

Pressure Group

Introduction:

The inherent quality of sociability of individuals is adhered to their general instinct and habitual tendency to form groups and pursue collective measures. The introduction of the study of group denounces the erstwhile exclusiveness of what was granted as formal political affairs and resurfaces the age old reciprocation between society and politics. Thus the study of 'influence' and 'influential' and the deliberation between individual and absolute collective body (i.e. state) has got new direction and dimension. Indeed, the study of group gets currency very recently in the academic fields. Subsequently it has been admitted that the pressure groups explicitly project the degree of plurality of society. The idea of pressure group entangles plurality with the monolithic structure of a state. In reality it voices up divergent interests of the society. Pressure group ventilates the multiple views, sometimes conflicting, of a society and brings a true democratic flavor to a polity. Pressure group is considered as a major constituent of society and it prevails at different levels of society. Thus Bentley reiterates "when the groups are stated, everything is stated, when I say everything, I mean everything" (Bentley: 1908:208-09).

Pressure Group- Towards A Definition:

It is really hard to express the very notion of pressure group under a single, comprehensive definition, given its dubious connection with politics and society. Pressure group can be conceptualized as 'an organised social group whose members share common attitudes, beliefs or interests and which seeks to influence public policies in the light of these attitudes or interests without ever trying to take any responsibility for government' (Mukhopadhyay:2008:153). It represents a far more homogeneous interest and is more interested in an effective articulation of this interest. It goes on promoting its particular interest or attitudes and picks up only those political issues that are integrally connected with them (Mukhopadhyay:2008: 154-155).

According to Truman, pressure group refers to any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitude, makes certain claims or demands upon other groups in the society, for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes (Truman:1951:40).

Zeigler explicates the term pressure group as 'an organized aggregate which seeks to influence the context of governmental decision without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities' (Zeigler:1964:30).

Almond and Powell classified interest groups into four categories.
These are as follows:

Anomic interest groups are seen to use militant and violent means. They adopt non-amicable means because they do not have ample scope to articulate their interests and operate in their desired direction. The anomic groups operate in the newly independent Afro-Asian countries where the political culture denies pluralisation and decentralisation of political power. In the developed society the failure of other organized group or a general ennui to them provides a congenial ground for anomic group's persistence. No associational groups are formed on the basis of adherence to certain traditional norms or bonds grown out of religious, regional, racial, ethnic loyalties. They are

denominated so because they lack a clear structural foundation and an organized procedure of action. Groups of the tribal or of indigenous people may be considered as instances of such type of pressure group. They are more of a volatile nature and they show their identity only in a critical situation. Institutional interest groups operate within the framework of formal institution like political parties, legislatures, bureaucracies etc. They manage to influence the decision makers and there by protect and promote their interest. These groups reside inside the political parties and legislatures in the form of party cliques and legislative blocs, skill groups respectively. Associational interest groups have manifested structural base. Trade unions, ethnic association, organised businessmen, civic group etc. are the examples of such pressure group (Mukhopadhyay: 2008:157-159).

Functions of Pressure Group:

Pressure groups carry out a range of functions. These include: interest articulation, political communication, political socialization, political participation, representation, policy-formulation and policy implementation, and education.

Interest Articulation: The prime objective of pressure group is to promote and protect the interests of its members. The pressure group encompasses such agendas which find little representation in the existing formal channels. Thus the primary task of pressure group is interest articulation. It identifies the major areas of interests and tries to present it in a systematic and comprehensive manner to the government (Chattopadhyay: 2005:418).

Political communication: Pressure groups carry out the function of political communication. They work as alternative channel, beside political party, for achieving specific goals. They ventilate public demands to the government and make the people aware of the governmental reactions and decisions (Chattopadhyay:2005:418). **Political Socialization:** Pressure groups also act as an important agent of political socialization. They through different mode of actions try to help people internalize specific cultural pattern. Thus one of their functions is to maintain and transform political culture through campaigns and creating public opinion. They often cultivate informal connections like local and social ties and operate at the levels like family, school etc. (Almond & Powell: 1966:83).

Political participation: A range of pressure groups, mainly outsider groups, seek to exert influence precisely by mobilizing popular support through activities such as petitions, marches, demonstrations and other forms of political protest. Moreover it always connects the people with the formal political arena by developing, shaping and incorporating certain attitudes and values among them (Chattopadhyay: 2005:419).

Representation: The operational dynamics of pressure groups are to secure certain group o interests though manipulative measures. Thus they try to infiltrate into the decision making bodies of the government and starts exerting influence during election and at the level of party nomination. In this way their preferred candidates find place in the policy-formulating bodies and champion their (Chattopadhyay: 2005:419-20).

Policy formulation and Policy implementation: Pressure groups can not directly take part in the formal decision making and implementing process. However, they can stimulate policy formulation by providing vital information, insights and suggestions to the government. They also seek to influence policy making with the help of concerned members having leaning towards them. Further they manipulate policy implementation by virtue of their access to the bureaucracy and the executive (Chattopadhyay:2005:418).

Education: Groups often attempt to carry out research, maintain websites, hold workshop and symposia and comment on government policies. They also seek to be prominent and popular by using high profile academics, scientists and even celebrities to get their views across.

Pressure Group Tactics:

Pressure groups follow a range of manoeuvres and tactics in pursuit of their goals. These methods are as follows:

Strike: Strike is considered as a viable pressure exerting method, often used by pressure groups to get their purpose achieved. Strike means cessation of work. A group usually resorts to strike with the aim of attaining economic and political rights. Strike is supposed to be non-violent and peaceful means, although sometimes violence may break out in this process. One of the common and popular forms of strike is hunger strike where the demanding group threatens to fast till death if their demands are not granted. However, the demanding group, maybe employers or workers, through strike, can put forward demands like ensuring a suitable work environment, regularized scheme of payment, claim of providing proper incentives etc. (Watts:2007:111-114, see also Chattopadhyay:2005:421).

Bandh and Gherao: Bandhs and Gheraos are two useful tools adopted by pressure groups to wield pressure. The Gherao tactic is supposed to confine a person or a group of persons for a given period of time, which may vary incidentally, to earn some positive benefits to the demanding group. As Subhas C. Kashyap conceptualizes, "when employers and factory managers etc. are encircled in their offices or elsewhere by the labourers and are prevented from freely moving about or out for hours or days together until their demands are conceded, the action is called gherao" (Kashyap:1969:50). On the other hand Bandh literally means closure. It is a multi-level, multi-sectorial approach which practically immobilizes some or all important avenues of society, such as paralysing transportation and financial transactions, closing up of educational institutions and government offices etc. Sometimes violent means are adopted during Bandh. Bandhs and Gheraos are adopted by organized as well as unorganized groups in order to achieve long-term and short-term socio-economic-political ends (Watts:2007:111 114).

Demonstration and Violence: Pressure groups often embark upon physical demonstration, violence and riots as preferable pragmatic ways to meet their ends. Violence as a tactic is espoused when the channels of political communication are insufficient, inadequate and mostly inaccessible. Sometimes pressure group's association with the violent means is considered as the sole effective tool of waging their cause. In some cases, taking resort to violence seems to be the last option in the

hands of the pressure group (Chattopdhyay:2005: 419). Pressure group's adherence to recurrent use of violent means may have explicit or implicit source in the political culture and historical development of a nation. Moreover groups' adherence to radical ideologies may invoke violence. However, adoption of violent means often has proven a suitable measure for attaining desired goals (Mukhopadhyay:2008:161-62).

Personal connection: the pressure group endeavours to build up intimate and informal connections, for example family, school, local and social ties, to get access to a minister or bureaucrat. As Almond and Powell observe 'where the contact occurs, in an atmosphere of cordiality and friendship the likelihood of a favourable response is improved. Demands articulated by a friend, relative or a neighbour are much more effective than a formal approach to a total stranger' (Almond & Powell:1966:83). Pressure groups make efforts to cultivate such intimacy and personal relations and aim at fulfilling their demands by persuading the decision makers. Thus, personal relation building ensures dialogue with the high-profile leaders and bureaucrats and easy access to them as well (Mukhopadhyay:2008:162).

Lobbying and Infiltration: Lobbying stands for the efforts of the individuals to influence the votes of the legislators, generally in the lobby outside the legislative chamber. In a broadest and modern sense, it means any attempt by individuals or groups to influence the decisions of government. Lobbying is a technique of influencing the body of legislators. It may assume different forms like personal meetings, delegations, deputations to representatives of the legislative assembly and making demonstrations etc. Lobbying consists of rendering support or threats of withdrawal of support from the nominated candidate during election. This technique involves an implicit, not always overt, assurance of providing monetary assistance often in the form of bribe or sharing the expenditures of the election. However, in a distinct bi-party system, such as in Britain, where cabinet plays a pivotal role in decision making lobbying is allowed to play a very limited role. Lobbying in an indistinct bi-party system, for instance in USA, plays a predominant role. Lobbying also influences functions of permanent political executive and judiciary (Ray:2009:194). Concomitant to this technique pressure groups strive to place their preferred candidates in the legislature and thereby can manipulate legislative procedures and decision making process in their favour. The practice of selecting members, backed by strong pressure group, into the office of public service is in vogue in USA (Mukhopadhyay:2008:162-163).