UNIT 4   FUNCTIONING OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES[*]

Structure

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

Political parties have become indispensible for the existence and functioning of modern political society. In this unit, we examine the meanings, origins, characteristics, role and functions of political parties in different political systems of the world. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of a political party

- Explain the origin of political parties

- Describe the functions performed by a political party

- Explain the functioning of political parties under different types of political systems

- Identify the challenges faced by political parties in contemporary times.

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Modern democracies have representative governments, i.e., a government where citizens elect people to represent them and make laws on their behalf. Elected representatives are held accountable by the people for their activity within government. It is in this process of representing the opinions of citizens and acting as the agencies of people's political participation that political parties perform the role of intermediaries, facilitating the relationship between citizens and institutions of the states.

Underscoring the importance of the political parties, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) noted that "a party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life." Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), a founding father of the United States of America, similarly acknowledged the importance of political parties when he wrote: "if I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all."

In performing the mediating function between the citizens and institutions of the state, political parties also find a place in non-democratic systems. Authoritarian and totalitarian governments such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Communist Soviet Union and China are identified with single political parties. On the whole, political parties have become the *sine qua non* in any modern political system.

4.2 POLITICAL PARTIES: MEANING AND ORIGIN

Political parties have been understood and defined differently. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), an Irish statesman, defined a political party as "a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed." In the 20[th]century, scholars have advanced a variety of definitions of a political party. German political scientist Sigmund Neumann (1904-1962) referred to political parties as "the articulate organization of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views.It is the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community"(1969, 71).The Italian scholar and staunch advocate of political parties, Giovanni Sartori (1924-2017), defined a political party as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections candidates for public office" (1976, 62).Similarly, American political scientist Robert J. Huckshorn(1928)regarded a political party as "an autonomous group of citizens having the purpose of making nominations and contesting elections in the hope of gaining control over governmental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of the government" (Katz 2020: 214).

While these definitions demonstrate difference in the interpretation, we can identify five distinct elements of a political party from them. First, the presence of a **group of people** is a necessary condition for a political party. The

membership of a party varies from a few hundred to millions according to the appeal of the party and the size of the country. Secondly, principles, norms and ideas are core element of a political party. Political parties are propounded on and **represent a particular ideology, identity, region and issue**, which provide a normative and ideational foundation to political parties. It is the adherence to principles which distinguishes a party from another. While earliest political parties such as the Liberal Party, Labour Party, Conservative Party, Socialist Party and Communist Party were based on ideology, political parties in the Developing World and newer parties of Europe and America are based on distinct identities and issues such as ethnicity, race, and region and environment. Thirdly, political parties generally have **a permanent organisation** with authorised members holding official positions in the organisation. The officeholders may be selected by top leadership or elected by party members. But there is continuity in the organisation, i.e., the life span of an organisation goes beyond the life of the current or one generation of leadership. Fourth, political parties come into being with **specific goals**. The main goal of a political party is to capture political power through the electoral process. To achieve their goals, they strive to gain and retain a degree of popular support. Finally, political parties seek to form government and control political power by **constitutional and legitimate means,** i.e., by contesting elections and not through extra-constitutional means like a coup.

Contrary to this Liberal viewpoint of party as an agency of organized public opinion that takes part in electoral struggle for power, a Marxist views it in terms of 'class' antagonism. Citing the example of the Communist Party, the leader of the Russianrevolution, Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) characterized party as "a small compact core, consisting of reliable, experienced and hardened workers" whose basic aim is the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeoisie class and establishment of dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin regarded the communist party as "the vanguard of a class, and its duty is to lead the masses and not merely to reflect the average political level of the masses."

Political parties come into beingat a particular historical juncture of the development of a state. American political scientists Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner argue that a political party emerges when the political system reaches a degree of complexity. They argue that "the political party materializes when the tasks of recruiting political leadership and making public policy can no longer be handled by a small coterie of men unconcerned with public sentiments." (1969: 04).Political parties also come into being when the ruling class begins thinking that people should participate in the system. The change in the thinking of the ruling elite may come as a result of the rising democratic consciousness, the increasing desire to select leaders or to control people uprising against them.

Along with the'when' question, it is also crucial to understand 'how' parties are established. French political scientist and politician Maurice Duverger (1917-2014) has given an authoritative explanation of the historical origin of political parties in his book *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activities in the Modern State* (1954). He offers a two-fold explanation of the origin of political

parties. The **intra-parliamentary origin** orwhat he calls "the electoral and parliamentary origin of parties" refers to those parties which have an origin within the parliament and assembly. Here a group of parliamentarians come together to maximise the prospect of winning the election, and form an electoral committee at the election time. These practices get institutionalised, eventually leading to the foundations of a political party. The**extra-parliamentary origin**refers to those parties which have their origin outside the parliaments and assemblies. They come into being when economic, religious and gender restrictions from voting rights are removed. Social groups such as philosophical societies, workers union, and newspapers associations played a significant role in establishing such political parties. The British Labour Party, for example, was created in 1899 by the Trade Union Congress as its electoral and parliamentary organisation. Similarly, agriculture and peasant organisations played a significant role in establishing parties in Austria, Canada, Switzerland, central European and Scandinavian states. European socialist parties and nationalist parties like Indian National Congress were also born out of social movements and struggles.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is a political party?

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2) How do parties of intra-parliamentary and extra-parliamentary origin differ?

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4.3 FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties perform a wide range of functions which have been organised and discussed by different scholars. The American political scientist Charles E Merriam (1894-1953) has identified the five distinct functions of the party as follows: selection of official personnel; formulation of public policies; conductors or critics of government; political education including nationalization of opinion; and intermediation between individual and government. (Scarrow 1967: 770) In the same way, British scholar Alan R. Ball has clubbed the functions of political parties into four groups: representative functions; electoral functions, governing function, and formulation of policy, (1987: 3-5) while Italian political scientists Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair have grouped the functions of parties into two broad categories: representative and institutionalfunctions.

4.3.1 Organisation and Modernization of Traditional Societies

Organising diverse and fractured societies and their modernisation is a crucial function of political parties. Modernisation is a process in which a society marches from the traditional to the modern stage of development. In this process, a traditional society tries to inculcate the defining economic, social and political attributes of modern society. The modernisation function of political parties begins with organising a fractured society into an organised polity. To this end, they bridge the differences among people and social groups. In other words, this function starts when a party starts nation-building in a fragmented or loosely organised society. Once the polity is organised, the political parties play a linchpin role in selecting the model of modernisation and political development. The path or model of economic, social and political development a newly established state will adopt is decided by political parties. The Indian National Congress (INC) is a familiar example. Since its establishment in 1885, the INC played a pivotal role in organising deeply divided Indian society to fight against the British colonisers. In the post-Independence period, the INC determined India's modernisation path.

However, it is not only a case with the post-colonial states. In Europe and America, parties have shaped and determined their modernisation in the 17th and 18th centuries. Expanding on the political party's role in organising a fractured polity, nation-building and its modernisation, American scholar Robert Dix opinion that "institutionalization of parties and party systems is crucial in the maintenance of the tenuous new democracies" seems to hold true.(Dix 1992, 490).

4.3.2 Political Socialization

Political parties are regarded as agents of political socialization. Political socialisation is a process in which people are familiarised with the political culture, political norms and values of their country and these virtues are transferred from one generation to another generation. Political parties function as a channel that communicates political culture from one generation to another. They educate people in various ways. First, at the time of election, political parties and their representative meet voters to inform them about their programmes and policies to convince them to vote in their favour. Secondly, ruling parties make people aware of the government's programmes and policies on any given issue. In recent years, social media has emerged as a crucial tool of political socialisation. Thirdly, through agitation, *dharna*sor protests, the opposition parties point out the shortcomings of the government's programmes and policies and present alternatives to the government's policies. This enables people to become aware of the government and its policies. Fourth, the political socialisation function is also performed by leading and participating in debates on television and radio and advertisements in electronic and print media. Fifth, by issuing the election manifestos before the elections, political parties let people know what they intend to do if they win the election. Through these practices, people become aware of their political system, its institutions and processes.

4.3.3 Political Recruitment

Political recruitment is the function of political parties in which they select people from society for a political role in the party and government. The process of political recruitment begins with political socialisation and providing formal membership of the party. The recruited members are trained in the party's ideology and later selected for contesting elections. These members hold official positions in government when the party wins general elections. Formal recruitment begins with the filing of nomination for contesting the election by the party member. This function "selection of leaders" is not limited to the democratic political systems. Underlining the comprehensiveness of the political recruitment functions of the political parties,Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner note that "whether the country is relatively democratic India or relatively un-democratic Ghana, a long-established democracy like Britain or a thriving totalitarian state like the Soviet Union, the party is likely to be intimately involved in political recruitment—the selection of the political leadership" (1969: 03).By political socialisation and recruitment functions, political parties make the polity more inclusive and representative.

4.3.4 The Formation and Running of Government

The formation of government is the ultimate goal of a political party. This function differentiates political parties from other social groups like interest groups or civil society organisations. To capture political power, political parties enter the election process andcontest elections. In this process, they field candidates and campaign in their favour. They strive to form a government by achieving wide public support. If they fail to gain a majority on their own, they try to form a government by forming coalitions with like-minded parties. Such coalition forming function can be seen widely in India, Australia and Brazil. Given their social diversity, electoral system and multi-party system, obtaining the desired majority by any party has become difficult. Once political parties gain a required majority in elections, they strive to form a government. They appoint elected members in the ministries and departments. In this way, the elected members of political parties run government and directly participate in the government's policies and programmes making process.

4.3.5 Making and Shaping Government's Policies

At first glance, it seems that policymaking is the government's function. However, a close look reveals that people occupying political positions in the government come from the ruling party. In this sense, the government can be called 'party-government.' At the broader level, the government's programmes and policies on critical issues are made according to the broader consensus reached in the party, reflecting their ideology and policy consensus. Alan R. Ball has rightly described "the formulation of policy" as an essential function of political parties.

Policymaking and policy-shaping are two distinct functions. In policymaking, political parties are directly involved in the process, though they perform this

function behind the scenes. In policy-shaping, parties influence the policy-making process. The ruling party exclusively performs the policy-making function, while both the ruling and opposition parties perform the policy-shaping function. In general, the ideology of the ruling party plays an important role in policy formationwith most Left and Centre parties preferring proactive intervention in economy and social welfare and the Right and Far-Right parties preferringliberalization and privatization.

4.3.6 Coordination

Political parties perform coordination or mediating function between government and society. Through the coordination function, political parties provide stability to the political system and establish and maintain coherence in the society and government. The coordination function takes place at least at three levels: coordination between government and society, coordination within government, and coordination within society. According to American scholar Kay Lawson, the coordination between society and government takes four forms: electoral linkage, participatory linkage, clientelist linkage and directive linkage(Pettitt 2014: 14). Details of these four linkages can be seen in the functions of political parties in the democratic political systems in section 4.5. The coordination within government occurs at two levels: among the three organs of thelegislature, executive and the judiciary and among national, regional and local levels of the government. Coordination between ministries and organs of government is realised through bodies like party meetings, parliament and its committees and policy committees, while coordination between different levels of government takes place in inter-governmental bodies like India's National Development Council and Australia's Premiers Conference and party meetings organised at various levels in the party. There are many civil society organisations like interest groups and non-governmental organisations that coordinate society. Along with other civil society organisations, parties function as a mechanism of coordination within society. Modern political parties have different occupational wings such as trade unions, farmers, women and the youth wing which are indulged in this process. These specialised occupational wings offer coordination among voters of that particular occupation with the party.

4.3.7 Representation

In modern states, people do not have time, training and ability to represent themselves in diverse aspects of political and social life. Therefore, political parties function as agents of the masses and represent them. They speak at various places and forums like media, parliaments, assemblies and electoral campaigns on behalf of their supporters and party members. The representation function of political parties is close to the "interest integration function" described by Almond and Powel, the American political scientists who came up with a variety of cultural and functional ways to measure the development of societies. Through common programmes, political parties bring many interest groups together. The success of the government formation function largely depends on the interest integration function of the political parties because if they

fail in getting votes from diverse interest groups in their fold, they will fall short of the required majority.

The representative function of political parties is extensive and diverse because the representation takes many forms: ideological representation, regional representation, representation of identities and representation of interests. A good number of political parties represent the commonideologyof their core voters and supporters. Such parties include Liberal and Conservative parties of the United Kingdom, Communist Party of China, Democratic Party in the United States of America, and Fascist parties of Italy and Germany. Some parties focus on regional representation. Such parties' core vote is based in a particular region; they prefer to identify themselves with the region's culture, language and religion and speak for that region. India's Telangana RastraSamiti which championed the cause of separate statehood for Telangana or the National Conference striving for the autonomy for the state of Jammu & Kashmir are examples of parties that represent the demands of their region. Some parties represent particular identities. The BahujanSamaj Party in Uttar Pradesh and the Shiv Senain Maharashtra are examples of parties which represent the interests of Dalits and Marathis respectively. Although these parties succeed in garnering support from voters of other identities, a large chunk of votes comes from their core identity-based voters. A few political parties also represent particular interest. The interest can be in the form of issues, such climate change, nuclear disarmament etc. The Green Party of Europe and the Nuclear Disarmament Party (1984-2009) in Australia fall in this category.

4.3.8 Control over Government

The role of political parties goes beyond the ruling party. They also work as the opposition. This role is exclusively found in democratic political systems. As an opposition party, the political party try to put control on the tyranny of the government. They criticise the government for its programmes and policies which they think are not in the best interests of the people and the state. They organise protests, marches, and door to door campaigning to spread awareness of the wrong policies and priorities of the governments. In turn, governments take the opposition party's role seriously, allowing their ministers and other party members to respond to the opposition party's allegations.

However, the most recurring role of the political parties as the opposition has evolved in the United Kingdom. Here the opposition party is known as Her Majesty's Opposition. Functioning as an opposition party, the concerned political party forms a Shadow Cabinet. The Shadow Cabinet of the opposition remains ready to take charge if the ruling loses the majority in the legislature. In other democracies, the opposition parties try to remove the ruling party and assume that role. To this end, they bring a no-confidence motion in the Parliament. Once the ruling party fails to prove the majority, the opposition takes the opportunity to form the government.

4.3.9 Making Public Opinion

Public opinion-making is primarily a democratic function of political parties. Political parties are directly associated with citizens through political socialisation, electoral and public opinion-making functions. Political parties function as agents of public opinion-making. They try to mobilise and convince citizens to stand with their position on any given issue. For instance, take the issue of the 123 Agreement, also known as the India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement which was covered extensively in Indian media. Not only the political parties but also Indian society was deeply divided. The main opposition party, the BharatiyaJanata Party and Marxist parties were opposing the deal as well as shaping public opinion in their favour. It is believed that the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement was one of few issues on which Indian people were aware of and shaping foreign policy issue since Independence. Although parties perform the public opinion-making function, they most extensively engage in this function during elections as public opinion is more likely to turn into votes at this time.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) The functions of political parties are not limited to electoral politics. Do you agree?

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4.4 POLITICAL PARTIES UNDER DIFFERENTPOLITICAL SYSTEMS

The role and functions of political parties vary with the type of political system. Their functions in non-democratic political systems differ from their functions in democratic political systems. The functions of political parties differ even among the non-democratic political systems like fascist and communist political systems. The difference in functions and roles is primarily rendered by the difference in political culture, the degree of socio-political development, the number of political parties and intra-party culture.

The role of political parties in a democracy is very comprehensive. American political scientist E. E. Schattschneider has observed that "the political parties created democracy, and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties." (Katz 2020: 216). First, the **electoral function** is the most important function of parties in a democracy. A competitive party system is found in the democratic political systems, where various political parties vie for votes in

elections to control political power. Political parties compete with each other to increase their membership and mass support base. Second, parties s**ocialise the citizens**, recruit and train them for holding political positions in the government. Political parties in democratic political systems mainly use persuasive means to mobilise support. After elections, bargaining among elected members takes place in the democratic political system to occupy political positions in the government. Given the democratic compulsions, often the top leadership is compelled to make their ministries more representatives in terms of region, occupation, gender and identities. Third, the role of political parties does not end with the **formation of the government**. Even after selecting elected members for political positions in government, parties function as watchdogs and keep an eye on them and the government. They even reshuffle ministers from one ministry to another, if found necessary. Fourthly**,** political parties create a strong **linkage between governments and voters**. According to Kay Lawson, four linkages are most important: electoral linkage, participatory linkage, clientelistic linkage, and directive linkage (Pettitt 2014: 14). The electoral linkage keeps the elected representative responsive to the voters and supporters of the party. By elevating the citizens' role from mere voters, the participatory linkage allows them to play an active role in governments. The clientelistic linkage provides a bargaining opportunity to voters and the party- the party provides some services or facilities in exchange for votes. Through the directive linkage, those in power (former party members, but now in government) try to control citizen's behaviour through coercion, education or both. Fifthly, the proper functioning of a democracy cannot be imagined without opposition parties today. **Controlling the government** as an opposition party is exclusively found in the democratic political systems.

Given the difference in political parties and political culture, the role and functions of parties in developing political systems varies from those of the advance or well-established democracies described above. In general, parties in developing systems strive for modernisation and political stability. However, political parties in some developing states have deferred playing in the election by the rules. Such parties have willingly or unwillingly challenged the stability of the system. Nevertheless, through the well-thought recruitment functions, parties in most of the states have succeeded in providing stability to the political system by making the council of ministers more representative and diverse in terms of region, identity, gender, and race.

Political parties play a slightly distinct role in the non-democratic political systems such as authoritarian, communist and fascist systems. There are three types of authoritarian political systems: monarchy, military and civilian. In authoritarian political systems, political parties are the instrument of governing the polity. They legitimise the ruling class and shield their regime. Political parties perform five interrelated functions in authoritarian political systems (Hague, Harrop and McCormick 2019: 282). First, the political parties help in solving intra-regime conflicts. In the absence of political parties, the dictator's regime may be destabilised.Secondly,political parties help balance threats to the regimes coming from other potential challengers like the military. Thirdly,political parties assist the dictator in managing elections. The dictator's

party help him in bribing voters, capturing polling booths, and manipulating elections. Fourthly, functioning as an instrument of propaganda, political parties take the message of the ruling class and extend their influence to the remote areas of the political system. Finally, political parties in the authoritarian regimes perform socialisation function. But they do not seek merely to educate people but educate in such a way that people support the regime, its ideology and prevent the chances of revolt against the regime.

In Communist political systems, inter-party competition is absent because either other parties are not recognised or lack enough support to compete with the dominant communist party. The communist political parties are usually organised on the principle of democratic centralism. Therefore, a strict hierarchy is maintained in the party. The political parties in the communist political system play a vital role in modernising, socialising, recruitment, and opinion-making. The communist systems' political party try to build the newly established communist states in line with communist ideology and philosophy. They shape the government's policies and programmes but not as opposition but from within. To enhance and maintain the legitimacy of the communist regime, they socialise and re-socialise citizens. They use persuasive as well as coercive means to attain their goals.

Fascist regimes assign great importance to the leader and party. As these systems are totalitarian, they try to control all aspect of citizen's life. Therefore, the fascist parties focus on the socialisation function. Through socialisation, the ruling elites try to legitimise the leaders and their ideology to deter and debarred any chance of opposition. To this end, the ruling party does not hesitate to coercing its citizens to follow the party, and its leaders dictate. Fascist political parties seek to modernise the state in line with fascist ideology. They try to shape public opinion favouring the fascist state and strongly discourage criticism and counter-opinion. The political party also functions as a coordination mechanism between people and government. As in the Communist systems, political parties in the fascist systems socialise citizens and discipline in line with the party's ideology, if necessary.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) How does the role of political parties differ in democratic and non-democratic political systems?

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4.5 CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties have been facing several internal and external challenges for a long time. Internally, the party's organisation and succession have been issues of concern. Parties, especially in developing countries, lack internal democracy. Organisational elections do not take at regular interval. Few leaders make decisions at the top level while others follow. A charismatic leader occupies the top position for an extended period, either without elections or merely with token organisational elections. In some cases, dynastic succession at top leadership takes place. Members of a family or clan occupy the top leadership position of the party. In this context, Spanish sociologist and political scientist Juan J. Linz (1926-2013) has aptly noted that the level of peoples' involvement and ideological and emotional attachment political parties commanded a century or even two or three decades has eclipsed. Few external developments in the 21st century have further complicated the matter, leading to a decline in the people's trust in the political parties.

Declining people's trust in political parties is a noticeable challenge. With rising awareness, peoples' expectations from political parties have increased. In the age of mass communication and social media, people are overtly expressing their anguish and dissatisfaction with parties. Several factors have contributed to the growth of this dissatisfaction. First, the opposition for the sake of resistance is one of them. Often political parties embarrass the same policies and programmes when in power which they used to oppose while in opposition. In India, one can take the Bhartiya Janata Party's opposition to Foreign Direct Investment in retail. It opposed the FDI in retail while in opposition butcarried forward the policy when it came into power since 2014. Secondly, the media also fuels this growing dissatisfaction. There is a tendency to paint leaders as power-seekers and creatures who work for self-perpetuation in power. Lastly, the inability of political parties to adapt to the changing social and cultural aspects of the states and cope with citizens' changing demands is widening the trust deficit. These factors have cumulatively contributed to reducing the public trust in political parties.

The rise of election management firms is posing a significant challenge to political parties. Several political parties have begun to delegate the crucial election management function to professional election management firms. Until recently, this was predominantly practised in the developed democracies of Europe and America. This is no longer the case now. Political parties in the Developing World, in their quest for political power through elections have started hiring election management firms. These firms take the required information from political parties and make election strategy for them. Taking private data from social media giants like Facebook and WhatsApp, these firms treat people like groups and not citizens. The entry of election management firms is promoting unethical data transfer. The rising role of the firms may make political parties less responsive and accountable towards citizens because parties may regard firms as more crucial in winning elections than providing services to the citizens. The expansion of the role of these firms may create a gap between political parties and citizens.

The increasing influence of social media is another factor that is further subsiding peoples trust in political parties. With the expansion of Internet services, the role of social media has expanded manifold in the last one or two decades. Social media has made the relationship between political parties and citizens a two-way process. The functioning of the political parties is significantly affected by this technological revolution. Instead of directly interacting with citizens, political parties use social media to reach people and mobilise people in their favour. Information is sent via social media. Consequently, the direct contact between citizens and political parties is gradually declining, especially when there are no elections. Political party's engagement with citizens is declining because the party's role as a link between society and government is being performed by the Information Technologycells of political parties.

In recent years, the IT Cells have made social media a favoured instrument of political parties to spread information to further their parent parties' image among citizens and targeted groups. To this end, political parties do not hesitate in spreading baseless fake news against their opponent parties. To gain an advantage over oppositions, political party's IT Cells have become a source of misinformation and distorted information against their opposition to malign the image. Fact-checking websites are exposing this propaganda and misinformation spreading strategy of political parties. Consequently, a section of citizen is getting disillusioned from political parties. Citizens have started expressing their anguish openly on social media. It will lead to a further decline in people's trust in parties, which will hamper the party's socialisation and recruitment functions.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What arethe challenges to the functioning of political parties in contemporary times?

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

Political parties are difficult to define but relatively easier to understand. The five elements or characteristics are identical to political parties: group, permanent organisation, principles, goals, and means. Although political parties play important roles and functions in all political systems, yet, their functions differ from one political system to another. In democratic political systems, they focus on electoral and coordination functions, while in authoritarian systems, they strive to legitimate the regime and function as a saviour of the regime. Many non-democratic regimes could have succumbed in the absence of political parties. If

we trust Lenin, even the revolution in the bourgeoise society could have been difficult, if not impossible, without the communist party's linchpin role in bringing proletariat consciousness among the working class.

Nevertheless, despite their linchpin roles, political parties are facing some severe challenges both internally and externally. Internally, even while functioning in democratic political systems, parties are coping with a democratic deficit. The lack of regular organisational elections and hereditary succession at the top position like the president and general secretary are top internal challenges. Externally, the rise of election management firms, expanding role of social media and the widening trust deficit between parties and the citizen voters compelled the parties to improvise their functioning. The improvisations like the use of social media may potentially address some crucial challenges. However, the establishment of IT Cells, in this way or another, is further extending the trust deficit between voters and them.

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4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Highlight five elements of political parties.

2) While writing the difference between two types of political parties, focus on when they came into being, their organisational aspect, and social base.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

If you agree, then (i) Highlight political party's functions like nation-building and modernisation, political socialisation, and controlling the government as opposition. (ii) Also focus on coordination, public opinion-making, and representation functions.

If you disagree, then (i) highlight political recruitment, formation of the government, making and shaping of government's policies functions.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

(i) Focus on the number of political parties and competition for a vote in electoral politics. (ii) Which functions they focus on and which not. (iii) Whether they use persuasive, coercive or the mix of both instruments to achieve their goals.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

(i) Discuss the internal challenges like lack of internal democracy and hereditary succession on the top post. (ii) Show in detail how widening trust deficit, increasing role of election management firms, and expanding social media are posing challenges to political parties.