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Topic: Role of Regional and state Parties in Indian Politics

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The study presents an elaborative dissertation on the dynamics of regional and state-based parties in Indian politics. The party system is a pillar of an elected 'representative form of government' which acts as a 'link between the electors and the elected.' Modern political representative democracies cannot be visualised without the existence and functioning of political parties. Parties make the citizens capable to perform politically and offer them opportunity to influence politics and political decisions.

Political Parties are an essential feature of the modern democratic government, but their function, organisation and number show substantial variation. Party system in any country is shaped by multiple factors such as its political system, and whether it is federal or parliamentary. Indian party system has also been shaped by its distinct political and social features. After independence an elected representative parliament has been setup at the central level and in the states of India on the same pattern. The purpose of setting a parliamentary form was establishing an accountable government as in this form of government, the executive is constantly observed and controlled by the opposition. After the analysis of the history of the parliamentary system, it could be seen that, it played a significant role in shaping the Indian party system. With the end of one-party dominance and emergence of coalition era, the fragmentation of political parties happened to take place more rapidly, which lead to the multi-party system in the country.

Another important feature by which the party system in India has been shaped to the larger extent, is the federal character of the country. Though it cannot be put in the category of 'distinctive federal system', constitutional power is divided among the central and the state governments. State governments are formed based on Assembly elections, which are mostly dominated by the state parties, different in ideologies and programmes, representing the varied interests of the citizens.

Keeping the objectives of the research in view, this study has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter of the thesis comprises the general overview of the thesis, which includes introduction, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, followed by the proposed hypothesis and the methodology. The second chapter deals with the *Party Politics in India: An overview*. In this chapter party system in India has been discussed in detail starting from 1947, when India got independence and was established as a parliamentary democracy. That was also the era when the Indian party system started taking shape in the tumultuous socio-economic conditions of the country. This chapter covers the different stages of party system in general with an emphasis to understand and distinguish the features of Indian party system. The existing theories related to party system mostly explain party system of the Western democracies and are mostly unable to explain the Indian party system.

The third chapter of the thesis traces the origin, growth, and expansion of the regional and state-based parties in the framework of different theories. As noted above, the unique pattern of the Indian party system does not fit in the Western typologies of the party system. It equally qualifies in terms of the origin and growth of the regional parties in India.

The focal point of the fourth chapter has been the role of the state and the region based parties in the construction of the coalition government(s) at the national level. The

1989 Lok Sabha election marked a significant shift in the Indian party system, especially at the central level. This chapter deeply analyses the pattern of shifting of power balance in national politics, we could see the emerging role of regional parties in national politics, weakening of congress hegemony which further led the instability and chaos in national politics and finally clustering of regional parties with national parties leading a stable coalition government.

Fifth chapter of the thesis focuses on the decreasing role of these regional and the state parties in the national politics and its various impacts drawn on Indian politics specifically after 2014 general elections. The 2014 Lok Sabha election is seen as a landmark election for these changes and termed as a 'second dominant party system' and other narratives used by the scholars. In this election BJP led NDA got an overwhelming majority, decimating its political competitors. Same pattern continued in the subsequent general elections where a single party secured the majority. These changes also influenced the role of regional parties in national politics leading to the multiple changes in Indian politics.

In the course of this study some of the findings are counterintuitive while others are mostly in line with established prior research. India's party landscape has been changing constantly since independence and its party system will remain an interesting as well as an important case to study for all the interested and the concerned people which will subsequently lead them to test the theories of the party system and their change and persistence.