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THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Political parties are complex, multi-faceted organizations with multiple linkages to organizations in civil society and the institutions of the state, typically spanning both. This is because parties arise in civil society or are rooted in civil society even if they may have originated in the legislature as legislative factions as in 18th and 19th century Britain and the United States. However, they are not purely civil society organizations. They overlap the institutions of the state or at least its legislative branch if they are represented in the national, regional (in a federal polity) or local legislatures, and also overlap the executive branch of the state if they are in power at the nation, regional or local level. They are variously, and at times overlapping, organizations embodying ideologies and programmatic visions, organizations that are at the same time social movements, organizations representing the interests of sections of civil society, whether secular/economic or in parts of its as organizations holding power in the institutions of the state, or in parts of it as in a federal state, and lastly, organizations with their own corporate interests, organizational structure and functioning which have consequences for political outcomes. They can be organizationally 'thin' or 'thick', deeply rooted and penetrative in civil society or superstructure, highly ideological or purely elector list, strongly linked to particular sections of society is character.

There has been a plethora of typologies of political parties in the political science literature. Parties have been classified according to varied criteria or combinations of criteria. However, before we attempt a classification, let us list the various functions of political parties. A non-exhaustive list of the core functions of political parties would consist of the following. The most important functions is the recruitment of political leadership, which consists of candidate nomination and electoral mobilization to win elections for their candidates and for capturing power. Closely related to this is the function of issues structuration or the framing of what become issues and determining how these issues are viewed and debated in the public sphere. This is particularly the case during election campaigns, but is not limited to them since such agenda setting takes place between elections as well as is an aspect of the normal activity of politics. Also closely linked is the function of forming and sustaining governments in office. Three broader non electoral functions continuously performed by parties in civil society, in which the actions of parties overlap with the action of civil society, in which the action of parties overlap with the actions of civil society, are the functions of societal representation or representing the interests of various social groups in the political sphere; interest

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aggregation, in which the diverse interests of different groups are aggregated into broader political programmes and policy platforms; and social integration, in which parties enable citizens to participate effectively in politics so that citizens develop a sense of the efficacy of participation in the political process.

KEYWORDS : *social movements, political process, civil society organizations.*

INTRODUCTION:

Gunter and Diamond (2001:3-39), in a state of the art survey and update of the literature on political party typologies, develop the following multiple criterion typology of parties. Instead of classifying parties by employing only one of a variety of possible criteria, for example, functionalist or organizational or sociological criteria and associated typologies, they develop a much richer yet fairly parsimonious typology using a combination of criteria. It does not necessarily fit every country but is best suited for our purpose. Gunther and Diamond (2001) divide political parties in to 15 types or species clustered into five broader geniuses' elite parties, mass based parties, ethnicity based parties, elector list parties and movement parties.

The first genus of the (traditional) elite parties consists of parties of local notables or clientelistic parties based on notables. These are weakly organized and mobilize support through personal resources of the notables or through vertical patron client networks. They make election nominations on the basis of loyalty. Such parties were present in early democratizing rural polities and typified parties in the 18th and 19th centuries. They can also be seen in some developing countries with fledgling democracies.

The second genus of the mass based parties, or mass party (see Duverger 1963; Michels 1915) refers to a party created outside the legislature, such as an industrial working class party, a peasant party, a religious party or, in some circumstances, a nationalistic party. These parties are well organized and have a mass membership. They are grouped into six species or three pairs of parties, namely, the socialist ideological parties, the nationalist ideological parties and the religious ideological parties. Each of these pairs consists of an organizationally thin, pluralist type of party and an organizationally thick 'proto hegemonic' or authoritarian type of party. Thus there are class mass, socialist, social democratic and labour parties, and there are Leninist revolutionary communist parties, both mass parties of the working class. There are broad based nationalist mass parties and ultra nationalist or fascist parties. The are Christian Democrat type religious mass parties and religious fundamentalist parties. This genus of party is controlled by its professional bureaucracy. It has a variety of mass organizations that it uses for resource mobilization. The highest level of the party bureaucracy controls the nominations for elections.

The third genus of the ethnicity based parties can be either mono ethnic parties that follow an ethnically exclusivist or even polarizing strategy, or broad, multi-ethnic coalitional or Congress parties. Parties of the first type may be well organized or weakly organized but they are typically not internally democratic. They tend to be controlled either by organized religious hierarchies or charismatic leaders. Nominal tins for elections are made at the top levels. Examples of the second type are the Indian National Congress up to the mid-1960s, the Malaysian Barisan National and the Tanzania African National Union, which are multi ethnic parties following national integration ideologies combined with particularistic benefits. Nominations tend to be decentralized and a part of power sharing in multiethnic societies.

The fourth genus is the electoralist parties. These may be personalistic programmatic or catch all parties. Personalistic parties are merely vehicles for the ambitions of their leaders and are purely election oriented, for example, Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia or Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. IN India, the various minor parties that have arisen at various times and are often suffixed with the names of their leaders like Congress (Tiwari), Akali Dal (Mann) or Telugu Desam (Lakshmi Parvathi) are instances of personalistic parties, Programmatic parties are also election oriented and thinly organized, but are more ideologically or programmatically coherent than al pure catch all party, for example, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in Britain or the post 1980 Republican Party in the USA. The catch all party is not a class party but essentially a machine oriented to winning elections (Kirchheimer 1996:177-200). Winn ability is its criterion for election nominations, electoral strategies and even policy stances. It tends to cut across class and other cleavages and make direct appeals to voters through the mass media.

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Lastly, the fifth genus is the movement party, which consists of parties that have evolved from contemporary social movements such as the Green Party in Germany or the various anti immigrants extreme right parties in Europe such as the Austrian Freedom Movement or Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National. They tend to straddle parties and movements and have a distinct, often issue based programme.

The term political party, in view of the recent studies, has assumed its own meaning making it different from every other organisation whether it is a group, faction, club, association etc. even if the objective of any such gathering may be the 'seizure of power'. A plausible definition of political party is thus furnished: "However, when we speak of political parties in this essay, we do not mean a loosely knit group of notables with limited and intermittent relationships to local counterparts. Our definition requires instead, (1) continuity in organisation that is organization whose expected life span is not dependent upon the life span of current leaders; (2) manifest and presumably permanent organisation at the local level, with regularized communications and other relationships between local and national units; (3) self conscious determination of leaders at both national and local levels to capture and to hold decision making power alone or in coalition with others, not simply to influence the exercise of power; and (4) the concern on the part of the organisation for seeking followers at the polls or in some manner striving for popular support.

Modern form of representative democracy has brought forth party system as an indispensable factor in every political society to lay down the rule that political party, in one form or another, "is omnipresent." This phenomena lays stress on the maximization of political participation in the sense that it enjoins upon the members of a political elite to take the people at large in confidence either for the sake of observing the myth that 'voice of the people is the voice of God', or to justify the very legitimacy of their leadership and authority. This phenomena also indicates a mark of political modernization in the sense that it calls for the involvement of more and more people into the process of what Easton says, 'authoritative allocation of values'. Whether it is the rule of a single person (monarch or dictator), or of the few (assembly or elite), or even of the many, the norms of stasiology demand attachment of sanctity to the norm that the masses must participate in the political affairs of the country as much as possible.

Meaning of Political party: Viewed in this context, the term political party has a comprehensive connotation. The classical explanation of Edmund Burke that political party is a body of men united for promoting the national interest on some particular principles in which they are all agreed' needs revision in the light of recent developments. While highlighting recent trends of political behaviour, Dean and Schuman argue that political parties have become essentially political institution "to implement the objectives of interest groups." If so, a specific interest constitutes the foundation of a political party and as 'specific' interests differ from one another, there are corresponding difference between political parties. As Neumann suggests: "A definition of party might as well begin with its simple word derivation. To become a party to something always means identification with one group and differentiation from another. Every party in its very essence signifies 'partnership' in a particular organisation and 'separation' from others by a specific programme"

In order to make the point more clear, it may be pointed out that a political party has a comprehensive connotation to include five determining features. First, a political party is not a loosely knit organisation of some persons. It is required that the members of a political party must be organised on some specific principles (interests) in a tight manner so that the party may be distinguished from some other 'oligarchical' entity or entities. Second, there must be close and intimate relationship among all the members of a party. An intermittent relationship between the 'Lords' and their 'vassals' does not constitute a party in this sense. Third, there must be a clear line of distention between the 'principles' and 'personalities'. Despite the weighty influence of the personalities of a few leaders, the life of the party must not depend upon the life of its leaders. That is, a party is not a firm or partnership which dissolve with the death or going away of its members. Fourth, the leaders of a party must Endeavour and struggle for maximizing their base of popular support and minimizing their circle of decision makers. Finally, the party must observe peaceful and democratic means, as far as possible, to gain power and to implement its programmes for the protection and promotion of their 'specific' interests.

Therefore an elucidation of party politics in India should begin with an understanding of the role of political parties in democratic systems generally. Parties are undoubtedly essential to the functioning of

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democracy; they perform varied functions within and outside the realm of politics. Their leadership and policies, internal practies, and the patterns of interaction with other parties and institutions can have profound consequences for the system of governance. As a keystone political institution in representative regime, the modern political party regularly fulfils three critical functions: nominating candidates for public offices; formulating and setting the agenda for public; and mobilizing support for candidates and policies in an election. Other institutions perform some of these functions too. What, however, distinguishes parties is their emphasis on linkage. Parties are seen, both by their members and by others, as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy makers. Their raison deter is to create a substantive connection between the ruler and ruled.

Blondel, in this regard, observes that political parties "are groupings, but groupings of a particular kind. Clearly it is not sufficient to say that they are 'Political' while other groups are not: polities being a procedure, a body are political only to the extent that it participates in the procedure of solution of conflicts." He further observers: "It is because aims are general and membership open that the parties want to take power and are highly politicized. They do not confine themselves to a limited number of issues; they are interested in all national decisions. They cannot, therefore, be confined to intermittent influence, but are concerned with overall influence.

Political parties and Pressure Groups: A Political party "is notoriously difficult to define accurately". Because it "is not always easy to differentiate it from a faction, an interest group, a parliamentary group which may have a life of its own independent of electoral opinion as in France, or from a political movement which may temporarily transcend a number of parties or groups as did the RPF in France, the Ressemblement Democratique Africaine, the National Union of Popular Forces in Morocco, the national Front in a number of systems. As a matter of fact, the meaning of political party is so flexible that it may mean any groups or organisation from one having a smaller number of members and committed to the protection and promotion of a specific interest to that having a wider base and, as Frank Sorauf in his work political Parties in the American System says, organised on the basis of any incentive like patronage, obtaining special treatment by the government, carrier opportunists, economic benefit, personal rewards, ability to wield influence, or ideological gratification. Keeping all such essential points in view, Curtis goes to the extent of saying "Essentially Party signifies a group of people who hold certain political beliefs in common or who are prepared to support the party candidates, work together for electoral victory, attain and maintain political power."

One thing is clear from what we have said above. We should not be led a way by what Burke said about two hundred years ago; we should also take into consideration that political parties are "specialised associations whose purpose is to secure power within a corporate group for their leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages. They may spring up within trade unions, corporations, universities, parliaments or the state itself in which latter case they are political parties. Parties are thus specialised associations and become more complex, organised and bureaucratic as a society approaches the modern type. The central object of a political organisation is to capture power either single or in collaboration with others. Thus the first and foremost aim of a political party "is to prevail over the others in order to get into power or to stay in it. It is this goal of attaining political power that distinguishes political parties from other groups in the political system, although the distention is rather blurred at time, especially in regard to pressure groups.

It is, therefore, a tedious job to differentiate between a political party and a pressure group. Thee occur several borderline cases where we find the two being analogous to each other. For example, the Irish Nationalists in the House of Commons before 1918, or the poorly represented Welsh and Scottish nationalist groups today display many of the characteristics of both political parties and pressure groups. The weaknesses of the party systems in most of the under developed countries of the world add to our difficulty in this regarded. One may say that Ann DMK in Tamilnadu or Shiva Sena in Maharashtra is not a political party but a pressure group, or may call them political parties in view of their 'open political commitments and activities.

The difference between a political party and a pressure groups may, however, be made on a conceptual plane. It may be said that a political party is an organisation of numerous people who are openly committed on broad questions of policy and they want to assume direct responsibility for their policies by

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seeking to monopolize or share with other parties in a position of political power. Contrary to this, a pressure group does the work of 'interest aggregation' and strives to protect and promote its specific interest without being ready to assume direct responsibility for the same. It plays the game of hide and seek in politics. The difference between the two is thus borne out by Neumann: "Fundamentally pressure groups are the representation of homogeneous interests seeking influence. The interest group is strong and effective when it has a direct specific purpose. Political parties, on the other hand, seeking office and directed towards policy decisions, combine heterogeneous groups. In fact, it is one of their major themes to reconcile the diverse forces within political society. Theirs is an integrative function which is not the domain of the interest groups.

Determinants of Party Structures are Manifold in structure. They vary from religious and social to economic and political factors. There may be parties like a confederation of various socio economic groups or various regional organizations like the Mapi of Israel and the Liberal Party of Australia. Though the determinants of party structure may be different, they may be reduced to three main factors historical, socio economic and ideological. In the first place, historical factors are of great importance in the determination of party structures. Parties are the conditions of modern political processes and their emergence presupposes a necessary degree of urbanization and development of mass communications. It is the extension of franchise that leads to the creation of political parties. Thus as the process of suffrage grows, the organisation of political parties has a wider and still wider base. The National Union of England, for example, came into being as a result of the conditions after the implementation of the First Reform Act of 1832. Thus political parties "arise when historical changes occur and these are not subject to scientific laws. Therefore, the development of parties is more haphazard and uneven than general classifications make apparent. Certainly particular changes are necessary such as the need for the dominant political elites to seek wider political support, and for a significant change in the political attitudes."

Second, the socio-economic factor has a significance of its own. The level of economic development influences the nature of party competition. We may find that there is a different response to urban and rural societies and to those in which class conflict is a significant aspect of the political process. In a liberal democratic state party with a totalitarian structure may hardly find a congenial place to live in and act since there is open electoral competition that allays possibilities of all such developments. Nationalism and religious divisions may be more important than class in forming the basis of some political parties. Of course, the attitudes and values prevalent in society and political culture, may be of vital significance in determining the types of political parties that emerge in any society.

CONCLUSION:

Three broader non electoral functions continuously performed by parties in civil society, in which the actions of parties overlap with the action of civil society, in which the action of parties overlap with the actions of civil society, are the functions of societal representation or representing the interests of various social groups in the political sphere; interest aggregation, in which the diverse interests of different groups are aggregated into broader political programmes and policy platforms; and social integration, in which parties enable citizens to participate effectively in politics so that citizens develop a sense of the efficacy of participation in the political process.

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