CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION: PRESSURE GROUPS – A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The politics of pressure groups is not a novel political phenomenon. However, it has been a matter of academic enquiry since the 1950s. In the twentieth century, a new concept crept up gradually into political research, viz., the idea that political activity is part of a process and this political process has been viewed principally as the interaction among governmental institutions and social groups. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to examine the role played by groups, including pressure and interest groups.\(^1\) It appears that the study of pressure groups is only a twentieth century development. Its importance was further realised with the academic discovery that in a modern society, there are many different types of groups other than political parties which influence the political process of the State. Thus, it was considered convenient to study such groups by bringing them under the terminology of pressure groups. Tentatively, a pressure group may be regarded as an organised social group whose members share common attitudes, beliefs or interests and try to promote their particularistic interests by influencing public policies.

In the contemporary world, the pressure groups seem to play an important role in the political process of a state. The study of pressure groups was initiated by the group approach to politics introduced by Arthur F. Bentley in his book, *The Process of Government*, published in 1908 and later by David B. Truman in his book, *The Governmental Process*, published in 1951. Bentley was an early advocate of a descriptive political science based on a group conception of political life. However, his book, *Process of Government* (1908) was ignored by political scientists for some two decades before it achieved any significant recognition. Therefore, the term ‘pressure group’ was neither used by Bentley nor by Truman. In 1925, this concept was highlighted by Andre Siegefride who pointed out that pressure groups constituted the core of political influence in America. However, it was perhaps, used for the first time by Peter Odegard in his book, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League*, published in 1928. A comprehensive and full scale study about pressure politics was made in 1954 by David B. Truman in his book, *The Process of Government*. By this effort of David Truman, group interaction in American politics not only became evident to the observers of the political process, but they also recognised that the pressure groups in the United States had assumed the role of a Third House of the Congress. Political scientists all over the world have now recognised the effective role played by pressure groups in different political systems. Their useful role in democratic politics cannot be ignored.

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In order to understand the politics of pressure groups with particular reference to student and youth organisations, the first step is to examine the existing literature on this theme. It appears that A.F. Bentley, an American political scientist, was the first to emphasise the role of pressure groups. His book, *The Process of Government*, published in 1908, was the first systematic study of pressure groups. He argued that the governmental process is essentially a process of the interaction of the various groups that operate in politics and therefore, in order to understand the process of government, one must understand the role of groups in politics. D.B. Truman in his book, *The Governmental Process*, defines pressure groups as, "any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behaviour that are implied in the shared attitudes. The shared attitudes constitute the interests".

Many scholars, both Western and Indian have carried out several studies on pressure and interest groups, to cite a few are, Peter Odegard, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League* (1928), asserted that "pressure groups are formed without regard for party opinion or other matters; they carry on agitations for or against projects termed favourable or prejudicial to their interests". V.O. Key Jr. in his book, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (1964) stressed on the political character of the pressure groups. According to him, prominent place must be given to the activities of private organisations if one is to

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understand the American political system because these associations constitute links of communication between citizens and the governments. Others who contributed to this literature are Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity – Public Pressure and Political Response in India* (1962); Abraham Holtzman, *Interest Groups and Lobbying* (1966); Francis G. Castles, *Pressure Groups and Political Cultural* (1967).

From the available literature, it can be seen that a number of articles have been written in S.M. Lipset (ed.), *Student Politics* (1967), on the following themes such as, on the approaches to the study of student political behaviour, the articles are as follows, S.M. Lipset, “University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries”; E. Wight Bakke, “Roots and Soil of Student Activism”; P.G. Altbach, “Students and Politics”. The authors in the above articles studied students from different perspectives such as, University students in underdeveloped countries, student activism and student movements which are even capable of toppling governments. For example, the Kishi Government in Japan in 1960 was forced to resign under student pressure. However, none of them studied the students as pressure groups. On the theme of comparative perspectives on student and politics, the articles are, George Z.F. Bereday, “Student Unrest on Four Continents: Montreal, Ibadan, Warsaw and Rangoon” and Glaucio A.D. Soares, “The Active Few: Student Ideology and Participation in Developing Countries”. On the theme of students and politics in Western countries and in Latin America, the articles are, S.M. Lipset and P.G. Altbach, “Student Politics and Higher Education in the United States” and K.N. Walker, “A Comparison of the University Reform

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Movements in Argentina and Columbia” and on Indian students – Attitudes and Activities, the article is by Metta Spencer, “Professional, Scientific and Intellectual Students in India”. Others like P.G. Altbach (ed.), Turmoil and Transition: Higher Education and Student Politics in India (1968) and A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn (eds.), Student Power (1969), studied student organisations as student movements.

In G.S. Mansukhani (ed.), Student Power in India, (1975), some Indian scholars have lent their contribution such as, Sushila Mehta, “Anatomy of Student Revolt”, and “Student Movement in Gujarat”, R.C. Hingorani, “Student Unrest in Bihar (1974)”, K. Gandhi, “Emerging Student Power and Social Response” and G.S. Mansukhani, “Student Services and Welfare”. A point to be noted is that, the authors above mentioned the pressure tactics of the students and the ‘student power’ in their relation to the politics of the State but no mention is made of the students as pressure groups. Then there is Babulal Fadia, Pressure Groups in Indian Politics (1980); Indrani Barua, Pressure Groups in Assam (1990); L.P. Misquitta, Pressure Groups and Democracy in India (1991), where he highlighted selected Western theories of pressure groups and their relevance to Indian conditions and examined the pressure groups in the business sector of the Indian society. Misquitta in his book did not take up the study of student and youth organisations as pressure groups. Meeta Deka in her book, Student Movements in Assam (1996) made an analysis of student movements in both developed and the developing nations and a historical study of the student movements in Assam and has been observed that there is no attempt to look at students as pressure groups. Another scholar, H.C. Upreti in his book, Youth Politics in India (1987), examined the
students and youth in the context of their participation in political activities, their political background which the author feels has direct bearing on their political behaviour, the reasons for student’s unrest, their pressure tactics etc. C.N. Somarajan in his book, *Pressure Groups and Democratic Politics* (1988) studied the important pressure groups prevalent in the State of Kerala, such as, the Sree Narayan Dharma Paripalana Yogam, the Kerala School Manager’s Association, the Kerala Karshaka Sangham etc. and their role in the state politics of Kerala. However, the authors mentioned made no attempt to study the students and youth as pressure groups.

In A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India* (1995), the student and youth organisations have been discussed from different perspective, such as, student organisations, social organisations, welfare organisation, youth problems, etc. but not as pressure groups. In M.N. Karna (ed.), *Social Movements in North-East India* (1998), the youth movements were studied as social movements and not as pressure groups. In A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India* (2002), the student and youth organisations have been discussed as student’s movement, student activism, student’s hegemony, pressure tactics adopted by them but not as pressure groups.

In Meghalaya, some research work had been carried out on the activities of the student organisations. P. Malngiang in his book, *Students and Politics in Meghalaya,* examined the role of various student organisations prevalent in the State of Meghalaya. In

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this book, the author made an attempt to understand the organisation and working of the various student organisations such as the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), the Meghalaya Post-Graduate Students' Union (MPGSU), the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the All Khasi- Jaintia Students' Union (AKJSU), etc., and to examine the problems of political participation and political recruitment including that of student leaders. The author also examined the various issues taken up by the student organisations and the pressure tactics used by them. Further, an attempt has also been made to understand the background of student leadership and the process as to how students are drawn to politics. Nikhlesh Kumar and A.K. Nongkynrih in their article, "Khasi Students' Union – A Preliminary Enquiry" have highlighted the nature of the student organisations with particular reference to the KSU and the functioning of the Union within the political context of the State. In this article, the authors made an attempt to understand the structure, nature, aims and objectives, characteristics and style of functioning of the Khasi Students' Union. It appears that the two authors have tried to analyse the KSU from a sociological point of view. In other words, their focus has been on the KSU as a social movement in Meghalaya and not as a pressure group. However, very little has been written on the youth organisations of Meghalaya including FKJGP. One available literature is Pascal Malngiang's article titled, "The Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP)". It highlights the role of the FKJGP as a social organisation and as a pressure group in the State politics of Meghalaya. In this article, the author made an attempt at understanding the issues raised by this organisation


and its role within the political context of the State. Thus, it appears from the article that though the FKJGP is basically a social organisation, the author tried to analyse its role and style of functioning from a political perspective. Another article on the youth is "Jaintia Youth Problems"\textsuperscript{11} by Emathus Nongtdu where he attempts to highlight the problems faced by the youth of Jaintia Hills. Another article on student and youth movement which has been published recently is, "Students and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya",\textsuperscript{12} written by Pascal Malngiang. In this article, the author made an attempt to examine the historical development of the student and youth organisations in Meghalaya, taking into account their professed objectives, issues raised by them and pressure tactics adopted by them. However, P. Malngiang's analysis is based mostly on documents made available by the organisation concerned. Despite his attempt at analysis of the pressure tactics, he does not study the student organisations as pressure groups. In this context, it is to be noted that the focus of our work is to study the student and youth organisations in Meghalaya, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the FKJGP as pressure groups.

From the review of the existing literature, it appears that since the 1980s, student and youth organisations of Meghalaya have actively participated in the political process of the State. These organisations have sought to generate public debate on several policies of the Government of Meghalaya and have even exercised their hegemony for mass mobilisation by shaping public opinion according to their own perceptions. Apparently, the major student


\textsuperscript{12} For details see, Pascal Malngiang, "Student and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya", in A.K. Baruah (ed.), Student Power in North-East India, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 173-196.
organisations, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the youth organisation, viz., the FKJGP have more or less similar objectives. It may be noted, however, that the allegiance of these organisations to their respective ethnic communities adds a complicated dimension to the politics of pressure groups in Meghalaya.

In the context of the above, the present work has taken up a study of the process of emergence of student and youth organisations as pressure groups in Meghalaya as well as their influence on policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya. The study has also focused on the interaction of these organisations with political parties and on the popular perceptions about the issues raised by these organisations.

The present study was carried out with an attempt to achieve the following objectives:

1) To analyse whether the issues raised by students and youth organisations are reflected in the policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya in order to evaluate the effectiveness of pressure group politics in Meghalaya.

2) To examine the similarities and differences in the perceptions of the student and youth bodies on various issues.

3) To examine the nature of the relationship that exists between the regional and national political parties of Meghalaya on the one hand and the student and youth organisations on the other and to analyse the responses of political parties and a cross-section of the public to the issues raised.
4) To examine the major issues raised by student and youth organisations of Meghalaya from time to time in order to highlight the similarities and differences in their stand vis-à-vis the Government of Meghalaya.

5) To examine the similarities or otherwise of the content of these programmes with the demands of some major student movements of the world in the 1960s.

The work was based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of the work include the Constitutions of students' organisations, memoranda submitted by the student and youth organisations to the State Government and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya. Informal discussions were also held with prominent political leaders of regional and national parties of Meghalaya, one from each political party except the CPI (Communist Party of India), because in the contemporary political scenario of Meghalaya, the CPI has not been able to intervene significantly in the politics of students. Informal discussions were also conducted with the Presidents and General Secretaries of each of these student and youth organisations as well as fifty citizens who are not political activists, to understand the perception of ordinary citizens about the politics of student and youth organisations. An attempt was made to ensure representation of different ethnic communities of the State.

The secondary sources include books, dissertations, theses, articles, journals, newspaper reports and so on. This work aims at presenting a description of the major issues raised and its implications for policies and decisions of the Government. In the process, it
examines the politics of pressure groups in Meghalaya with special reference to student and youth organisations. The present study is on pressure groups with special reference to student and youth organisations of Meghalaya and the period of data collection is from June 2001 to March 2009.

As far as the study of pressure groups and their role in the political process is concerned, it appears that there exists some confusion over terminology and definition. Therefore, various terms are used interchangeably such as, 'pressure group', 'interest group', 'the lobby' and 'political group'. The term 'pressure group' has been criticised as some scholars have used it as a term of abuse and not as a neutral description. Therefore, it has been suggested that the term 'pressure group' be used as a broad generic title, keeping in mind the dangers of implying sanctions and introducing value judgements and to divide it into two broad categories, namely, interest groups and attitude groups. The former consist of those groups in which the shared attitudes of the members result from common objective characteristics, e.g., all the members of the group may be plumbers, farmers, bank executives and so on. The latter, on the other hand, are those groups in which the members hold certain values in common, e.g., all members of the group may wish to ban the use of nuclear weapons, cruelty to animals, etc. From this distinction, one can conclude that interest groups usually have some other primary purposes than that of influencing government policies whereas attitude groups are often formed with the prime purpose of

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influencing governmental decisions. Moreover, the basic difference between attitude and interest groups lies in the fact that while the former is to be known by its subjective base, the latter has very much an objective base. Further, once an attitude group is successful in having achieved its goal of influencing governmental policies, it is likely to disband or become inactive in relation to the political process. The interest group, on the other hand, is keen on pursuing its interest and is, therefore, likely to remain a permanent group seeking to influence, now and then, the governmental decisions. This is the reason why interest groups receive more academic attention than attitude groups. Further, interest groups can be divided into four categories, namely, (a) anomic interest groups, arising out of high tension and discontentment in the society; (b) non-associational interest groups, e.g., kinship, status and class groups; (c) institutional interest groups, e.g., political parties, bureaucracies etc. and (d) associational interest groups, e.g., trade unions, organisations of businessmen or industrialists, etc.

It may therefore, be argued that the interest groups and pressure groups are in fact different terms used for the same group. In any society there exist a number of interests or 'shared attitudes'. Some are organised, others are not. Therefore, an interest group is a "shared-attitude group that makes certain claims upon other groups in the society." Some

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15 Alan R. Ball: op. cit., p. 105.
17 Alan R. Ball: loc. cit., p. 105.
18 Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay: op. cit., pp. 157-159.
19 It means uniformity in thought and behaviour of a member of people.
scholars prefer using the former while others use the latter. However, it is to be noted that for those groups which exert pressure, the term 'pressure group' is generally used, e.g., trade unions and manufacturer's associations are interest groups when they interact with each other over questions like hours of work and wages. But when they try to influence the content of legislation by acting through or upon the institution of government, i.e., when they assume direct political significance, they become pressure groups. Therefore, in a way, all interest groups may eventually become pressure groups.

The political party and pressure groups are two significant social groups which have a great deal of relevance to the functioning of the modern political process. It has been observed that the pressure group is as old as the political party. In fact, certain political parties have originated as pressure groups which in course of time, have got converted into political parties, for example, in Britain the formation of Labour Party in 1906 was preceded by the formation in 1900 of the Labour Representation Committee which was technically a pressure group. Similarly, in India, the Indian National Congress, as it was founded in 1885, was more a pressure group which took quite a number of years to assume the form of a full-fledged political party. The political party and pressure groups are both organised structures, however, there is a lot of difference between them. In the first place, the political party is a multi-interest group which accommodates heterogeneous interest and tries to reconcile these interests with each other. The pressure group, on the other hand, is a social

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group that represents a far more homogeneous interest and is more interested in an effective articulation of this interest. The political party having a membership base wider than the pressure group have policies on a much wider range of issues, covering almost every field of governmental activity. Whereas, the pressure group have policies only on those issues whose interest it represents. The political party is not merely content with formulating policies. Thus, for the sake of giving effect to these policies, it tries to run the government and therefore, aims to capture political power. A pressure group, on the other hand, always avoid the corridors of political power.23 In this context, a major distinction between the pressure group and the political party is in the focal points of their attention.24 The political party is mainly concerned with government and seeks to staff the major policy-making positions in government. Pressure groups on the other hand, are spokesmen for sectional interests and are mainly concerned with particular issues of public policy affecting their own interest.25

The differences between the pressure group and the political party are more prominent in developed countries like America compared to others. Thus, in some political systems a political party is found to have successfully accommodated some of the important pressure groups. For example, in Britain, the Labour Party is mainly composed of trade unions whose members have acquired indirect membership in the party. In France, some of the political parties are in actual practice pressure groups. Further, in some countries,

23 Ibid., pp. 154-155.
pressure groups work more as agents of political parties and this is clearly exemplified by
the Indian Trade Unions working under the direct control of political parties.\textsuperscript{26}

In this context, it is interesting to examine the Western theories on pressure groups
and their applicability to Indian conditions. Diverse explanations are offered as to the origin
and growth of pressure groups in a modern polity. The most important of the modern
pluralists was Arthur F. Bentley who was of the opinion that no interest could be considered
to exist unless manifested itself in group action, he was more concerned of the interest of the
group as a whole rather than individual or national interest.\textsuperscript{27} David Truman’s “disturbance
teory”, envisage people as being stimulated to organise as their relationship with other
groups or institutions undergoes disturbance or alteration. He argued that “the increasing
complexity of our society and the rapidity with which changes have occurred – create
greater intensity as well as frequency of disturbances – have made the association the most
characteristic and pervasive sort of political interest group”.\textsuperscript{28} John C. Calhoun’s theory of
“concurrent majority” envisages men with conflicting and opposite interests’ unite together
to form a majority group to promote the common good of all.\textsuperscript{29} Then comes the “exchange
theory” propounded by Robert Salisbury which postulates that individuals enter into inter-
personal relationships because they derive some benefit from the relationship in exchange.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{26} A.K. Mukhopadhyay: \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 155-156.
Bloomingston, 1949.
\textsuperscript{28} David B. Truman: \textit{The Governmental Process – Political Interest and Public Opinion}, Alfred A. Knopf,
\textsuperscript{29} John C. Calhoun: “A Disquisition on Government and Selections from the Discourse”, in C. Cordon Post
so it seems to be a give and take policy and the success of the group depends on the leader who initiated the formation of the group. Mancur Olson Jr. in his book, The Logic of Collective Action (1968), propounded the “by-product” and “special interest” theories. His theory of collective action revolves around self-interest and personal economic aggrandisement. Self-interest is a human weakness which stems from the fact that each individual has personal goals to achieve apart from the joint goals of the whole group. Thus, here men enter into groups not for the benefit of the group as a whole but for their own individual benefits.

Bentley’s group theory has been criticised on the ground that the omission of individual interest and national interest cuts at the very root of the conception of what is considered today ‘the modern society’. Truman’s theory is criticised on the ground that it neglects individual and national interest, however, on the whole, the theory is considered to be practical and will remain valid because the “disturbance” factors takes place more often than visualised, especially, in this age of discoveries, technology, wars, social upheavals, etc. However, Calhoun’s theory based on numerical majority seldom succeeds, for example, government based on numerical majority seldom lasts long, such as, the coalition Government of Meghalaya as observed in the recent years, for example, the Lapang led MUA Government lasted for few days, with effect from 10th March 2008 to 19th March 2008 and then came the MPA Government with effect from 19th March 2008 to 19th March 2009. Salisbury’s theory is criticised on the ground that the leader can abuse the powers vested in

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him and this can lead to widespread corruption, immorality and subversion. Olson’s theory is criticised on the ground that he did not delve into the formation of groups and is not clear on the phenomenon of lobbying. However, his theory is very much applicable to the modern times, especially to smaller groups.\textsuperscript{32}

Thus, it has been observed that Olson’s special interest theory is more suited to Indian conditions as it moves with the times. Besides, pressure groups are compatible with the inborn instincts of man, his instinct for self-preservation, self-aggrandisement and greed. Thus, Olson’s theory is very much applicable to Indian conditions because of the permit and quota systems prevailing in the country since independence.\textsuperscript{33} Some Western thinkers such as, James Madison, Theodore Lowi, Robert Paul Wolff and E.E. Schattschneider criticise the pressure groups proliferation as bad for the democratic process or good government. They weaken democratic institutions by opposing formal procedure with informal bargaining.\textsuperscript{34} However, all said and done pressure groups is a reality in this modern world of today and its importance as one of the social groups operating in the political process cannot be underestimated.

Pressure groups had been defined in various ways by different scholars. A.F. Bentley, an American political scientist, was the first to emphasise the role of pressure groups. He argued that, the governmental process is essentially a process of the interaction


\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 19-20.

\textsuperscript{34} For details, see \textit{loc. cit.}
of the various groups that operate in politics and, therefore, in order to understand the process of government, one must understand the role of groups in politics.35

D.B. Truman, in his book, *The Governmental Process*, defines pressure groups as:

Any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment of forms of behaviour that are implied in the shared attitudes. The shared attitudes constitute the interest.36

According to V.O. Key Jr., “such groups while they may call themselves non-political are engaged in politics, theirs is a politics of policy in the main”. He stressed on the political character of the pressure group.37 Another scholar H. Zeigler defines it as, “an organised aggregate which seeks to influence the context of governmental decisions without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities”.38 F.F. Castle defines it as:

Any group attempting to bring about political change whether through government activity or not and which is not a political party in the sense of being represented at that particular time, in the legislative body.39

Summing up the definitions given by a number of Western scholars, Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay, an Indian scholar, observes that

A pressure group is a group that has a clearly identifiable formal structure where the members are linked to each other in terms of their common attitude or interest and it seeks to influence the process of public decision-making.\(^\text{40}\)

According to C.N. Somarajan, another Indian scholar, pressure group is, “a group organised for promoting the interests of its members by influencing the government without being part of it”.\(^\text{41}\)

Another Indian scholar, Babulal Fadia, is of the opinion that, “pressure groups are interest groups as well as influence groups, they are private associations formed to influence public policy”.\(^\text{42}\)

From the various definitions given by the different scholars, we can refer to the term pressure group as any interest group whose members share common interests and attitudes and collectively work together to realise their particularistic interest, by pressurising the Government to make policies favourable to their interests. It appears, therefore, that pressure group signifies the existence of a group life and the people who form this group have shared

\(^{42}\) Babulal Fadia: Pressure Groups in Indian Politics, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1980.
attitudes. It also seems that pressure groups function within a formal organisation and they attempt to influence the legislature to pass laws in their favour. Last but not the least, the pressure groups make use of pressure tactics to press the Government for conceding to their demands. However, the effectiveness of a pressure group can be judged by the extent of governmental response to its demands.

The nature and characteristic of pressure groups in a society depends mainly upon the governmental structure, its activities and the socio-economic milieu within which a political system has to work. The number of groups and the intensity with which they are able to pursue their objectives depend upon the social legitimisation of group activity and the prospects of fulfilling group demands in a given political system. Ultimately, however, effectiveness of pressure groups depends upon their physical resources such as wealth, membership, etc.\(^{43}\)

Studies of pressure groups were conducted shortly after the end of World War II, in most of the developed parts of the globe, especially in countries whose systems permit relatively free political enquiry and at least tolerate the formation of extra-governmental associations. In the United States, it was after the publication of the book by Truman, that pressure groups were recognised for purposes of research, teaching and analysis of American politics. The organisation and operation of pressure groups are much wider in the United States than in other countries because of the system of Government with its

federalism, separation of powers and checks and balances, prevalent there. Therefore such
groups are considered very vital in the political sphere of the country. In Britain, pressure
groups do exist but are not so influential as their counterparts in the United States of
America. In Britain pressure groups are considered as useful, necessary and inevitable and
regarded as a natural reaction against the growing power of the State. Political role of
pressure groups in dictatorial regimes is almost non-existent. However, the possibility of
their existence cannot be rejected altogether. For example, in today's Pakistan, Islamic
fundamentalist groups are actively engaged in influencing the policies of the military
regime. In an authoritarian system, pressure groups are merely instruments of the State for
securing ends which are state-determined or they may become part of the façade of
government for legitimising decisions. Thus, the role of pressure group seems to differ in
different political systems.

A.K. Mukhopadhyay rightly argues that pressure groups are more of a necessary
feature of highly developed societies that have undergone industrial, technological and
scientific revolutions resulting in a speedy process of urbanisation and education, an
extensive development of communications and inter-dependent and well co-ordinated social
and economic life. The needs and interests of such societies are too many to be handled
adequately by primary groups or political parties alone, and this is what explains the
emergence of pressure groups that look after the host of interests which continue to expand

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their volumes with the further expansion of these societies. Thus, pressure groups are to be found mostly in the Western developed societies. In all the under-developed societies of Asia and Africa, barring a few exceptions like Singapore and Malaysia, few pressure groups are found to be active.\textsuperscript{47}

Although the study of pressure groups started during the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, in India, it is still very much only a modest beginning, for here it does not operate with as much vigour as in advanced and more mature societies. In fact, in India, pressure groups came to acquire prominence in the post independence period only.

At present, a large number of pressure groups exist in the country and play a definite role in politics. However, pressure groups in India have not achieved the same position as they have acquired in Western democratic countries. Moreover, caste, religion, region and language seem to exercise a dominant influence on their functioning. Thus, the pressure groups in India combine in themselves, elements of traditionalism as well as of modernity. The pressure groups in India do not always confine their activities to peaceful lobbying but often take resort to violent means for achieving their objectives. Therefore, it is alleged by the Indian State that some pressure groups have assumed the form of anti-national and destabilising forces in the political life of the country. It is interesting to note that in India, group pressure has been directed towards influencing the administration and implementation of policy rather than towards its formulation. These groups seem to have succeeded in

\textsuperscript{47} A.K. Mukhopadhyay: \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 169-170.
forestalling certain government actions and in modifying policy rather than in initiating it. For example, in the State of Meghalaya, the State Government in October 1998 raised the age of superannuation of State Government Employees from 58 to 60 years which came into force from 25th September 1998. However, this order was opposed by the pressure groups, especially, the student and youth organisations which pressurised the Government to revoke it. Ultimately, in December 1999, the State Government had to concede to this pressure and passed an order to reduce the age of superannuation of State Government Employees from 60 to 58 years and this came into force from 31st March 2000. This trend is also noticed in Kerala politics where the powerful interest groups try to influence the execution of policy rather than its formation. In fact, the pressure groups in Kerala are viewed as a determinant factor in the socio-economic life of the State. In Rajasthan the trend of influencing the Government policy is also seen. For example, it was under the pressures of Rajasthan University and College Teachers Association (RUCTA) that the State Government agreed to give UGC pay scales to the College and University Teachers in 1977. Again, the State Government agreed to implement the pay-scales as recommended by Beri Commission for its employees under the pressure of the Employees Association in 1982. In Rajasthan, pressure groups, such as, Kshatriya Mahasabha and Kisan Sabha are considered as important pressure groups in the politics of Rajasthan. Other important associational pressure groups in State politics are trade unions, business organisations, peasant organisations, student organisations, Government Employees Associations, etc. In this context, Myron Weiner

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51 Ibid., pp. 206-207.
points out that the organised groups in influencing the administration rather than the formulation of policy can create dissonance between policy making and policy implementation. This prevents progress and the speed with which goals of a Government can be fulfilled.\footnote{For details see, A.S. Narang: Indian Government and Politics, Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, 1985.}

In Orissa, an interest group viz., the Kendu leaf traders seems to play an important role in influencing the politics of the State.\footnote{Fadia, op.cit., p. 145.} Pressure groups in West Bengal are a form of linkage and means of communication between the masses and the elite.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 289-291.} The student and youth organisations in West Bengal seem to play an important role in State politics.

In India, though most pressure groups lack the kind of maturity and influence that have been acquired by groups in the Western developed societies, it appears that student and youth organisations have the potential to play an important role in the politics of the country as a whole. Student organisations can be described as the brilliant instances of anomic groups. The history of such organisations dates back to the pre-independence period. In the 1920's, a student organisation was formed in Punjab under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai. This organisation played its part in the Non-violent, Non-Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movements of Mahatma Gandhi. In the same year, an All Bengal Students' Association was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru. The Communist Party established their All India Students' Federation in 1936 and this Federation supported the war efforts of the
British Government. The Congress, on the other hand, established another organisation in 1945 known as the All India Students’ Union. This Union took part in the Quit India Movement and made very heavy sacrifices. However, in 1950, it was decided by the Congress leadership to depoliticise the students and, therefore, dissolved the organisation. Thereafter, the National Union of Students came into being. Even this was later disbanded and another body called Youth Congress came into being and this organisation exists even today. At present, the National Students’ Union of India (NSUI) is a student organisation affiliated to the Congress and is operating as one of the pressure groups in the country.

Student organisations are only one among a multiplicity of pressure groups operating in India. The students do not form a distinct class in an economic or professional sense but are mostly mere adjunct of various political parties which use them to further their political or factional interests. For example, in West Bengal, all political parties have student wings at Calcutta University, such as, Chhatra Parishad, Students Federation of India (SFI), etc. In recent years, some student groups in India have succeeded in gaining considerable political mileage by not only emerging as receptive and hegemonic sections of the intelligentsia, but have even transcended their role as pressure groups by taking the shape of full fledged political parties. For example, the agitation led by the All Assam Students’ Union in collaboration with the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad ultimately culminated in the formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) which captured political power in the state under the leadership of some prominent student leaders. This seems to be a unique phenomenon in the political life of the country. Thus, it appears that in developing societies, student
activism has at times, brought down the government and succeeded in forcing the government to adopt policies perceived by the students to be conducive to their interests, such as, establishment of an agricultural university, transfer of a principal (of a government college), concessions in fees, better hostel facilities, etc.^^

It may be observed further that students take up both campus oriented issues as well as societal ones. What starts as a pressure on academic authorities slowly tends to build up as a confrontation with the government to meet their grievances and demands and this led the students to act as pressure groups. For example, in Gujarat in 1973-74, the students of C.D. Engineering College of Gujarat University started an agitation initially against the mess bills in the college hostels and later it developed into a widespread agitation against price rise and corruption and ultimately led to toppling of the Government. Thus, it appears that student organisations play a major role as agents of social change and political development. Moreover, it is seen that scholarly interest in the role of students in politics has grown immensely since the sixties, thus, reflecting the political importance of students in many countries.

The role of students in politics is becoming so increasingly important that as Lipset stated, it would be an error to ignore students in any effort to analyse the future of politics, whether domestic or international scene.^^ Myron Weiner, in his Politics of Scarcity, also

^^^^V M Sirsikar, A Survey of Research in Political Science, Vol 1, Political System A Project sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research, Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1979, p 94

^^^^S M Lipset “The Possible Effects of Student Activism on International Politics”, in S M Lipset and P G Altbach (eds), Students in Revolt, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p 521
treats the students as pressure groups.\textsuperscript{57} V.M. Sirsikar, an Indian scholar, is of the opinion that the students do exert considerable pressure on the policy makers by their protests. Sometimes, these become violent and destructive of public property. However, in most cases, the students have succeeding in forcing the government to a desired policy,\textsuperscript{58} for example, in January 1965, students in Madras led an anti-Hindi language agitation against the Government's policy to introduce Hindi language as the national language and ultimately succeeded in influencing the policy of the Government.

In this context, it has been observed that the Student Union since the 1990s are referred to as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) in newspapers and journals in Meghalaya. A point to be noted here is that NGOs are totally different from a student union. It is a non-profit, voluntary citizen's group which is organised on a local, national or international level. NGOs do not promote a particular section of the society but are organised around specific issues, such as, human rights, health, environment, etc. which affects the whole of humanity, whereas, the student union on the other hand, tries to promote the students just as the trade union tries to promote the working class, to provide them with the best possible working conditions and wages. A point to be noted is that, both student union and trade union becomes pressure groups when they try to influence the policy decision of the Government for their own respective advantage.

\textsuperscript{57} Myron Weiner: \textit{The Politics of Scarcity}, Chicago, 1962.
\textsuperscript{58} V.M. Sirsikar: \textit{loc.cit.}, p. 94.
Apart from student organisations, there are youth organisations which also constitute an important category of pressure groups operating in the country today. The members are mostly young people drawn from all sections of society including students. The youth seem to play a significant role in the politics of the State and this can be traced back in history. In fact, all through modern history and particularly since the 19th century, participation of young people in mass movements has been very common. For example, in the 19th century, when most of the states had seen formal education and the introduction of a political system requiring the abilities of reading and writing, the newly educated young people found themselves more equipped to participate in politics than their illiterate elders. This newly emerging educated elite found their eager supporters among the high school and college students. History of the Assamese Students' Literary Club, Asom Chatra Sanmilan and the Jorhat Sarbojanik Sabha is illustrative of this trend.\(^5\) Youth plays a significant role in the social and economic development of a society. It may be observed that with the passage of time and development and modernisation in science and technology, a gap has occurred between the older and the younger generation and this has created a situation in which the youth feel that they can no longer tolerate the faults of their elders and thus confront them on various societal issues.\(^6\) An example may be cited from the history of militant nationalist movement in India, when a new and younger generation was coming up, a generation that had no faith in the moderate policies followed by the Congress so far and agitated for more dynamic techniques of political struggle. This led in formation of youth organisations which


act as pressure groups pressurising the Government on various issues concerning the
development of the society as a whole. Moreover, the youth constitute a receptive section of
the intelligentsia in every society and they tend to exercise a hegemonic influence on the rest
of the society by trying to thrust their own ideas on other sections of the society. They seem
to be shaping the consciousness of a whole society.\footnote{A.K. Baruah: \textit{op.cit.}, p. 15.} It is also seen that youth movement
was prevalent in Central Europe as early as in the early part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and this
indicated the dissatisfaction and restlessness of the youth and it is in such movements that
the social dynamics of modern youth find its fullest expression.\footnote{Bibhash Dhar: "Youth Movement – A Symbol of Modernisation in Arunachal Pradesh", in M.N. Karma
(ed.), \textit{Social Movements in North-East India}, Indus Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1998, p. 113.} In view of these
developments, it may be argued that the youth are likely to play an important role in the
politics of the State. In India, youth organisations, such as, Yuva Congress, Bharatiya Yuva
Morch\a, etc. are playing a significant role in Indian politics. There are a number of youth
organisations operating in the State of Meghalaya today, for example, the Federation of
Khasi, Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP), Synjuk Seng Samla Shnong (SSSS), etc.
According to Pascal Malngiang, ‘youth’ is a generic term and comprises both of students
and non-students. It has been observed that in matters connected with student movements in
the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, the non-student youths have played an active role and have
rendered support to the activities of the various student groups. In fact, the success of the
various agitations led by the students is due to the support extended by such youth groups of
various localities.\footnote{Pascal Malngiang: \textit{Students and Politics in Meghalaya}, Seven Huts Enterprise, Shillong, 1994, p. 57.} This indicates the important role played by the youth organisations in
alliance with student organisation in modern society.
By and large, student and youth organisations have been studied interchangeably. However, there is a difference between them, students constitute a minority of the group called youth, they constitute those youths studying in colleges and universities whereas the youth constitute all members of the society on the basis of age criteria. Beyond this age criteria, there is nothing in common amongst them. They may be illiterate or literate, employed or unemployed, married or unmarried. They may also have a closer affinity with other groups in the society having different labels. Another point of difference is that the youth as a group is more amorphous and poorly organised as compared to student groups who are designated and accepted as a group in the context of their college and university. The youth are available as a human resource for other groups such as political parties, trade unions, etc. For example, the Youth Congress is the youth body of the Congress Party. However, what is significant is that the students as well as the youth constitute a heterogeneous group in terms of their socio-economic and occupational backgrounds. It is to be noted that in India, as yet, pressure group politics has not attained the same level as its counterpart in the United States. Of course, this does not mean that pressures are not exerted on public policy by groups and individuals. Pressures, especially by student and youth organisations are definitely exerted on public policy as seen in the examples cited above.

In the light of the above discussion on a conceptual understanding of pressure groups, we propose to take up a study of student organisations as pressure groups in Meghalaya in the next chapter.

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