

## OPIUM-PRODUCER FARMERS AS AN INFLUENTIAL PRESSURE GROUP IN INDIAN POLITICS

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### Abstract

In society, there are numerous interests, and when these interests become organized, the number of interest groups increases significantly. When organized interest groups seek government assistance to achieve their objectives and aim to influence government decisions in their favor, they become pressure groups. These pressure groups then exert pressure on the government. The farming community, particularly opium farmers' organizations, is a key example of such pressure groups. Currently, opium is cultivated for medicinal purposes in three Indian states: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. Opium cultivation is under central government control. Opium farmers' organizations use political influence to pressurize the government to adjust opium cultivation regulations in their favor.

### OPIUM PRODUCERS AS AN EFFECTIVE PRESSURE GROUP IN INDIAN POLITICS

In modern political systems, pressure groups and organized groups have specific importance. These groups play a role in the exercise and implementation of political power in democratic societies. Nowadays, politics is not only considered as the governance of the state but also includes the study of the decision-making process. In modern political systems, governments are often influenced by pressure groups in decision-making and legislation.

Pressure groups are referred to by various names such as interest groups, non-governmental organizations, lobbies, informal organizations, factions, etc. Current political parties do not represent all segments of society. In such cases, when different interests in society come together in an organized manner, they are called interest groups, such as farmers' unions, teachers' unions, student unions, trade unions, etc. The goal of these various interest groups in society is to improve the social, economic, and professional conditions of their members.

It is well-known that when these diverse interests in society become organized, the number of interest groups increases. When organized interest groups seek government assistance to fulfill their objectives or exert pressure on the government to influence decisions in their favor, they transform into pressure groups. Explaining the meaning of pressure groups, Odgaard wrote, "A pressure group is a formal organization of individuals who have one or more common interests and who attempt to influence the course of events, particularly public policy and governance, in order to protect and promote their own interests."

Pressure groups are found in all types of political systems. Although in Indian politics, pressure groups and interest groups have not been as explicitly expressed as in Western countries, the increase in organized pressure and interest groups is evident due to the adoption of adult suffrage, expansion of political rights, privileges granted to the public, and planned programs in economic and social sectors. In Indian politics, active pressure groups can be divided into four categories based on the Almond model:

### PRESSURE GROUPS BASED ON THE ALMOND MODEL

1. **Institutional Pressure Groups**
  - Congress Working Committee
  - Congress Parliamentary Board
  - Chief Minister's Club
  - Central Election Committee
  - Bureaucracy
  - Army

**2. Community Pressure Groups**

- Workers' Union
- Business Associations
- Farmers' Community
- Student Community
- Youth Groups
- Communal and Religious Communities
- Linguistic Communities

**3. Non-Community Pressure Groups**

- Sectarian and Caste-Based Communities
- Communist Groups
- Regional or Separatist Groups

**4. Protest Pressure Groups**

- Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
- Babbar Khalsa
- Khalistan Commando Force
- ULFA
- Khalistan Liberation Front

In Indian politics, institutional and protest pressure groups have a significant influence on central politics, while community and non-community pressure groups play effective roles in state and local politics.

Among community pressure groups, the opium farmers' organization is prominent. Currently, opium is cultivated for medicinal purposes in only three Indian states: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. Opium is a narcotic substance. Therefore, control and regulation of opium-related activities are managed by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985, under central government authority. The central government is responsible for determining the cultivation area, changing licenses, setting standards for yield, and fixing sale prices. Opium farmers' organizations use effective pressure on political leadership to influence the government's regulations on opium cultivation.

Opium cultivation is low-cost but highly profitable. A farmer generally requires 7 to 8 kilograms of seeds per hectare, with a market value of 150 to 200 rupees per kilogram. From one hectare, a farmer can produce approximately 55 to 60 kilograms of latex, which is the liquid product obtained from opium. Currently, the government buys latex at 1800 rupees per kilogram. Thus, a farmer can easily earn between 50,000 to 100,000 rupees per hectare. Additionally, farmers can also earn from the seeds and leaves of opium. Economically, opium farmers are well-off, hold a respectable position in their area, and exert influence over the general public. They support and provide financial aid to major political candidates who back their opium policies, thereby directly or indirectly influencing political leadership for favorable opium policy formulation through monetary and public support.

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