

1. Critically evaluate the role played by caste based pressure groups in Indian politics.**Approach**

Define what is caste based pressure groups with help of examples in Introduction. Further provide benefits and drawbacks of caste based pressure groups to society and nation at large. In conclusion take a balanced and integration based view.

Introduction:

A caste based pressure group (PG) is a group where people of same castes are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. They try to influence government policies to secure socio-economic benefits. With Caste system being main feature of Indian society, caste based PG's have evolved in India. Some examples of caste organisations are Scheduled Caste Federation, Backward Caste Federation, etc.

Body

Positive role played by caste based pressure groups in Indian politics

- Deepen Democracy – They provide vital link between the government and the governed. For example : Harijan Sevak sangh started by Mahatma Gandhi served to provide government services to the backward caste people.
- Political empowerment – Caste based assertions and political bargaining power has increased for many backward castes. For example: Justice party in Tamilnadu and Scheduled caste federation in Maharashtra have been on forefront to assert the political rights of Dalits and backward castes which resulted in reservations in assemblies and education.
- Influence policy decision – Pre-independence PG's highlighted social issues which led to constitutional provision of securing equality and justice for downtrodden. Towards this pursuit, state came out with affirmative measures like reservation in education and employment. The decision to amend the atrocities act was due to pressure from scheduled caste groups.
- Achieve constitutional ideals – equality, justice and dignity. Voice is given to the marginalised sections as they cannot be ignored in the first-past-the-post electoral system. For example: Bahujan samaj party has evolved from a pressure group to a political party and has focused on uplifting of the backward castes through various social and financial support.
- Strengthen democracy as these PG's encourage people's political participation. Help educating group on their rights and form public opinion on important issues. For example: Patidar association with its agitation has led to invoke participation in political process which have increased the overall voting percentage in elections.

- Regional politics origin is also traced to caste based PG's which entered into political domain. Ex: AIDMK, BSP. This has made national political landscape more accommodative of regional aspirations and increased decentralisation of power.

Negative fall outs of the caste groups :

- Identity politics – Caste based pressure groups limits identity of citizens to a particular caste which limits full participation of citizens in governance system. Further identity politics gives rise to hatred between communities. For example: The mobilisation of upper caste groups in Hathras against the family of victim of rape belonging to 'lower caste' family.
- Fissure in society – It may lead to divisions within the society which might be harmful to the overall unity of society and nation altogether. For example : The demands of lingayats to create a separate religious sect as a minority.
- Increased social unrest and social animosity : Identity politics and caste conciseness has led to physical violence as seen in Bhima Koregaon issue, discrimination against dalits such as obstruction of their entries in temples and violence for intercaste marriages.
- Law and order issue with their agitation turning violent. Ex: Jats for reservation, Karni Sena protest against Padmavat. These incidences highlight how caste groups can affect the fundamental rights of other citizens and create a law and order situation which might be detrimental to public interest.
- Casteism : This leads to caste groups favouring their own kith and kin rather than supporting people on merit.
- Political class agreeing to demands under pressure. Ex: reservation for Marathas when they do not meet the criteria of socially-educationally backward class.

Conclusion

Democracy wants people to express their views and interests. Pressure groups provide means to this. In diverse country like ours with multi-caste system, caste based PG's have so far had both positive and negative fallouts. But in the interest of integrity of nation and to attain a future of casteless society, the negative outcomes of the caste based groups which leads to violence, hatred, obstruction to law and order should be curbed. For this the civil society, political parties and government should work in tandem.

2. Why haven't women been successful in forging a robust pressure group for the furtherance of women rights in India? Critically analyse.**Approach**

Define what are pressure groups with emphasis on women's pressure group with help of examples in introduction. In next part in brief mention history of women's movement in India and different groups. Then write what are the factors which are hindering a robust pressure group system in India of women. In conclusion take a balanced view on past achievements and future ahead.

Introduction

Generally a pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. Women pressure groups defend the common interests of woman. They are a vital link between the government and the governed. They keep governments more responsive to the wishes of the women community. India has long history of women pressure group starting from Bharat Stree Mahamandal in 1910.

Body

Women in India have faced significant violations of their human rights for centuries. From rape and domestic violence to forced labor and denial of educational opportunities, the struggle for rights and empowerment is a daunting one for Indian women. In the world's second-largest country, hundreds of millions of women are still affected by some of these issues. Women's rights are vital to the success and growth of developing nations, making projects that empower Indian women vital to the well-being of the entire country.

Women pressure group and contemporary scenario:

- The women's are equal part of the society but still they have faced various types of discrimination in history and contemporary times. To alleviate these women groups have been an effective pressure group across the world. Whether it may be the movement for equal voting power or equality in jobs women groups have protested and achieved their rights.
- Similarly in India starting with the first wave of feminism from 19th century when the issues of widow remarriage, female infanticide and child marriage were at forefront, women have organised to make their voice heard. The institutional forms in second phase of feminism with different organisations formed by Sarla devi Chaudhrani, Sarojini Naidu, Pandita Ramabai were at the forefront. While the third phase was after the Independence where groups like SEWA, Saheli have forwarded women issues.
- But still it has been realised that women has not been as effective as a pressure groups as there is ever increasing rise in violence both physical and sexual, low

political participation, low land rights, low sex ratio. This has led to focus on reasons for failure of women pressure groups in India.

Reasons for Women haven't successful in forging a robust pressure group for the furtherance of women rights in India.

- Women's Pressure Groups in India have proven to be one of the most difficult movements to organize, because they represent such a large and varied segment of society. While all women share an obvious bond through their gender, their interests vary depending on characteristics such as age, race, religion, and political affiliation.
- Political participation of women: while women comprised 49 percent of the voting population, there are only 11.6 percent women parliamentarians in the country. Cultural attitudes, the difficulties in raising sufficient campaign funds and inadequate support from political parties were some of the challenges to form women Pressure groups.
- Lately women's movement have been hijacked by fundamentalist and thus women have got involved in communal issues rather than the issues of women empowerment.
- Low labour force participation due to patriarchy reduces their independence which doesn't allow them agency to organise and fight for their rights
- The family system in India restricts women to work out of their household as they are overwhelmed with immense responsibilities.
- Women politicians who have been in higher positions have failed to uplift other women's or to organise a pan India women organisation.
- Majority of political parties treat women wing as side wing rather than main feature of their parties. Further due to lack of democracy women are hardly represented in top hierarchy of the political parties.
- Caste has been a hindrance to organise women as the issue of purity and pollution have restricted to all sections to come together.
- Class division among rural and urban women have also hindered unity. Urban women groups have largely neglected the social reality and needs of dalit women's and rural women's.

Conclusion

Empowerment of women is imperative for development of family, society and nation. For this strong motivated women's pressure groups are needed to pursue their causes so that they can lobby for the basic rights of equality, employment, agency and political leadership. In past women's group in India has achieved amendments of sati act, rape laws, compensation for acid victims and therefore to further achieve total equality well empowered groups will be beneficial.

3. What is an integrated check post (ICP)? How does it boost regional connectivity? What are the challenges being faced by ICPs? .Discuss.**Approach**

Define what are integrated check posts in Indian border system .Discuss how they boost the regional connectivity through trade, transport, etc.In next part mention what are the challenges that needs to be weeded out for their effective functioning.Make a summary based conclusion in the end and reforms needed.

Introduction

The ICPs are entry and exit points on India’s land borders and house various facilities such as customs, immigration, border security, quarantine, among others, within a single facilitation zone. Formulated in the early 2000s in the aftermath of the Kargil War (1999) and initiated since 2012, the ICPs have helped streamline cross-border trade and passenger flows through the modernisation of border management infrastructure.

Body

In 2019-20, 40% of India’s total trade with Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and Pakistan took place through the six ICPs at Agartala, Petrapole, Raxaul, Jogbani, Moreh and Attari. As of 2021, India has nine operational ICPs along its land borders with neighbouring countries, of which seven have been formally inaugurated.

Integrated check posts and boost to regional connectivity:

- Trade : The creation of Integrated check posts have increased trade between India and its neighbouring countries.Further it has opened avenues for local producers in border region to sell their products.
- Tourism: Security enabled terminals and ease of immigration facilities with logistics support have increased tourism.Bangladesh is India’s largest tourism partner.Further Indians are also visiting Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan regularly.
- Asian connectivity: These posts in future will serve to further the Asian integration trough trilateral highways and BBIN road initiatives of SAARC.
- Immigration : Ease of transport have increased the labour market flows between border states.Majority of Bangladeshis and Nepalis work in India and these borders serves as legal transit zones without illegal intermediary p.
- Security: The high security at these post have curbed the anti social activities at border region which harassed the local population.This have increased integration in border regions.
- People to people relations : People to people relationships have improved over the years with increase in trade and ease of transportation.This has furthered cultural integration between Northeast and Asia.

The ICPs have transformed border-crossing between India and Bangladesh by bringing in all the concerned agencies under one roof and thus substantially organising the

processes. Where the facilities are operational, cross-border movement has become easier and less time-consuming. Relatively increased efficiency in the inspection and release of goods; Improved quality of the services rendered by border agencies; and Expedited border-crossing and improved flow management.

However, there is room for improvement in several areas, to further tap into the potential of the ICPs.

- **Infrastructure** : Several infrastructure flaws were observed near the ICPs, which restrict their efficacy. For instance, the narrow approach road in Petrapole results in massive congestion in the vicinity, increasing the travel time from Kolkata to the border. Further, cargo and passenger terminals have been separated in Petrapole. The facilities available in the passenger terminal are insufficient for the volume of passengers it handles daily. This is evident in the long queues of passengers outside the terminal every day.
- **Scanning and Inspections** : Currently, the ICPs lack sufficient screening facilities. There are no technological tools to scan the trucks crossing the border for loading and unloading of goods. The goods are inspected manually, which is not a reliable method. Moreover, the BSF, which is in charge of border security and monitoring the ICPs, are only sanctioned to check the permits for the trucks entering/exiting, not the cargo. Such loopholes, according to experts, allow malicious groups to conduct unlawful activities across the border.
- **Identity Verification** : Some of the local residents claimed that illegal immigrants often take up jobs in the facilities near the ICPs. Trucks can enter ICPs across the border using simple photograph-based paper permits allotted to the drivers, which can be tampered with. The locals expressed concerns about security, since the personnel at the ICP gates are not equipped to verify the authenticity of these documents.
- **Migrants' Records** : The ICP immigrations are handled by multiple agencies, e.g. the Bureau of Immigration, the central body under the MoHA, is in charge of the Petrapole and Hilli but not the rest of the ICPs. Thus, there is no common record for the people entering or exiting via land-border checkpoints. This restricts the movement of legitimate passengers to specific ICPs. To increase the flexibility of movement and ease of tracking, the government must develop a central database on priority.
- **Use of ICT** : Currently, none of the ICPs studied employ adequate information and communication technology (ICT). High-speed digital connectivity is needed to optimise ICT usage. However, since the ICPs are located in remote areas, they receive low-speed of bandwidth. According to experts, poor digital connectivity will negatively affect the performance of the Single Window System (SWS), which is necessary for paperless trade.

Conclusion

The establishment of the ICPs on the Indian borders reflects India's willingness to provide world-class facilities at the border checkpoint to promote trade and connectivity with its neighbour. The government can draw lessons from the existing

ICPs to avoid replicating their flaws and thus improving those that are yet to be developed. In the future, efficient ICPs will be crucial to India's trade and connectivity with neighbouring countries . India must therefore focus on consistently upgrading the facilities in a timely manner.

