

A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power, agreeing on policies for the collective good. Its three components are leaders, active members and followers.

Q2. State the various functions political parties perform in a democracy.

They contest elections, put forward policies and programmes, play a decisive role in making laws, form and run governments, act as opposition, shape public opinion, and provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes.

Q3. Why are political parties necessary for democracy?

Without parties, all candidates would be independent and no one could promise policy changes or take responsibility for running the country. Large representative democracies need parties to gather views, form responsible governments and support or restrain them.

Q4. What is a multiparty system? Why does India have one?

A system in which more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power, alone or in coalition. India has it because its vast social and geographical diversity cannot be absorbed by two or three parties.

Q5. What are the criteria for a national party?

A party must secure at least 6 per cent of the total votes in Lok Sabha or Assembly elections in four States and win at least four seats in the Lok Sabha.

Q6. What is meant by defection? How has it been checked?

Defection is changing party allegiance from the party on which one was elected. The Constitution was amended so that an MLA or MP who changes parties loses the seat.

Power is concentrated in a few top leaders; parties do not keep membership registers, hold meetings or conduct regular internal elections, and ordinary members cannot influence decisions.

Q8. How have State parties strengthened federalism?

Since no single party could win a majority until 2014, national parties allied with State parties. Since 1996, almost every State party has been part of a national coalition government, giving states a voice at the centre.

## Long Answer Questions

Q1. What are the various challenges faced by political parties?

Lack of internal democracy: power concentrated in a few leaders, no registers, meetings or internal elections.

Dynastic succession: top posts controlled by one family; inexperienced people get power.

Money and muscle power: candidates chosen for money; rich donors and companies influence policies; criminals supported.

Lack of meaningful choice: declining ideological differences; leaders shifting parties.

These problems reduce public trust in parties.

Q2. Suggest some reforms to strengthen parties so that they perform their functions well.

Anti-defection law: legislators lose their seat if they change parties.

Affidavits on assets and criminal cases by candidates, ordered by the Supreme Court.

Election Commission order on organisational elections and income tax returns.

A law to regulate internal affairs: membership registers, own constitution, independent authority, open elections.

One-third tickets for women and quotas in decision-making bodies; state funding of elections.

Pressure from people, pressure groups and media, and citizens joining parties to reform them from within.

Q3. Describe any three national parties of India.

BJP: founded in 1980 from the Jana Sangh; integral humanism, Antyodaya and cultural nationalism; leads the NDA; 303 seats in 2019.

INC: founded in 1885; centrist, secular, supports welfare of weaker sections and reforms with a human face; led the UPA; 52 seats in 2019.

BSP: formed in 1984 by Kanshi Ram; represents dalits, adivasis, OBCs and minorities; base in UP; 10 seats in 2019.

(Other national parties: CPI-M, AAP and NPP.)

## MCQs with Answers

1. A political party has how many components?(a) Two (b) Three (c) Four (d) FiveAnswer: (b)

2. In India, candidates of a party are usually chosen by(a) Party members and supporters (b) Top party leaders (c) The Election Commission (d) Voters directlyAnswer: (b) Top party leaders

3. Which country has a one-party system?(a) India (b) USA (c) China (d) UKAnswer: (c) China

4. The USA and UK are examples of(a) One-party system (b) Two-party system (c) Multiparty system (d) No-party systemAnswer: (b) Two-party system

5. How many parties are registered with the Election Commission of India?(a) About 150 (b) About 350 (c) More than 750 (d) About 1,500Answer: (c) More than 750

6. How many recognised national parties are there as per the 2023 notification?(a) Five (b) Six (c) Seven (d) EightAnswer: (b) Six

7. The Bahujan Samaj Party was formed in 1984 under the leadership of(a) B.R. Ambedkar (b) Kanshi Ram (c) P.A. Sangma (d) Syama Prasad MukherjeeAnswer: (b) Kanshi Ram

8. Which is the first party from North-east India to become a national party?(a) Mizo National Front (b) National People's Party (c) Sikkim Democratic Front (d) Asom Gana ParishadAnswer: (b) National People's Party

9. A party is recognised as a State party if it gets at least 6% votes in an assembly election and wins at least(a) One seat (b) Two seats (c) Four seats (d) Six seatsAnswer: (b) Two seats

10. The Indian National Congress was founded in(a) 1857 (b) 1885 (c) 1906 (d) 1947Answer: (b) 1885

## Quick Revision Points

- Political party: group contesting elections to hold power; leaders, active members, followers.
- Seven functions: contest elections, policies, laws, governments, opposition, public opinion, access to welfare.
- Parties are a necessary condition for representative democracy.
- 750+ registered parties; one-party (China), two-party (USA, UK), multiparty (India).
- Alliances in 2004: NDA, UPA, Left Front.
- State party: 6% votes + 2 assembly seats; national party: 6% in four states + 4 Lok Sabha seats.
- Six national parties (2023): AAP, BSP, BJP, CPI-M, INC, NPP.
- State parties strengthened federalism; coalitions since 1996.
- Challenges: internal democracy, dynastic succession, money and muscle power, no meaningful choice.
- Reforms: anti-defection law, affidavits, EC orders; suggestions: internal regulation law, women's tickets, state funding, public pressure.

## Chapter Summary

Political parties are groups that contest elections to hold power, and they perform key functions: contesting elections, offering policies, making laws, forming governments, acting as opposition, shaping opinion and giving people access to government. They are necessary for representative democracy. Party systems vary from one-party to two-party and multiparty;

The Election Commission recognises national and state parties; India now has six national parties and many state parties, whose rise has strengthened federalism. Parties face challenges of weak internal democracy, dynastic succession, money and muscle power, and lack of meaningful choice. Reforms like the anti-defection law and affidavits, and suggestions like internal regulation, women's tickets and state funding, can strengthen them.

## Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Use the updated list of six national parties (2023), including AAP and NPP; many older notes are outdated.
- Functions of parties and challenges with reforms are the most asked long questions.
- Learn recognition criteria for state and national parties precisely.
- Case-based questions often use cartoons on money power or coalitions.
- Link each challenge with a reform for a complete 5-mark answer.

## Frequently Asked Questions

What is a political party?

A group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government to promote their policies.

How many national parties are there in India?

Six, as per the Election Commission's 2023 notification: AAP, BSP, BJP, CPI-M, INC and NPP.

What is a multiparty system?

A system in which more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power alone or in coalition.

Is Political Parties in the 2026-27 syllabus?

Yes. It is Chapter 4 of Democratic Politics II for 2026-27.

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Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page. No signup is required.

## Conclusion

Political Parties explains why parties are essential for democracy and what must change for them to serve people better. Revise the functions, party systems, the national parties table and the challenges with reforms, and you will be ready for every question on this chapter.

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