

# Pressure Groups in Indian Politics

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**In this article we will discuss about the pressure groups in Indian politics.**

Business has always played a big role in political life of the nation. It controls economy and also maintains life line of the nation. It can bring fame as well as defame to the government and under certain circumstances can even dislodge political party from position of power.

Business groups play their role irrespective of the consideration whether it is bi-party or a multi-party system or whether form of government is democracy or totalitarian. Business as a pressure group is not to be seen only in few countries, but all over the world.

But its role differs from situation to situation. It can be different in dictatorship than what it can be in a democracy. Similarly business plays a different role in a developing society than what it can in a developed society.

It is because in developed societies these are more organised than what these are in a developing society. In India there are no political associations of business interests but business interests in India have developed in almost all political parties in the country.

These try to infiltrate in the parties by giving them donations so that the parties can perform their activities and contest elections. The business contributes maximum financial assistance to the political party in power, in case its programme is not anti to business houses or private business.

This perhaps is the major reason that all opposition parties have always been demanding that company donations to political parties should be banned

because these donations are more beneficial to the ruling party than to the opposition parties.

It is feared that in case political parties continue to receive donations liberally from the companies independence of legislatures may be throttled. Though before the elections of 1967, all opposition parties were demanding ban on company donations yet when after 1967 these parties came to power and big business began to finance these parties as well these too kept quiet.

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It was in 1968 that Congress party in the Lok Sabha felt the need and necessity of banning receipt of donations from business companies. The party was of the view that the business had so much dominated the party that there is no organ of any political party which is not under its influence.

But there were many Congressmen who did not favour this idea. Since the party was divided, a Bill purposing ban on donation to political parties could not be passed. On May 7, 1969, Companies Amendment Bill was again introduced in the Lok Sabha. The proposed Bill provided that donations by companies to political parties or to individuals for election purposes should be banned. The Bill was passed on May 19, 1969.

But task of reducing the influence of business groups on politics obviously cannot be easy because the former being fairly well organised. One finds that Chamber of Commerce Calcutta was founded as early as in 1833., whereas that of Bombay in 1907 and of Madras in 1909.

The Muslims also founded a Muslim Chamber of Commerce. After independence leading business men organised themselves into Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

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In each metropolitan city in every state there is a well organised Chamber or an Association of businessmen, e.g., The Associated Chamber of Commerce,

All India Manufacturers Association, Indian Merchants Chamber, Calcutta and so on.

Since the business community has well organised itself, therefore, it is difficult to think that it will leave its hold simply because of banning donations to political parties by an Act is passed by the Parliament. In fact, the big business, to the extent possible, also contributed during freedom struggle, so that the sympathies of new political bosses are not alienated.

Big business in India so far has been showing inclination towards Congress party. It is because it feels that in the near future there is no political party which can uproot it. The experiment of Janata Party has already failed. Since Congress party cannot be dislodged from power, therefore, the alternative is to weaken it, which the business magnates do not favour.

Moreover, this circle also feels that of all the socialist organisations in the country, the Congress is the least socialist and thus much less dangerous to big business.

When socialists like Ashok Mehta, Acharya Kirplani, Rani Manohar Lohia and others left the party, it went in the hands of the rightists and the big business felt comparatively safe. Big business houses might have thought of reviewing their approach if they were convinced that there was a national political alternative to Congress Party.

But finding none, big business continues to remain with the Congress party and sides with non-Congress parties when these come to power. Business circles try to closely associate themselves with opposition parties governments when absolutely necessary and this is what happened in 1977 when Janata Party came to power at the centre and in some states.

Business group, in the beginning, when Jana Sangh was founded did not show any inclination towards it because it felt that there were no chances of its coming to power. The group did not wish to waste its resources in a party which was not likely to come to power Moreover, it was also not clear as to what economic policies the party would follow.

In addition the business group was not too keen to weaken Congress Party. But as the time passed this party made it clear that in the economic field it would allow freedom for individual enterprises, but not allow concentration of wealth just in few hands.

This suited the business, but still big business did not extend its active support to this party till 1967. It was only after 1967 elections that business group started paying attention to this party but even at present it is not a favourite party of big business.

In 1959 Swatantra party was founded. This newly founded party gave a clear, economic policy which promised to give maximum freedom to the business and wanted that the state should least interfere in the affairs of the individual.

This policy suited to big business but even then that did not come forward to support the party. It was again because it did not see any hope of this party coming to power even in the distant future and secondly that it did not wish to annoy the ruling Congress.

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Thus big business in India, as a pressure group has been following a very safe policy of not annoying those in power and authority. It does not favour or disown any political ideology and for it any method or technique is fair enough to follow provided that protects its interests.

It follows both old and modern techniques and applies a method which serves its purpose. Since business in India is concentrated just in few hands, therefore, it is not difficult for big business houses to follow some independent policy.

In addition to normal methods of financing political parties business houses run educational institutions, technical institutes, offer scholarships, run charitable institutions and above all control press, so that they can become popular and mould the view point of the people to suit their ideology and thinking.

Business pressure group in India tries to win the sympathies of the masses by undertaking welfare activities e.g., by setting up educational, technological and health institutions on the one hand and charitable on the other. These try to establish informal business contacts, by developing family, community and personal friendship.

Then it has also been found that in India business has tried to show eagerness to go near the administrators rather than politicians. In the words of Prof. Weiner, "... Indian businessmen establish high particularistic relationship with individual administrators, who are appealed on the basis of blood relationship when it exists, personal relationship or most often personal regards."