Polity & Governance · GS - II

“The Indian party system is passing through a phase of transition which looks to be full of contradictions and paradoxes.” Discuss.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
12.5	~200 words

Answer Hint

Multiparty competition; coalition politics; national and regional parties; leadership centralisation; electoral alliances; social representation; political fragmentation

Model Answer

Introduction

India's party system has evolved from Congress dominance to multiparty competition, coalition governments and stronger regional parties. Its present character reflects simultaneous centralisation and fragmentation.

Major Contradictions and Paradoxes

- **National dominance and regional strength:** National parties compete across India, while regional parties remain influential in several states.
- **Strong leadership and weak internal democracy:** Elections increasingly revolve around prominent leaders, while internal party decision-making may remain concentrated.
- **Coalitions and majorities:** Coalition-building remains important, even as some national parties have secured parliamentary majorities independently.

- **Identity and development politics:** Parties mobilise caste, religion, language and regional identities while also campaigning on welfare and economic development.
- **Ideological shifts and pragmatic alliances:** Parties may form alliances despite significant ideological differences to achieve electoral objectives.
- **Representation and dynastic politics:** Political participation has widened, but family-based leadership persists in some parties.
- **Digital mobilisation and misinformation:** Social media has expanded political engagement while also increasing the circulation of misleading content and polarising narratives.

Implications

These trends make electoral outcomes less predictable and encourage adaptive political strategies. Regional parties can strengthen federal representation, but excessive fragmentation may complicate stable policymaking. Centralised leadership can improve campaign coordination but may weaken internal accountability.

Way Forward

- Strengthen internal party democracy and transparent candidate selection.
- Improve political funding transparency and disclosure.
- Enforce electoral laws fairly and consistently.
- Encourage evidence-based debate and civic education.
- Promote greater representation of women and underrepresented groups.

Conclusion

The contradictions in India's party system reflect its social diversity and competitive democracy. Strong institutions, internal accountability and issue-based politics are necessary to make this transition more democratic and stable.

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