

**Notes****21**

POLITICAL PARTIES AND PRESSURE GROUPS

You might have already read that democracy is a government of the people, for the people and by the people. A democratic government is considered a people's government run by the people themselves. In practice in most of the countries the democratic governments are run by the representatives elected by the people. You might be thinking how the people get themselves represented in the government. People elect their representatives through the process of elections. In elections candidates generally are nominated by organizations known as political parties. Yes some of the candidates contest elections as independents also. However, participation of the people does not begin and end with elections only. People also participate in the process of governance through groups known as pressure groups or interest groups. In this lesson, we shall discuss political parties and pressure groups, especially in the context of our country. You will like to know more about political parties and pressure groups.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of a political party;
- elaborate the main characteristics of political parties;
- classify the types of political parties in India;
- discuss the functions and role of political parties in a democratic government in India;
- distinguish between national and regional political parties of India;
- highlight briefly the major policies of national political parties;
- differentiate between political parties and pressure/interest groups;

- assess the role of pressure/interest group; and
- analyse the impact of political parties on our daily lives.

21.1 POLITICAL PARTIES: MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS

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21.1.1 Why Do We Need Political Parties?

In the present day democratic countries, political parties are considered as essential components for the formation and working of the government. Of course, in some countries like Libya, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, there are governments without parties. These countries are not democratic and political parties are banned there. We can therefore infer that democracies function successfully in countries which have competitive party systems. Political parties actually help the institutions and processes of a government democratic. They enable people to participate in elections and other processes of governance, educate them and facilitate them to make policy choices. If political parties are necessary to make the working of the representative government possible, you may well ask as to what is the meaning of a political party? What are its main characteristics? What are their roles in a democratic government?

22.1.2 Meaning of a Political Party

A political party is generally described as an organized body of people who share common principles and cherish certain common goals regarding the political system. A political party operates and seeks political power through constitutional means to translate its policies into practice. It is a body of like-minded people having similar views on matters of public concern. Gilchrist defines a political party as “an organized group of citizens who profess or share the same political views and who by acting as a political unit, try to control the government”. Another definition given by Gettell is: “a political party consists of a group of citizens, more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who, by the use of their voting power, aim to control the government and carry out their general policies”. From these definitions it is clear that political parties are organized bodies and are primarily concerned with the acquisition and retention of power.

21.1.3 Characteristics

From the above mentioned definitions of political parties, following can be identified as their main characteristics:

- a political party is an organized group of people;
- the organized group of people believe in common principles and common goals;

MODULE - 3

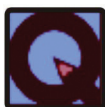
Democracy at Work



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Political Parties and Pressure Groups

- its objectives revolve around seeking political power through collective efforts;
- it employs constitutional and peaceful methods in seeking control over the government through elections; and
- while in power, it translates its declared objectives into governmental policies.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.1

1. Answer the following questions by selecting the right option out of the four stated below:
 - (a) Which of the following is the characteristic of a political party?
 - (i) Group of people organized for betterment of their locality.
 - (ii) Group of people sharing similar religious views.
 - (iii) Group of people having common principles and views on public matters.
 - (iv) Group of people attending an election meeting.
 - (b) Why do we need political parties in a democracy?
 - (i) To help legislature making laws.
 - (ii) To help executives administering the country.
 - (iii) To help judiciary delivering judgments.
 - (iv) To help people choosing their representatives.
 - (c) Which of the following is not a democracy?

(i) Libya	(ii) Indonesia
(iii) India	(iv) Sri Lanka

21.2 POLITICAL PARTIES: FUNCTIONS AND ROLE

You have already read about that political parties are essential for the proper functioning of representative democracy. They perform vital functions in every political system. It is important to know who places candidates before the electorate when there are elections in the country? Do you know who carries out campaigns during elections? Have you ever realized how a government is formed and who is nominated as the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister? All these relate to the functions of political parties and their role in a democratic polity. The functions performed by the political parties, especially in the context of India, are asunder:

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- they nominate candidates during elections;
- they campaign to obtain support for their candidates in the elections;
- they place objectives and programmes before the voters through their manifestos;
- those securing the majority in elections form the government and enact and implement the policies;
- Those not in power form opposition and keep a constant check on the government;
- they form opposition when they are in minority in the legislature and constantly put pressure on the government for proper governance;
- they educate people and help in formulating and shaping public opinion;
- they articulate peoples' demands and convey them to the government; and
- they provide a linkage between people and governmental institutions.

In India political parties have been performing the above-mentioned functions quite effectively since independence. They have made representative governments in India both possible and successful for over past six decades. They provide effective links between the citizens and the governments on the one hand, and the electorates and their representatives on the other. They try to cater to people's demands on public matters, and mobilize political participation. Elections without parties would have almost been impossible. In fact, democracy needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good.

The experience of functioning of political parties in India during the last six decades indicates that by and large they have been instrumental in shaping public opinion, creating political awareness, and imparting political education to the people. They successfully form the governments where they receive the mandate of the people and implement their respective policies and programmes both at the Centre and in the States. They have contributed towards making the institutions and processes of government truly democratic. We can, therefore, say that democracy in India has been strengthened by a competitive and multi-party system.

**ACTIVITY 21.1**

Try to find in your State:

- Which political party/parties have formed the present government?
- To which political party does the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly belong?

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- Name five political parties that have put up their candidates in the last election.

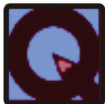
You can get the above information from newspapers, your parents or friends.

21.3 POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA: THEIR EVOLUTION AND GROWTH

The establishment of Indian National Congress in 1885 in India is generally considered as the beginning of the formation of parties. To begin with, the Indian National Congress which led national movement was an umbrella organization representing interests of all sections of society. The formative phase of the Indian National Congress was dominated by the Moderates like Dada Bhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and others as well as the Extremists like ‘Lal-Bal-Pal’ – referring to Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal. After the First World War, the Indian National Congress steered the path of India’s independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. There also emerged some other political parties during this period like the Muslim League, the Communist Party of India, the Hindu Mahasabha, etc.

After independence in 1947, the Indian National Congress transferred itself into a political party in the sense of contesting elections and forming government. It remained a dominant political party up to 1967, as it continued to win elections held in 1952, 1957, 1962 and 1967 at the Centre as well as in almost all the States. This period is known as ‘one party dominant system’ in view of the Congress winning majorities whereas the large number of other political parties contesting elections winning only few seats.

Since 1967 the party system in India has been in constant flux. In 1971 although the Congress won a majority in the Lok Sabha, in many states various other political parties formed governments mostly in coalitions. After 1977, it appeared that India had moved towards a ‘two party system’ – the two parties being the Indian National Congress and the Janata Party. But it was only for a very short period. The Janata Party which was in fact a coalition of various factions like the Congress O, the Jana Sangh, the Socialists, the Bharatiya Lok Dal, and the Congress for Democracy split into different factions. The Janata split once again gave advantage to the Congress which returned to power at the Centre in 1980 and remained there until 1989. However, the Congress has not been able to regain its dominant position ever since 1989. Indian party system witnesses a coalition system of government from 1989 onwards. Since 1999 two broad coalitions have come up – one, known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the second, known as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by the Congress Party. At present in India in fact there is a multi-party system as very large number of parties participate in political process.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.2

Answer the following questions by selecting the right option out of the four stated below each item.

- (a) Which one of the following is a correct statement?
- India is a 'one party system'.
 - Political parties in India came into existence even before independence.
 - Political parties in India emerged only after independence.
 - The Congress did not get majority in Lok Sabha in 1989.
- (b) Which of the following is not the function of political parties in a democratic system:
- Political parties work secretly to bring a change in the system.
 - They shape public opinion.
 - They attempt to acquire political power.
 - They form opposition if not in majority in the legislature.
- (c) Since when the coalitional governments in India have come to stay at the national level?
- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| (i) 1952 | (ii) 1989 |
| (iii) 1977 | (iv) 1967 |

21.4 PARTY SYSTEMS IN INDIA: NATURE, TYPES, POLICIES

You have read above that in the earlier years of independence the Indian National Congress dominated the party system. But the same has not continued and there had been periods of non-Congress governments both at the Centre and in the States. In general, the party system in India has not been a fixed one like a single party system or a dominant one-party system or a two-party system or a multi-party system. The features found in any of the above party systems may be found in India's party system. For many years now, the party system has not been a single-party dominant system as it used to be the case till 1967. It is not now a one-party dominant system. The Indian party system is not a bi-party system, that existed for a short period between 1977 and 1980. It is more a less a multi-party system because the national political parties depend largely on the support of regional political parties to stay in power at the Centre as well as in some States. Various political parties join hands to form coalition governments as single parties are finding difficult to get majorities by themselves.



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**Notes****21.4.1 Dominant Features of India's Party System**

In view of the above, the party system in India displays the following major characteristics:

- India has a multi-party system with a large number of political parties competing to attain power at the Centre as well as in the States.
- the contemporary party system in India has witnessed the emergence of a bi-nodal party system existing at both national and state/region levels. The bi-nodal tendencies operating at two poles are led by the Congress and the BJP both at the center and in the states.
- political parties are not hegemonic but competitive, though many a time we see a particular party aligning with one national political party and then shifting to another on the eve of general elections.
- the regional political parties have come to play a vital role in the formation of governments at the Centre. At the Centre, these regional parties support one national political party or the other and seek substantive favours, ministerial berths at the Centre and other financial package for their respective States.
- election is now fought not among parties but coalition of parties. Nature of competition, alliance and players is varied from state to state.
- coalitional politics has been a new feature of our party system. We have reached a situation where there is no single party government, except in some of the States. There are, as you can see around, neither permanent ruling parties nor permanent opposition parties.
- as a result of coalitional politics, ideologies of the political parties have taken a back seat. Administration is run through Common Minimum Programme, which reflects that pragmatism has become the 'ruling mantra'. We have seen political situations where the Telugu Desam Party supported the BJP led NDA in 1999 and CPI(M) backed the Congress led UPA in 2004 without formally joining the government.
- parties are keen on focusing on the single emotive issue/s to garner votes. The emotive issues in some of the earlier elections were: *Garibi Hatao* of the 1970s, 'Indira is India' of the 1980s, 'Taking into the 21st Century' under Rajiv in mid-1980s, BJP 'India Shining' of 1999, Congress 'Feel Good' in 2004 and 'Aam Aadmi' in 2009.
- parties now look for short term electoral gains rather than build lasting social coalitions.

**ACTIVITY 21.2**

Through discussions or reading newspapers, try to find out :

- (i) Which Political Party of your region has played a vital role in the formation of the government at the Centre and when?
- (ii) Which National Political Party/Coalition enjoyed the status of being the ruling party at the Centre and when?
- (iii) Which are the major Regional Political Parties in your state? When did they enjoy the status of being the ruling party in your state?

21.5 INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES: TYPES

Political parties in India are classified by the Election Commission for the allocation of symbols. The Commission classifies parties into three main heads: National Parties, State Parties, and Registered (unrecognized) Parties.

The Election Commission grants political parties the status of national parties on three grounds:

1. It should be a recognized political party in four or more states.
 2. It should have won at least 4 per cent of the seats in the last Lok Sabha elections or 3.33 per cent of the seats in the assembly elections from the state.
 3. All the candidates put by the party should have polled at least 6 per cent of the total valid votes in the elections.
- A. The **National Political Parties** have areas of influence extending over the entire country. Since the last general elections held in 2009 the recognized national political parties in India are: the Indian National Congress (INC), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India, Marxists (CPI-M), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD).
- B. The **Regional Political Parties**, as recognized by the Election Commission, are those political parties which receive a certain amount of votes or seats in a State. The Election Commission grants election symbols to the political parties and the candidates who contest elections. The number of regional political parties in the country is fairly large. Some of the leading regional political parties in India include Trinamool Congress (West Bengal), Assam Gana Parishad (Assam), All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu) Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry), National Conference (Jammu and Kashmir), Samajwadi Party (Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand), Shiromani Akali Dal (Punjab), Shiv Sena (Maharashtra), Telugu Desam (Andhra Pradesh). Can you identify the name of a regional political party in your state?

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ACTIVITY 21.3

Find out the names of the political parties which formed governments in 2008 in the following states:

- Delhi
- Madhya Pradesh
- Rajasthan
- Chhatisgarh

21.5 INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR POLICIES

You have read that there are a number of political parties at the national as well as the state levels. Every political party pronounces its policies and programmes as commitment to the electorate. These are normally included in a document known as Manifesto. As you may be aware, Manifestoes are published by political parties during elections. We may discuss the major policies of the following political parties.

1. 1. The Indian National Congress: Founded in Bombay in 1885, the Indian National Congress (now the Congress) played a leading role in India's freedom struggle. After independence the Congress emerged as the leading party of governance and ruled at the Centre and in almost all the States till 1967. The first two decades in India's political history were dominated by the Congress and the period came to be described as the 'Congress System'. The dominance of the Congress decreased gradually. Now it depended on coalition of political parties to come to power in the Centre. The Congress is committed to democracy, secularism, and socialism. It is, in a way, a centrist political party. While it champions the policy of liberalization, privatization, globalization called "LPG" on the one hand; it also works for the welfare of the weaker sections of society. It advocates both agrarian based Indian economy and industrialization. It seeks to strengthen grassroots institutions at the local level and claims to play a vital role in international institutions, especially in the United Nations.

2. The Bharatiya Janata Party: Founded in 1980 after distancing itself from the then Janata Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party is the new incarnation of its erstwhile formation, Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS). BJP is an important political party both at the Centre as well as in some of the States. The BJP stands for (a) nationalism and national integration, (b) democracy, (c) positive secularism, (d) Gandhian socialism, and (e) value-based politics. Tilted towards the right in the initial stages, the BJP is as centrist as is the Congress now. The party has formed governments in a number of States such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttarakhand. The party is trying to expand its base in South and North-East India.



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3. **The Communist Parties:** The major communist parties in India are the Communist Party of India (CPI), founded in 1925 and the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI M) which came into being after the split in the Communist Party of India in 1964. Over the years, the CPI(M) became relatively more powerful than the CPI. The CPI (M) and the CPI had been in power in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. The Communist Parties are workers' and peasants' parties. Based on the ideology of Marxism and Leninism, the Communist Parties stand for socialism, socialist ownership of industries, agrarian reforms, rural upliftment and a self-reliant economy. They are opposed to capitalism, imperialism and globalization.
 4. **The Bahujan Samaj Party:** Founded in 1984 by Kanshi Ram, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) claims to be the party of the deprived sections of the Indian society, especially the poor, the landless, the unemployed and the Dalits who constitute the majority in the Indian population. It draws inspiration from the teachings of Sahu Maharaj, Jyotiba Phule, Ramaswami Naicker and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Ms. Mayawati is leading the party at present. The BSP works on the principle of '*Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay!*' (Welfare and Happiness for All). It formed the government in Uttar Pradesh for two terms – once as an alliance with the BJP and later as an independent ruling party in the State.
 5. **Nationalist Congress Party:** The Nationalist Congress Party is a breakaway group of the Indian National Congress. The trio who formed the party in 1999 included Sharad Pawar, P A Sangma and Tariq Anwar. The party's policies are more or less same as that of the Congress. It has major support base in Maharashtra. It has been a coalition partner of the Congress led UPA since 2004.
 6. **The Rashtriya Janata Dal:** The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) is another party which came into existence after disintegration of the Janata Dal in 1997. The party was formed by Lalu Prasad Yadav. The party stands for socialist programmes and social justice for the backward castes and minorities. It had been in power in Bihar for nearly a decade. It was also a coalition partner of the Congress led UPA in 2004.
- II. Regional Political Parties:** Regional political parties have emerged to fulfill regional aspirations. They became quite popular in their respective States that they have even begun dominating state politics and capturing power in their respective States. Their enhanced political positions helped the national political parties form coalition governments at the Centre. It is because of the regional political parties that our party-system has been federalized. The Centre has begun to address their problems and respond their aspirations through accommodation. The evolving nature of our party system has strengthened the cooperative trends of our federal system.

III. Registered (unrecognized) Parties:

A large number of political parties are registered at the Election Commission, without having been recognized as National or State parties.

MODULE - 3

Democracy at Work

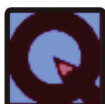


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Political Parties and Pressure Groups

You may be surprised to know that in 2009, 363 parties contested elections. Some independents were also in the fields. Most of the political parties were registered (unrecognized) parties. The classifications of political parties in 2009 may be asunder:

- National Parties - 7 (Congress, BJP, CPM, CPI, BSP, Nationalist Congress Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal)
- State Parties - 34
- Registered (unrecognized) Parties - 322



INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.3

1. State any two features of India's party system.
2. Write three major objectives of any two of the following political parties.
 - (i) Indian National Congress
 - (ii) The Bharatiya Janata Party
 - (iii) The Communist Party of India (Marxist)
 - (iv) The Bahujan Samaj Party
3. Which of the following is a regional political party in Jammu & Kashmir?
 - (i) Indian National Lok Dal
 - (ii) National Conference
 - (iii) Forward Bloc
 - (iv) Rashtriya Janata Dal
4. The Shiv Sena is a political party in
 - (i) Maharashtra
 - (ii) Tamil Nadu
 - (iii) Bihar
 - (iv) Uttarakhand



ACTIVITY 21.4

Find out about the important political parties in your State/ Union Territory. What are their three major policies? What would motivate people to vote for different parties?

Name of Political Party	Major Policies	Motivation for voting

21.6 POLITICS PARTIES AND PRESSURE/INTEREST GROUPS

You might have seen demonstrations, dharnas, and such like activities in your locality, city or State by students, farmers, workers, etc. Some of these activities, you might have observed, are carried by organized groups like Students Union, Farmers Union, Trade Union, Business Association, Teachers' Associations, etc. In general, these groups try to press upon the government for formulation of policies or enactment of laws according to their interests. Yet they themselves do not contest elections. Therefore, you will agree that they are not political parties.

Then what are these? In any country, especially a democratic one, there are large number of organized groups which, directly or indirectly influence politics and government. The members of such organized groups are united in respect of some specific interests that they tend to advance. For example, the workers of a factory are organized in what is called the trade union to promote their interests. Similarly, there are other organized groups. These are called pressure groups or interest groups. What are these pressure groups or interest groups? How do they differ from each other? What role do they play in the political system of our country? Let us discuss that.

21.6.1 Pressure groups and Interest groups

You can see below the illustration depicting a rally by the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). INTUC is an organization that can be described both as a pressure group and an interest group. Generally, interest groups and pressure groups are considered synonyms, but they are actually not. Interest groups are organized groups of people which seek to promote their specific interests. Their characteristics are: (a) they are well-organized, (b) they have certain common interests, (c) the interest that unites the members is specific and particular, (d) the members of such organized groups seek to attain, protect and



Figure 21.1 A Rally by Indian National Trade Union Congress



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promote their interests for which they are united. A pressure group, on the other hand, is an interest group which exerts pressure on the government or the decision-makers for the fulfillment of their interests.

It is important to make a distinction between an interest group and a pressure group. Interest groups may exist without even exerting pressure on the government or the decision-makers. A group that does not exert pressure to influence or pressurize the authorities in order to achieve the desired objects, is not called a pressure group. An interest group that exerts pressure on the government to achieve its goals is called a pressure group. All pressure groups are interest groups while all interest groups may not be pressure groups. The following differences between the two groups are significant:

Interest Group	Pressure Group
Formally organized	Strictly structured
Interest-oriented	Pressure-focused
May or may not influence the policies of the government	Must influence the policies of the government
Softer in outlook	Harsher in attitude
More or less protective	Protective and promotive

21.6.2 Pressure Groups: Role and Techniques

In the democratic functioning of a polity, pressure groups play a vital role. They seek to promote, discuss, debate and mobilize public opinion on major public issues. In this process, they educate people and widen their vision, enhance their democratic participation and raise and articulate various issues. These groups try to bring changes in public policy.

To achieve their objectives and goals, the pressure groups employ various techniques and methods. These include appeals, petitions, demonstrations, picketing, lobbying, and processions. They also write in the media, distribute pamphlets, issue press releases, organize discussions and debates, put up posters and chant slogans. They may carry out satyagraha, that is, a non-violent protest. At times, pressure groups resort to strikes in order to pressurize the legislators, the executive officials, the decision-makers. Often, they resort to boycott. Have you not seen lawyers, sometimes boycotting the courts, the teachers, their classes? The pressure groups resort to such activities to influence governmental policies.



Do you know

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying refers to attempts made by officials in the government, most often legislators to exert influence on the formation or implementation of public policy.

21.6.3 Political Parties and Pressure Groups

You have already read that political parties and pressure groups are not same. However, both of them play an important role in a democracy. Therefore, their relationship is markedly close and clear. For example, the trade unions help their respective political parties by providing them workers during elections. On the other, it is the political parties which advocate legislation in respect of the interests of the workers. Do you know that the National Students Union of India (NSUI) provides future leadership to the Congress while the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) does so for the Bharatiya Janata Party? While some pressure groups are linked to particular political parties, there are many which have no linkage to any political party. It is important to understand that the pressure groups are different from political parties. The distinction between the two can be stated as under:

- Pressure groups are not primarily political in nature. For example, although Rashtriya Swayamak Sangh (RSS) supports the Bharatiya Janata Party, it is, by and large, a cultural organization. The political parties are basically political.
- Pressure groups do not seek direct power; they only influence those who are in power for moulding decisions in their favour. The political parties seek power to form the government.
- Pressure groups do not contest elections; they only support political parties of their choice. Political parties nominate candidates, contest elections, and participate in election campaigns.
- Pressure groups do not necessarily have political ideologies. Political parties are always wedded to their ideologies. For example, the Congress party is wedded to the ideologies of socialism, secularism and democracy; the Communists advocate the interests of workers, peasants and other weaker sections.
- The interests of the pressure groups are usually specific and particular, whereas the political parties have policies and programmes with national and international ramifications.

21.6.4 Pressure Groups in India

Like in other democratic countries, in India too there are many interest/pressure groups. These are of various kinds. There are pressure groups based on traditional social structure. There are groups like Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Sanathan Dharma Sabha, Parsee Anjuman, and Anglo-Indian Christian Association. Then, there are the caste groups such as the Brahmin Sabha, the Nair society, and the language groups (such as the Tamil Sangh, the Anjuman-e-Terraqi-e-Urdu). You may find other types of interest groups which may include bodies such as the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) or those related to workers and peasants like All India Trade Union Congress, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the Kisan Sabha, etc. There are, for example, the institutional groups such



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as the Civil Services Association or the Non-Gazetted Officers' Union. At times, you may observe that there are groups like the All Assam Student's Union asking for the establishment of a college in rural areas.

21.6.5 Civil Society Organizations: A New Form of Mass Pressure Tactics in India

India has a very large number of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), that is, organizations established by citizens of the country, to pursue certain interests. Many of these organizations act as pressure groups on the government, to promote implementation of policies in their areas of concerns. These organizations are run by ordinary persons who feel strongly committed to certain issues. Many ordinary persons come together informally or formally to share their feelings about different issues and prevailing social injustice.

Civil Society is an interface between the state and individual. Civil Society Organizations broadly refer to the active participation and engagement of men and women in groups – associations, organizations, voluntary agencies on the issues of common concern like environmental protection, price rise, prevention of corruption, etc. The 21st century witnessed the active involvement of people through civil society organizations which could be seen in number of protest movements across country. People take up issues of gender discrimination, child labour, street children and so on, and contribute through individual and collective action. Such organizations are able to mobilize public opinion because these issues are relevant to many people in society. Some of the Civil Society Organizations include Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS, Rajasthan), People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUC), National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO), Medico Friends Circle (MFC), and many others. Such organizations put pressure on the government for changing policies on many important issues such as corruption, human rights, livelihood of different people, environmental protection, women empowerment, educational and health issues.

Civil Society Organizations help to reach out to many people. They provide a channel for people to express their grievances and also work constructively for the change. They point out when the government is not fulfilling its promises to the nation. They attract idealistic and committed young people, even acting as a space for teaching and learning 'good citizenship'. Good citizens are vigilant and alert. Civil Society Organizations are formed by such vigilant citizens. Many of them struggle for the larger social good, often sacrificing their own comfort, time and energy. Some important leaders of Civil Society Organizations in recent times include Aruna Roy (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan), Ela Bhatt (Self-Employed Women's Association), Medha Patkar (Narmada Bachao Andolan) and Anna Hazare (India Against Corruption). All these organizations involve a large number of people who struggle to bring about changes in State policies. Many of the organizations and groups believe in following non-violent methods.



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21.6.6 Pressure Tactics

As pressure groups are concerned with influencing the government, they use various tactics for the same. These are primarily constitutional and peaceful. In India one of the commonly used pressure tactics is Satyagraha, a non-violent protest. As you know it is Gandhi who introduced the idea of Satyagraha and is known all over the world for the same. Although he used these methods in the context of foreign rule, the methods are still relevant. The methods have been successfully used. For instance, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has influenced the government to improve its policies on the rights of women workers. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan led the people's movement which got the government to bring about the law on 'Right to Information'. In the North-Eastern State of Manipur, many groups including 'Just Peace', Apunba Lup (students' organization) and Meira Paibis (women's groups) are trying to influence the government to listen to people's genuine grievances. Together, these groups are associated with Irom Sharmila, a civil rights activist known as 'the Iron Lady of Manipur' who has been on a hunger strike since



Figure 21.2 Meira Paibis (women activists) protesting in Manipur;



Figure 21.3 Women of Kerala sending postcards to P.M. and President of India in support of demands made by Meira Paibis and Irom Sharmila for peace in Manipur

MODULE - 3

Democracy at Work



Notes

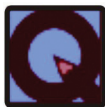
Political Parties and Pressure Groups



Figure 21.4

November 2000. Irom Sharmila wants that the government should repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) which is responsible for violence in her State and other parts of North-East India, and respect people's democratic right to life. People from all over the country are responding to her sacrifice (she has not eaten food for 11 years, and is alive only because she is being forced through a tube attached to her nose).

Pressure groups also use tactics of holding demonstrations, sitting on dharnas, going on strikes, organizing public meetings, presenting memorandums to legislative committees, promoting their causes through use of media and creation of public opinion.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.4

1. What are Pressure groups? How do they differ from interest groups?
2. Write two differences between pressure groups and political parties?
3. Discuss at least three ways in which pressure groups try to influence the policies of the government. Give suitable examples.



ACTIVITY 21.5

Some characteristics of interest groups, pressure groups and political parties are given below in a jumbled form. To distinguish each one of them from the other, read them carefully and write them at the appropriate place in the given table.

- Strictly structured
- Contest elections
- Softer in outlook
- More or less protective



Notes

- Protective and promotive
- Seek power of the government
- Help in making legislation
- Interest-oriented
- Political in nature
- Formally organized
- Smoothen the process of change of power
- Pressure-focused
- Harsher in outlook
- May or may not influence the policies of the government
- Must influence the policies of the government.

Interest Groups	Pressure Groups	Political Parties



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Political parties have a definite role in any democratic system. In fact, political parties make democracy possible; they make elections possible; they help transfer power; they educate people and make government responsive.
- In India, political parties are broadly of two types; national political parties, with influence extending to the entire country; regional political parties, with influence limited to particular State(s).
- Among the national parties, we have the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Communist Parties, the Bahujan Samaj Party, and the Rashtriya Janata Dal. The regional political parties include, among others, the Akali Dal (Punjab), the DMK and the AIADMK (Tamil Nadu), the Telugu Desam (Andhra Pradesh), the National Conference (Jammu and Kashmir), the Shiv Sena (Maharashtra), the Trinamool Congress (West Bengal).
- The regional political parties started playing a crucial role in coalition politics since 1989.

MODULE - 3

Democracy at Work



Notes

Political Parties and Pressure Groups

- The coalitional governments have come to stay in the country.
- Pressure groups, different as they are from political parties, exist and function to influence the policies of the decision-makers/government to attain their specific/particular interests. Their role, in modern democracies is, indeed, significant.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Why do we need Political Parties?
2. What do you mean by a Political Party?
3. List any four characteristics of Political Parties.
4. Describe any four functions of Political Parties.
5. Explain briefly the policies of the Indian National Congress.
6. Describe three features of the nature of party system in India?
7. What is a pressure group?
8. Distinguish between political parties and the pressure groups highlighting two points.
9. Give a brief account of pressure groups in India.
10. What are Civil Society Organizations? Write the names of any two contemporary Civil Society Organizations in India.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

21.1

1. (a) (iii)
(b) (iv)
(c) (iii)
2. Write this answer based on your own understanding of how a democracy should function

21.2

- (a) (ii)
- (b) (i)
- (c) (ii)
- (d) (iv)



Notes

21.3

1. competitive, coalitional
2. (1) The Indian National Congress:
 - (a) democracy,
 - (b) secularism.
- (2) The Bharatiya Janata Party: (a) nationalism and national integration, (b) Gandhian socialism
3. (ii)
4. (i)

21.4

- 1 A pressure group is an interest group which exerts pressure on the government or the decision-makers for the fulfillment of the interests of its members. Pressure groups are different from interest groups in the sense that the interest groups may exist without even exerting influence on the government or the decision-makers. But unless a group exerts such pressure to influence or pressurize the authorities in order to achieve the desired objects, it may not be called a pressure group.
2. (a) Pressure groups are not primarily political in nature. For example, although Rashtriya Swayamak Sangh supports the Bharatiya Janata Party, it is, by and large, a cultural organization. Political parties are basically political in nature and orientation.
 - (b) Pressure groups do not contest elections; they only support political parties of their choice. Political parties nominate candidates, contest elections, and participate in elections campaigns.
3. Pressure groups play a vital role in the democratic functioning of a polity. They help promote, discuss, debate and mobilize public opinion on major public issues. Three ways used by pressure groups are: appeals, petitions and demonstrations. For instance, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has influenced the government to improve its policies on the rights of women workers. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan led the people's movement which forced the government to bring about the law on 'Right to Information'.