INTRODUCTION
This introductory chapter deals with the meaning of political parties, political parties in India and functions of political parties. It also presents the parties in India, problem of the study, review of the literature on the topic, objectives, need of the study and other methodological aspects of the study.

Political parties are an integral part of the politics and public life of the nation. The sub-system cannot escape the shortcomings and ills of the macro system in which it has to function. This bitter truth must be recognized honestly. In this context, it is pertinent to ask some basic questions; what are political parties? How did they originate? What do they do? How to reform them and enhance their performance and efficacy in the government and outside?

**Meaning**

The famous British philosopher and parliamentarian Edmund Burke defined the political party as a body of men united for promoting the national interest upon some particular principle in which they all agreed. Max Weber, the well-known German thinker, characterized modern party organizations as the children of democracy, of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and to organize the masses, and develop the utmost unity of direction. For purposes here, parties may be defined as political organizations whose basic purpose is to transform popular wishes into viable policy alternatives and to choose the top men who constitute the government.
Contesting win the elections and form the government is what distinguishes political parties from the various other groups and organizations in the country. For example, interest groups and pressure groups have their own goals and seek to influence public policies in their favour. A lot of social organizations, NGOs, professional associations enter the public arena with a view to right some wrongs or effect some reforms they consider important. But none of them field candidates for elections. They do not seek political power. It is also possible to look at political parties as coalitions of interest and pressure groups, and many other segments of the population. But, it is as political parties that they seek to build majority coalitions out of their support groups and form governments.

**Origin and Evolution**

The earliest political institutions to function as a sort of a link between the rulers and the ruled were the informal factions and sundry transient groups, which had led to the Royal Court. An ambitious member of the royal family or a strong personality enjoying the King's confidence or a contender to the throne, etc., led these factions in their own ways. Often these groups had to tread the thin line between “loyal opposition” and the deadly tag of “traitor”. Forward movement in the direction of modern political parties occurred in the European monarchies veering towards democratic politics. Great Britain and Sweeden were the best examples. The King's men, obviously, held the major executive / administrative posts in
the government. Naturally, the opposition had to base itself in the Parliament. Overtime, organized opposition to the current office holders, yet loyal to the King, gained acceptance and legitimacy.

It is interesting that in the beginning pejorative terms like ‘Whigs’ and ‘Tories’ were used in Great Britain by opponents to describe each other. Later on, the partisans themselves adopted the very terms as their labels, thereby completing the transition. The forerunners of political parties as we know them today were in the business of governing and sitting in opposition in turn so to say for long years. Nowadays, the Leader of the Opposition enjoys the status of a Cabinet Minister in most democratic governments around the world and is a legitimate and integral part of democratic governance.¹

Organizing its ranks in Parliament, consequently, became crucial for the opposition party. In order to increase their numbers inside the legislature, the party had to go out into the constituencies and work for the victory of its candidates all over the country. This naturally led the party in power to counter the opposition by organizing itself inside and outside the Parliament and at the hustings. The two political parties competing for power became the hallmark of the governmental system.

Functions of Political Parties

Political parties perform many important and necessary functions in the governance of a country. As mentioned earlier, it is the parties that
operationalise democracies. It is through them that people literally govern themselves. Political parties act as a two-way conduit between the people and their governments. People's wants and concerns, opinions and preferences are too varied and diffuse to be actual consequence in reality. Political parties take them up as their own; articulate them in the public arena; aggregate and integrate the interests and priorities into relatively coherent policy clusters. These are then transformed into alternative public policies and contending programmes of action in the dynamic of competitive electoral politics.²

Parties mobilize citizen support for the chosen policy alternatives through public education, campaign rallies, discussions and conferences. By enthusing party workers to reach out to the people, the policies and priorities are honed further. The policy options are then adopted by the parties as planks in their platforms. Before elections political parties issue their manifestos – packages of promises, policies and programmes of action for the welfare of the people and the advancement of the country etc., voter endorsement gives the majority party or coalition the mandate to govern the country in tune with their manifestos. In brief, this is how the political parties actualize and operationalise the concept of governance with the consent of the governed.³

Citizen support is vital not merely to give legitimacy to governments and their policies, but also to actually implement them. Parties do their best
to "explain" government's policies and actions to the people. Parties in
government explain so as to defend their policies and programmes. Parties
in opposition or outside the government "explain" things so as to expose the
shortcomings of governments in office and their failures in performance, etc.
This process of propaganda for support waged by the parties in power and
the counter propaganda waged by the parties in opposition and / or outside
the government spreads public awareness, promotes citizen involvement in
public affairs. This is a learning experience for the people, a kind of training
in democracy.

The nature and extent of organization of the parties varies a great deal
from party to party and from one political system to another. Suffice it to
say that internal democracy within the parties is of utmost significance and
goes a long way in keeping the whole governance of the nation democratic.
If the parties are internally authoritarian or organized in the top-to-bottom
mode, the larger political system cannot remain democratic for long. In fact,
this is the most serious defect of the political parties in India.

The Congress party which ruled the roost for long conducted a
democratic internal election only once in over four decades! The outcome of
that election was countermanded by the diktat of the party President,
P.V.Narasimha Rao, who was also the Prime Minister at that time. The more
recent "re-election" of Sonia Gandhi as the party's President was more in
the nature of a competition in psychophancy than in free exercise of choice. 
The record of other parties is not too different.

**AUTHORITARIAN IN NATURE**

A comprehensive study of the internal organization of the four major parties in Andhra Pradesh carried out by Lok Satta, a Hyderabad-based organization devoted to political, electoral and governance reforms, is indeed revealing. It confirmed the well known fact that none of the four major parties in the state – Congress, TDP, BJP and CPM – are democratic. They differ only in the degree and kind of authoritarianism practiced. Consensus, ideology or personal loyalty are used to sustain the top-to-bottom style of functioning.

It may be added that political parties also differ widely on issues of membership, fund raising, party discipline and internal dissent, etc. Parties invariably use the term anti-party activities to justify expulsions from the party. Often the axe falls on those who are out of line with the high command or the powers that be in the party concerned. However, party discipline in terms of voting in the legislature is perceived differently in the presidential and parliamentary democracies because their implications and consequences are quite different in the two systems. Party whips are far more exacting in the parliamentary systems because the future of party’s governments are at stake. In the presidential systems with a fixed term for the governments, party discipline in this regard is quite lax.
Elections of Political Parties

Political parties need workers and funds to mobilize voters in order to win elections. Campaigning costs money, lots and lots of it. Over the decades, campaign costs have grown astronomically. Campaign funding has many implications for political parties. All the money that comes into the party’s exchequer entails obligations of some sort. Big donors as well as small donors have expectations. Obligation free funds are most welcome. But they are rather rare and also very meager. Consequently, parties become indebted to big donors, i.e., individuals as well as organizations. This certainly exerts a negative influence on the process and extent of their responsiveness to the will of the people.

Political parties are inevitable and necessary in a democracy. But, it is not necessary that they have to be evil. Between evilness and perfection, there is ample room for improvement. That is where our efforts should be concentrated. Winston Churchill rightly remarked that democracy is a bad form of government. But, all the others are worse, he added quickly and wisely. Since everything else in the world we live in is less than perfect, we should not be surprised that political parties are not what they ought to be. To reform them and improve their functioning is endemic to the system in place and it calls for an endless and concerted struggle.
Three Important Reforms

Firstly, it is needed to prevent criminalization of politics and public life. By law we should prohibit political parties putting up persons with a criminal background as candidates for election. Persons convicted for any offence by any court should be made automatically ineligible to contest elections at any level. Pendency of appeal in a higher court should not be allowed as an alibi.

Secondly, the income and expenditure of all political parties should be in the public domain. The donations and other incomes as well as election and other expenditures should be published annually and subjected to thorough audit by independent agencies. Transgressors should be punished severely.

Thirdly, political parties should be helped to improve their functional efficacy through the adoption of best practices from wherever we can learn. Where an idea comes from is not important. How good it is for the system is crucial. This dimension is far more important than is realized. Implementation and operational efficiency, as distinguished from diagnosis and analysis, are India’s national malaise.

Cleaning up of the political parties will certainly go a long way in the cleaning up of the country’s politics and public life.
POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

The excitement and exuberance of Independence was dampened by the traumatic experience of partition of the subcontinent. The immediate challenge before the country was to cope with the conflict emerging from a heterogeneous and diverse society. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution endeavoured to provide for a liberal democratic political set-up to cater to the competing aspirations of the diverse cultural and linguistic minority. Institutional mechanisms were provided to realize the goal of unity in diversity. Political leaders became aware of the need to govern by accommodation and consensus.

Political Parties and Constitution

Nationalist leaders of the USA, while framing a constitution for the country, felt apprehensive about making provisions for political parties. Indian leaders also followed the same line of thinking as their American counterparts. The term political parties does not appear anywhere in the original text of the Constitution of India. Today, regardless of whatever political system under which a state operates, political parties are accepted as indispensable. Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan advocated partyless democracy for India. Gandhi had a deep desire to see the Indian national Congress dissolve itself and transform into a Lok Seva Sangh (non-party organization to serve all the people).
**Political Party – A Definition**

A political party can be defined as an identifiable group of members of a national society who organize themselves on a stable basis with the objective of exercising power in order to secure the goals of that society and for that purpose enlist and mobilize support. Hence it is the vital task of a party to resolve conflicts and integrate various elements in the society into a harmonious pattern of relationships. A critical assessment of the functioning of political parties in India is imperative as a basis for their revitalization.

**NATIONAL PARTIES**

**Indian National Congress (INC)**

Indian National Congress, which led the freedom movement, has been described as an umbrella party as it accommodates various shades of political, social and cultural spectrum within its fold. Congress is described as a Centrist party by some and ideologically Left of centre by others due to its socialistic leanings. Contrary to the wishes of Gandhi, the Indian National Congress became a full-fledged political party after Independence.

The Indian National Congress was initially led by a group of upper class homogeneous elite group. Other political parties such as the Socialists and the Communists were the dissenting factions that came out of the INC which had a well established nationwide organization. According to Duverger, the leadership of the political parties is democratic in appearance and oligarchic in reality. Authority was hierarchical from the local to the
national level in the Congress Party. Jawaharlal Nehru combined in himself the posts of the Prime Minister and that of the Party President after the death of the Home Minister, Sardar Patel, in 1950 and the Indian National Congress became a one-man show under Nehru.

The Party Ideology

Madhu Limaye argues in favour of preserving party independence in relation to the government. The goals and philosophy of the Indian Constitution were fully endorsed by the Indian National Congress. In 1955, the Congress ideology was declared to be the transformation of India into a socialistic society. The ideology appeared to be vague and confusing. Limaye commented that Congress had no social philosophy or coherent system of thought to guide its action and policies.

In 1966, the INC split into two groups. By focusing on removal of poverty as the theme in her campaign, Indira Gandhi secured a landslide victory in the 1971 general election. She accumulated power in her hands and imposed National Emergency in 1976 subverting the democratic institutions. The Congress Party became authoritarian and despotic under Indira Gandhi, and her younger son Sanjay Gandhi functioned as an extra-constitutional centre of power until the Congress lost power in the national election in 1977.
Janata Party

The protest movement launched by Jayaprakash Narayan swept the country during the early 1970s. The objective was to liberate the Indian Republic that faced its gravest crisis when its free institutions along with the fundamental and civil rights of citizens were suspended. Responding to the call by Jayaprakash Narayan seven opposition parties joined together to form the Janata party which dislodged the Congress from power in the 1977 general elections, winning with a massive majority. Janata party was committed to restoring the democratic, secular and socialist state on Gandhian principles. Because of in-fighting, the Janata Party could not sustain itself in power for long.

Leftist Parties

The Socialists and the Communists formed the Left parties in India. After many splits and mergers the Socialist Party withered away. The two Communist Parties, CPI (Marxist) and CPI hold sway primarily in West Bengal and Kerala. Both the Communist parties have worked within the democratic Parliamentary framework. These parties in West Bengal and Kerala were effective in implementing agrarian reforms as well as protecting and pampering the labour force. The lure of power has prompted the Communist parties to compromise their ideology in order to form coalition governments with communal parties such as the Muslim League.
periodically. Undue pampering of the labour force by the Communist Government in Kerala has ruined the economy of the state.

**Swatantra Party**

This party of rightist leaning attained some prominence in 1960s. It defended private property and the interests of the landlords and the businessmen thus restricting itself to a socio-economic elite interested in status quo. It played its part in counteracting an over-centralised bureaucratic state machinery. It was effective as a responsible opposition party in the Parliament.

**Communal Parties**

Today communalism is probably the most serious challenge facing the Indian society and polity. Militant Hindu Nationalist Movements have been part of Indian society from 1920s. They manifest themselves through cultural organizations such as Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). These organizations have been campaigning to liberate Hindu religious sites by demolishing mosques allegedly built over the temples centuries ago during the mughal period. The razing of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in Northern India is a case in point. It has attracted world-wide attention. Communalism is the anti-thesis to liberal democracy. Demolition of Babri Masjid on December, 6, 1992 by some Hindu fanatic elements shattered the cherished values of secularism and freedom of worship guaranteed to the citizens of the Indian republic. The RSS is a
highly organized, disciplined, militant Hindu organization. Its members, including school children, get training in martial arts and it propagates an exclusively Hindu identification of the Indian nation.

**Bharatiya Janata Party**

The erstwhile Jana Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which evolved from its represents the political arm of the RSS. The BJP, under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Prime Minister is making efforts to project the image of a moderate party. Atal Behari Vajpayee is trying hard to resist the pressure of construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya by the RSS, VHP and other Hindu fundamentalists on the ruins of Babri Masjid. Of late, there has been a revival of Hindu fundamentalist activity as shown by intolerance towards minorities, especially towards the Christian community. Every day there are instances of communal violence erupting in some parts of the country.

**Akali Dal**

Akali Dal is a regional and communal party confined to Punjab, membership being restricted to members of the Sikh community. In 1925, it entered politics under the leadership of Tara Singh who demanded a separate Sikh state. The Akali Dal party, however, became faction ridden through much of its existence due to the manipulations by the Congress. The Congress encouraged the Sikh preacher, Joginder Singh Bhindranwale, to disrupt the Akali Dal but the later turned against the Congress and led an
extremist terrorist movement against the Congress government at the Centre. Indira Gandhi was forced to send in the Armed Forces into the Golden Temple to dislodge Bhindranwale, deeply hurting the sentiments of the Sikh community which led to her assassination in 1984.

**Muslim League**

The Muslim League as a communal party played an active role in the events that led to the partitioning of India and achieving the goal of a separate country for the Muslims. The British had followed a policy of divide and rule encouraging hostilities between the Hindus and Muslims. After realizing its goal, the power of the Muslim League as a party declined except in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (MMM) has been revived recently. A number of communal riots have already taken place and there is always a threat of even small incidents flaring up into riots in certain areas.

**Regional Parties**

In the 1967 general election, Congress lost its majority in 8 states although it won at the Centre. Protest against the growing trend of centralization of power and the strategy of intervention in the state administrations pursued by the Congress played a key role in the emergence of regional parties. They were also the products of socio-political religious movements where in some cases, charismatic leaders nurtured them.
Congress in power at the Centre used convenient strategies suitable to the context in dealing with the regional parties.

The Dravida Munnetra Khazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu arose out of the anti-Brahmin movement started during the 1920s. The founder of DMK, Anna Durai, and noted film stars such as M.G.Ramachandran, Jayalalitha and writers such as Karunanidhi nurtured the DMK and its offshoot AIADMK. These Dravidian parties have dominated the political scene in Tamil Nadu thereafter.

Telugu Desam began as a movement to protect the self respect of the people of Andhra Pradesh. It became an important regional party under the leadership of popular film star N.T.Rama Rao and continued to do so under the leadership of Chandra Babu Naidu.

REVIEW OF THE STUDY

Several writers contributed a length on the present study, a useful for the future level.

Maurice Diverger (1955) in his contribution on ‘Political Parties, their Organization and Activity in the Modern State’, observed there are two types in the political parties – major parties and minor parties. He also emphasized that parties without a majority bent are often led into demagogy by the very nature of the system. He further contributed that minor parties consists of two types – personal minor parties and permanent minor parties. From there, regional parties are emerged.
Sadasivan, S.N. (1977) in his study, 'Party and Democracy in India', stated that minor parties are bound to be an integral part of the political system because of the continuous struggle between various closed social groups, particularly in multifarious systems.4

Ram Reddy, G and Sharma, BAV (1979) in their study, 'Regionalism in India – A Study of Telangana' stated that with the initiation of the constitutional process of regionalisation along primordial lines had commenced in India. They also concluded that after Independence several primordial linguistic and sub-cultural groups which demanded regional identity.5

Horst Hartmann (1977) in his book, 'Political Parties in India' highlighted that regional parties gained commanding influence in some localities or regions, but at the national level their impact has been limited.6

Sigmund Neumann (1956) in his study, 'Modern Political Parties – Approaches to Comparative Politics', emphasized that political party as an organization founded and maintained for the purpose of getting candidates elected to public offices. He concluded that modern parties have developed a well-built system based on the principle of any large-scale commercial or governmental organization.7

Alan R. Ball (1977) analysed in his contribution, 'Modern Politics and Government.' He stated that ideology constitutes the mirror of the core
values of a political party and political parties are said to be the most important ideological carriers and interpreters.8

Om P. Gautam (1997) in his article ‘The Indian National Congress and Nation Building’, stated that Nation Building is an on-going process. Nation is not a state of being but is always in a state becoming. He also stated that new conflicts and new demands arise as new social groups emerge or old ones make new demands for redistribution of political and economic power.9

Deep Chand Bandhu (2003) in his book, ‘History of Indian National Congress,’ examined that the history of INC is a saga of struggle of millions of our countrymen for attainment of Poorna Swaraj. He also mentioned several contributions and the role of Gandhi.10

P.M. Mammen (1997) in his paper, ‘The Multi-Party system in Kerala’ explains that every political party functions as an intra-party alliance of communal factions. He concluded that none of religious communities at the new threshold of coalition politics functions as a monolithic structure or the exclusive determinant to shape the political behaviour of its members.11

Rajni Kothari (1972) in his study, ‘Politics in India’, explained that the congress system has always been a system of coalition, multi-group in character, and informed by a continuous process of internal bargaining and mobility.12
From the above it is noted that several writers have contributed at the
different levels in regard to the political parties in general and to some
extent regional parties in particular. Therefore this study is focused fully on
regional parties.

NEED OF THE STUDY

India combines antiquity with continuity, which has made the Indian
society excessively diverse. This diversity is not merely linguistic as goes
the general impression in view of the creation of the linguistic states, but
extends to other domains of life, such as, culture, religion and caste as well.
More than this, the ‘antiquity’ of the Indian civilization, as perceived by its
people, has led to a historiography, which has helped in the construction of
several territorially organized cultural peoples. They perceive themselves to
be cultural entities with their own histories, cultures, literatures, religions
and linguistic traditions, and have a ‘glorious’ past to fall back upon, when
face-to-face with the existential realities of political and economic
deprivations.

India has in fact been termed a ‘continent of many communities
united through shared experience but powerfully motivated by parochial and
regional considerations.’ It is this existence of culturally distinct regions or
sub-regions in India (not necessarily coinciding with the political units,
called states) which tends to counteract the attempts at centralization.
A federal government is usually placed in an advantageous position to deal with various kinds of regional and sub-regional tendencies, as it provides them with a forum to enjoy some degree of autonomy. But the federal government by its very nature provides a congenial political environment for the growth and strengthening of such feelings in the first place. A federal system in fact aims at maintaining some kind of a balance between these regional pulls and the sentiments for cohesive nationalism.

The principle of ‘unity in diversity’ may have been part of the ‘political policy’ of the government, but it was in a way also embedded in Indian culture and psyche for centuries, not as a ‘policy’ but as a cultural idiom, where diverse cultures co-existed without much hostility on this account.

This was a very interesting case of an embryonic development of a model where a ‘national party’ had to negotiate its terms with its ‘regional allies’, all of course, within the political space provided by the Congress Party, which, needless to say, was severely restricted, constrained and therefore, limited.

It was not the emergence of these regional satraps, but the ease with which they opted out of the Congress Party, that was more significant than any other development.

An attempt was thus made to tread the middle path by keeping the national image intact with its Congress suffix, but at the same time
identifying with the regional support base by using the state name as its prefix.

The shrinking space within the Congress Party gave rise to an ironical situation where increased electoral presence of the Congress Party in the Lok Sabha actually meant growing power of the regional political outfits. The crude and brutal way in which the central leadership of the Congress Party resorted to the pulling down of its own governments in the states, and the unceremonious ways in which the Congress chief ministers were removed, further reflected the narrowing political space.

It won in 1984 with an unprecedented majority had also marked the decline of the party. It has been maintained that the party continuously gave way to the regional forces, and neither of these two elections restored the Congress dominance.

In fact the regional issues were then put into the background in the wake of the larger issue of political survival. It was this important reason that made these parties not only coalesce but also merge their identities into a single political entity, called the Janata Party.

This was symbolic of the desire of these parties to join each other only on a ‘front’ to fight the Congress, something they had all been doing separately in their respective states throughout the previous decades, mobilizing the anti-Congress vote. It was, however, still the National Front where the dominant leadership, both in qualitative and quantitative terms,
largely came from the Janata Dal (JD) which was the principal political party to have mobilized the anti-Congress vote, mainly on the Bofors issue, thereby giving an all-India call against corruption in high levels of governance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. to review the literature on political parties in India,
2. to study particularly the structure, origin of National political parties,
3. to examine the regional parties in India,
4. to analyse the regional parties in Andhra Pradesh
5. to study the policies and programmes
6. to summarise the impact of regional party.

Because the present study is descriptive in its nature, the study has been confined to the political study on different levels – national, regional and others. Nevertheless because of the practical constraints involved in approaching the so-called political leaders and get their views. Therefore, some information is gathered for the study.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study has been confined to within the objectives mentioned above. Since this study is more or less micro level in its nature would undoubtedly reflect some problems which are to be solved easily in future level.
METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the Researcher used secondary data. It includes the literature, books and journals and so on. Besides the secondary data, the Researcher has also collected primary data through personal interviews with the leaders of national parties, regional parties and from time to time researcher participating in conferences relating parties both national and regional.
REFERENCES


