

Lesson 21

Public Opinion and Pressure Group

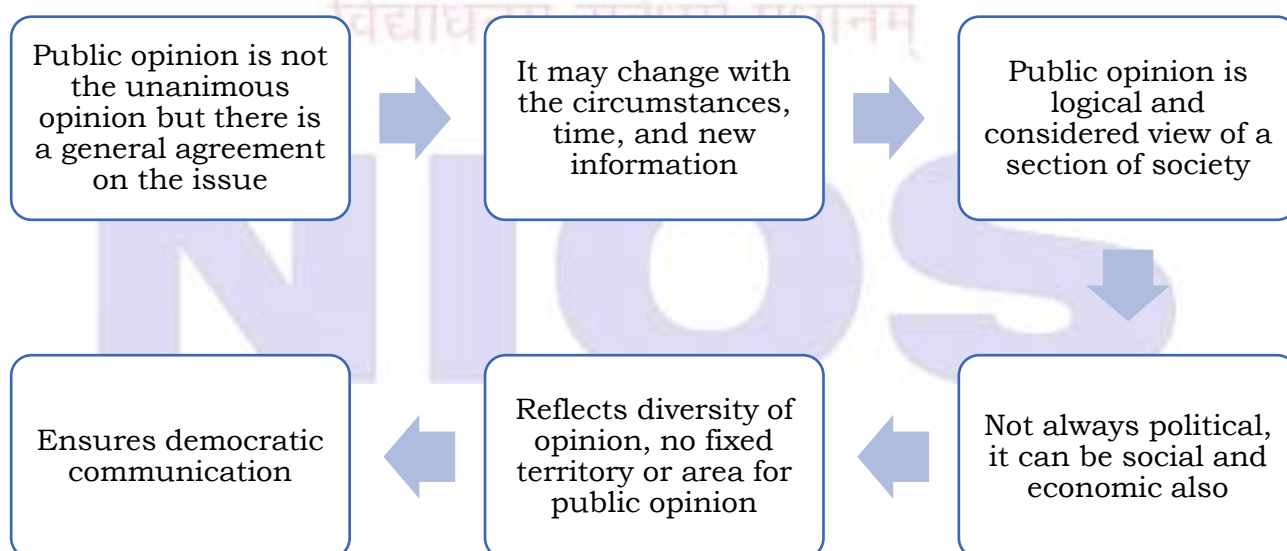
Summary -

In any political system public opinion and pressure groups play a very significant role. There is various aspects of public opinion and pressure groups. Democracy derives its authority from the people, no government whether it is democratic or not, can afford to ignore the public opinion and pressure groups.

Meaning of Public Opinion

- The public is not a fixed body of individuals.
- The term public means a section of society sharing common interests.
- It holds similar views and opinions on matters of public concern.

Characteristics of Public Opinion



Significance and Role of Public Opinion –

- ✚ Public Opinion is the expression of the views of citizens, The significance and role of public opinion can be explained as follows:

Guide to the Government:

- ✚ Public opinion acts as the guide to the government in respect of policy formation,

(b) Helping in Law Making:

- ✚ Government is always under pressure of public opinion and takes note of the same in formulating laws for the common good.

(c) Acts as a Watchdog:

- ✚ Public opinion acts as a watchdog. It controls and checks the government from becoming irresponsible,

(d) Protects the Rights & Liberties:

- ✚ Public opinion acts as the protector of rights and liberties of citizens,

(e) Acts as a Powerful Force in International Sphere:

- ✚ Public opinion has acquired worldwide importance; the international relations are influenced by public opinion.

Formation of Public Opinion -

Political Socialisation –

- ✚ Political socialisation is the basic process through which every individual is oriented with respect to political issues,

Press –

- ✚ The print media includes newspaper, periodicals, pamphlets, journals, leaflets.

Radio and Television –

- ✚ Electronic media, radio, and television act as a mirror of social life.

Cinema –

- ✚ Cinema has been the traditional medium of entertainment and awareness.
- ✚ It cultivates new ideas and norms in the society on political and social problems.

Public Meetings –

- ✚ Public meetings or platforms are effective means of moulding public opinion for different social, cultural, intellectual, and political activities.

Political parties and their activities

- ✚ Political parties formulate and organize public opinion. They are called mobilisers of opinion

Opinion Polls –

- ✚ Opinion polls serve to indicate public opinion at the time of their being taken.

Educational Institutions –

- ✚ Include schools, colleges, literary clubs, study circles, universities, and libraries etc. They can mould public opinion to a great extent.

Hindrances in The Formation of Sound Public Opinion -

(a) Indifferent Attitude: People like to keep themselves away from political activities. They do not take interest in public affairs,

(b) Illiteracy: Illiterate people have a limited knowledge and they do not understand the political problems,

(c) Poverty: The poor are isolated from politics, and they do not find time to devote their attention to public affairs,

(d) Disharmony amongst various castes and communities: The people and political parties, in democracy must rise above the feelings and emotions of casteism and communalism.

(e) Free Press: Unbiased objective and independent press and fearless media play a very significant role in the formation of healthy opinion.

Pressure Groups –

Pressure or interest groups are organized groups, having common and social interests concerned with influencing decision making by putting pressure from outside. Pressure groups have voluntary membership and are found in every country.

Pressure Groups is controlled mainly by five factors: –

- (i)** the pattern of political institutions
- (ii)** the nature of party system
- (iii)** the political culture and attitudes of leaders and people
- (iv)** the nature of the issues and problems confronted and
- (v)** the character and type of the concerned interest groups.

Classification of Pressure Groups in India -

(a) Professional Pressure Groups: - includes the employees of a particular occupation or profession for the protection of their interests.

(b) Socio Cultural Pressure Groups: which are concerned with community service and the promotion of the interests of the whole community.

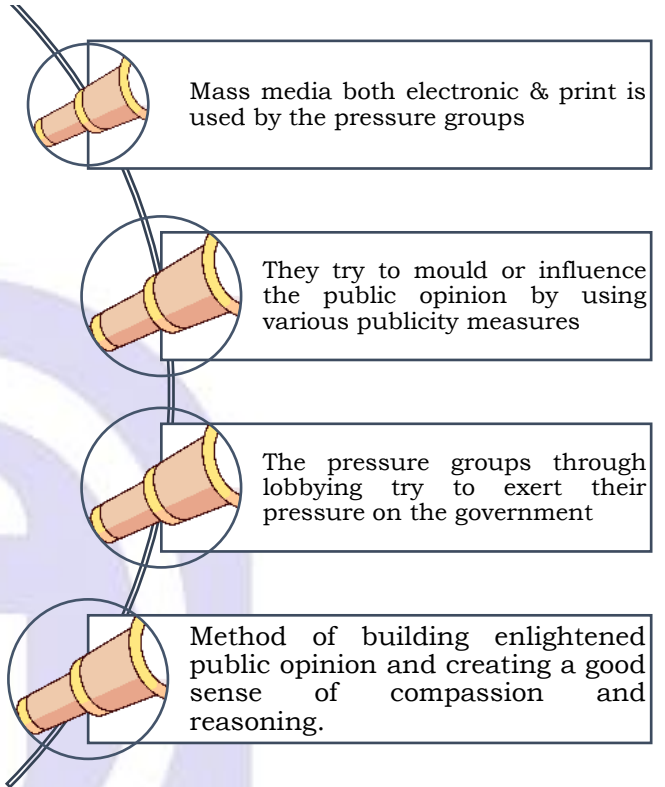
(c) Institutional Pressure Groups: influence the government policies in their favour without directly getting involved in the political system.

d) Adhoc pressure Groups: come into existence for a very short period with the objective of pressuring the government for a specific task.

Role of Pressure Groups –

- ✚ Act as a link and source of communication between the masses and the political parties.
- ✚ Sensitize the public towards various socio-economic issues thereby educating them politically.
- ✚ To produce very effective leadership.
- ✚ As a training platform for future political leaders.
- ✚ Bridges the gap between various traditional values in the society.

Methods of Pressure Groups –
Methods are dependent on the nature of political system and the type of society in the country:



Evaluate yourself –

1. Mention the various agencies of public opinion.
2. “Pressure groups acts as a link and source of communication between the masses and the political parties”, in reference to the statement write your views with suitable examples.
3. Write down the hindrances in the formation of sound public opinion.