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Q5(d)

Discuss the role of pressure groups in strengthening democracy.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Politics and Society

Politics and Society: Nation, democracy and citizenship; Political parties, pressure groups, social and political elite; Regionalism and decentralization of politics; Secularization.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the role of pressure groups in strengthening democracy
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Pressure groups organise interests without always seeking office.

Unions, farmer bodies, **BAMCEF**-type associations and **Chipko**-Narmada movements widened the public agenda.

Business and communal lobbies can capture the same channel.

Dominant-caste groups may silence labour.

Democracy is stronger when many groups can knock and the state can referee.

Introduction

Pressure groups are organised interests that push the state without necessarily seeking office. In India they can thicken democracy by giving voice, or they can capture it for a dominant caste or firm.

Body**How they strengthen democracy**

- **Farmer unions**, trade unions, and women's groups convert private grievance into public agenda, which a disharmonic democracy needs.
- **BAMCEF**-type associations and caste federations, for all their limits, pulled those excluded by Ghurye's civilisational elite into bargaining.
- Environmental groups around **Chipko** and Narmada forced development to face displacement, a check on majoritarian growth talk.
- Professional and business chambers supply information that parliaments cannot gather alone.

Risks

- Moneyed lobbies and communal fronts can drown the unorganised informal worker.
- Dominant-caste farmer power may speak as 'the village' while landless labour stays quiet, as village studies warned.

Condition

- Pressure groups strengthen democracy when entry is plural and the state remains able to referee.

Flow diagram

Pressure groups -> Voice between elections
Pressure groups -> Capture by money caste
Voice between elections -> Stronger democracy
Capture by money caste -> Weaker democracy

Conclusion

Pressure groups strengthen Indian democracy by organising interests between elections. They weaken it when only the already dominant can knock. The sociological task is to see which groups have the corridor.

Facts & figures

Narmada Bachao Andolan

A movement-pressure formation that put displacement on the national table.

Chipko

Himalayan forest protection that showed local livelihood as a public interest.

BAMCEF

Backward and minority employees' federation that organised a Dalit-Bahujan professional voice.

Farmer unions

Can deepen agrarian democracy or speak mainly for surplus farmers.