

Centre for Distance & Online Education

**UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU
JAMMU**



**SELF LEARNING MATERIAL
BA SEMESTER –III**

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSE NO. PS- 301

**DR. HINA S. ABROL
COURSE COORDINATOR**

Printed & Published on behalf of the Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Jammu by the Director, CDOE, University of Jammu, Jammu.

[http :/www.distanceeducationju.in](http://www.distanceeducationju.in)

WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Course Writers

Dr. V Nagendra Rao

Dr. A Lalitha

Perminder Kour

Diwakar Singh

Mukesh Sharma

Sushma Mahajan

Amit Kumar Sharma

Editing & Proof Reading

Dr. Mamta Sharma

© Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Jammu, Jammu, 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the CDOE, University of Jammu.

The script writer shall be responsible for the lesson/script submitted the CDOE and any plagiarism shall be his/her entire responsibility.

BA POLITICAL SCIENCE

SEMESTER III

Course No. PS- 301

Title Western Political Thought

Duration of Exam 3 Hours

Total Marks 100

Internal 20

External 80

UNIT I PLATO (421 Bc-347-BC)

- 1.1 Concept of Justice; Prevalent Theories of Justice and Plato's Concept of Justice
- 1.2 Concept of Education: Education in Ancient Greece and Platonic Concept of Education
- 1.3 Concept of Communism: Communism of Wives and Children and Property
- 1.4 Concept of Ideal State and Philosopher King

UNIT II ARISTOTLE 348BC-322BC)

- 2.1 Aristotle as Father of Political Science: A Shift From Political Philosophy to Political Science
- 2.2 Aristotle's Views on Household: Criticism of Plato's Concept of Communism and Aristotle's Concept of Slavery
- 2.3 Aristotle's Classification of Government and Concept of Revolution
- 2.4 Aristotle's Best Practicable State: Concept and Characteristics

UNIT III MACHIAVELLI 1469-1527AD)

- 3.1 Renaissance and Its impact on Machiavelli
- 3.2 Machiavelli's Views on Human Nature and Motives- Implications and Evaluation
- 3.3 Machiavelli's Views on Relationship between Ethics and Politics
- 3.4 Machiavelli's Views Regarding Preservation and Extension of State Power

UNIT IV JOHN STUART MILL 1806-1873 AD)

- 4.1 Concept of Liberty, Thought, Expression and Action
- 4.2 Mill's Views on Women Equality
- 4.3 Mill's Views on Representative Government: Proportional Representation and Plural Voting
- 4.4 Relevance of Mill's Ideas on Modern State and Government

Note for Paper Setter

- Section I: It will carry 20 marks. There will be total questions in this section. Students will attempt any five questions. Each questions will be of 4 marks
- Section II: It will consist of 8 questions of which students will have to attempt four questions on the basis of Within Unit Choice. The Upper limit of each question will be 1000 words. Each question will carry 15 marks.

Suggested Readings

Annas, J, An Introduction to Plato's Republic, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981

Aristotle, The Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982

Brian, Nelson, Western Political Thought, Pearson, New Delhi, 2006 Barker,

Ernest, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, London: Methuen, 1906

Sabine, George and Thomas L. Thorson, A History of Political Theory, New Delhi: OUP & IBH, 1973

Jones, W. T., Master of Political Thought: Machiavelli to Bentham: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947

Ten, C. L., Mill on Liberty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980

Wayper, C. L., Teach Yourself Political Thought, Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 2007

Boucher, David, and Kelly, Paul, Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present, New Delhi: OUP, 2009

Plant, Raymond, Modern Political Thought, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Title	Author	Page No
UNIT I	PLATO (421 BC – 347 BC)		
	1.1 Concept of Justice: Prevalent Theories of Justice and Plato's Concept of Justice	Perminder Kour	
	1.2 Concept of Education: Education in Ancient Greece and Platonic Concept of Education	Diwakar Singh	
	1.3 Concept of Communism: Communism of Wives and Children and Property	Diwakar Singh	
	1.4 Concept of Ideal State and Philosopher King	Diwakar Singh	
UNIT II	ARISTOTLE (348 BC – 322 BC)		
	2.1 Aristotle as Father of Political Science: A Shift from Political Philosophy to Political Science	Mukesh Sharma	
	2.2 Aristotle's Views on Household: Criticism of Plato's Concept of Communism and Aristotle's Concept of Slavery	A. Lalitha	
	2.3 Aristotle's Classification of Government and Concept of Revolution	V. Nagendra Rao	
	2.4 Aristotle's Best Practicable State: Concept and Characteristics	V. Nagendra Rao	
UNIT III	MACHIAVELLI (1469 – 1527 AD)		
	3.1 Renaissance and its Impact on Machiavelli	Sushma Mahajan	
	3.2 Machiavelli's Views on Human Nature and Motives – Implications and Evaluation	Diwakar Singh	

	3.3 Machiavelli's Views on Relationship between Ethics and Politics	Diwakar Singh	
	3.4 Machiavelli's Views Regarding Preservation and Extension of State Power	V. Nagendra Rao	

UNIT IV	JOHN STUART MILL (1806 – 1873 AD)		
	4.1 Concept of Liberty, Thought, Expression and Action	Amit Kumar Sharma	
	4.2 Mill's Views on Women Equality	Amit Kumar Sharma	
	4.3 Mill's Views on Representative Government: Proportional Representation and Plural Voting	Mukesh Kumar	
	4.4 Relevance of Mill's Ideas on Modern State and Government	V. Nagendra Rao	

UNIT I: PLATO

In the entire history of political thought no thinker evoked the admiration, reverence and criticism that Plato (428/27-347 BC) did. This outstanding Greek philosopher has left behind many important works, out of which three, the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws* were of perennial interest to all those interested in the history of political ideas. Plato has been generally regarded as the founder of philosophical idealism by virtue of his conviction that there is a universal idea in the world of eternal reality beyond the world of the senses. He was the first to formulate and define political ideas within a larger framework of a philosophical idea of Good.

Plato was born in 428/27 BC in Athens in a distinguished, aristocratic, though not an affluent, family. Plato met Socrates in 407 BC at the age of 20 and since then was under his “hypnotic spell”. He was so influenced by Socrates; it was natural that the trial and execution of Socrates in 399 BC proved to be a turning point in Plato’s life.

In 386 BC Plato established his Academy in Athens, which became a seat of higher learning and intellectual pursuits in Greece for the next one hundred years. By including Mathematics, Geography Philosophy and other disciplines as areas of study, the academy concretised the possibility of a science of knowledge with which one could reform the world. Plato saw in the academy a training school for future philosophic rulers and Aristotle was one of the products of this academy. Teaching in the academy was imparted through lectures, Socratic dialectics and problem-solving situations. For Plato, the search for truth was not through mere instruction and theoretical knowledge, but with the guidance of an advanced mind. Through the academy, Plato kept alive the Socratic legacy. In course of time the academy also became the prototype for subsequent universities and institutions of higher learning. He died in 347 BC while attending the wedding feast of one of his students.

Plato perceived political philosophy as an architectonic science of society, and like Socrates and the Sophists, distinguished the political from the other dimensions of life. Within the European intellectual tradition he conceptualised the disorders and crises of the actual world and presented to his readers a vision of a desirable political order, which till today has fascinated his admirers and detractors. He has

been described as a poet of ideas, a philosopher of beauty and the true founder of the cult of harmonious living.

Plato, along with his disciple Aristotle, has been credited for laying the foundation of Greek political theory on which the Western political tradition rests. These two versatile thinkers between themselves have explored, stated, analysed and covered a wide range of philosophical perspectives and issues. A most fitting tribute has been paid by Whitehead who stated that the entire European philosophical tradition is nothing but a set of footnotes to Plato and Aristotle.

While Plato's admirers have been numerous, he has had his share of critics too, beginning with Aristotle. Most of his recent critics have been in the twentieth century within the liberal tradition. They assailed Plato for his hostility towards progressive, humanitarian and democratic ideals, and regarded him as the philosophical forerunner of modern day totalitarianism, which itself is a twentieth century phenomenon. Paradoxically, the liberals in the nineteenth century were more appreciative of Plato, claiming him to be a liberal of that period.

This entire Unit covers various facets of Plato's philosophy and his concepts. In the first lesson you will study Plato's concept of Justice, in the second you will comprehend Plato's concept of Education, the third will explain you Plato's notions about Communism and the fourth will elaborate Plato's concept of Philosopher King and Ideal State.

SUGGESTED READING FOR THIS UNIT

Dunning, W. A., *A History of Political Theories* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1976).

Foster, Michael B., *Masters of Political Thought*, vol. I, Plato to Machiavelli (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Sabine, George H., *A History of Political Theory* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH 1973).

Suda, J. P., *History of Political Thought* (Meerut: K. Nath & Co., 1975).

Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramashwamy, *A History of Political thought. Plato to Marx*. Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2007.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit I: **PLATO**

1.1 CONCEPT OF JUSTICE: PREVALENT THEORIES OF JUSTICE AND PLATO'S CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

- Shandilya Perminder Kour

STRUCTURE

- 1.1.0 Objectives**
- 1.1.1 Introduction**
- 1.1.2 Meaning and Definitions of Justice**
- 1.1.3 Prevalent Theories of Justice Before Plato**
- 1.1.4 Plato's Criticism of Existing Theories of Justice**
- 1.1.5 Plato's concept of Justice: Three Souls and three Classes**
- 1.1.6 Platonic Justice**
- 1.1.7 Criticism of Platonic Concept of Justice**
- 1.1.8 Let Us Sum up**
- 1.1.9 Exercises**
- 1.1.10 Suggested Readings**

1.1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:-

- introduced to the concept of the Justice in the Ancient Greek society before Plato;
- know about the Prime-Facie Theories of Justice, and Plato's critique of them;

- understand the Plato's division of the society into three classes;
- know about platonic Justice;
- differentiate between the Platonic Justice and Modern Justice.

1.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of justice occupies centre stage both in ethics, and in legal and political philosophy. We apply it to individual actions, to laws, and to public policies, and we think in each case that if they are unjust this is a strong, maybe even conclusive, reason to reject them. Classically, justice was counted as one of the four cardinal virtues (and sometimes as the most important of the four); in modern times John Rawls famously described it as 'the first virtue of social institutions'.

The concept of justice is not static. With the changes in the society, the concept of justice has also changed from time to time. Justice is an evolutionary concept. Hence, in this lesson, you will study how the concept of justice evolved and practised during the Greek period and how Plato examined it.

1.1.2 MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF JUSTICE

Broadly speaking, justice means the fulfilment of the legitimate expectation of the individual under laws and to assure him the benefit promised therein. Justice tries to reconcile the individual rights with the social good. The concept of justice is related to dealings amongst human beings. It emphasises is on the concept of equality. It requires that no discrimination should be made among the various members of the society.

To define justice it is very essential to refer to the root idea of the word "*Jus*" meaning joining or fitting. Thus, justice carries the meaning of cementing and joining up human beings together. The values of liberty equality and fraternity are important in any system of law and justice. These values exist in different proportions and there are conflicts between them too. Therefore, there is need for a constant process of adjustment between the conflicting claims of these

values in a society. In this way justice assumes the key role of an adjuster and synthesiser. It reconciles the claims of one person with another.

1.1.3 PREVALENT THEORIES OF JUSTICE BEFORE PLATO

In ancient Greek literature the concept of *dikaion* was used to describe a just person. From this emerged the general concept of *dikaiosune*, or justice, as a virtue that might be applied to a political society. The issue of what does and does not qualify as just could logically lead to controversy regarding the origin of justice, as well as that concerning its essence. Perhaps an effective aid to appreciating the power of their thought is to view it in the context of the teachings of the Sophists, those itinerant teachers of fifth-century ancient Greece who tried to pass themselves off as “wise” men. Sophists are known for their relativism and their skepticism. The first important one, Protagoras, captures the former with his famous saying, “Man is the measure of all things—of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not”; and he speaks to the latter with a declaration of agnosticism regarding the existence of divinities. Gorgias is remembered for a striking three-part statement of skepticism, holding that nothing really exists, that, even if something did exist, we could not grasp it, and that, even if we could grasp something real, we could never express it to anyone else. If all values are subjective and/or unknowable, then what counts as just gets reduced to a matter of shifting opinion. We can easily anticipate how readily Sophists would apply such relativism and skepticism to justice. For example, Thrasymachus is supposed to have said that there must not be any gods who care about us humans because, while justice is our greatest good, men commonly get away with injustice. But the most significant Sophist statement regarding justice arguably comes from Antiphon, who employs the characteristic distinction between custom (*nomos*) and nature (*physis*) with devastating effect. He claims that the laws of justice, matters of convention, should be obeyed when other people are observing us and may hold us accountable; but, otherwise, we should follow the demands of nature. The laws of justice, extrinsically derived, presumably involve serving the good of others, the demands of nature, which are internal, serving self-interest. He even suggests that obeying the laws of

justice often renders us helpless victims of those who do not. If there is any such objective value as natural justice, then it is reasonable for us to attempt a rational understanding of it. On the other hand, if justice is merely a construction of customary agreement, then such a quest is doomed to frustration and failure. With this as a backdrop, we should be able to see what motivated Plato to seek a strong alternative.

1.1.4 PLATO'S CRITICISM OF EXISTING THEORIES OF JUSTICE

Plato in his *Republic* explained the prima facie theories of Justice which were prevailing during his times. He adopted a negative method in defining justice. He firstly rejected these theories of justice and then developed his concept of Justice. The following are the prima facie theories of Justice.

1.1.4.1 THE THEORY OF CEPHALUS – TRADITIONALISM

Cephalus – a wealthy businessman believed in the concept of traditional morality. For him, justice was in speaking the truth and paying your debts. His son Polemarchus who continued the discussion in the *Republic* still further argued that justice should be administered in such a way that good is done to the friends and harm to the enemies. Justice is an art and that few alone can practice that.

Criticism Plato rejected this theory on the following grounds:-

1. If justice is an art then there is much scope in its administration in a way that it can be used in a selfish way for promoting self interests.
2. If justice gives benefit to friends only then what is the standard of deciding whether a particular person is a friend or a foe.
3. It is against the concept of morality to do good to one's friend & to evil to one's enemy.
4. It is very difficult to know that one's friend may be the friend in appearance. Actually he may be enemy.

1.1.4.2 THE THEORY OF THRASYMACHUS: RADICALISM

Thrasymachus represents the new and critical views of the later fifth century. He is treated by Plato as the spokesman of the radical Sophists.

Thrasymachus defines justice as the interest of the stronger. Might is right; a man ought to do what he can do and deserves what he can get.

The second proposition of Thrasymachus is that injustice is better than justice. Justice means satisfaction of the desires of the rulers alone that were few whereas injustice satisfied many and the masses at large. Therefore, it was proper to be unjust so as to satisfy all rather than to become just for the satisfaction of a few alone.

Criticism Plato has also criticized Radicalism on the following grounds:-

1. This justice preaches extreme individualism. It implies that everyone stands for his selfish ends alone and not for others.
2. Such a concept – the interest of stronger – can never be a true principle of society. If this principle of extreme individualism is adopted, it will divide the society into pieces. Society cannot exist under such a principle of justice.
3. According to Plato, justice is always better than injustice. A just man is wiser, stronger and happier than an unjust man.

1.1.4.3 THE THEORY OF GLAUCON: PRAGMATISM

Glaucon was the chief exponent of this theory. For him, justice is not something natural or permanent but it is something based on conventions and customs and artificial. He believed that justice was the child of fear and there had been no fear of oppression at the hands of strong. It is something conventional and not based on any fundamental laws or principles.

Criticism: Glaucon's theory is also criticized on the ground that it is wrong to believe that justice is the product of convention or that it is something external. But it is something internal and it is the result of virtue.

1.1.5 PLATO'S CONCEPT OF JUSTICE: THREE SOULS AND THREE CLASSES.

Plato explained his arguments for differing individual capacities with the help of the theory of three classes and three souls. He borrowed this idea from Pythagoras. He pointed out that every human soul had three qualities – rationality, spirit and appetite, with justice as the fourth virtue, architectonic in nature, balancing and harmonizing the other three qualities.

In each soul, one of these qualities would be the predominant faculty. Individuals in whom the rational faculty was predominant would constitute the ruling class, and the virtue of such a soul was wisdom. This soul, a lover of learning, had the power to comprehend the Idea of Good. Those in whom spirit was the predominant quality were the auxiliaries or warriors, and the virtue of such souls was courage, implying the ability to hold on to one's convictions and beliefs in adverse times. Together, the rulers and soldiers would constitute the guardian class. Socrates compared a spirited or thymotic individual to a watchdog, capable of great bravery, public spirit and anger while fighting strangers in defence of one's city. It indicated the willingness to sacrifice one's material desires for the sake of the common good. Such a soul was a lover of honour and victory. It was basically a political virtue necessary for the survival of a community and ought to be kept under control.

Individuals whose souls were appetitive exhibited a fondness for material things. They were lover of gain and money. They were the artisans, the producing class. The quality for such an appetitive soul was temperance, though Plato did not see temperance as an exclusive quality of the artisan class. A diagrammatic representation of Plato's conception would be as follows:-

Virtue	Soul	Class
Wisdom	Rational	Rulers (Philosopher-King)
Courage	Spirited	Soldiers
Temperance	Appetitive	Artisans

Though Plato took into account the role of spirit and appetite in human

behaviour, he was convinced that reason must ultimately control and direct emotions and passions. This explained why the rational soul embodied in the philosopher ruler would govern.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What is Thrasymachus definition of Justice ?

2. What role does the tripartite soul play in Plato's theory of Justice?

1.1.6 PLATONIC JUSTICE

Plato gave great importance to the concept of Justice. Justice in the individual meant that every individual was assigned a place in society according to one's natural aptitudes and skills. In other words, justice meant departmental excellence. Moreover, justice was psychic harmony, balancing and ordering the three elements in accordance with the dominant one. For Plato, restraint was the key to proper development and societal harmony.

Principles of Justice – Plato based his justice on the following main principles–

1. That non-interference in the affairs of others.
2. Functional specialization should be established in the society.
3. Justice should harmonize wisdom, courage and temperance. In other words, every citizen in the state should perform, according to his abilities and capacities, duties assigned to him.
4. Justice should be collective. He doesn't think of individual rights but in

terms of his duties. If everyone performed duties properly then alone right could automatically follow.

5. His concept of Justice means rendering of service to community as a whole.
6. His justice is not legal but universal

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Elaborate the Cephalus theory of Justice.

2. Examine Plato's concept of Justice?

1.1.7 CRITICISM OF PLATONIC CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

1. His concept of Justice believes that it is only proper performance of duties by each individual. It is something moral and not legal. But in reality, law is based in legal forces and not morality.

2. His justice can be practicable only in the city – states but not in the modern states.
3. Every individual possesses three qualities namely ‘reason’, ‘spirit’ and ‘appetite’. But Plato provides for the development of only one quality. He allows every individual to develop 1/3 of his qualities leaving remaining 2/3 faculties undeveloped, which is both undesirable and unwanted.
4. According to his concept of justice, ‘Philosopher-king’ is himself the embodiment of Justice. He should not be bound by any laws and given absolute powers to administer justice. But he forgets that absolute power in the hands of few persons is bound to lead towards corruption and misuse of power.
5. His concept of justice is not humanitarian but only totalitarian because it establishes certain privileges for a class of people. In it, one class has been kept above the laws of the land while the others have been asked to follow these rules. Such type of atmosphere is bound to create class disturbances in the society.
6. Justice should be uniform and universal. But Platonic justice has special inclination for philosopher – king.
7. It has been said that his concept of Justice is static. It does not move with the moving times and is, thus, bound to become outdated with the passage of time.

1.1.8 LET US SUM UP

An ideal state for Plato possessed the four Cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, discipline and justice. Justice in the state meant that the three social classes performed the deliberative and governing, defence, and production, without interfering with the functions of the others. Justice was “one class, one duty; and one man, one work.” He drew a parallel between the three social classes and the three elements of human soul. Each soul had a corresponding social

class. A just society recognized and educated every individual talent according to the dominant element in one's soul, and ordered these elements into coherent classes. For Plato, the state was the Ideal, of which justice was the reality. Justice was the principle on which the state had to be founded and a contribution made towards the excellence of the city.

1.1.9 EXERCISES

1. Define the concept of Justice?
2. Why was Plato not satisfied with the prevailing political conditions of Athens?
3. Name the Prima Facie theories of Justice.
4. Write a short – note on theory of Traditionalism.
5. Name three classes and three souls as given by Plato.
6. Write a short note on Plato's division of society.
7. Write a brief note on Platonic Justice.

1.1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 &2 ,Meerut, K.Nath&CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit I: **PLATO**

1.2 CONCEPT OF EDUCATION: EDUCATION IN ANCIENT GREECE AND PLATONIC CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Diwakar Singh

STRUCTURE:

- 1.2.0 Objectives**
- 1.2.1 Introduction**
- 1.2.2 Education in Ancient Greece**
- 1.2.3 Plato's Concept of Education**
- 1.2.4 Plato's Educational Method**
- 1.2.5 Educational Curriculum**
 - 1.2.5.1 Elementary Education
 - 1.2.5.2 Higher Education
- 1.2.6 Evaluation of Plato's Theory of Education**
- 1.2.7 Let Us Sum Up**
- 1.2.7 Exercises**
- 1.2.8 Suggested Readings**

1.2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- understand the how the educational system evolved in Ancient Greek society;

- know Plato's concept of Education and his educational method;
- comprehend his division of educational system and its curriculum;
- critically evaluate Plato's theory of education.

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Greek education was a huge role in ancient Greek life since the founding of the Poleis, until the Hellenistic and Roman period. From the origin of education in the Homeric and the Aristocratic tradition, Greek education infinitely democratized in the 5th century BC. There were two forms of education in Ancient Greece: formal and informal. Formal Greek education was principally for men, and wasn't offered to slaves, manual laborers, or women. In some Poleis, laws were passed to forbid the education of slaves. A young lady would receive informal education from her mother, who taught her how to maintain a household, to serve her father, and later in life-her husband.

Greek education focused mainly on training an "entire person", which include education of the mind, body, and imagination. The precise purposes of Greek education diverged from polis to polis. The Spartans placed a high importance on military training, while the Athenians, by tradition, gave more attention to music, literature, dance, and later also to the natural sciences, which included biology and chemistry, as well as philosophy, rhetoric, and sophistry-the art of presenting an argument using deception and reason to convince the public to agree with a certain point of view. The Spartans also taught music and dance, but with the purpose of enhancing their manoeuvrability as soldiers.

1.2.2 EDUCATION IN ANCIENT GREECE

Athens was the main educational, intellectual and cultural centre of Ancient Greece. The main purpose of education in Ancient Athens was to make citizens trained in the arts, and to prepare them for both peace and war. It was aimed at the cultivation of the students' physical, mental, and moral qualities. From Athens we get the motto: A sound mind in a sound body. All schools were very small private schools, and education was very valued.

The type of education provided by the ancient Greeks to their children and youths went through various phases in keeping with the demands of the city-state. Historians of education distinguish between the old and the new education, the former being thoroughly practical and aimed directly at preparing the boy for his adult activities as a member of the state, while the latter was the inevitable result of the profound economic and political changes the Athenian state underwent during the first half of the Fifth Century B.C.

Indeed before this time the Athenians had been mainly an agricultural community, however the great extension of trade following on Themistocles' endeavour to make Athens the greatest maritime power in Greece called into being a new class of wealthy merchants, to dispute the claims of the landed aristocracy who had previously been the rulers. The final outcome of this conflict was the establishment of a democracy in which every free-born citizen – whether rich or poor – had an equal share. Then ensued the life-and-death struggle with Persia, from which Athens emerged with great glory and with added power. With doubtful wisdom and justice, she seized the opportunity to convert the league of allied states, with whose help the victory had been won, into an empire on which she imposed her will. Incidentally this extension of her power opened up fresh chances for ambitious young men, and there arose a demand for an education to fit them for the new conditions, which was quickly met by the appearance of a new class of teachers called Sophists. These professed themselves able to supply the needed education. Concurrently the rapid increase in wealth and political influence was bringing about far-reaching changes in the temper and habits of the people. The simple life of the centuries before Salamis – where the naval battle was won over Persia in 480 B.C., thereby establishing Athenian maritime supremacy - quickly disappeared and a more luxurious fashion took its place.

In the early days of Athenian history (800 B.C.) ideas concerning education were in some respects similar to those in Sparta, albeit less extreme. Education was still largely physical but with a greater emphasis placed on music, poetry and general literacy. From 400 B.C. Athenian culture developed significantly and this influenced their educational thinking and practice. Prior to this, the aim

of Greek education was a simple one: to respond to specific needs, for example those of a militarist state, as in Sparta. The warrior ideal determined the type of education required: physically fit and militarily proficient youths trained in the most physically and morally demanding ways. The ideal sought was a combination of the man of action and the man of wisdom, at any rate such wisdom as was made up of homely virtues as learnt in the family circle and at the hands of the elders. Later, the teachings of such poets as Hesiod were resorted to, but the emphasis changed very little, if at all. 'Husbandry, ploughing and sowing, rural economy, homely morality, labour and thrift', made up the contemporary educational scheme which, it should be stressed, was not divorced from conduct and daily life.

1.2.3 PLATO'S CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Plato regards education as a social process by which the units of society become instinct with social consciousness and learn to fulfil all social demands. It is the agency by which the individual is adjusted to society and learns to perform the duties of his station unselfishly. In laying stress on the social aspect of education, Plato differed fundamentally from the Sophists who regarded it as a way of individual success than of contributing to common good and social righteousness. Plato's aim of education is not to develop the faculties of the individual but to make him a suitable instrument in the service of the state. This is why Plato makes education the major responsibility of the state and does not entrust it to private agencies.

Plato however does not ignore the individual aspect of education. For him it is not only the social process by which individual is adjusted to the society; it is at the same time a process by which he realises truth. Its object is to turn the eye of the soul to the light to enable the individual to contemplate Reality which lies behind the world of sense. The two aspects of education, as a way of social righteousness and as a way of truth, are blended in an exquisite whole in the theory of Plato.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

- 1 Explain the education practiced in Athens during Ancient Greek period.

- 2 Why did Plato believed education should be controlled by the state.

1.2.4 PLATO'S EDUCATIONAL METHOD

The method and stages of education advocated by Plato follow his conception of the human soul as an initiative thing and as acting in different ways at different stages of its growth. By describing it as initiative thing, he means that it naturally assimilates itself to its surroundings. For Plato education consists in surrounding the soul with objects in whose likeness one wants it to grow.

The conception that the soul is an initiative thing does not mean that it is passive; on the contrary, Plato regards it as essentially active. The function of education is not to put ideas in knowledge into the soul; it is rather to draw out the best things that are latent in it by directing it to the right object. The problem of education is to give the soul right surroundings. Since the soul reacts to its environment at all stages of its developments, education is the matter of the life-time. A person is being educated not only when he is young but also when he matures and grows old. The early education thus becomes education through fancy and imagination; character is trained through emotions at this stage. When the individual becomes an adolescent and mature the soul is reached through reason; here education means the development of the understanding through sciences and philosophy.

The earlier education is predominantly social in character; its aim is preparation of the citizens for the proper discharge of their duties. During the later stage education becomes more a way of truth; its social aspect no longer remains prominent. Because of its vital importance Plato devotes great attention to the earlier education.

Another feature of Plato's educational theory deserves the mention. He insists upon a system of state controlled compulsory education. Since it is the positive means by which the rulers mould the character of the individuals and generate in him an unselfish devotion to duty. It is evident that the state cannot leave it to private agencies but must direct and control it itself for the some reason it must be made compulsory for all the citizens.

Plato makes another innovation upon the current Athenian practices; he is

for giving the same type of education to both boys and girls. The women play the same role in the state as men do and are eligible to hold the same office as that of men.

Finally, Plato makes no reference to the producing class in his scheme of elementary education. He was almost exclusively preoccupied with the two upper classes, the warriors or auxiliaries and the rulers or guardians. Plato devised the scheme of education with the purpose of producing the proper type of the ruling class; he therefore ignored the third great class of producers of wealth.

1.2.5 EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

Plato divides the education of the citizen into two main stages: (1) Elementary; and (2) Higher. Elementary education for the first ten years is the teaching of the youth. It is also beginning of the monetary class. Higher education is the beginning of the middle ages. It is also the beginning of the ruling class of guardians. The first is the beginning of character through emotions; the second is the training of understanding through science and philosophy.

1.2.5.1 ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Plato adopted some features of the Athenian and some of the Spartan system and combines them in a new whole. In conformity with the Athenian tradition, Plato thought that the best education would be music for the soul or mind and gymnastic for the body. Music included the study and interpretation of literary masterpieces, poetry, singing and playing. Similarly the meaning of gymnastic was widened to include body exercise, diet and medicine. Both types of training are a means to the features of character; they have a moral purpose. Gymnastics is the training of the body and a preparation for the vocation of the warrior and thus a way of social training. Plato recommends a reform of poetry and music; he subjects both of them to a severe state censorship. In short, in order to preserve the purity of their moral message, both literature and music must be submitted to regime of that state and made simple.

Many scholars criticise Plato for advocating state censorship of the poets and the interests; they condemn such a control as it destroys the free play of the artistic impulse.

1.2.5.2 HIGHER EDUCATION

The elementary education up to the age of eighteen outlined above is to be followed by a two years course of military training. At the end of training there is a weeding out process through theoretical and practical examination. Those who fail are given the economic work of the society—business clerks, workers and farmers. The successful candidates who show aptitude for scientific studies are given higher education. *The higher education aims at to train the selected few to become the guardians of the state.* It is to commence at the age of twenty and to continue for ten years. Just as the special qualification of the warrior class is courage, the special virtue of the ruling class is wisdom. The curriculum of the higher studies is designed with the aim of making the recipients wise. This is sought to be achieved through the study of sciences like mathematics and astronomy known at that time. After the ten years course at the age of thirty, there is a second elimination test. Those who are eliminated are given the work of auxiliary and executive aids and military officers of the city-state. To successful candidates, there is a study of dialectic which lasts for five years. Dialectic is instrument by which idea of good is being purchased to ruling class. The idea of the good occupies the same position in Platonism as notion of absolute Brahman has in Vedanta.

The higher education is designed to produce the Philosopher King and guardians for the highest positions in the state. According to Sabine it constitutes the most original as well as the most characteristic proposal in the republic.

1.2.6 EVALUATION OF PLATO'S THEORY OF EDUCATION

Plato's scheme of education is based upon the principle of equal opportunity to all. The women are also entitled to get the education, so that they

may employ their capabilities in the service of society. The education aims at the all round development of human personality. Its purpose is to produce ideal type citizens having consciousness of their social obligations and the rulers.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What are the main stages of Plato's educational curriculum.

2. Critically examine the Plato's theory of education.

1.2.7 LET US SUM UP

Plato's system of education is mainly meant for administrators and rulers, a number of individuals are not given chance to enjoy the benefits of a free and compulsory education. It is unjust and arbitrary for the producing classes as they are not given the right for to get education. Plato puts more emphasis on mathematics and minimises the importance of literature. His aim is to produce an ideal philosopher and not an ideal man of action. He extends the period of education to thirty five years which is a life long process of education. It will be difficult for guardians to maintain their efficiency as desired by Plato.

1.2.8 EXERCISES

1. Briefly state the education practiced in Athens during ancient Greek period.
2. State the theory of Education as advocated by Plato.
3. "Plato's Republic is not a work of politics but the finest treatise on education that has even been written". (Rousseau). Explain and discuss.

4. Discuss the main principles of Plato's theory of Education.
5. "In Education Plato sees the only true way to permanent stability of the state".
Elucidate and discuss.

1.2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, *A History of Political Thought: Plato to Marx*, New Delhi: PHI Learning, 2011

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K.Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Vol 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

1.3 CONCEPT OF COMMUNISM: COMMUNISM OF WIVES AND CHILDREN AND PROPERTY

Diwakar Singh

STRUCTURE

1.3.0 Objectives

1.3.1 Introduction

1.3.2 Communism of Property

1.3.2.1 Preparing the guardians

1.3.2.2 Life of Guardians

1.3.2.3 Separation of political and economic power

1.3.2.4 No material possession of guardians

1.3.3 Evaluation

1.3.4 Difference between Platonic Communism and Modern Communism

1.3.5 Plato's Arguments for Abolition of Family

1.3.6 Evaluation of Communism of Women

1.3.6.1 Why the Abolition of Family life

1.3.7 Let Us Sum Up

1.3.8 Exercises

1.3.9 Suggested Readings

1.3. 0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to understand;

- Plato's Concept of Communism of Property;
- Difference between Platonic Communism and Modern Communism
- Plato's notion of abolition of family
- Critical evaluation of Plato's concept of communism of wives

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Plato's theory of communism was certainly a corollary of his conception of justice. He believed that without communism there would be clash of ideas and interests between reason and appetite. Plato's communism is based on the premise that property, family instincts and private interests would distract man's attention from his obligations to the community.

He strongly opined that family and property are always impediments not only to philosopher king, but also to a commoner in his discharge of duties. As property and family relationships seemed to be the main source of dissension in the society, Plato stated that neither of them must be given any recognition in an ideal state. Therefore, a sort of communism of family and property was essential to offset the consequences of Plato's design of ideal state.

Plato introduced a new social order based on communism of women and communism of property for two upper classes – the warriors and rulers, who are devoted by a single name – guardians. The system of communism is recommended by way of caution.

Plato's communism is of two forms, viz., the abolition of private property, which included house, land, money, etc., and the second, the abolition of family, through the abolition of these two, Plato attempted to create a new social order wherein the ruling class surrendered both family and private property and embraced a system of communism. This practice of communism is only meant for the ruling class and the guardian class.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What does Plato mean by the Communism of wives, and how is it supposed to function among the guardian class?

2. In what ways Plato's communism of wives and children similar to or different from modern communism?

1.3.2 COMMUNISM OF PROPERTY

Plato's communism of property is in no way related to the modern communism or socialism because there was no mention of socialization of the means of production. Plato's approach was mainly concerned with one factor of production, that is, property that has to be socialized.

1.3.2.1 PREPARING THE GUARDIANS

Plato looks to a sound system of state-controlled education to train the Guardians for their special work and to keep them unselfishly for the performance of their duties. It would generate in them not only the concentration that their first and foremost aim is to secure the unity and coherence of the state which seems that they have no interest of their own apart from the interest of the state. Plato, therefore, wants to make sure that material conditions under which the Guardians live should be such, as will neither impair their virtue as Guardians

nor tempt them to prey upon the other citizens.

1.3.2.2 LIFE OF GUARDIANS

In the first place, none of them have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely necessary. Neither should they have a private house or store closed against any one who has a mind to enter. Provisions should be such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage. They should agree to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay enough to meet the expenses of the year and no more and they will go to mess and live together like soldiers in a camp.

They alone of all citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold or be under the same roof with them or wear them or drink from their. But should they even acquire homes or land or money of their own, they will become housekeeper and husband men instead of Guardians, enemies and tyrants instead of allies of the other citizens, hating and being hated, plotting being plotted against, they

will pass their own life in much greater terror of internal than of external enemies, and the hour of ruin both to themselves and to the rest of the state will be at hand.”

1.3.2.3 SEPARATION OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER

Plato says that nothing is more disastrous for the purity and efficiency of administration than the union of political and economic power in the same hand. If those who wield political power in the state have economic interest of their own, they are very likely to forget the need of unselfishness and the necessity of wisdom and follow lines of action which would better than at the expense of the rest. Those who exercise political power have no economic power and those who are engaged in economic activities should have a share in political power.

1.3.2.4 NO MATERIAL POSSESSION BY GUARDIANS

There is still another reason why Plato forbids Guardians from the possession of silver and gold. It would be recalled that the special qualification for membership of the warrior class is its courage, and need for participation in the work of Government wisdom. In fact what qualifies a person for the function of Government is the superiority of virtue. If all the citizens of state are allowed to possess property, persons apt to be chosen for political offices is to be determined on the basis of property and not on the ground of virtue. If, therefore the fitness of men for political offices is to be determined by what they are and not by what they possess, private property must be denied to higher classes. Abolition of private property would ensure that individuals would gain positions in the state because of their spuriousness of virtue. Sabine says, “so firmly was Plato convinced of the pernicious effect that he saw no way to abolish the evil except by abolishing wealth itself so far as the soldiers and rulers are concerned”.

1.3.3 EVALUATION

Plato's conviction that what brings about corruption and dissolution in a state is the pursuit of private economic interests by those who exercise political insight. Most of the evils from which mankind has always suffered are due to the union of political and economic interests in the same class. But the remedies he suggests for eradicating this evil are not sound. The producing classes cannot be excluded from participation in political life for all time.

Plato's suggestion that the rulers and warriors should have no houses and no property of their own is generally described as communism. The extent of common property allowed to them by Plato is very small. It is to say that what they have in common is not the possession of property but its renunciation which provides a unity to the state.

1.3.4 THE COMMUNISM OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The project to abolish property is followed up by the proposal to abolish family life from amongst the guardians.

1.3.4.1 PLATO'S ARGUMENT FOR THE ABOLITION OF FAMILY

Family affection a rival to the states loyalty

Plato thinks that with its narrow life hoarded wealth and secluded women, family are the enemy of the unity of the state and the free development of all its members. Family affection is a serious and powerful rival to loyalty to the state; experience shows that it is liable to war the first place in man's devotion and weaken his loyalty to the state. In the words of Sabine," Plato regards family affection, directed towards particular persons, as another potent rival to the state in the competing for the loyalty of rulers. Unless the garb of anxiety for the future of their children the selfishness and narrowness of the parents outlook is of transmits concerned".

Family a private world

The family is a private world into which we try to escape for satisfaction and comfort. He considers it a place where each man dragging any requisition, which he has made into a separate house of his own, where he has a separate wife, children and private pleasures and pains. Plato thus condemns the private household as a centre of instincts flourish.

Family a place of wasted talents

Family is also a place of wasted talents and transferred powers and this in a two way fold. Firstly, it prevents men and women, particularly women, from developing their personality fully. Women are confined to the seclusion of their quarters in homes and have no other function except that of bearing and rearing children. Secondly the education given to the children in the homes is very poor substitute for that which can be imparted in a state controlled system.

To emancipate women

The abolition of the family would thus not only destroy the centre of selfishness, it would also result in the emancipation of the women from the drudgery of the home and set them free for the service of the state.

No difference between men and women

Plato here concedes on the assumption that except in the matter of sex, there is no fundamental difference between men and women, which can effect the participation of latter in political life of the community. Just as the female dog is needy as good for watch keeping, as the male dog is capable of the same training. Similarly women can discharge the same functions as men, though in an inferior degree. The women is only weak because of weak sex, so only of this difference, she should not be discriminated. The fact of sex is not one isolated thing in women's nature in which alone she differs from men, it colours her whole being.

Inferior status of women

Plato sought to abolish the family not only because he regarded it as a

centre of exclusiveness and a serious rival to the state, but also because it assigned an inferior status to women. The woman in the ancient Greece was bond servant at the mercy of her parents, as to whom she married. Plato could not permit such slaves to be the member of his ruling class and to live with his elite.

To get the service of women

His ruling class demanded women who were the equal of their men. In order, therefore to secure that the best women folk would be recruited to the service of the state and they should receive the highest education. The abolition of the marriage tie was thus a tremendous assertion of the right of women. It raised her to the level of man and it postulated her rational nature.

Eugenic reasons

Plato sought to abolish family for eugenic reasons also. This made clear in the scheme for the reform of marriage, which he proposes. Having abolished the family Plato has to make arrangements for the continuation of the race for the bearing and rearing of children among the guardians. Celibacy is not his goal. He says that the state would choose suitable seasons and periods for capitals at which number of marriages sufficient for producing the requisite numbers of children would be celebrated. In celebrating the marriages, care should be taken to see that the best among men and women are united at the proper age, only this would facilitate the improvement of race. In other words, according to Plato the state must act on the same principle in which a breeder of animals proceeds i.e. putting a good sire to as many dames and a good dame to as many good sires as possible. The children born of such temporary unions will be taken over by the state and brought up in a public crèches, so that no child will know its parentage and no parents will know their children. All the children born in a season will be the common sons and daughters of all the persons married at that time. In this way perfect unity will be realised.

In this way Plato scheme for the reform of marriage serves several purposes; it makes for the unity of state. It leads to improvement of the race. It

emancipates women for the service of the state and puts them on a level of equality with men.

1.3.5 EVALUATION OF COMMUNISM OF WOMEN

Almost every man would approve the purposes of Plato. No one will object to the unity of the state. Men and women do not come together merely for the purpose of procreating children, the relation of husband and wife is a deeply spiritual relation and is a matter of life time. What the child needs is the mother's love and affection which he can never get in public crèche. The family may be a centre of exclusiveness; it may lead a man down to a lower level where he forgets his duty to the state. It may also condemn women to a life of drudgery; it is not a wholly evil thing. As Aristotle pointed out subsequently, it is also the place where family affection develops and other virtues are required. Here men and women meet for life's partnership and not for a temporary union.

The unity of state is also a highly desirable thing. But it is open to question if it is best promoted by making the rulers, in other words, the state into a family. A state would cease to be a state if it is converted into a family. There are fundamental points of difference between the two on account of which it is among to equate them.

What can reasonably said by way of criticism of Plato is that his conception of unity of the state is one sided and therefore, defective. The unity of state is quite compatible with the existence of numerous associations within it. Unity in human society can be and should be realised through diversity.

What was said about the rule of philosopher kings may also be held to be true about the communism of women and property. There can be no gain saying to fact that the selfishness and corruption in a society cannot cease and the unity of the state cannot be achieved so long as the members of the guardian class continue to have private economic interest which compete with those of the subjects.

Why the abolition of family life: - Plato was led to the abolition of family life as a necessary thing of the principles with which he started. First, his conception of the state as a community in the true sense of the term involves the idea that women should take part in public life as men. Secondly if we once concede his conception of the tripartite nature of the soul, the nobility of virtue with knowledge and the conception of government as event, we cannot but reach the conclusions at which he arrived. In the words of baker, “Plato sees in the family on the one hand a root of selfishness, which may grow into family funds and civic sedition”.

1.3.6 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLATONIC COMMUNISM AND MODERN COMMUNISM

In the first place, it must be remembered that Plato abolishes private property only for the warrior and ruling classes; his scheme does not touch the producing classes at all. It therefore, leaves the economic structure of the state entirely unchanged. The individualistic system of production is left wholly unaltered; no single production is affected. This is because it is not motivated by the evils of poverty and exploitation by the capitalistic theories, on the other hand seek to completely overhaul the economic structure of the state because they want to put an end to the exploitation of the labour by capital. They would abolish the private ownership of means of production by the capitalist. There is thus nothing in common between Plato and modern societies and communists, so far as the effect on the system of production is concerned. Their motives are very different.

Secondly Plato's communism is political in character, whereas modern socialism and communism are economic. The former is political in as much as its object is the unity of state and not the attainment of a more equitable distribution of wealth. In Plato's scheme, inequalities in the possession of wealth should remain so far as the producing classes are concerned. Plato seeks to abolish private property in the case of guardians in order to eliminate the economic

motive from politics. The modern socialists and communists, on the other hand, want the workers to control the political life of the state.

Thirdly, Plato's communism is half communism; it effects a small section of the total population of the state. Modern communism on the other hand, is universal. It is universal in two senses. It affects the whole body of citizens in a state and it's international in character. The modern communists want to establish a new world order in which there shall be no national states. Their slogan is; workers of the world unite.

Fourthly, Plato's communism is ascetic in character. It is a way of surrender and it is a surrender imposed on the best and only on the best. Members of the guardian class are asked to give up private possession of gold and silver because they are hindrances. Modern communism assumes their desirability and wants a more just distribution of them. In Plato's communism, there is no demand for the nationalization of means of production. He wants to nationalise only a part of the product. Plato's communism is thus secondary in nature. The main aim of the modern communists is economic and political aims are secondary.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

- 1 Critically examine Plato's communism of wives and property?

2. What are the philosophical and political justifications Plato gives for this radical proposal?

1.3.7 LET US SUM UP

It is alleged that by abolishing family and depriving members of the upper two classes of property, Plato sacrifices individual to the community and ignores the claims of individuality. The individuality of an individual does not consist in his doing what he likes. It should be remembered that there is no such thing as abstract individual. Everyone is what he is in virtue of social relationship. We grow and develop our own personality by participating in and contributing to the life of the community. A public servant who devotes himself whole heartedly to the common interest and lives for others does not diminish his individuality, he rather enriches it thereby.

1.3.8 EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of Plato's theory of communism. How does it differ from modern communism?
2. Explain the psychological, ethical and social basis of Plato's communism.
3. In his estimate of the platonic communism of wives and property, Baker says that "Plato starts from right principles but makes a mistake in their application". What are the right principles from which Plato starts and what are the errors committed by him in their application?

1.3.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K.Nath & CO., 2010.

Roberts, P., *Introduction to Political Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit I: **PLATO**

1.4 CONCEPT OF IDEAL STATE AND PHILOSOPHER KING

- Diwakar Singh

STRUCTURE

1.4.0 Objectives

1.4.1 Introduction

1.4.2 Construction of Ideal State

1.4.3 The Theory of Functional Specialization

1.4.4 Criticism: Plato's Ideal State a Utopia

1.4.5 The Rule of Philosopher King

1.4.5.1 Despotism

1.4.5.2 Servitude

1.4.5.3 Defence

1.4.6 Let Us Sum Up

1.4.7 Exercises

1.4.8 Suggested Readings

1.4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to understand:

- how Plato constructed the ideal state;
- Plato's theory of functional specialization;
- the major criticism against Plato's ideal state;
- Plato's views on the rule of Philosopher King;

- Plato's concepts of despotic, servitude and defence;
- the defects in the concept of Philosopher King.

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Plato is interpreted as a utopia, not because it is a 'romantic' but because Plato intended it to be the state of a scientific attack upon the idea of the good. The statement had to be understood properly that what is good and what is needed to create a good state? What Plato tries to depict is the model of the best state. In other words, Plato wanted to set up a pattern as to what a state ought to be. In fact Plato depicted a state which was primarily an embodiment of the idea of the ultimate good. He wanted his statesman to know as how to construct a good state.

Similarly, the conclusion that the Government in the Ideal State should be entrusted to persons possessing supreme wisdom naturally follows from the principles that the government of Plato's Ideal State must be aristocratic in character. The function of Government should be entrusted exclusively to a small class distinguish from others by superiority in virtue. The guardians are selected from among the ranks of the warrior class and their education in mathematics and Dialectics. Knowledge of the idea of good gives the individual not only wisdom but also love for it and the further guarantee that they hold fast to the belief that their duty is to do what is best for the community. This led him to conclude that in an Ideal State the ruler should be always a "Philosopher King".

In this lesson, you will study these two aspects of the Plato's related to government and the ruler, that is Ideal State and Philosopher King.

1.4.2 CONSTRUCTION OF IDEAL STATE

The fundamental postulate which emerges as Socrates proceeds with the construction of state is that it arises out of the needs of mankind. Every individual has several wants – the more fundamental of which are food, clothing and shelter – but he cannot satisfy them by his unaided efforts. No individual is sufficient

into himself; he needs the help and co-operation of his fellow beings for the satisfaction of his needs. What drives men to organise themselves into society is the need of mutual co-operation for the satisfaction of common wants. Society is organised on the principle of reciprocal exchange of services which itself is based on the principle of division of labour, instead of each person devoting some of his time to the production of food, a part of making a house and rest to the manufacture of clothing, it is far better that some should confine themselves to the production of food stuffs sufficient for meeting the requirements of all, some to the production of houses and some to the making of clothes. From this analysis of the origin of society it is clear that according to Plato the bond which first unites men in a state is the bond of mutual economic dependence. It is neither residence in a common territory nor religion, nor kinship. These factors may emerge later. They are not so fundamental for the origin of society.

At the outset Plato confines himself to the three primary economic wants – food, clothing and shelter. It soon becomes apparent that in addition to the tillers of soil, builders and weavers, there must be other persons to supply other wants which are bound to arise i.e., carpenters and smiths and other artisans to make repair agricultural and other instruments. Traders and merchants, hired labourers and other persons soon make their appearance in the state, which would consist of various groups of persons performing different functions to supply to the common needs of all. These needs are at the outset simple and in the main economic in character. But many will not be satisfied with the simple way of life which alone is possible in such a commodity, would like to have luxuries. The state would become luxurious and in the process cease to be self-sufficing, also luxuries thus bring about war. The possibility of war and the consequent need of protecting the state against foreign aggression necessitate the introduction of a new class of persons – namely soldiers or warriors.

Since Plato has already introduced the principle of division of labour or specialisation of functions in the simple state, it must be adhered to even more rigidly in the luxurious state. Plato assigns to the military class the function of protecting the state against foreign aggression and maintaining internal peace and order. Then there will be a ruling class whose function, it would be to co-

ordinate and control the activities of all other group is also an equally great necessity. The function of the ruling organisationship, like all other functions, must be performed by individuals who are fitted for it by natural qualities and specific training. Because the good life of the whole state depends upon the thoroughness and efficiency with which the guardians perform their duties, their education and training absorbs the attention of Plato.

1.4.3 THE THEORY OF FUNCTIONAL SPECIALISATION

The construction of ideal state is closely linked up with a particular view of the nature of the human soul which Plato seems to have derived from the Pythagoras. He held that human soul consists of three elements. Firstly there is the irrational element of desire from which proceeds hunger, thirst, love and other appetites. These persons contribute nothing but connected with the economic bond. Secondly, the element of spirit makes the appearance the economic community based on appetite is changed into a military organisation based on spirit. Even then the state remains incomplete; there is no class in it corresponding to the element of reason in the human soul. This element makes its appearance with the emergence of the ruling class whose character really determines the character of the state as a whole. Appetite may have drawn men together by an economic nexus; spirit may have added a new military bond; it is reason that holds men together by teaching them to understand and through their understanding, to love one another. In other words, the state can be considered as completed only when all the elements of the human soul have contributed to its organisation. It is reason which band men together by enabling them to understand and love one another.

So, the platonic state consists of three distinct classes, distinguished from each other not by qualification of birth and wealth, but by the specific functions they discharge. They are: 1) The producing class; 2) The warrior class; 3) The ruling class. This is the functional specialisation when each class functions to its own station without interfering in the affairs of state and continuously strict to one duty. This will lead to functional specialisation and all men performing

duty towards their station will lead to functional specialisation. Such a state will be an ideal state and in such a state there will be complete justice.

1.4.4 CRITICISM: PLATO'S STATE A UTOPIA

Just as our ancient Rishi's forbids the Brahmins to acquire and accumulate wealth and restricted their functions to the acquisition of knowledge and service of the people, so Plato lays down that the rulers are to be knower of idea of good and are to serve the people but to amass money. Such an idea advised by Plato for the ruling class is neither practicable and nor desirable. Those who believe in the ideal of a classless society should ponder whether such a concept agrees with human nature. If men differ in their qualities, if some are Sattavic, some are Rajasic and some are Temasic class distinctions are bound to emerge. This ideal state which Plato imagined was a utopia.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1..Critically examine the ideal state of Plato?

2 Discuss Plato's views on functional specializations?

1.4.5 THE RULE OF PHILOSOPHER KING

This conception of Rule by the Philosopher Kings is the most original as well as the most profound of all the Platonic conceptions and therefore, deserves a somewhat detailed examination, all the more so because it runs counter to our democratic beliefs and practices and was also a denial of the political faith of the city-state with its ideal of free citizenship.

As has been stated above, the idea that government should necessarily be entrusted to a few highly learned experts follows naturally from the principles that the sufficient qualification for the function of Government is the superiority of virtue that *this work requires abilities of a peculiar kind which can be found only in a small number of men*. Plato makes another statement which is not acceptable for the modern democrat. He assumes that such philosophic natures can be found only among the ranks of gentry and not among peasants and artisans.

The ills of the city-state will never cease until Philosophers are Kings and Kings are Philosophers and that only will one state have possibility of life and behold the light of the day.

Plato believes in the existence of a ruling aristocracy and distributors belonging to the subject class. In the words of one political thinker, “Plato remains an aristocrat convinced that peasants, the craftsmen and the Shop-keepers were incapable of political community”.

1.4.5.1 DESPOTIC

The philosopher Kings are absolute in the sense that they are not bound or limited by any written law. They are not responsible or even responsive to public opinion. Their government may be sense; the masses have no share in it. The citizens should submit themselves to the care and guidance of the philosopher kings in the same way in which a patient after having once decided to put himself under doctor’s treatment.

1.4.5.2 SERVITUDE

The fact that the citizens of the state are expected to submit themselves to the absolute rule of the Philosopher Kings and are not given any share or voice in shaping the policies of the state leads some persons to remark that the Platonic citizens are in a state of servitude. They have simply to carry out the wishes of the ruling elite. It is wrong to compare the citizens to be sick men who cannot take care of themselves and must therefore be looked after by experts.

1.4.5.3 DEFENCE

In defence of the Platonic conception of absolute rule of the philosopher Kings as the ideally best thing it may be pointed out that it is not an unqualified absolutism, most certainly it is not tyranny as the Greeks understood the term. It might be free from the written Law and public opinion, but most assuredly it is not free from the restraint of what we may call the fundamental articles of the constitution. It is the paramount duty of the philosophers Kings to see that the state adheres to its four basic principles suggested by Plato, i.e. 1) to watch against the entry either of poverty or wealth into the state; 2) to limit the state to

size consistent with unity and self-sufficiency; 3) to maintain the rule of Justice and ensure that every one is occupied in the discharge of his specific duty; and 4) to ensure that an innovation is made in the system of education.

In short, the philosophic element is essentially the human element; it is what makes one timely human. Such philosophic nature is fit to rule; subjection to it is not all likely to feel like submission to despotic or tyrannical rule.

Foster describes the conception of rule by the philosopher Kings as the most profoundly original concept in the entire political theory of Plato. We have seen political theory of Plato. We have seen that its implications are most repugnant to the spirit of democracy. They were also in consistent with the ideal of free citizenship. Popper rejects the conception of despotic rule by specially trained philosophers as leading to totalitarianism, to unmitigated authorisation. This raises the questions; Was Plato wrong in the most original part of his political philosophy? Has the ideal of absolute rule by a trained intelligence consisted no element of truth or value in it? It is impossible to give a wholly negative answer to this question. The Platonic theory embodies a great and fundamental truth of universal application. Plato lays stress, namely that Government is a difficult and which requires specific education and training. The Republic is originally the voice of the Scholar. It was the great merit of Plato to have realised that unless political power and reason are united together, unless statesmanship is combined with most profound wisdom and those individuals who are deficient in wisdom are excluded from political power, states will never rest from evil.

The rule of philosopher-Kings not only assures the union of reason and political power in the highest organ of the state, it is also best alternative to put an end to class-war from which states have suffered at all times.

Lastly, it should also be remembered that the life of the philosopher kings as well as of the guardians is of renunciation and surrender. If they have political power, it is at the sacrifice of their personal interests, like desire for wealth bodily pleasure and family life. It is not from one class, but from all classes in the community, that Plato demands sacrifice.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What makes a philosopher ruler different from other people according to Plato?

2. What subjects does Plato think a Philosopher ruler should study?

1.4.6 LET US SUM UP

The greatest defect, however, is that men of the type it demands are very rare. History does to give us any example of Philosopher-Kings.

In the first place, it is difficult to find a sufficient number of men having the vision of the Good and possessing the qualities of philosophic nature as described in any community. Secondly, Platonic conception of Government by Philosopher-Kings that it is liable to degenerate into tyrannical and oppressive. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Thirdly, such a rule of the Philosopher-Kings will turn into a Totalitarianism rule.

1.4.7 EXERCISES

1. Give a brief account of the ideal state of Plato.
2. State the basic principles of Plato's ideal states and discuss his views on functional specialisation.
3. Give the Platonic conception of the ideal state and criticism of it.
4. "As for philosophers, they make imaginary laws for imaginary commonwealth". Enumerate this statement with reference to Plato.
5. Discuss the concept of Rule of king-Philosophers.

6. Make a critical estimate of the rule of the philosopher king as advocated by Plato.
7. “The ills of the city-states will never cease until philosophers are kings and kings are philosophers” (Plato). Discuss.
8. “The perfect guardian must be a philosopher” (Plato). Comment.

1.4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Gauba, O.P., *Western Political Thought*, Macmillan Publications India Ltd, 2011

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K.Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., “The Nature of Political Thought”, *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

UNIT II: ARISTOTLE

Aristotle holds an enviable place in the annals of political philosophy. The significance of Aristotle, in the history of political theories, lies in the fact that he gave to politics the character of an independent science. If the world is indebted to Plato for idealism in philosophy and politics, Aristotle is the father of realism in thought and action. Aristotle was the master of almost every branch of existing knowledge.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was born at Stagira, a Greek colony on the Macedonian coast. His father was a physician, which probably contributed to the prevailing interest in biological studies. In 367 B. C. he migrated to Athens in order to study Philosophy under Plato. Aristotle was probably attracted to Plato's school in the first place because it was the best place in Greece to carry on advanced studies. Once there, he remained a member of the school as long as Plato lived and influenced to a great extent by Plato's philosophy. Every page of his later philosophical writing bears witness to this connection. Aristotle differs from his master, Plato, much more in the form and method than in the substance of his thought. Plato is imaginative and synthetic; Aristotle is matter-of-fact and analytic. Ideas present themselves to Plato more through metaphor and analogy; to Aristotle more through the processes of exact logic. Plato is more impressed by the unity pervading phenomena; Aristotle, by the diversity.

The Aristotelian writings present a problem very different from that of Plato's Dialogues. His extant works were for the most part not books completed and prepared for publication. They were used in connection with his teaching. In fact, they were not published in their present form until four centuries after his death. Aristotle directed many research students in number of projects, such as the famous investigation of the constitutional history of a 158 Greek cities, of which the *Constitution of Athens* is the only surviving example.

Aristotle's famous work *Politics* represents two stages in Aristotle's thought which are distinguished by the distance that he has travelled in emancipating himself

from the influence of Plato or striking out a line of thought of his own. Aristotle to some extent abandoned the idealism of Plato and conceived a science or art of politics on a much larger scale. The new science was to be general; that is, it should deal with actual as well as ideal forms of government and it should teach the art of governing and organizing states of any sort in any desired manner. This new general science of politics, therefore, was not only empirical and descriptive, but even in some respects independent of any ethical purpose, since a statesman might need to be an expert in governing even a bad state. The whole science of politics included the knowledge both of the political good and also of political mechanics employed perhaps for an inferior or even a bad end. This enlargement of the definition of political philosophy is Aristotle's most characteristic conception.

Aristotle's thought process; his study of politics and especially the logic that is visible throughout his works are still relevant in understanding present day politics. In this Unit you are going to study and understand the political theory of Aristotle. For a better comprehension this theory is divided into four different streams and concepts: in the first lesson you are going to study Aristotle's contribution in transforming Political Philosophy into Political Science, in the second lesson you will comprehend Aristotle's criticism on Plato, his views on Household and Slavery, in the third lesson you will study Aristotle's Classification of Governments and Concept of Revolution, and in the final lesson you will comprehend Aristotle's Best Practicable State. We hope after studying all these lessons on Aristotle, you will get a better understanding of his philosophy.

SUGGESTED READING FOR THIS UNIT

Dunning, W. A., *A History of Political Theories* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1976).

Foster, Michael B., *Masters of Political Thought*, vol. I, Plato to Machiavelli (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Sabine, George H., *A History of Political Theory* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1973).

Suda, J. P., *History of Political Thought* (Meerut: K. Nath & Co., 1975).

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)
Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)
Unit II: ARISTOTLE

2.1 ARISTOTLE AS THE FATHER OF POLITICAL SCIENCE: A SHIFT FROM POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

– Mukesh Sharma

STRUCTURE

- 2.1.0 Objectives**
- 2.1.1 Introduction**
- 2.1.2 Aristotle: Life Sketch and Major Works**
- 2.1.3 Aristotle: A Shift from Political Philosophy to Political Science**
- 2.1.5 Let Us Sum Up**
- 2.1.6 Exercises**
- 2.1.7 Suggested Readings**

2.1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the lesson, you will be able to understand:

- How Aristotle carried forward the tradition of intellectual inquiry professed by Plato before him.
- How he remained to be the pioneer in laying the foundations of Science of Politics and tried to separate it from its philosophical contents.
- Why Aristotle still remains a starting point for any scholarly enquiry in the field of Political Science.

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Political thought is one of the most important aspects of the study of Politics. It provides a theoretical and philosophical understanding that is pre-requisite for conceptual and linguistic clarity in the subject of Political Science. Most of the part of political thought is concerned with some of the fundamental issues related to politics such as understanding the meaning and the nature of the state, government and citizens; political obligation, authority, freedoms and duties etc. The state, government and the citizenry are the prime focus of political philosophy.

This section begins with a discussion over the political thought of Aristotle who had not only contributed in expanding the foundation of political philosophy laid by his predecessors but also laid the foundations of a ‘science of Politics’, ‘Political Science’. In fact, he is regarded as the father of Political Science. It was with him that political philosophy began on practical lines. He applied scientific method to the study of Political Science and also tried to separate ethics from politics. He was the first of the pragmatic thinker by holding man as a political animal.

However, Aristotle’s thinking about politics was largely shaped under the guiding influence of his political mentor, Plato. Both Plato and Aristotle were the great pioneers of European intellect. Plato’s Academy was the first of the philosophical schools followed by Aristotle’s School, Lyceum. In the words of Whitehead, European philosophical tradition is nothing but a set of footnotes to Plato and Aristotle.

Thus, Aristotle has contributed a lot in laying the foundations of Science of Politics. It is hailed that Aristotle bestowed antiquity like an intellectual colossus. In the words of Barker, no man before him had contributed as much to learning. No man after him could hope to rival his achievement. The totality of his literary work represents an encyclopaedia of the available knowledge. Aristotle is a philosopher, and still perhaps the greatest name in the history of philosophy.

2.1.3 ARISTOTLE: LIFE SKETCH AND MAJOR WORKS

Aristotle was born in 384 BC at Stagira. He belongs to an affluent family. Beside politics, he had a deep interest in Medicines and Biology too. He joined Plato's Academy for 20 years and became the tutor of Alexander in 343 BC. He established his school of learning, 'Lyceum'. He made an exhaustive study of 158 constitutions (Governments). He was the first to put together a library with a big collection of books and manuscripts. He died in 322 BC at the age of 62.

In the entire history of Political Science, there is no thinker comparable with Aristotle. The best known of Aristotle's works was the 'Politics'. The central theme of his, 'Politics' was the 'Polis' an institution that was unique to fifth century B.C. In 'Politics', he made a detailed examination of the nature of the State; its origins; an analysis of 'ideal state'; different prevailing constitutions/forms of governments; and the concepts of citizenship and law.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Aristotle as the father of political science. Comment?

2. What are the major works of Aristotle?

2.1.4 ARISTOTLE'S POLITICAL THOUGHT: A SHIFT FROM POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

It is rightly said that the ancient Greek political thinkers including Socrates, Plato and Aristotle laid the foundations of political philosophy. Among all them, Aristotle enjoys a pivotal position. He has not only elaborated the philosophical works of his predecessors but also provided a critical analysis to test the efficacy of such philosophical content to the prevailing circumstances.

Thus, he also diverged from his predecessors on many points.

He shared with Plato many of the basic perspectives such as hierarchy of human nature, justice as a relation or order among parts, and the inevitability of social classes. But he also diverged from him in several ways mainly on issues like bases of the ideal regime, the dimensions of ethics and the causes of revolution. He believed in the unified theory of sciences, but disagreed on how this unity was to be achieved. He did not believe in Plato's optimistic claim that all knowledge could be founded up to a single set of axioms. In fact, he was the pioneer to divide the knowledge into three categories; productive, practical and theoretical.

Aristotle's political philosophy was both a critique and a corrective of Plato's ideas. As opposed to Plato's radical reforms in the Republic, Aristotle sought to conserve and preserve existing traditions and institutions. He was a realist and liberal conservative. He was also critical of Plato's scheme of ideal state. Against Plato's social unity/harmony, he stood for social differentiation as key to good and stability of the state.

Secondly, Aristotle separated the political from the non-political against Plato's insistence on unity. He stood for the segregation of the political life from that of family. He regarded family as the natural institution that help stabilising the state rather than being an obstacle. Likewise, he declared property as necessary attribute to overcome goodness and philanthropy.

Thirdly, Aristotle also criticized Plato's advocacy of rule of philosophy and the preference for philosopher king over the statesmen. Aristotle viewed that the rule of philosophy would prevent the circulation of elite and lead to discontent and dissent. In its place, Aristotle professed constitutional rule, for it not only check arbitrary power, but also ensure a periodic rotation of office bearers. Aristotle was critical of denying any participation.

Lastly, the pragmatic and scientific understanding of Aristotle's views on politics is reflected from his reliance on a method that is different from those of his predecessors. The main characteristics of Aristotle's method were:

1. Aristotle based his studies on facts. He was more concerned with the facts and was deeply interested in collecting and examining them. He wanted a definite and scientific knowledge. That is why he rejected the ideal state and proposed his own sketch of the practicable state. Thus their methods differ in the sense where Plato's thinking was speculative in nature, Aristotle built up his system of thought on observation and analysis of facts. Maxey rightly describes Aristotle as the 'first scientist'. Owing to his childhood training in medicines and other natural sciences, he also adopted an empirical and inductive methodology in the study of political problems. Aristotle was the first to make an attempt to separate the politics from the ethics.

2. He also employed comparative method of study in his writings. He had an extra-ordinary knowledge of the political institutions both of his own times and of the past. He made a comparative analysis of about 158 constitutions and then generalised his views about the good/pure and the arbitrary/perverved forms of governments.
3. Aristotle is also known for his realistic method. He had a clear approach to the understanding of the problems confronting his time and their rationalistic solution. He laid equal importance on measuring the value of facts apart from their collection.
4. He also tried to adopt the teleological method. That is explaining the final causes of things. Aristotle defines the state as a union of families or villages for a happy or good life. This teleology leads him to develop an organic view of the state.
5. Another aspect of Aristotle method was his concern with tradition. It was the adherence to facts of past history which made him a conservative thinker. He attached great importance to the accumulated wisdom of the past. That's why he is portrayed as a reformist than a radical in his political thought.

In short, Aristotle is rightly acclaimed as the 'father of political science' as he laid the foundations of systematic, empirical and realistic study of politics. He pioneered the use of inductive methodology instead of deductive method employed by his predecessors. In the words of Maxey, "as Plato is father to the idealists, romanticists, revolutionists and utopians, Aristotle is father to the realists, scientists, and the utilitarian."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain how Aristotle's political thought are different from Plato's political thought.

2. Elaborate Aristotle's teleological method.

2.1.5 LET US SUM UP

In the history of Western intellectual tradition, both Plato and Aristotle enjoy an eminent position. Aristotle was a realist and a moderate. He is regarded as the father of Political Science as he was the first to analyse it critically and systematically. He was one of the earliest political thinkers to use the comparative

method, a method that has considered being relevant even today. His style was simple and logical.

Aristotle was terse, with precise arguments. His lecture notes were more an exposition of his research interest. He devoted him-self to the organization of research. His biological treatises and collection of 156 constitutional histories represents a scientific type of exact research into the real world.

In short, he was the first to conceive a ‘Science’ or ‘Art’ of Politics on a much larger scale. This new science was not only general, empirical and descriptive but in some respects independent of any ethical purpose. He had a scientific thinking of the best practicable state, realizable on this earth and based on realities. Based upon his distinct and ablest methodology, he is rightly regarded as the father of Political Science as well as the first Scientist of Politics.

He was not a conservative but progressive by regarding change as inevitable. Aristotle accepted the possibility of progress. The most scientific about Aristotle was his conception of a Practicable State. He regarded the State as the highest form of political union. It is a humane institution where individuals fulfil the real purpose of civic life i.e. the satisfaction of their basic wants.

In short, there is no denial that Aristotle is one of the most outstanding figures of Political Philosophy. By his systematic treatment of the subject he gave politics the character of a science. He became the first individualist and constitutionalist who established supremacy of law. His ‘The Politics’ is the richest treasure that has come down to us from antiquity. It is the greatest contribution to the field of Political Science.

2.1.6 EXERCISES

1. Write a short note on the early life and major works of Aristotle.
2. Discuss how Aristotle’s Political Thought was a Shift from Political Philosophy to Political Science.
3. Elaborate on the statement “the systematic treatment of the subject Aristotle gave politics the character of a science”.

2.1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Berki,R.N., *The History of Political Thought: Ashort Introduction*, London: Dent, 1977

Suda J.P.,*A History of PloiticalThought*,Vol 1 &2 ,Meerut, K.Nath&CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell,Raymond G., “The Nature of Political Thought”, *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17,Issue 2 May 1923.

**2.2 ARISTOTLE'S VIEWS ON HOUSEHOLD:
CRITICISM OF PLATO'S CONCEPT OF COMMUNISM
AND ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF SLAVERY**

– A. Lalitha

STRUCTURE

2.2.1 Introduction

2.2.2 Bases of Platonic Communism

2.2.3 Characteristics of Platonic Communism

2.2.4 Plato's views on Communitisation of Property and Wives

2.2.5 Aristotle's Views on Private Property and Family

2.2.5.1 On private Property

2.2.5.2 On Family

2.2.6 Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Communism of Property and Wives

2.2.6.1 Criticism on the communisation of Property

2.2.6.2 Aristotle's Criticism of Community of Wives

2.2.6.3 Aristotle's criticism on denial of the private life to Guardians

2.2.6.4 Criticism on the Neglect of Workers and a section of Guardian
Class

2.2.7 Aristotle Concept of Slavery

2.2.8 Liberal Views on Slavery and its Criticism

2.2.8.1 Aristotle Views on Slavery: Critical Analysis

2.2.9 Let Us Sum Up

2.2.10 Exercises

2.2.11 Suggested Readings

2.2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the lesson, you will be able to understand:

- Plato's views on Communism of property and wives;
- Aristotle's views on private property and family;
- Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's communism;
- Aristotle's concept of Slavery and its criticism.

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Being his master, the influence of Plato on Aristotle was intense and pervasive. Though he was the most famous and the best among the Platonists he was not a through going Platonist. Aristotle was equally appreciative and critical of Plato. Though Aristotle was in agreement with Plato on many basic perspectives enunciated in the "Republic" he disagreed with his master in several ways. Nothing illustrates better the fundamental difference between the tempers of the two great philosophers than their attitude towards family and property, which are the basic concerns of this lesson.

As you have already studied, Plato postulates two institutions for the realization of Justice in his Ideal State. They are:

1. A system of state-controlled education.
2. A new social order based on Communism of Property and Wives.

In this lesson you are going to study mainly about the criticism of Aristotle on Communism of Property and Wives. However, to understand Aristotle's criticism of these methods in a better way, it is essential to recollect the bases and characteristics of Plato's Communism, Plato's argument in favour of the communism of property and wives and Aristotle's conception of private property and family at least in brevity.

2.2.2 BASES OF PLATONIC COMMUNISM

The psychological basis of Plato's argument was that, "to be a member

of the State Family rather than that of a Private Family represents the highest form of life for an individual”. Hence, he wanted a Citizen to confine to his allotted task, must merge himself in the state and render his specialized service to the state.

The historical experiences of Greece became the practical basis of Plato’s Communism. Deriving from those experiences Plato strongly believed that “union of political and economic powers in the same hands proved to be fatal to political efficiency of the state”. Plato argued that economic power would demoralize his philosopher rulers who have the monopoly of political power, hence he strongly advocated for its separation from the political power.

His third argument is based upon philosophy and he firmly believed that “men who have unique duty to perform must submit to unique regulations”. Hence the guardians (the warriors and the rulers) of the state must not go after property, rather renounce it.

2.2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PLATONIC COMMUNISM

Plato’s Communism remains very different from what passes under the name at the present time. Its main characteristics are as follows:

The first characteristic is that only the upper two classes namely the Warriors and Rulers (together called as guardians) are expected to be unselfish and work for the benefit of the whole society. He expected only the guardians to be deprived of their property, not the workers and artisans. Hence, Platonic communism does not affect the old individualistic system of production.

The second feature is that the rulers have no lands and no houses, but they live in common barracks and have a common public mess, as they sacrifice everything and labour for the common good.

The third characteristic is that he starts from the principle that for the realization of the common welfare, the guardians must be induced to their work in the best way. As Plato considered the material goods as obstacles in the way to it, he wants to do away with them.

The fourth feature is that Plato's communism is aristocratic, it is a surrender imposed on the best of the society and not by the whole community. Even among the guardians all are not fit for assuming office. Hence it is aristocratic and political, rather than economic in its nature.

2.2.4 PLATO'S VIEWS ON COMMUNISATION OF PROPERTY AND WIVES

As you have already studied, Plato's conception of ideal state and justice demand the rule of "Philosopher Rulers" and their emancipation from domestic as well as economic worries by a system of communisation of property and wives (family). By Communisation Plato means the abolition of private property as well as the family.

According to Plato, being the monopolists of political power the guardians should not have any property beyond what is absolutely necessary. He expected them to receive from the citizens only a fixed rate of pay enough to meet the expenses of each year and not anything more than that. Since the Guardians have no houses, no lands and live in barracks, it is true to say that "what the rulers have in common is not the possession of property, but its renunciation". Plato believed that this renunciation provides a bond of unity to the state.

When it comes to the question of family among guardians, Plato considered family to be a distraction and he wanted it to be abolished as it stands in the way of realisation of his Ideal State. Plato believed that private family postulated property and therefore communism of property made it necessary to abolish the private family. Plato also did not like the subordinate position in family and seclusion of women in the service of the state. Through the abolition of private family Plato not only visualised state family but also the emancipation of women and their role in the service of the state. For Plato, the Communism of family and property try to eliminate all the negativity that hampered the proper growth of individual.

For Plato, the abolition of property is also necessary to inculcate certain virtues in guardians. In Plato's Ideal State what qualifies a person for the function of government is the "superiority of virtue", not the possession of property. Since

the fitness of men for the political offices is determined by what they are and not by what they possess, hence, private property must be denied to the higher classes.

Plato wanted to abolish the private family because it encourages hatred, selfishness, exclusiveness and envy. Plato condemns the private household as a centre of exclusiveness where selfish instincts flourish and also as an expression of the acquisitive instinct. Further family affection is a serious and powerful rival to loyalty to the state. For Plato thus, the abolition of family destroys the centre of selfishness. Plato sought to abolish family not only because it is a centre of selfishness, but also for its assignment of an inferior status women.

As Plato's ruling class demanded women who were the equal of their men Plato saw the abolition of family as also a way in the emancipation of women for the service of the state.

Plato wanted to abolish the family for eugenic reasons also. He believed that conventional marriage led to women's subordination, subjugation and seclusion. He rejected the idea of marriage as spiritual union, but accepted it as necessary for the continuance of the human race. Towards this he advocated temporary sexual unions for bearing children. He relieved women from the rearing and care services and assigned that work to the state.

Thus, Plato abolishes private family and property for the guardian class, on the ground that they encouraged favouritism, particularism, factionalism and many other corrupt practices among the rulers. For Plato politics did not mean promoting one's personal interests, rather it was to promote the common good. Plato thereby wanted to establish a high standard governing and governors by abolishing the twin institutions of private property and family for the guardians.

However, Aristotle was in more disagreement with his master on the communisation of property and family than any other conceptions of Plato expressed in Republic. Unlike his master Aristotle highly respected and appreciated the institutions of private property and family and considered them to be time tested. Hence it also becomes necessary for us to recollect Aristotle's views on the institutions of property and family.

2.2.5 ARISTOTLE'S VIEWS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND FAMILY

Contrary to his master, Plato, Aristotle held that every citizen requires private property and the discipline of family life. He regarded them as institutions belonging to all by the order of nature.

2.2.5.1 ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Unlike his master, Aristotle defended private property. He advocated private property as an essential instrument of good life and also as a means to develop human personality. He believed that private property should be protected by state, because, for the existence and proper functioning of the household private property is necessary. Though Aristotle supported the instinct of acquiring property in man as natural he also recognises the need to put a regulation. Aristotle was the first to pay attention to the economic basis of political institutions but he focussed on the character and distribution of wealth and its influence on the form of government. He considered extreme inequality of wealth as an important cause for revolutions. Though he strongly defended private property, he was also a believer in well distribution of wealth that is why he preferred and prescribed "Private ownership of property but the common use of the produce" in an ideal state.

2.2.5.2 ON FAMILY

To Aristotle, family is a natural association of which man becomes a member from the time of his birth. For Aristotle it is as natural as the State. Aristotle conceived marriage as a holy institution and family as a source of pleasure for both men and women. He believed that the family establishes a bond that unites its members and also provides them with a space for the exercise and development of individual talents.

Aristotle considered women and the family as the belongings of a private realm. Aristotle supported natural aristocracy in the family where the man was a dominant partner, though the husband and wife are interdependent; he considered them not to be equals. In a family he supported man's say on things

that were worthy of his consideration, leaving the rest to the woman. Violation of this norm, he felt would pervert an aristocratic relationship into an oligarchic one.

After recollecting the conceptions of both the master philosophers, let us proceed to Aristotle's criticism of the methods suggested by his master.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What are the Aristotle's views on Private property and family?

2. How Aristotle's views on property are different from Plato's views?

2.2.6 ARISTOTLE'S CRITICISM OF PLATO'S COMMUNISM OF PROPERTY AND WIVES

As you have already read, the chief aim of Plato was to attain the Unity of State, promote *Justice* and *Virtue*. For him the communism of property and wives are the best means of achieving harmony in a State. His disciple, Aristotle was as keen as Plato in securing the Unity of the State but differed with his master on the concept of such unity and the methods of its achievement.

Contrary to his master Aristotle believed that the Unity of State as emphasised by Plato would destroy that differentiation of function, which is the law of nature. For Aristotle, Platonic scheme of unified State would destroy the self-sufficiency of the State and he rather believed that plurality in the state leads to its greater unity. In Aristotle's opinion "A Unity based on the removal of all diversities in individual is fatal to the State just as identity in musical tones is fatal to musical harmony". Aristotle wants to create unity in the State by educating the people in the spirit of the constitution and not by the abolition of the time-honoured

institution of private property and family. Hence, his criticism on communisation of property and Wives (family) needs a special reference in the whole criticism against Platonic communism.

2.2.6.1 CRITICISM ON THE COMMUNISATION OF PROPERTY

Aristotle objected common ownership of property on both economic and moral grounds. For him property was necessary, not only to fulfil the possessive instincts, but also to encourage goodness and philanthropy. He criticised the common ownership of property as problematic, because that ultimately tends to common neglect.

He also opposed common ownership because that gives no chance to reward those who work hard and show greater initiative. Aristotle, being the first philosopher to realise the need to institutionalise the just reward, criticised Plato's communism for ignoring it.

Aristotle believed that it would be wrong to attribute all the troubles to the institution of property. For Aristotle most of the problems surrounding property stemmed from the evils of human nature and are not innate in the institution of property. Aristotle believed that the root of the evil is not in property, but in the inordinate love of man for it. Thus the evil lies in the wickedness of man. Hence he strongly believed that evils of human nature couldn't be corrected through legislation. He criticised Plato's communism for its excess institutional and control of property. This excess control as criticised by Aristotle, instead of bringing about an improvement would lead to additional evil. For him spiritual medicines are needed for spiritual ills. Aristotle prescribed the remedy in the form of "proper system of education". He believed that in the development of an individual's philosophy and inculcation of good habits as a part of moral life, institutions of property and family could be made instrumental. Therefore he recommends social and moral regulation rather than legal regulation with the help of these two institutions and not by abolishing them.

Aristotle went one step further than defending private property. He considered that a certain degree of unequal distribution of property is necessary and desirable. In his opinion the unequal distribution of property gives to the wealthy an opportunity for public service through public charity and public endowments. While believing in private property and inequality of its possession he also believed that excess wealth is inimical to the end of true living. It is also characteristic of Aristotle that he seeks to improve and perfect the institution of private property by proper custom and legislation. He insists upon its generous and liberal use. In short he advocated for private property with public use not its renunciation.

2.2.6.2 ARISTOTLE'S CRITICISM OF COMMUNITY OF WIVES

As many scholars write, the realism of Aristotle, his understanding of

human nature and social life, and respect for traditional institutions made him to reject tooth and nail the platonic idea of community of women and children.

To Aristotle, Plato's communism of wives is unnatural and foolish. He strongly felt that this scheme did not recognise and improve any traditional family ties. Aristotle was also critical of the Platonic conception of communism of family on the ground that to abolish the family would mean its destruction as a school of moral and civic virtues. Aristotle regarded family as a natural institution, and its abolition as detrimental to both individual and society. For him the family along with the institution of property had stood the test of times.

Aristotle criticised platonic scheme because it creates confusion and disharmony in the social order and will lead to harmful polygamy. Because, under the scheme of communism of wives a female guardian technically belongs to all the guardians. This can be understood, as that every man's wife would be the wife of every other man. Aristotle felt that this arrangement in practice would produce disharmony rather than unity. In addition, unholy acts against fathers or mothers, or sisters of brothers are likely to be committed, as the relationship is unknown and confusing.

Aristotle criticises the communisation of family not only for depriving the children of their civic and moral virtues, but also for their neglect. The children being common to all are prone to be neglected because no one would feel responsibility for them in the absence of personal care and affection. He strongly believed that only a mother can rear a child properly and felt, instead of being cared by one's father, it is quite possible for child to be ignored by someone fathers.

Even though, Aristotle appreciated the attention given by Plato for educating women, as a staunch supporter of aristocracy in family he considered the emancipation of women to be detrimental to the household, he believed that the natural hierarchy in family ensured stability. Aristotle was equally critical of granting unrestricted freedom to women. Aristotle emphasised that women should be made a part of the city and its educational process, but could be left out of the political process.

While dealing with Aristotle's criticism we should not forget that Plato never expected nationalisation or socialisation of women in the Guardian classes, what he aimed at is the abolition of permanent marriage and provision for temporary mating between properly selected pairs.

Apart from the criticism on the above his criticism on the denial of private life to guardians and the neglect of workers are also worth mentioning.

2.2.6.3 ARISTOTLE'S CRITICISM ON DENIAL OF THE PRIVATE LIFE TO GUARDIANS

Unlike his master, Aristotle never believed in the good of the social whole, for which the individual with his private interest must be sacrificed. Though he agreed with his master on the unity of State and its supremacy over individual, he strongly believed that a certain amount of individual liberty and individual possession was necessary to bring about the greatest good of the members of the state. On this ground Aristotle joined other critics of Plato for depriving his guardian class the material and psychological reasons to be happy on the grounds that the object of legislation was the happiness of the state. His argument is that if guardians are not happy, then there is a possibility that they would replicate the same kind of life for others, defeating the purpose of justice as defined by Plato as making a soul happy. For Aristotle, Unity of state is best attained not by creating a particular type of citizen through communism, but by properly utilising the differences in the individuals of the highest good of the State.

2.2.6.4 CRITICISM ON THE NEGLECT OF WORKERS AND A SECTION OF GUARDIAN CLASS

Aristotle also levelled his criticism against Plato for the neglect of non-guardian classes which form the overwhelming majority of the population of the State. He does not provide any system of education for them, which was suitable for their needs and requirements. Aristotle felt that in Platonic communism the Guardian and Non-Guardian classes would be hostile to each other.

Aristotle further felt that in Platonic communism not only were the workers

deprived their rights and prevented from assuming office, but even among the guardians not every one was in a position to aspire for one. He expressed his doubts about the detrimental effects, both moral and practical of an aristocratic monopoly on political and social honours.

2.2.7 ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF SLAVERY

Aristotle believes in natural theory of slavery. He was of opinion that nature has created differences and no two persons are identical or equal in traits. He tried to argue on the basis of reason and fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule. For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature intended to be Lord and Master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave.

There are many kinds of rulers and subjects (and that rule is better which is exercised over better subjects – for example – rule over men is better than rule over wild beasts). Aristotle was of the opinion that rule of soul over the body and of the mind and the rational element over the passion, is natural and expedient, whereas equality of two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful. Again, male is by nature superior and the female inferior; and one rules and the other is ruled, this principle of necessity extends to all mankind.

Aristotle assumes that nature is universally ruled by the contrast of superior and inferior; man is superior to the animals, the male to the female, the soul to the body, reason to passion. In all these divisions, it is just that superior rule over inferior and such a rule is to the advantage of both. Among men, there are those “Whose business is to use their body and who can do nothing better” and they are by nature slaves. And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; for both with their bodies’ minister to the needs of life. Nature would like to distinguish between the bodies of freeman and slaves, making the one strong for servile labour, the other upright and useless for such services. They are useful for political life in arts of both war and peace.

Aristotle justifies slavery on three grounds namely naturalness, usefulness and expediency. He finds slavery essential to a household and defends it as natural and therefore, moral. A slave is a living possession of his master and is an instrument of action. A man cannot lead a good life without slaves anymore than he can produce good music without instruments. It is a law of nature that superior should rule over inferior.

Aristotle has justified slavery on the grounds of usefulness and expediency. It is in the larger interest of the community. It is desirable that the masters should be free from the material worries so that they may be able to concentrate on public affairs. The slaves render a valuable service to the master by freeing him from material demands and providing necessary leisure which he can utilise for the attainment of virtue.

Finally, slavery was justified on the grounds of expediency. It is asserted that slaves played a vital role in the maintenance and operation of the Greek economy. It provided leisure to the citizens.

2.2.8 LIBERAL VIEWS ON SLAVERY AND ITS CRITICISM

Aristotle lived at a period when slavery was a universal institution and a necessary part of social structure. On the other hand, the sophists declared slavery to be unnatural. Aristotle took a realistic and Liberal attitude on the question of slavery. His liberal attitude towards slavery is apparent from following ideas.

Aristotle makes out a distinction between slave by law and slave by nature i.e. between casual and natural slaves. Slaves by law include prisoners of war. He was realistic enough to see that many were slaves by law rather than by nature, particularly those who were reduced to slavery by conquest, a custom widely practised in wars of antiquity. He was, therefore, opposed to the treatment of prisoners as slaves. Therefore, he was opposed to the legal or conventional theory of slavery.

He advocated a relationship of friendship between a master and a slave to a limited sense. Both masters and slaves have rational faculty but there exists a difference in degree. Son of a slave is not always a natural slave. He can be a

slave if he is naturally inferior. A Greek should not enslave a Greek except casually. Feeling strongly about the cultural unity and superiority of Greeks, Aristotle was particularly disturbed by slavery in Greece, and said that “Hellenes do not like to call Hellenes slaves, but confined the term to barbarians”. All the slaves should be given necessary training and they should be given an opportunity of emancipation.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain Aristotle’s views on Slavery.

2. Critically examine Aristotle’s views on Slavery.

2.2.8.1 ARISTOTLE VIEWS ON SLAVERY: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Firstly, Aristotle’s assumption that some men are born to rule because they are virtuous and rational does not seem to be plausible and in contrary to the modern notion that men are equal. The modern notion is not only an ethical assumption but is supported by empirical wideness.

Secondly, Aristotle believed in the racial superiority of the Greeks. He was of opinion that Greeks should never enslave Greeks. It means that all Greeks were born to be naturally superior, which is unbelievable and unrealistic. This belief has been disapproved by modern science. In fact, no race as such is supposed to be superior to other. The theory based on such faulty presumption was bound to be wrong.

Thirdly, Aristotle does not give any reliable and fixed criteria for the

determination of who is and who is not a natural slave. His definition of slavery according to which some men are, by nature, born to issue orders and others to obey them without reasoning, would reduce the majority of men in this machine age to the position of slaves. From this angle, domestic servants, Labours and women in backward countries, can be considered as slaves.

Fourthly, his theory of slavery is also contrary to the notions of social justice. On the one hand, he considers the slavery essential to enable the masters to devote themselves fully to the services of the society, but on the other hand, he does not acknowledge their importance or properly reward them for their services. This is a clear violation of the notions of social justice.

2.2.9 LET US SUM UP

In some ways Aristotle's criticism can be considered as a corrective of Plato. Aristotle levelled much of his criticism when Plato was alive itself. This criticism not only speaks of the difference in their philosophies but also of Plato's highness and his encouragement of his disciples to develop a critical perspective.

Even though Aristotle's criticism shows his great wisdom and realistic perspective, Plato's Communism cannot be rejected out rightly. Regarding the practicability of Plato's scheme, let us not forget that it was to be applied only to a small minority. Demands were made only on the guardian class (in the view of Plato who possessed highest reason and virtues) in view of monopoly of political power given to them. It is also desirable here to mention about Aristotle's criticism of Platonic communism for depriving the guardians from property and family. Aristotle felt that Plato sacrificed the individual to the community and ignored the claims of individuality. Many scholars condemned this allegation for its wrong and narrow interpretation of individuality. As some scholar rightly says the individuality of an individual does not consist in his doing what he likes, or setting himself up against the community. It should be borne in mind that there is no such thing as an abstract individual. Every one is what he is in virtue of social relationships; one can grow and develop his personality by participating in and contributing to the life of the Community. A guardian, being a philosopher who devotes himself whole-heartedly to the common good and lives for others does not loose his individuality, he rather enriches it.

2.2.10 EXERCISES

1. Write about the position of workers and artisans in Plato's communism?
2. Which conceptions of Plato demand for the abolition of private property and family?
3. Briefly write Plato's objections on the institution of private family?
4. Whose emancipation does Plato visualise through the abolition of Family?
5. How Aristotle preferred to use the private property?

6. Describe why Aristotle supports the institution of Private Property?
7. How Aristotle's regulation is different from the regulation suggested by Platonic Communism of Property?
8. Describe why Aristotle desired unequal distribution of property?
9. Explain why Aristotle considers the abolition of family as detrimental to individual and society?
10. Why Aristotle considers the communisation of wives as harmful and confusing?
11. How far do you accept with Aristotle in his criticism for the denial of private life and property to the Guardians?
12. Do you consider that individual interests can be sacrificed for the good of the community?

2.2.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

Ullmann, Walter, *A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages*, Penguin Books, 1965

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K. Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit II: ARISTOTLE

2.3 ARISTOTLE'S CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT AND CONCEPT OF REVOLUTION

– V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

2.3.0 Objectives

2.3.1 Introduction

2.3.2 Classification of Governments

2.3.3 Concept of Revolution

2.3.3.1 Causes for Revolution

2.3.3.2 Means for Prevention of Revolution

2.3.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.3.5 Exercises

2.3.6 Suggested Readings

2.3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- know how Aristotle classified the governments on bases of their functioning'
- understand Aristotle's concept of Revolution;
- comprehend Aristotle's views on causes for revolution and various means to prevent revolutions.

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

For Aristotle a state is an association of men for the sake of the best moral life. He says that “man is by nature a political animal” therefore, men “desire to live together” and also “for the sake of mere life...mankind meet together and maintain the political community”. The type of life which a group of men will live in common depends upon what kind of men they are and what ends they design to realise, and reciprocally the end of the state will determine who can be members of it and what kind of life they can individually live. From this point of view a constitution is, as Aristotle says, an arrangement of citizens, or a kind of life, and a form of government is the expression of the kind of life which the state is designed to foster. The ethical nature of the state not only dominates but also completely overlaps its political and legal nature. Thus Aristotle concludes that a state lasts only so long as its form of government endures, since a change in form of government would signify a change in the constitution or the underlying “kind of life” that the citizens are trying to realise.

Aristotle defines constitution as a general system of authority through which the functions of the state are performed. To quote Aristotle, “A constitution is the arrangement of magistracies in a state, especially of the highest of all. The government is everywhere sovereign in the state, and the constitution is in fact the government. For example, in democracies the people are supreme, but in oligarchies the few; and, therefore, we say that these two forms of government also are different: and so in other cases”. Aristotle was categorical that a rightly constituted law was the final authority. He assigned a comprehensive array of powers to the deliberative branch of government, since it was supreme. It controlled the magistrates and the courts by controlling the laws that regulated their functions, and by retaining the power to decide judicial and executive issues. In the constitution are determined the number and inter-relationship of the various organs of government, the methods through which they are manned, and, particularly, the abode of the supreme or sovereign power. On this last point depends the difference between constitutions; for the governing body is sovereign, and makes the constitution what it is. Accordingly, where the people are the governing body, the constitution is a democracy; where the few govern, it is oligarchy.

2.3.2 CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Aristotle analysed and compared 158 constitutions, thereby uniting the empirical and speculative modes of enquiry. Based on the study of all these constitutions, he adopts the six-fold classification already used by Plato in the *Statesman*. Aristotle primarily classifies constitutions, first, according to the mere number of those in whom sovereign power is vested, and, second, according to the end to which the conduct of government is directed. The latter principle distinguishes pure from corrupt forms. Constitutions promoting general well-being of the governed were true or good, whereas those that fettered the interests of the ruled were bad or perverted. To quote Aristotle:

The conclusion is evident: that governments which have a regard to the common interest are constituted in accordance with strict principles of justice, and are therefore true forms; but those which regard only the interest of the rulers are all defective and perverted forms, for they are despotic, whereas a state is a community of freeman.

The crux of the above statement is that when the government is administered with common good in view, the state is pure; when the administration aims at the interest, not of all the citizens, but of the governing body alone, the state is corrupt. After giving definitions regarding pure and corrupt forms, Aristotle classifies governments into six categories, three in pure forms and three in corrupt forms. Let us read this classification in Aristotle's own words.

Having determined these points, we have next to consider how many forms government there are, and what they are; and in the first place what are the true forms.... The true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one, or of the few, or of the many, are perversions. For the members of a state, forms of government in which one rules, we call that which regards the common

interests, kingship or royalty; that in which more than one, but not many, rule, aristocracy... But when the citizens at large administer the state of the common interest, the government is called by the generic name,—a constitution. And there is a reason for this use of language. One man or a few may excel in virtue; but as the number increases it becomes more difficult for them to attain perfection in every kind of virtue, though they may in military virtue, for this is found in the masses. Hence in a constitutional government the fighting-men have the supreme power, and those who possess arms are the citizens.

Of the above-mentioned forms, the perversions are as follows:—of royalty, tyranny; of aristocracy— oligarchy; of constitutional government, democracy. For tyranny is a kind of monarchy which has in view the interest of the monarch only; oligarchy has in view the interests of the wealthy; democracy, of the needy; none of them the common good of all.

Dunning's tabular form simplifies the above statement of Aristotle and provides a better clarity to understand the classification.

Sovereignty of	Pure Form	Corrupt Form
The one	Royalty	Tyranny
The few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
The whole people	Polity	Democracy

In respect to this classification it is to be observed that the pure forms are based on an ideal which belongs to political science in its broadest and most abstract sense; while the corruptions, so called because they deviate from the ideal, are what fall strictly within the field of politics in its practical and independent character. Aristotle's conceptions of royalty and aristocracy are hardly less idealistic and fanciful than Plato's. Royalty is substantially the rule of the one perfect man; aristocracy is the rule of the few perfect men, not easily to be distinguished in their attributes from Plato's "guardians".

Aristotle regarded monarchy as a true form of government, for it was possible to have a virtuous person as a ruler who would be able to stand outside the law and be its single guardian. To such and ideally perfect man may be ascribed the right to rule, unrestrained by law. But for the actual states the best possible law has a better ground for supremacy than the best possible man. And for the work of government subject to law, the capacity of an individual can never equal that of an aggregation of individuals. The many is less easily corrupted than the one; and even though the one may have nominal supremacy, the physical impossibility of conducting the administration single-handed renders necessary a plurality in government which is not different in kind from a plurality immediately under the constitution. Aristotle's conclusion is, in fact, that monarchy not only is illogical, but also is practically impossible. Tyranny, the corrupt form of royalty, Aristotle regarded as resting purely on force, and therefore as having no place in a purely rational system of politics.

For his detailed examination of the non-monarchic constitutions, Aristotle points out that the different forms rest upon a deeper foundation than that of mere number in the sovereign body. Oligarchy and democracy signify, respectively, the domination of the rich and that of the poor; while practically these classes are the few and the many the greater importance lies in the economic, not in the arithmetical, fact. But these two forms again require, according to Aristotle, further subdivision. Here we can see how he divided democracy into various forms:

Of forms of democracy first comes that which is said to be based strictly on equality. In such a democracy the law says that it is just for the poor to have no more advantage than the rich; and that neither should be masters, but both equal.... There is another, in which the magistrates are elected according to a certain property qualification, but a low one... Another kind is that in which all the citizens who are under no disqualification share in the government, but still the law is supreme. In another, everybody, if he be only a citizen, is admitted to the government, but the law is supreme as before. A fifth form of democracy, in other respects the same, is that in which, not the law,

but the multitude, have the supreme power, and supersede the law by their decrees. This is a state of affairs brought about by the demagogues. For in democracies which are subject to the law the best citizens hold the first place, and there are no demagogues; but where the laws are not supreme, there demagogues spring up.

So, according to Aristotle, democracies differ from one another, and the same is true of oligarchies; here again the various shades, of which he enumerates four under each form, have a close relation to social and economic facts. The form, amount and diffusion of wealth play a large part in the peculiar adjustments of political organisation.

In the detailed treatment of aristocracy and polity, the original character of the two is almost entirely lost sight of by Aristotle. Their relation to oligarchy and democracy appears no longer as that of the pure to the corrupt, dependent upon the end to which government is directed. On the contrary, the distinctions are made to turn upon the characteristic principle that determines participation in political functions. The principles that are in conflict for supremacy in every community, Aristotle says, are liberty, wealth, virtue and good birth. Where part in the conduct of the government is assigned on the basis of liberty (and equality, which is essential element in liberty), the constitution is oligarchic; where on the basis of virtue, in the strictly ideal sense, it is aristocratic. Polity is the constitution that embodies a blending of the two principles, liberty and wealth. When with these two virtue also is combined, the resulting form is entitled to, and generally receives, the name of aristocracy. But this mixed aristocracy he carefully distinguished from the pure and ideal aristocracy of which the principle is virtue alone.

The full application of Aristotelian analysis thus gives a rather formidable aggregate of forms of constitution; and it is doubtful, says Dunning, if the philosopher in his best estate could have assigned an actual government clearly and categorically to any one particular class. Certainly *the Politics*, as we have it, is very far from clear in distinguishing each from all the rest. Polity and the mixed aristocracy are especially difficult to disentangle, and various shades of democracy and oligarchy approach perplexingly near to both. But there can be

no doubt as to the success of the philosopher in detecting the broad underlying influences, historical, social and economic, through which the manifold variety in political organisation is determined. It is his realisation of the diversity in these influences that leads him more or less unconsciously to shift from time to time the basis of his classification.

The practical significance of the distinction between constitutions on the basis of principle is best revealed in Aristotle's refined analysis of the three elements essential to every government. These necessary elements are: first, a deliberative organ; second, a system of magistracies; and, third, a judicial organ. On the divergences of form and function in these three elements depends the character of the various constitutions. It is because these divergences are practically infinite in number that the forms of constitution shade imperceptibly from one to another of the prominent types. Practically, the most conspicuous characteristics of the various forms are conceived to be: in democracy, concentration of important functions in the general body of citizens, assignment of offices by lot, as the guaranty of perfect equality, and compensation for public services; in oligarchy, concentration of functions in a narrow body of the wealthy, assignment of offices on a property qualification, and unpaid public services; in polity, diffusion of functions among various organs, assignments of offices by a combination of lot and election. Practical or mixed aristocracy would be determined by the employment of oligarchic forms, subject to a primary regard for fitness, rather than for wealth, in the ruling body.

For Aristotle, though states differ from one another according as the supreme power within them is vested in one man, in several, or in many, nevertheless, there is one condition to which all these different kinds of state must conform. In all of them the supreme body must exercise its power according to a law. If it does so the result is not that a different or an inferior form of state comes into existence. What then comes into existence is something which cannot properly be called a state at all. "Such a democracy", says Aristotle "is fairly open to the objection that it is not a constitution at all; for where the laws have no authority, there is no constitution. The law ought to be supreme over all, and the rulers should judge of particulars, and only this should be considered a constitution".

In Aristotle, there was hardly a discussion of the ideal type except sketchy details, but a concern with the best practicable state, pointing out that a monarchy and aristocracy were best suited for ideal forms of state, since goodness was their aim. This we will study in detail in the next lesson.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain Aristotle's Classification of Government.

2. How Aristotle categorized Revolution

2.3.3 REVOLUTION

Frequent changes in the governments of the city-states in Greece, due to decadence and deterioration in political life, gave food for serious thought to Aristotle who formulated his views on Revolutions and their causes. In Book V of the *Politics*, Aristotle makes a masterly exhibition of scientific analysis on the subject of Revolutions.

Aristotle points out that there are varying degrees of revolution. A revolution

- may take the form of a change in the constitution of the state;
- authors may have the constitution unchanged and be content to get the political power into their own hands;
- may make an oligarchy more or less oligarchic, or a democracy more or less democratic; and finally
- may be directed against any particular institution or set of persons in the state and may leave the form of government otherwise unchanged.

2.3.3.1 CAUSES FOR REVOLUTION

According to Dunning, the most general cause of revolutionary movements Aristotle finds to be the craving of men for equality. As already noticed, equality has a double character—absolute and proportional. The masses are ever seeking for absolute equality—for the same privileges and power that are possessed by the few; the few strive for proportionate equality—for a superiority in privilege and power corresponding to their superior wealth or ability or birth. By this one broad principle, thus, may be explained the manifold phenomena of the conflicts for the establishment of monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy and democracy. Of the particular causes which are operative in

revolutions the philosopher enumerates a large number, grouping them according as they lie more in the sphere of human passions (jealousy, arrogance, fear, etc.) or in that of impersonal facts. His remarks under the latter head exhibit his insight at its best, tracing, as he does, political transformation to obscure social and economic sources. Particular stress is laid upon the fact that the causes of revolutions are to be regarded as quite distinct from the occasions. The latter may be, and often are, incidents of trifling character; the former are always profound.

Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy categorise the general causes of revolutions given by Aristotle into three broader themes:

1. Psychological motives or the state of mind.
2. The objectives in mind.
3. The occasions that gave rise to political upheaval and mutual strife.

The *psychological factors* were the desire for equality in an oligarchy, and inequality in a democracy. The *objectives* in mind included profit, honour, insolence, fear, superiority in some form, contempt, disproportionate increase in some part of the state, election intrigues, wilful negligence, neglect of apparently insignificant changes, fear of opposites and dissimilarity of component parts of the state. The *occasions* that gave rise to revolutionary changes were insolence, desire for profit and honour, superiority, fear, contempt, and disproportionate increase in one part or element of the state.

Aristotle analysed these particular causes in each individual constitution. Democracy, oligarchy, polity and aristocracy are subjected in turn to a searching examination, through which the manner of their undoing is laid bare. This investigation duly sets forth the influences which produced the broad trend of government from monarchy to democracy, but at the same time explains all the manifold deviations from this general order.

Democracy has not always been the last term of the series, but has often passed into oligarchy and tyranny. For both these transformations the demagogues have been responsible. In the early days the fighting demagogue, by posing as the friend of the people, made himself tyrant; in later days the talking demagogue,

ever assailing the rich, drives them to oligarchic revolution in self-defence. More common, however, is the transformation of democracy from the more moderate to the extremist variety, through the conviction impressed by the demagogues upon the masses that the people are above even the law.

Oligarchy, Aristotle finds, falls chiefly through dissensions and ambitions in the privileged classes themselves. Where the rulers are harmonious, he says, an oligarchy is not easily overturned. But this form of constitution may, like democracy, be transmuted, not into a wholly distinct form, but into another variety of itself; and this often happens.

As to the mixed constitutions, aristocracy and polity, revolutions may most often be traced to an inexact adjustment of the different principles which are combined in them. Aristocracy tends to become oligarchy, through the undue encroachment of the richer classes; polity to become democracy, through the undue aspiration of the poorer classes. Stability can be maintained only by proportionate equality and by giving to each his own. It is in these mixed constitutions in particular that transformations are apt to take place unnoticed, through the imperceptible modification of social and economic conditions.

2.3.3.2 MEANS FOR PREVENTION OF REVOLUTION

Aristotle follows up his elaborate array of the causes that produce revolutions by an equally impressive array of means for preventing them. The character of the particular causes suggests at once the character of the corresponding remedies. In the mixed constitutions special care must be taken to detect the obscure beginnings of new conditions making for political change. In aristocracy and oligarchy the inferior classes must be well treated, and the principles of democratic equality must be strictly applied among the privileged classes. The body of citizens interested in political stability must often be roused by the cry that the constitution is in danger. No single man should be permitted to attain to power either suddenly or in a disproportionate degree. "Men", the philosopher reflects, "are easily spoiled, and not every one can bear prosperity". Access to positions of power should be made gradual and slow, and undue influence on the part of any individual should be met, if necessary, by ostracism.

In every state, further, the utmost care should be taken to exclude the officers from all opportunity of pecuniary gain. Especially important is this in oligarchy; for a while the masses may be contented to leave political office to others and devote themselves to money-making, they will always resent being excluded from positions that bring not only honour but also profit. The surest way to satisfy both the classes and the masses is to throw the offices open to all, but without salaries. This will ensure in practice the manning of the offices chiefly by the well-to-do. But every care must be taken, through public statements as to the condition and conduct of the finances, to inspire confidence that the treasury is not being exploited by the officials. It is desirable, moreover, that no class should have a monopoly of the offices. In oligarchy the poor, and in democracy the rich, should be encouraged to share in those administrative functions which do not affect the sovereign power. This corresponds to the broad dictate of good policy, not to push extremes the principle of any particular form. Extremes provoke resistance; the mean should be observed; for, whatever elements may rule, all the other elements are valuable to the state. Finally, the most efficient of means for the preservation of the state from revolution is that which is in general the least considered—a system of education in the spirit of the constitution. Legislation is likely to avail little unless the youth of the city are trained to appreciate what is truly essential to the maintenance of their particular system.

Aristotle's discussion of the monarchic constitutions is particularly noteworthy for his finished expositions of tyranny as an art. Royalty, as a practical institution, is in his eyes only a more or less interesting survival from archaic times and conditions. It was essentially the unchecked rule of a super-eminent individual or family over willing subjects. But with general enlightenment the pre-eminence of any one man has become impossible, and the passing of royalty cannot be prevented; for when the subjects cease to yield the monarch willing obedience, whatever absolute power he retains must rest on force, and he is therefore no king, but a tyrant; and if, on the other hand, he submits to limitations on his power, he may remain king in name, but is no longer a monarch in fact.

As distinct from royalty, tyranny is to Aristotle a political phenomenon

sufficiently modern to demand the same scientific consideration as actual constitutions. Of all the species of government it is as a rule the least permanent; therefore the causes which lead to its downfall require special attention. In general these causes are the same as those which operate in the extremist varieties of democracy and oligarchy. The inherent likeness of these forms to tyranny is, in fact, the theme of reiterated comment by Aristotle.

According to Aristotle, to counteract the influences working against him and to maintain his power, the tyrant has the choice between two diametrically opposite policies. That most commonly adopted is one of ruthless and unqualified repression:

- the best citizens are slain or banished;
- whatever makes for a noble and exalted life among the people is suppressed;
- association for intellectual or social purposes is forbidden;
- espionage renders dangerous all freedom of intercourse;
- vast enterprises, whether of peace or of war, are devised to keep the people occupied and poor; and
- the tyrant himself, surrounded by a servile crowd of foreigners, lives a life of undisguised luxury and selfishness.

The more rare, but in Aristotle's opinion the more effective, policy is that according to which the tyrant keeps a firm hold on the essence of power, but disguises the reality of the tyranny by the semblance, at least, of beneficent rule. The administration is ostentatiously economical; the public interest is made a subject of the ruler's grave concern; those who come in contact with him are inspired with respect, rather than with fear; the patronises genius, shows constant respect for the things of religion and avoids all public displays of sensuality or luxury. It is essential to this policy, however, that the tyrant shall win a reputation for at least the military virtues. He shall select his subordinates from men of plodding, rather than enterprising character. Moreover, while inspiring the rich and the poor with distrust of each other and confidence in him, the tyrant shall,

when choice must be made between them, side always with the stronger. In short, the characteristics of monarchic rule of this kind are that it be rather paternal than despotic, that it be based on moderation rather than excess, and that it be popular—winning the classes by friendship and the masses by the arts of the demagogue. On such principles the tyrant’s rule will be better for the subjects, will be more lasting, and will tend to have a beneficial influence on the character of the ruler himself.

Aristotle pointed out that the source of revolution and seditions was usually the image of the government. Care would have to be taken to prevent offices from being used for personal gain. In the interest of constitutional stability, three qualities were required for office-bearers in high positions, and these were: (a) loyalty to the established constitution, (b) outstanding administrative capacity, and (c) integrity of character, goodness and justice in forms. Repeatedly, he emphasised on a fusion between oligarchic and democratic forces. He also recommended government propaganda in education, respect for law even in small things, and justice in law and administration, i.e. equality according to one’s contributions, as measures to prevent revolutions.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What are the means suggested by Aristotle for preventing Revolution.

2. How does Aristotle’s concept of middle class relate to political stability and good governance.

2.3.4 LET US SUM UP

The search for stability through polity made Aristotle examine the causes

for instability, change and revolution, and prescribe remedies against unnecessary and incessant change. Unlike Plato, who did not accept change and equated it with decay and corruption, Aristotle on the contrary regarded change as inevitable. Change represented movement towards an ideal. Unlike Plato, Aristotle accepted the possibility of progress. Things changed because they had the potential to inch towards perfection.

Stability and revolution were important in Aristotle's agenda of political ideals, having perceived a constitution as containing the essence of a state. Aristotle discussed general causes of revolution and then looked into the reasons why individual constitutions changed. Unlike Plato, Aristotle perceived multiple reasons for revolutions, rather than simply a regime's prominent deficiency. He

placed greater responsibility on the rulers to ensure stability and justice. The criterion of stability was not majority support for a constitution, but the fact that no class or faction favoured violent change.

2.3.5 EXERCISES

1. How Aristotle characterised the State?
2. How Aristotle defined the Constitution?
3. What is the basic difference between pure and corrupt form of State?
4. How do you understand Aristotle's definition of Monarchy?
5. What are the various forms of Democracy?
6. Define Aristotle's Oligarchic and Aristocratic forms of Government?
7. According to Aristotle three elements essential to every government. What are they?
8. How Aristotle categorised Revolution?
9. What are causes for Revolution?
10. What are the means suggested by Aristotle for preventing Revolution?
11. According to Aristotle to maintain his power, the tyrant has the choice between two diametrically opposite policies. What are they?
12. In the interest of constitutional stability, three qualities were required for office-bearers in high positions. What are they?

2.3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Scruton, Roger, *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, London: Pan Books, 1982

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K. Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit II: ARISTOTLE

2.4 ARISTOTLE'S BEST PRACTICABLE STATE: CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

2.4.0 Objectives

2.4.1 Introduction

2.4.2 Definition of State

2.4.3 Best Practicable State

2.4.3.1 Stress on Strong Middle Class

2.4.3.2 Polity as Best Practicable Form of Government

2.4.4 External Conditions for Best Practicable State

2.4.4.1 Population

2.4.4.2 Territory

2.4.4.3 Classes

2.4.4.4 Education

2.4.4.5 Leisure

2.4.5 Let Us Sum Up

2.4.6 Exercises

2.4.7 Suggested Readings

2.4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will understand:

- how Aristotle defined the state;
- what is the best practicable state in Aristotle's understanding;
- various external conditions required for best practicable state.

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the political factors in a Democracy and Oligarchy, which we have already studied in the previous lesson, enabled Aristotle to consider the form of government that would be suitable to a large number of states, assuming that for its realisation no more virtue or political skill was needed than what the states could gather.

In fact Book III of Aristotle was designed as an introduction to an ideal state. Books VII and VIII, however, show that Aristotle found the carrying out of this project so unsatisfactory that he never completed it. It is safe to conclude that the construction of an ideal state became less and less congenial to Aristotle's mode of thought as he grew older. This conclusion is borne out by the reading of Book III itself. Its complexities are due to the fact that an introduction to the ideal state involves, to Aristotle's mind, a rather extended study of existing kinds of states. Often he is evidently more interested in the empirical study than in the purpose that he had set himself.

In so far as the object is to formulate an ideal state, this is not an insuperable objection. For such a state would be dominated by the highest possible kind of life. At least, had supposed that an understanding of the ideal of the good would show what this is. But to arrive at the idea of the good first and then to use this as a standard for criticising and evaluating actual lives and actual states, was just what made Aristotle despair. If, on the other hand, one begins with the observation and description of actual states, distinctions evidently have to be made. The good man and the good citizen cannot be quite identical, as Aristotle points out, except in an ideal state. For unless the purposes of the state are the

best possible, their realisation will require a kind of life in the citizens which falls bellow the best possible.

It is hard to see just how this conclusion can advance the construction of an ideal state, but it is also obvious that Aristotle has treated a perennial dispute in political ethics with incomparable common sense. In fact, the examination of the conflicting claims of democracy, as we stated above, led Aristotle later to lay aside the search for an ideal state and to take up the more modest problem of the best form of government attainable by most states.

2.4.2 DEFINITION OF STATE

In the first book of *The Politics*, Aristotle sets forth the fundamental characteristics of the state. It is an association—an association of human beings—and the highest form of human association. Aristotle defines state in these terms:

Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embrace all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

For Aristotle, the state springs from the union of villages into an association of such size and character as to be self-sufficing. It is the last and the perfect association. Originating in the bare needs of living, it exists for the sake of complete life. And because the individual can fulfil the end of his existence—can live a complete life—only in the state, Aristotle declares that man is by nature a political animal. Aristotle wrote:

...a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which is a community of families and aggregation of families in well-

being, for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. Such a community can only be established among those who live in the same place and intermarry. Hence arise in cities family connections, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship, for the will to live together is friendship. The end of the state is the good life, and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable life.

Our conclusion, then, is that political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship. Hence they who contribute most to such a society have a greater share in it than those who have the same or a greater freedom or nobility of birth but are inferior to them in political virtue; or than those who exceed them in wealth but are surpassed by them in virtue.

Such a society, Aristotle says, must indeed form the groundwork of every state: "These are conditions without which a state cannot exist"; but a society which was no more than this would not deserve the name of a state at all. Because it would be restricted from performing that service to its citizens which is the chief end of state to perform—the service of making them good men, or of educating them to virtue. The bad actions of a man which do not infringe the rights of his neighbour are just as vicious as those which do. A state is doing only half its duty which sets itself to curb the latter but ignores the former. Above all, a state should be concerned with the characters of its citizens, not merely with their overt actions. To deter a criminal from committing a crime by fear of a penalty is to leave the criminal as bad a man as he was before. A state which does not care how good or bad its citizens are so long as they do not commit criminal actions is not performing the proper function of a state. "Those who care for good government take into consideration virtue and vice in states. Hence it may be further inferred that virtue must be the care of a state which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name".

2.4.3 BEST PRACTICABLE STATE

In approaching the question as to which form of constitution or state is best, as we studied already, Aristotle refuse to return a categorical answer. We must consider, Aristotle declares, not only what form is the best absolutely, but what is the best attainable by actual men and on the average, and what is the best under given conditions.

Aristotle's portrayal of the best state was not only influenced by his scientific and practical bent of mind but also by his theory of virtue which to Plato meant the opposite of vice but, to Aristotle, was represented by the golden mean.

The ideal state not being possible due to lack of ideal conditions, one should think of the best attainable. To do this one should follow the rule of the golden mean in deciding between other constitutions, the extremes being the main source of political evil. In human society extremes of wealth and poverty are the main sources of evil. The one brings arrogance and a lack of capacity to obey; the other brings lavishness and a lack of capacity to command. Where a population is divided into the two classes of very rich and very poor, there can be no real state; for there can be no real friendship between the classes, and friendship is the essential principle of all association. That state, therefore, will be the best in which the middle class is stronger than either or both of the extremes. In such a state the influences which make for peace and order will wholly prevail and stability will be insured.

2.4.3.1 STRESS ON STRONG MIDDLE CLASS

According to Aristotle, the best practicable state's foundation is the existence of a large middle class composed of those who are neither very rich nor very poor. It is this class which "saves states", for they are not poor enough to be degraded or rich enough to be factious. Where such a body of citizens exists they form a group large enough to give the state a popular foundation, disinterested enough to hold the magistrates responsible, and select enough to avoid the evils of government by the masses. Upon such a social foundation it is possible to build a political structure drawing upon institutions typical of both

democracy and oligarchy. There may be a property qualification but only a moderate one, or there may be no property qualification with no use of lot in selecting magistrates.

The principle of the middle-class state is balance, balance between two factors that are certain to count for something in every political system. These two he describes as quality and quantity. The first includes political influences such as arise from the prestige of wealth, birth, position, and education; the second is the sheer weight of numbers. If the first predominates the government becomes an oligarchy; if the second, a democracy. In order to produce stability it is desirable that the constitution should allow for both and balance the one against the other. It is because this is most easily done where there is a large middle class that this kind of state is the most secure and the most law-abiding of practicable constitutions. This brings the political dimension of best practicable state, the polity.

2.4.3.2 POLITY AS BEST PRACTICABLE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

As to the best form of the state, Aristotle's preference is as follows: 1) Ideal Royalty; 2) Pure Aristocracy; 3) Mixed Aristocracy; 4) Polity; 5) Most moderate Democracy; 6) Most Moderate Oligarchy; 7) The two intermediate varieties of Democracy and Oligarchy; 8) Extreme Democracy; 9) Extreme Oligarchy; and 10) Tyranny. Absolutely considered, polity stands fourth in Aristotle's list of preferences but, says Aristotle, it is the best practicable form of state. It represents a judicious fusion of oligarchic and democratic elements. So, for Aristotle, the constitution which in all respects embodies the principle of the mean is polity. This constitution, therefore, must be on the average the best.

But it is not to be understood that this form, which is on the average the best, is necessarily the best for every people and under every set of conditions. Circumstances, Aristotle holds, may make any form the best. The general principle here is that the element which desires the existing constitution to stand shall be stronger than those which desire change. In other words, stability is the criterion; and that constitution is best which under the circumstances will last

the longest. In this sense, democracy is best where the poor greatly exceed the rich in numbers; oligarchy, where the superiority of the rich in resources and power more than compensates for their inferiority in numbers; polity, where the middle class is clearly superior to all the rest.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain the best practicable state that was suggested by Aristotle.

2. How does Aristotle suggest a state can prevent revolution or political instability in his best practicable model.

2.4.4 EXTERNAL CONDITIONS FOR BEST PRACTICABLE STATE

In the discussion of the characteristics of the best state, Aristotle mixes idealism with practicability. He does not give the details of governmental organisation and confines himself to the determination of the most favourable external conditions for the state and the best means for character-building for the people. Aristotle wrote:

In what has preceded I have discussed other forms of government; in what remains the first point to be considered is what should be the conditions of the ideal or perfect state; for the perfect state cannot exist without a due supply of the means of life. And therefore we must presuppose many purely imaginary conditions but nothing impossible. There will be a certain number of citizens, a country in which to place them and the like. As the weaver or shipbuilder or any other artisan must have the material proper for his work, so the statesman or legislator must also have the materials suited to him.

The plan suggested by Aristotle for the realisation of the Ideal State presents the most desirable features of a city-state given below.

2.4.4.1 POPULATION

A certain minimum of population is necessary to make the state self-sufficing as also a certain maximum beyond which good government and order become impossible. Let us read this from Aristotle's own writings:

First among the materials required by the statesman is population: he will consider what should be the size and character of the country. Most persons think that a state in order to be happy ought to be large;

but even if they are right they have no idea what is a large and what a small state. For they judge of the size of the city by the number of the inhabitants; whereas they ought to regard, not their number, but their power. A city too, like an individual, has a work to do; and that city which is best adapted to the fulfilment of its work is to be deemed greatest... And even if we reckon greatness by numbers, we ought not to include everybody, for there must always be in cities a multitude of slaves...foreigners; but we should include those only who are members of the state, and who form an essential parts of it. The number of the latter is a proof of the greatness of a city; but a city which produces numerous artisans and comparatively few soldiers cannot be great, for a great city is not to be confounded with a populous one.

Moreover, experience shows that a very populous city can rarely if ever, be well governed; since all cities which have a reputation for good government have a limit of population.... For law is order, and good law is good order; but a very great multitude cannot be orderly.... Beauty is realised in number and magnitude, and the state which combines magnitude with good order must necessarily be the most beautiful. To the size of states there is a limit, as there is to other things.... [A] state when composed of too few is not, as a state ought to be, self-sufficing; when of too many, though self-sufficing in all mere necessities, as a notion may be, it is not a state, being almost incapable of constitutional government.

As the above statements indicate, for Aristotle, the state must be of a manageable size. Aristotle's view of the size of the population is rather parochial, judging from modern standards. Personal knowledge by each citizen of all others is now-a-days not considered necessary for good government, for proper election of people to offices by merit, and for service on the juries. Aristotle, obviously, approves of the population of a city-state, not of a present nation-state.

2.4.4.2 TERRITORY

Territory should be large enough to ensure a free and leisured life but not too large to foster laxity and luxury. The territory of the state should be hard of access to the enemy but easy of egress to its own inhabitants. It should be near enough to the sea for necessary imports but not too near to promote foreign trade of a seafaring class. It should be small enough to be taken in at a single view. The land should be divided into two parts: 1) Public for the worship of gods and other state purposes; and 2) private for citizens, each citizen getting his share of land and cultivating it with the help of slaves.

2.4.4.3 CLASSES

The elements in the population of the state necessary to make it self-sufficing are agriculturists, artisans, warriors, a well-to-do leisured class, priests and administrators. Of these, the first two are *in* but not *of* the State. They are non-citizens, while the remaining are citizens proper. The citizens must own the land individually except for the common land. They must perform different functions during different periods of their lives: they must be warriors while young, administrators when older and priests when very old. This arrangement will complete their civic training and teach the citizens their duty of ruling and being ruled.

2.4.4.4 EDUCATION

To Aristotle, it is clear that the ideal tone of his ideal state depends on the character of the people which itself depends on education. The chief function of the state, therefore, should be a scientific course of education designed to cultivate moral, intellectual and physical excellence in its citizens for the due performance of their civic functions. A system of uniform, compulsory and public education is the first necessity of an ideal state. Aristotle's educational scheme generally resembles that of Plato. Meant as it is for leisured citizens, it aims at moral and mental culture rather than at practical or professional utility, lays stress on physical training and attaches to music, character-building virtues. The

educational system is calculated to make good citizens, soldiers and administrators. “Education” is the name which Aristotle gives to the process of making men good, or of training them to virtue. So, for Aristotle, education was state’s principle function. The object of its institutions should be to train men to goodness, not only to intellectual, but to moral and physical excellence, and not only during childhood, but during the whole course of the lives. The state should be the school of the citizen.

2.4.4.5 LEISURE

Aristotle has given maximum stress on the need for leisure. According to him the activities of leisure are identical with the activities of “the good life”, for the sake of which the state exists. Aristotle wrote:

- (a) Men in general think that magistrates should be chosen not only for their merit, but for their wealth: a man, they say, who is poor cannot rule well—he has not the leisure.
- (b) That in a well-ordered state the citizens should have leisure and not have to provide for their daily wants is generally acknowledged.
- (c) No man can practice virtue who is living the life of a mechanic or labourer.
- (d) The legislator should direct all his military and other measures to the provision of leisure and the establishment of peace.
- (e) Since the end of individuals and of states is the same, the end of the best man and of the best constitution must also be the same.... Courage and endurance are required for business and philosophy for leisure...
- (f) Concerning music a doubt may be raised—in our own day most men cultivate it for the sake of pleasure, but originally it was included in education, because nature herself, as has been often said, requires that we should be able, not only to work

well, but to use leisure well; for, as I must repeat once again, the first principle of all action is leisure.

(g) Now that we have spoken of the virtues, the forms of friendship, and the varieties of pleasure, what remains is to discuss in outline the nature of happiness, since this is what we state the end of human nature to be.... Happiness does not lie in amusement.... The happy life is thought to be virtuous; now, a virtuous life requires exertion, and does not consist in amusement.

Waking life is made up of three parts, according to Aristotle; there is labour or toil, amusement or recreation, and leisure. With the first two of these we are familiar enough. We are accustomed to the notion that a man's life is composed of hours of work and hours of recreation. But, if we were to use the word "leisure", we should probably use it as a synonym for "recreation". A "leisure hour" means for the same as an hour of recreation; a "life of leisure" means simply a life in which no work is done.

Aristotle does not mean this by "leisure". He thinks it as an important part of the justification of slavery that the labour of the slave provides leisure for the master; this does not mean that he thinks it just that some men should work in order that other may be idle. He says that the legislator should direct his measures to the provision of leisure; this does not mean that the aim of statesmanship is to secure that the people have as little as possible to do. He thinks it indispensable that citizenship should be confined to a leisured class; this does not mean a class which can afford to play while other men work.

Leisure, for Aristotle, is not relaxation, but a form of activity. By performing these activities man realises and exercises his human virtue. These are the activities for which man is destined by his nature, and it is these which are designated by the term "leisure".

What activities are these? Practically all activities beyond those to which man is driven by the necessity of supplying his economic and material needs; first and foremost, the political activity of ruling the performance of public

service, the activity of warfare, in which the virtue of courage is actualised; the conduct of social relations with fellow-citizens, which calls forth the virtues of temperance, generosity, magnanimity, and good fellowship; participation in athletic contests, in dramatic performances, and in the services of religion; and, finally, the pursuit of science and philosophy.

In the end, Aristotle's best possible state has been summed up as one which is "neither too rich nor too poor, secure from attack and devoid of the desire for great or wide expansion of trade or territory, homogenous, virtuous and cultured, a defensible unambitious community, self-sufficient but not aggressive, great but not large.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain Aristotle's concept of golden means.

2. Why did Aristotle consider leisure important for a good and meaningful life.

2.4.5 LET US SUM UP

A preliminary discussion, devoted to a nearer definition of the true end of the Aristotle's best ideal state, develops the conclusion that for the state, as for the individual, the best life lies in the pursuit of virtue, rather than of power or wealth. A peaceful career, devoted to self-perfection through the harmonious and unceasing activity of all the elements of political and social organisation, is the true ideal, and that which involves complete happiness for both state and people.

The realisation of this ideal depends partly upon external conditions, which must be more or less determined by chance, but to a far greater extent upon the

character and culture of the people, which may be fixed through scientific legislation. The size of the population and the extent of territory must be sufficiently great to make the state self-sufficing. But the number of people must not exceed what can be well supervised; the community must be a city and not a people. The city should be situated near enough to the sea to procure what is necessary from abroad, but not near enough unduly to stimulate commerce and the seafaring class. In natural endowments the population should resemble the Greeks, who combine the spirit and courage of the northern races with the intellectual keenness of the Asiatics. The elements essential to make the state self-sufficing are agriculturists, artisans, warriors, well-to-do people, priests,

and administrators. Performing in succession the various duties of citizenship, they will maintain that equality which is distinctive of the free citizen and will round out the civic character by experience in both ruling and being ruled. Supported by the prudence of their land, they will enjoy that leisure without which true virtue is impossible.

As to the means through which the ideal character is to be developed in the citizens of the state, Aristotle finds it, as did Plato, in scientific education. The ultimate function of the state is pedagogic. For the perfection of the community depends upon the perfection of its constituent members, and the perfection of the latter can be achieved only through the cultivation of moral and intellectual excellence. Hence a system of uniform, compulsory, public education is the first essential of the best state, and the administration of such a system is the most important function of government. We find in *The Politics* provision for a rigid regulation of the times and conditions of marriage and procreation and of the care of the young. Thus will be ensured the ideal basis for the later training, the finished product of which will be a matured manhood of physical grace and beauty, combined with a moral and intellectual fitness for the lofty thought and noble action that are worthy of the free man's leisure.

However, it is significant that Aristotle's Best State remains unfinished. After studying four lessons, which cover different aspects of Aristotle's philosophy, now we are in a position to understand Aristotle's political ideals did not eventuate in the construction of an ideal state. The ideal state represented a conception of political philosophy which he inherited from Plato and which was in fact little congenial to his genius. The more he struck out an independent line of thought and investigation, the more he turned towards the analysis and description of actual constitutions. The great collection of 158 constitutional histories made by him and his students marks the turning point in his thought and suggested a broader conception of political theory. This did not mean that Aristotle turned to description alone. The essence of the new conception was the uniting of empirical investigation with the more speculative consideration of political ideals. Moral ideals—the sovereignty of law, the freedom and equality of citizens, constitutional government, the perfecting of men in a civilised life—are always

for Aristotle the ends for which the state ought to exist. What he discovered was that these ideals were infinitely complicated in the realisation and required infinite adjustment to the conditions of actual government. As George H. Sabine comments, “ideals must exist not like Plato’s pattern in the Heavens but as forces working in and through agencies by no means ideal”.

2.4.6 EXERCISES

1. For Aristotle, the state springs from the union of villages into an association of such size and character as to be self-sufficing. Elaborate.
2. How do you understand Aristotle’s statement of “political society exists for the sake of noble actions and not of mere companionship”?
3. The ideal state not being possible due to lack of ideal conditions, one should think of the best attainable. Explain.
4. According to Aristotle, the best practicable state’s foundation is the existence of a large middle class. Elaborate.
5. What is the best Practicable State that was suggested by Aristotle?
6. In the discussion of the characteristics of the best state, Aristotle mixes idealism with practicability. Explain.
7. Aristotle’s view of the size of the population is rather parochial judging from modern standards. How do you understand this?
8. For Aristotle, the chief function of the state should be a scientific course of education designed to cultivate moral, intellectual and physical excellence in its citizens for the due performance of their civic functions. Elaborate.
9. Why Aristotle has given maximum stress on the need for leisure and how he defined leisure?

2.4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K.Nath & CO., 2010.

Gettell, Raymond G., “The Nature of Political Thought”, *American Political Science Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

UNIT III: MACHIAVELLI

In no system of political philosophy is the influence of environment more manifest than in that of Machiavelli. The brilliant Florentine (Italy) was in the fullest sense the child of his times. Born in 1469, he entered public life twenty-nine years later, and died in 1527. The period of his maturity thus coincided with the first quarter of the 16th century. During that time, Italian politics was the field of a most complex activity, and Machiavelli, who during fourteen years (1498-1512) held an important office in the Florentine administration, was in the midst of it. Practical experience thus combined with his philosophical temperament to give character to his speculations. The missions on which he was sent by his government gave him personal knowledge and experience not only of Italian men and affairs, but also of the greater nations of Europe. His extensive and acute observations of government in its actual working left a most vivid impression on his thought and writings. But with all the influence of contemporary political conditions, Machiavelli's philosophy was to an even greater extent the product of the Renaissance, which swept entire Europe in the beginning of the 16th Century. It was under the stimulus of the spirit embodied in the Renaissance and even a greater extent in Greek literature that his naturally acute intelligence attacked the problems of politics and propounded solutions which, in both method and results, were as distinct from those of the preceding centuries. The work which was avowedly an application of his new method, the *Discourse on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, dealt with the Romans almost extensively; and in *The Prince* Machiavelli's interest was clearly determined by contemporary conditions. The comparative method, which is essential to fruitfulness in the historical, was employed only to a slight extent and mostly in a rudimentary form.

In fact, Machiavelli's method was historical rather in appearance than in reality. The actual source of his speculations was the interest he felt in the men

and conditions of his own time. Of the circumstances of his own time he was a most accurate observer and a most acute analyst. His conclusions were reached empirically, and were then reinforced by appeals to history. These characteristics of method are closely related to the point of view from which he regards politics. His philosophy is a study of the art of government, rather than a theory of the state. He is interested in the establishment and operation of the machinery of government—in the forces through which governmental power is generated and applied. He views things from the standpoint of the governing, not of the governed class. The main theme of the Machiavelli's works is the successful creation of a principality by an individual. But the centre of his thought is the methods of those who wield the power of the state, rather than the fundamental relationships in which the essence of the state consists.

It follows, therefore that while the affinity between Machiavelli and Aristotle is, from the point of view of method, very marked, in substance Machiavelli covers a much narrower field than that covered by the Aristotle. Aristotle devoted much attention to the workings of government, to the practical questions of policy and administration; but he subordinates this phase of his work to the investigation of the broader aspects of organised social and political life. He has a theory of the state in the wide sense, and he sets forth this theory at length. Machiavelli, while conscious of a broad philosophical basis for his views, gives only perfunctory attention to this, and hastens to take up the questions of immediate practical concern. While the ideal of Aristotle was a state in which immobility and philosophic calm constituted the supreme end to be kept in view, the ideal of Machiavelli was a state whose end was expansion and the attainment of widespread dominion.

Reading Machiavelli is a great pleasure and refreshing. It is noteworthy that even after five centuries his theory looks more relevant to the period in which we are living. In this unit of Machiavelli, the first lesson will be on Renaissance and its impact on Machiavelli, the second lesson on Machiavelli's views on Human Nature and Motives, the third lesson deals with Machiavelli's views on relationship between Ethics and Politics, and the fourth lesson discusses Machiavelli's views regarding the preservation and Extension of State Power.

SUGGESTED READING FOR THIS UNIT

Dunning, W. A., *A History of Political Theories* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1976).

Foster, M.B., *Masters of Political Thought*, vol. I, Plato to Machiavelli (Delhi: Oxford, 1971).

Jones, W. T., *Masters of Political Thought*, vol. 2, Machiavelli to Bentham (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Sabine, George H., *A History of Political Theory* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Co. Ltd., 1973).

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)
Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)
Unit III: **MACHIAVELLI**

3.1 RENAISSANCE AND ITS IMPACT ON MACHIAVELLI

- Sushma Mahajan

STRUCTURE

- 3.1.0 Objectives**
- 3.1.1. Introduction**
- 3.1.2 Renaissance**
- 3.1.3. Chief Characteristics**
- 3.1.4. Impact on Machiavelli**
- 3.1.5. The Areas of Impact of Renaissance**
- 3.1.6. Let Us Sum Up**
- 3.1.7. Exercises**
- 3.1.8. Suggested Readings**

3.1.0 OBJECTIVES

This sub-unit deals with the meaning, types of Renaissance, Italian Renaissance and its impact on Machiavelli. After studying it, you should be able to

- explain the concept of the Renaissance in its three forms
- distinguish the forms from one another
- explain the Impact on Machiavelli

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The word Renaissance is derived from the Latin word ‘rinascere’, which means ‘to be reborn’. In this sense, Europe has had three Renaissances. The first

one took place in the eighth century when something of the old Roman learning

was revived; the second occurred in the thirteenth century when Aristotle and the learning of the Arabs were rediscovered. The third, for which the first two prepared the ground, originated in the fourteenth century and extended roughly to the end of the sixteenth. Since it originated in Italy and reached its high watermark there in the fifteenth century, it is sometimes known as the Italian Renaissance. It began the most important period in western thought since the age of Greece, and marked the re-emergence of the humanistic, and at a later stage, of the scientific outlook which is typically European. The Renaissance, in fact, was a rediscovery of pagan antiquity. It was a rebirth of that ancient culture which Christianity had conquered and suppressed. Artists and scholars of Renaissance looked back to this Classical past. They deliberately rejected the scholarship and religious thought of the Middle Ages. For them, the Middle Ages were a Dark Age wherein the feudalism and monarchy had flourished in Europe with active support and blessings of the Church.

Beliefs of the Social and Political philosophy of the Middle Ages:

- a) Man's duty to God is more imperative than his duty to State.
- b) Church as the sole conduit by which God's scheme was revealed to human beings. In other words, all knowledge was dependent on divine revelation as revealed to Church.
- c) Power of church to decide the future life of human beings. It was believed that the Church had the keys to heaven (and surely hell too).
- d) Divine authority of Kings to rule

3.1.2 THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

While taking the classical past as its model, the Renaissance was one of the most creative periods in human history, comparable only to the Golden Age of Hellenic Athens in the fifth century before Christ. The Italian Renaissance, in fact, marked an important turning point in human history. Just as the Germanic invasions of the fifth century of our era marked the end of the Classical Period of history and ushered in the Middle Ages, so the Renaissance was the beginning

of our own Modern Period of history and marked the ending of the Middle Ages. The revival of interest in pagan antiquity was something more than merely a scholarly or academic movement. It symbolized also a revival of pagan sentiments in the European peoples, which had been overlaid, but not dissolved by the Christian culture of the middle Ages. Men discovered a new interest in the works of the ancients because these works were congenial to something of which they were conscious in themselves- to a new sense of liberty and new values of life. It influenced their art and literature and was responsible for an outburst of vernacular literature. Under its influence man became a more important subject of study than God. Men were more interested in studying the relation of man to his fellow-beings than the relation of his soul to Deity.

3.1.3 CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF RENAISSANCE

Chief characteristics of Renaissance way of thinking were:

- a) It was a shift towards human concern.
- b) It glorified man, his dignity.
- c) It centred on man of flesh and blood with all his joys and sorrows.
- d) It defended right to pleasure and rejected asceticism.

After Renaissance, the absence of divine sanctions and a comforting heaven brought about a sea change in attitudes. This forced philosophers to seek moral principles that could form the basis for ethics and laws. The decline in the belief of divinity of Kings as well as of Church was signalled by Niccolò Machiavelli (1467-1527) – a product of Italian Renaissance.

3.1.4 IMPACT ON MACHIAVELLI

Florence has often been called the Athens of the Renaissance because so many great artists were born or worked there. Machiavelli was born as a citizen of Florence, where he entered public life in 1494 at the age of twenty-five. Machiavelli rose to prominence during the Florentine Republic under Savonarola in 1498. After the Medici regained power in 1512, Machiavelli retired from

government (involuntarily), moved to his estate outside Florence, and began to write. Convinced from his experiences in government that Italy could survive only if unified under a strong leader, in 1513, Machiavelli published *The Prince*, the best known piece of writing of the renaissance period. Perhaps also intended as a means to curry favour with the Medici leader of the moment, *The Prince* was intended as a guidebook for the eventual leader of all of Italy and as a reference for rulers everywhere. In its pages, Machiavelli argued that it was better for a leader to be feared than loved, and advocated that a “prince” should do anything necessary to maintain his power and achieve his goals.

The facts which exercised the profoundest influence on Machiavelli and determined his political philosophy may be summed up under the following heads: (i) the political division of Italy and the resulting disorderly factious and corrupt conditions that prevailed in the country; (ii) the monarchic reaction which had swept away almost all the vestiges of medieval representative institutions; and (iii) the Renaissance which was strongest in Florence, the birthplace of Machiavelli.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient

1 What is Renaissance.

2. Explain the impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli.

3.1.5 THE IMPACT OF RENAISSANCE ON MACHIAVELLI

a) Spiritual Ancestry- Denial of Divine Law and Denial of Natural Law:

He attacks the separation of the temporal from the spiritual sphere, and he rejects the doctrine of Natural Law; thus denying the two main principles of the Catholic system. Machiavelli does not believe the cardinal tenet of Christian doctrine,

that man is destined to a supernatural end. This does not mean that he confines man's end to merely material well being. But the values which he recognizes over and above material well being are all earthly and not heavenly ones. They are the values of greatness, power, and fame. Fame which will outlast his life is the only immortality of which Machiavelli thinks the individual to be capable. If man has, as Machiavelli thinks, no supernatural end, there is no function to be performed by a Divine Law.

b) **Humanism:** With the focus in the Italian Renaissance being, individual achievement, self gratification, and the quest for public appraisal and political power, changes occurred in the nature of politics. People who wanted fame and

power in this new world of humanism and self-righteousness had to deserve it. No longer did a supreme authority, such as the pope, appoint officials and leaders. The authority rested in the hands of the person willing to take charge. This approach to gaining wealth and power can be described as Machiavellian. Machiavelli wrote one of the most influential political books of all time, called the *Prince*, which is considered the most lasting work on Italian Renaissance. In his novel, Machiavelli writes of “cruelty, well used or badly used,” and warns the compassionate and humanistic prince “not to make bad use of this compassion. He expanded on his belief in the Prince that Italians should behave with ferocity when it comes to politics, and should back up that ferocity with a unified force. Machiavelli’s principles have had a profound effect on the way Europe and the rest of the world have viewed politics over centuries, and truly show the Renaissance’s uncanny trait of promoting individualism and social Darwinism.

c) **Nationalism and Patriotism:** At the beginning of the Renaissance, Italy was divided into some 250 self- governing city-states, ranging from small towns of 2,000 individuals, to some of the largest cities in Europe of that time, such as Florence, Milan, and Venice, each with 100,000 citizens each. These city-states were loosely organized under the Pope, ruling out of Rome, although he had no real political control over the divided Italy. Internally these states were the home of fierce political rivalries and personal ambitions, and a brilliant artistic and literary culture. In their relation with one another they were involved in constant struggles carried on by diplomacy and war, the latter waged largely by mercenary armies. The political disunion of Italy laid it open, further, to incursions and armed interference by the larger political units which existed in other parts of Europe, by the German Emperor, and by the national monarchies of France and Spain. These powers were often summoned into Italy by Italian states or Italian parties to assist them against their rivals. Spain, in particular, was the power on which the Popes continually relied for the support of their temporal dominion in Italy. Machiavelli saw that unless the whole country was united under a strong central government, she would be conquered and annexed by either France or Spain or else destroyed in the course of conflict between these two powers for

her possession. As an ardent patriot Machiavelli passionately desired to find some means by which Italy could be united and made sufficiently strong to maintain internal peace and order, resist aggression by foreign states and expel the foreigners from her soil .

d) Conception of Morality: Niccolò A Machiavelli observes that “whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times.” For him, politics is about one and only one thing: getting and keeping power or authority. Everything else—religion, morality, etc—that people associate with politics has nothing to do with this fundamental aspect of politics—unless being moral helps one get and keep power. The only skill that counts in getting and maintaining power is **calculation**; the successful politician knows what to do or what to say for every situation. Throughout *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, it’s clear that Machiavelli has praise only for the winners. For this reason, he admires figures such as Alexander VI and Julius II, universally hated throughout Europe as ungodly popes, for the astonishing military and political success. His refusal to allow ethical judgments enter into political theory branded him throughout the Renaissance as a kind of anti-Christ. He was the first to discuss politics and social phenomena in their own terms without recourse to ethics or jurisprudence. In chapters such as “Whether a Prince Should Be True to his Word,” Machiavelli argues that any moral judgment should be secondary to getting, increasing and maintaining power. On one hand, Machiavelli saw the wickedness of ruling classes and Church; on the other hand, he saw intellectuals ready to prostrate and sell their mind for silver. Naturally, he treats princes, aristocrats, nobles, priests and wise men with no awe or respect; he considers them as immoral to the core and prescribes no morality for them; they are to be kept in control by system of checks and balances. He has more faith in common people and wants liberty for them. Machiavelli is remembered more for his ‘immoral’ philosophy than for his views on liberty or checks and balances, though for centuries after him, these two have been primary concerns of most political thinkers.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What is Machiavelli's view of morality in politics.

2. What is the main idea of Machiavelli's "The Prince".

3 What is the difference between public morality and private morality according to Machiavelli.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Ebenstein, William, *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*, Dryden Press, 1969
Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K.Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Vol 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit III: MACHIAVELLI

3.2 MACHIAVELLI'S VIEWS ON HUMAN NATURE AND MOTIVES – IMPLICATIONS EVALUATION

Diwakar Singh

STRUCTURE

3.2.0 Objectives

3.2.1 Introduction

3.2.2 The Renaissance

3.2.3 Machiavelli's Theory of Human Nature and Motives – Universal Egoism

3.2.3.1 Realistic Interpretation of Human Nature

3.2.4 Critical Analysis of Machiavelli's Concept of Human Nature and Motives

3.2.5 Exercises

3.2.6 Suggested Readings

3.2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will know:

- What is meant by renaissance;
- Its influence on Machiavelli;
- Machiavelli's views on human nature and motives and its critical analysis.

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Greek Political thought was influenced by the nature of Greek City-

states and the highly rational character of the Greek mind. The thoughts of men in the middle ages were dominated by (i) the idea of a universal society organised under two different heads, the Pope and the Emperor and (ii) the general acceptance of the Christian Church as the ultimate authority defining man's place in the universe and his moral duties. The subordination of the state to the spiritual authority was the distinctive trait of medieval civilization and culture. There emerged a new outlook, rational in nature which separated state from church. The new secular nation-state which was slowly emerging in the 14th and 15th centuries and this in turn signified the passing away of the middle ages and the birth of the modern world with its emphasis on the spirit of secularism and nationalism and independence of the individual. It is necessary to understand the forces which resulted in the passing away of the Middle Ages.

3.2.2 RENAISSANCE

The period between the death of Marsilio in 1343 and the birth of Machiavelli in 1469 saw the beginning of a great intellectual and spiritual revolution known as Renaissance. This period witness a great political upheaval also, both the Empire and the papacy lost much of their power and prestige and were reduced to political insignificance. The strong national monarchies came into being almost everywhere in Europe, particularly in Spain, France and England.

So far as political institutions are concerned, the new developments tolled the death-knell of medieval institutions. The new state that was fast taking shape was secular and national. The triumph of the sovereign, secular, nation-state meant the disappearance of the Middle Ages and the birth of the modern world. The scientific method had come to stay and it also tented in the same direction, namely the freeing of the human mind from bondage to old ideas and the beliefs.

The notion of Renaissance is usually taken to mean revival of knowledge or learning. It originated in Italy and reached its highest watermark there, it is sometimes known as Italian Renaissance. It was the rebirth of emotions which had remained dormant for long.

The momentous changes, political and intellectual described above, produced equally great changes in political theory which are best represented in the workings of Nicolo Machiavelli who has born at Florence in 1469 and died in 1527. Machiavelli was the child of Florence and of the Renaissance. All the qualities which characterise his city and his age appear in his own personality.

For the Middle Ages the centre from which all thought proceeded and to which it returned was the conviction that there exists a God who is perfect, infinite, and completely good, whose representative on earth is the Pope in Rome, and whose heavenly kingdom finds an earthly counterpart in the holy and apostolic Catholic Church.

For the Renaissance, on the other hand, man is more important than god and man's relations to his fellows more important than his soul's relation to the Deity. Instead of the old supernatural ideal of divine perfection, man adopts an ideal which is natural and human. What matters are the things of this world, not of the next: the enrichment of the individual personality, the development of intellect and of the talents, the enjoyment of beauty in all its forms, and a life of rich and varied activity. And the world, so far from being a static mirror or symbol of God's plan for man, becomes a dynamic play of natural forces. In their competition we have actively to join if we are not be thrust down and lost.

What the Renaissance and the Middle Ages judge to make for success in life differ at every point, not only because of the differences in the ends aimed at, but also because of the different conceptions of the world in which these ends are aimed at. According to the Renaissance success cannot be won by a life of piety, prayer, and good deeds. On the contrary, it requires determined self-assertion and ruthless disregard of conventional morality.

Machiavelli was very much a man of the Renaissance. In his works we find a brilliant epitome of his period. As a product of the Renaissance, he repudiates the old mediaeval notion of an objective moral order, determined by God, and in accordance with whose prescriptions men live "best". On the contrary, for him that life is best which brings fame, distinction, honours, and reputation to a man. To attain these ends *power* is required; not only to bring one to, and maintain

one in, a position of prominence, but also because power is good in itself, for the satisfaction it brings and for the self-assertion its possession affords. And power is essentially something which one owns in relation to other men and which is exercised through political institutions.

Machiavelli's initial thought process also reflects the prevailing political conditions of the 15th Century Italy. The Italian peninsula was divided into five states; the kingdoms of Naples, the territory of the Roman Catholic church, the Duchy of Milan and the republics of Venice and Florence. The political division of Italy and the struggle between five states made the country weak and pray for the ambitions of the powerful neighbouring states of France, Germany and Spain. Machiavelli passionately desired to find some means by which Italy could be united and made sufficiently strong to maintain peace and resist aggression from the soil. To this end he wrote his three great books, namely *The Art of War*, *Discourses on Livy* and *The Prince*.

3.2.3 MACHIAVELLI'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE AND MOTIVES

We have already seen in a general way what the Renaissance view of human nature was. In his comments on conduct of the men of his own time, Machiavelli provided the same black view of human nature which all of his contemporaries had given. Machiavelli starts with the fundamental assumption about the nature of man and the motive which impel him to action. These assumptions exercised a profound influence upon his theory of the nature and origin of state and the ends it should pursue. These assumptions also determined his views about the nature of the methods which Governments should adopt for the realization of those ends.

Let us begin by considering what Machiavelli takes to be the primary motives that determine men's actions. What sort of things do men want? What sort of things do they value? The answers to these questions determine not only the kind of state which is feasible, but the policy of the ruler who wishes to maintain himself in power.

Machiavelli believed that Men are born bad. There is no inherent goodness in them or virtue in them. He considered them to be a compound of weakness, folly and knavery intended by nature to be the dupe of cunning, the prey of despotic. He deserted them as a grateful, fickle, deceitful, cowardly and avaricious, as new animals driven by the motives of fear, the lust for power, vanity and scheming self-interest. They are bad and deprived; none of them does any good unless obliged. To quote Machiavelli himself “wherever a choice is join to them and they are free to do as they like, everything is immediately filled with confusion and disorder. Men are more prone to evil than to good”. What makes them bad and depraved is their innate selfishness and aggressiveness. Every one wants to have the best things for himself and to have as much of them as possible. Neither in power nor in possessions, there is any limit to human desires. Therefore, human beings find themselves in a state of perpetual sniff and competition which is bound to result in complete anarchy unless they are restrained by the force of laws.

The basic needs ones satisfied the people begin to desire other things, e.g. wealth and power. An individual seeks these additional things only for himself and his family. Machiavelli went a step further when he says that an individual would more readily forgive the murder of his father then the confiscation of his patrimony. With this understanding of human nature, Machiavelli argues that the motives on which a wise and successful ruler should rely are egoistic or selfish and not moral or altruistic. He should not bother to justify his policies on moral or idealistic grounds. His one aim should be to make himself strong and powerful enough to give the people the security which they have always sought and shall always seek.

From the universal egoism of man, it follows that he has no social qualities as such. The qualities that pass for social virtues are nothing but expressions of self-interest in disguise. Machiavelli argues further that the game of politics cannot be played in accordance with moral principles. If we are depraved, if they are more prone to evil then to good, if one does good unless obliged to do so, it becomes idle but also foolish for the prince to rely on the moral and social virtues of the people. A wise statesman would aim at being feared rather than

being loved. Men must be restrained by the one weapon they understand, namely force. Force breeds from and fear is more disciplinary than love which easily gives way under trial. If men are bred by nature, if he never behaves well towards that unless compelled to do so by the force of circumstances and further human nature remains unchanged from age to age, it necessarily follows that it cannot be depended upon to reform itself. It is only through force and repression that the evil tendencies inherent in man can be kept under check and control. The method of Government must therefore, be one of force.

According to Machiavelli most men are stupid and irrational. He says:

The people often, deceived by an illusive good, desire their own ruin...

Those who have been present at any deliberative assemblies of men will have observed how erroneous their opinions often are; and in fact, unless they are directed by superior men, they are apt to be contrary to all reason.

Men have so far degenerated that republics are impossible, or, if they are attempted, turn out to be miserable failures. In this age the only really feasible government is a principedom, rule by a single individual with an iron hand. In fact, despotism is the only effective government for contemporary society. Machiavelli says: "The only way to establish any kind of order...is to found a monarchical government..."

According to Machiavelli, men agree to restraints of law only because of their selfish interest of security of their life and property. So, he opines that, government is founded on the weakness, selfishness and insufficiency of the individual, who is unable to protect himself without state aid. The effective motives on which a statesman must rely are egoistic. There is no limit to human desires of wealth and power, which leads to anarchy unless controlled by force. For Machiavelli, force and not will is the basis of state. He did not believe in the moral progress of man.

3.2.31 REALISTIC INTERPRETATION ON HUMAN NATURE

By emphasising the importance of the study of history, Machiavelli

established a method that was extremely useful. However, in spite of being keen observer of history, he presumed that human nature remained permanent and constant, making it possible to deduce principles of political behaviour. The reason for such a presumption was because of the fact that he lived in an age of flux, where the political order was transient. The belief in a timeless human nature with permanent needs became the yardstick to measure and explains the transience of politics and social orders.

Machiavelli gives to the general line of thought, that society has its origin in a calculating self-interest, a distinctly materialistic turn in his comments. Here, he sets forth that men have by nature endless desires, and that the craving for additional satisfaction of them is the mainspring of all human action. One of the most potent of these desires is that which finds satisfaction in private property. In his writings this same idea receives fuller development, and a materialistic individualism is made the explanation of the love of independence and self-government.

Material prosperity is, in short, Machiavelli's idea of the chief conscious basis of political life among men. How far this conception is from that of the ancient philosophers, that the state is an institution devoted to the moral and intellectual uplifting of a community, and from the mediaeval notion, that the end of the state is primarily to smooth men's way to eternal salvation, it is not necessary further to demonstrate.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Briefly states Machiavelli's view on human nature.

2. Critically examine Machiavelli's view on human nature.

3.2.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MACHIAVELLI'S CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE AND MOTIVES

Machiavelli's depiction of human nature is subject to criticism. Many criticised the notion of Machiavelli that men are essentially wicked and bad and that the only way to check and control them is through force and fear. A theory of the mechanism and operations of good government based upon scanty evidence is bound to be top sided and wrong. If Men are not wholly good, they are not wholly bad either, he has a social side which brings him into natural association with their human beings and makes him cooperate with them in the pursuit of a common government. As some critics opined, "The great fault of Machiavelli

lies in the fact that he builds his theory of state, or rather preservation of state in an environment of fear or prohibitions, a thing which is bound to react rather unfavourably on the moral progress of the state without which neither preservation nor expansion is easy of accomplishment". Many scholars also argue that the conditions of Italy of his times greatly influenced Machiavelli's thought process, especially regarding to human nature. It must, however, be admitted that Moralists may condemn Machiavelli, but the use of immoral means for the achievement of political ends is the approach in politics.

3.2.5 EXERCISES

1. Discuss the Salient features of Renaissance Movement.
2. Machiavelli was very much a man of the Renaissance. Elaborate.
3. Make a critical estimate on Machiavelli's views on Human Nature and Motives.
4. Explain Machiavelli's conception of Human Nature.
5. "Human Nature and motives became the base of Machiavelli's political philosophy" Do you agree with the statement?

3.2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Randell, M.J., *An Introduction to Political Thought*, London: Sidwick and Jackson press, 1973

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K. Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Vol 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

3.3 MACHIAVELLI'S VIEWS ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICS AND POLITICS

– Diwarkar Singh

STRUCTURE

- 3.3.0 Objectives**
- 3.3.1 Introduction**
- 3.3.2 Machiavelli's Attitude towards Ethics and Politics**
 - 3.3.2.1 Machiavelli's denial of divine law
 - 3.3.1.2 Machiavelli's denial of natural law
- 3.3.3 Criticism**
- 3.3.4 Let Us Sum Up**
- 3.3.5 Exercises**
- 3.3.6 Suggested Readings**

3.3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to understand:

- Machiavelli's views towards ethics and politics
- Why Machiavelli denied both divine and natural laws

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Ancient and Medieval Ages, politics had been the handmaid of Ethics. A very lukewarm attempt was made by Aristotle to separate politics from Ethics, but he too was not fully successful. Greek considered the state as a moral institution. The State under the Christian political thought was

the creation of God and ruled by an agent sent by the God. The politics under the Papacy was controlled by the religion.

Contrary to the prevailing ideology, Machiavelli completely separated ethics from politics. Moral judgements are wholly subordinate, in Machiavelli's philosophy, to the exigencies of political existence and welfare. So far as the religious and moral practices involve the operation of forces above the influence of human reason, they are entirely out of his sphere. But so far as religion is operative in determining relations to the state and the trend of political development, it is subjected to the same analysis as appears in his treatment of morality.

3.3.1 MACHIAVELLI'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ETHICS AND POLITICS

Among the political ideas of Machiavelli, the one with which his name is mostly intimately associated and what marks his break with the Middle Ages most completely is his formal and conscious separation of politics from religion and morality. No earlier thinker, ancient and medieval went so far in keeping politics out of morals and religion as he did. In Machiavelli, the separation of politics from ethics and religion is deliberate and complete. He was led to it as much by his views about the nature of man and Government as by his assumption that Power is an end in itself. It is vital to remember that whereas all political thinking from Plato and Aristotle down to close of the middle ages had concerned itself with the central questions of the need of the state and had considered state-power as a means to achieve higher values and conceived in moral terms. Machiavelli broke away completely from this tradition and ignored the issue of the ethical purpose of the state. He did not regard state power as the servant of a higher ethical purpose, but accepted it is an end in itself. Consequently he confined his attention and inquiries to the means best suited to the acquisition, retention and expansion of power.

3.3.1.1 MACHIAVELLI'S DENIAL OF DIVINE LAW

Machiavelli in his theory of the secular state emancipated the state completely for the control of Church and assigned a very subordinate place to the latter. Machiavelli does not believe the cardinal tenant of Christian doctrine, that man is destined to a supernatural end. If man has no supernatural end, there is no function to be performed by a Devine Law. He repudiates the theory of St. Thomas Aquinas that man needs the guidance of the Divine Law to attain blessedness in the life to come. The well-being of an individual is confined to material sphere. He rejects the cultivation of virtues which Christianity laid great stress as the end of life. He sanctions the use of immoral means like fraud, forgery, trickery, breach of faith and violence by the Prince to get his ends. The conclusion is sometimes drawn that Machiavelli despised religion and morality.

Machiavelli further suggests that “the Prince should appear to have the qualities in respect of which men are counted good. He should so behave that anybody who sees and hears him “would regard him as the embodiment of mercy good faith, integrity, kindness and religious”; but he must have his mind so disciplined that, when it is necessary to save the state, he can act regardless of these. Machiavelli says: “Let the prince, then, look to the maintenance of the state’ the means will always be deemed honourable and will receive general approbation”. And when Machiavelli is treating of republics, his conclusions are the same: “I believe that when there is fear for the life of the state, both monarchs and republics, to preserve it, will break faith and display ingratitude”.

However, from the above extracts it would be clear that Machiavelli does not despise or ignore religion and morality. He realises the important role, they play in the political life of a community. In the opening chapter of his book *The Discourses*, he says.

Princes and Republics who wish to maintain themselves free from corruption must above all things preserve the purity of all religious observances and treat them with proper reverence, for there is no greater indication of the ruin of a country than to see religion condemned.

So Machiavelli did not ignore the importance of ethics or religion while conducting politics. Moral judgements are holly subordinate in Machiavelli's philosophy, to the exigencies of political existence and welfare. He is not immoral, but unmoral in his politics. And the same attitude appears in relation to religion. So far as religious practices involved the operation of forces above the influence of human reason, they are entirely out of his sphere. Religious sentiment is viewed as an important instrument of state policy, and as such it must taken account of by statesmen always.

Though Machiavelli holds that it is only through force that the evil tendencies of men can be kept under check and control, he is realistic enough to realize that force alone cannot be an adequate instrument. He says that there is no better instrument for the prince to use religion as instrument for creating national customs and habits of thought which will help the state in preserving peace and order and maintaining the stability of society. He urges the familiar view that a community which looses the religion sentiments greatly imperils itself.

This means that Machiavelli attaches only an Instrumental Value to religion. The religion, therefore, cannot be given a place above or outside the state as Christianity sought to give it. It is useful as an organ of the state. He takes note of religious and moral instruments of state policy. He valued religion purely for the sake of its services to the community. He was indifferent to its inner nature and man's relation to God.

3.3.1.2 MACHIAVELLI'S DENIAL OF NATURAL LAW

Machiavelli's notion of virtue is correlative to his notion of the human end. Human virtue must comprise those qualities by which man is enabled to achieve the end for which he is destined; and since for Machiavelli this end is the attainment of success, power, and fame, it follows that for him the virtue of man consists in the qualities which fit him to win these things.

The recurrence of this word *virtu* in Machiavelli's works renders the passages in which it occurs untranslatable into modern English. The literal translation is, of course, "virtue", but what Machiavelli means is something so clearly different

from what we mean by that word. The difference comes from the fact that our common moral notions assumes a principle which Machiavelli repudiates, namely, that man attains goodness only by being subject to law. This is the principle which, in a certain form, inspires Plato's answer to the Sophists, when he declares that restraint is an essential condition of virtue.

The doctrine of Natural Law implies that there are certain eternal canons of right conduct, to which the good man must conform. His virtue is judged by the measures in which his conduct conforms to these canons. But Machiavelli judges conduct by another standard. He measures a man's "virtue" by his ability to attain power and fame, and just as other moralists prescribe rules for the exercise of virtue, as *they* conceive it, so Machiavelli lays down rules for the exercise of "virtue" as he conceives it. As they tell man how they may conform their conduct to the laws of right and wrong he tells them how they may direct their action to the ends of greatness and power.

However, Machiavelli admired ancient Romans for their civic virtue and believed that the greatness of Rome was due to purity in the family, independence and sturdiness in private life, simplicity and frugality of manner and loyalty and trustworthiness in performing public duties. From this it would appear that Machiavelli was neither immoral nor did he despise morality. He was concerned with moral problems and was moral himself, but his conception of moral goodness and his moral standards were different from others.

The whole effect of this point of view is summed up in the dictates of unscrupulous patriotism: "where the safety of one's country is at stake there must be no consideration of what is just or unjust, merciful or cruel, glorious or shameful; on the contrary, everything must be disregarded save that course which will save her life and maintain her independence".

The question arises, why did Machiavelli advise the Prince to throw to the wind all moral considerations and act in complete disregard of them whenever the interest of the State required such a course? Why should he said: Let the prince look to the maintenance of the State; the means will always be deemed honourable and will receive general approbation. In other words why should

Machiavelli propose two different standards of morality, one for the ruler and another for the private citizens? There is no doubt that the theory of Machiavelli is an extreme example of double morality.

Three reasons may be assigned to why Machiavelli placed the state above morality. Firstly, he held that the reasons of state should outweigh all other considerations because the state is the highest form of social organisation and most necessarily of all institutions for the protection and promotion of human welfare. It should therefore, be placed on a level of equality with private citizens and governed by the same morality by which their affairs are regulated. Secondly, he was concerned that if state were to confine itself to the employment of moral means only, it would find it impossible to keep under check and control the inherently egoistic and aggressive nature of men. Machiavelli was convinced that man being what he is, the state would never succeed if it were to depend on moral means only. He therefore, propounded the doctrine that where the safety of the country is at stake there must be no consideration of what is just or unjust, right or wrong, glorious and shameful. Every means is justified if it is calculated to lead to the desired end — the security and safety of the State. Thirdly, Machiavelli could recommend the adoption of immoral means by the state without any questions of conscience because in his judgement the State was neither moral nor immoral, it was non-moral.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain the empirical method of Machiavelli.

2. Explain the double standard of morality in Machiavelli's concept of separation of religion and politics.

3.3.2 DE-LINKING POLITICS FROM MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Not less important, scientifically, than his adoption of the historical method, and far more influential in establishing the reputation of Machiavelli was his attitude towards morality and religion. It is by this which Machiavelli is best known, and it is this that contributes most to make him the expression of a definite break from the middle ages.

Machiavelli maintains the separation of politics from ethics and religion consciously as a result of the conviction that this corresponds most closely to the facts of human existence. He is in the fullest sense a student of practical

politics, and he seeks to determine the workings of a real, not of an ideal, political life. Imaginary and impossible states have for him no interest whatever. His purpose is “to get back to the actual truth of things”. There is, he says, the greatest difference between the way in which men live and that in which they ought to live; and the former not the latter, is deliberately chosen as the subject of his investigation.

This point of view was, of course, most useful. It corrected the tendency to making of political science a mere congeries of moral and religious precepts. At the same time, it involved the interpretation of history and the formulation of political philosophy in terms of the most advanced rationalism of the Renaissance. In the intellectual classes of Machiavelli’s day moral and religious emotion was practically extinct. A calculating self-interest served for a practical standard of conduct, and a perfunctory observance of the forms of the Christian religion did not disguise a widespread rejection of its substance. It was easy, therefore, in such an environment for Machiavelli to formulate his political philosophy independently of ethical and theological influences.

By far the foremost among the ideas which the Florentine made prominent in political science was that of a distinction between the standards of public and of private morality. Most of the discussion turned on this point while locating Machiavelli at the centre. The whole trend of theory under the influences which characterized the time of the Reformation was against the view which Machiavelli propounded; but the practice of the age continued to furnish, like all preceding ages, incontestable evidence that the “reason of state” took precedence, in political life, of the moral code which was recognized as valid between man and man. In Frederick the Great of Prussia, Machiavellian doctrine received a particularly noteworthy confirmation. For Frederick, as a mere irresponsible philosopher, roundly berated the Italian for the immoral teachings of *The Prince*; but in later life, as the ambitious head of a struggling and sorely beset state, he exemplified in his policy some of the very maxims which he had most solemnly denounced.

Gramsci praised the greatness of Machiavelli for separating politics from ethics. Following Croce’s description of “Marx as the Machiavelli of the

proletariat”, Gramsci tried to analyse the ramification of the political aspect of Machiavelli’s theory by writing *The Modern Prince* which remained incomplete. In the *Prison Notebooks* (1925-36), there were a number of references to Machiavelli, and Gramsci pointed out that the protagonist of the new prince in modern times could not be an individual hero, but a political party whose objective was to establish a new kind of state.

Machiavelli distinguished acts of morality and immorality in the conventional sense. Though critical of the Church and Christianity, Machiavelli was born and died as a Christian. His attack on the Church was due to his anti-clericalism, rather than being anti-religion. In comparison, paganism of the ancient world seemed preferable.

By advocating separation of ethics and morals Machiavelli became an idol and exponent for many behaviourists of early twentieth century. His theory was central point in the debates of both orthodox and behaviourist schools. The behaviourists, who campaigned vigorously for “value-neutral” political theory, had used Machiavelli’s theory to support themselves. This we can see in the below paragraph which was stated by Gabriel A. Almond, one the strong supporters of behaviourist school:

The breakthrough of Renaissance political theory lay in Machiavelli’s treatment of the legitimacy of regimes and political leaders. Prior to the *Prince* and the *Discourses*, writers treated political regimes dichotomously as pure and corrupt, normative and non-normative, in the original Platonic and Aristotelian senses. Machiavelli, viewing politics as practised in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries, legitimised non-normative politics as unavoidable, as survival-related, as part of reality....Machiavelli touched the nerve of political science with this “value-free” orientation and his name has become a synonym for moral indifference and political cynicism. The issues raised by this venture into realism are still fluttering the dovecotes of political philosophy.

On the whole it must be said that while Machiavelli’s attitude towards morality and religion was scientifically justifiable, and contributed greatly to

the clarification of the problems of politics, the lack of feeling which characterised the expression of his views afforded considerable ground for the suspicion that he was not only scientifically unmoral, but also practically immoral, and for the criticism to which he has been subjected throughout succeeding centuries. Yet it may be doubted whether, with all the reproach that is due him, he has not been too severely punished by having to bear the odium that is concentrated in the term “Machiavellian”.

3.3.3 EMPHASIS ON EMPIRICISM

Next in importance to his view of the relation between politics and morality, in its influence on later political philosophy, was Machiavelli's method—his reunion of theory and practice. Though the mediaeval tendency to philosophise “in the air” – to speculate on the basis of conditions which had lost, if they ever had possessed, the semblance of reality – by no means entirely disappeared after Machiavelli's time; though it continued for a century or more to characterize a large body of political literature: yet his relentless empiricism gave an impulse to the method of observation and experience which was not exhausted till the last vestiges of medievalism in political theory had vanished.

3.3.4 PRINCIPLES OF STATECRAFT

Machiavelli, more than any other political thinker, created the meaning that has been attached to the state in modern political usage when the word itself, as the name of a sovereign political body, appears to have been made current in the modern languages largely by his writings. The state as an organized force, supreme in its own territory and pursuing a conscious policy of aggrandizement (expansion) in its relations with other states, became not only the typical modern political institution but increasingly the most powerful institution in modern society. To it more and more fell the right and the obligation to regulate and control all the other institutions of society, and to direct them on lines overtly set by the interests of the state itself. The part that the state, thus

conceived, has played in modern politics is an index of the clearness with which Machiavelli grasped the drift of political evolution.

For Machiavelli the state is a *natural* entity. It rises out of, and exists in the midst of, a play of natural forces, which the ruler must understand and make use of if he and his state are to survive in the ruthless competition. Here Machiavelli lays the foundation for Marx and those later theorists who interpret politics as the study of power-conflicts and their control. It is true, of course, that there are great defences between Machiavelli and these later thinkers. Machiavelli had, for instance, no conception of the economic forces which Marx sees at the basis of all change, political, social, and intellectual. But for Machiavelli, as for Marx, there is no divine order of things designed by God in accordance with His plan for man and the universe. Thus, Machiavelli's insight that the state can be understood only in terms of human lusts and appetites, and his supplementary recognition that the successful ruler must learn to control these forces, make an epoch in political thinking and constitute the basis for the whole modern development.

Machiavelli was also the first to speak of the *raison d'état* of the state. He could perceive the forces shaping the modern nation-state like nationalism, national security, territorial integrity and militarism as forces to safeguard and further the state interests. His achievements lay in confronting the secular state and scientifically enquiring into its nature and behaviour. His political realism allowed him to remain neutral towards the means that were to be employed for achieving the ends. Machiavelli admired and advocated for the subjection of a number of states to the rule of a single prince or republic. This conception of unity has little in common with that which inspired the heroic national politics of the nineteenth century; but it is precisely that which was to determine all the transformations of political geography in Western Europe for three centuries after Machiavelli's death.

Finally, a summary of the chief influences which radiated from Machiavelli into the broad field of political science must include reference to his doctrine of aggrandizement. In the assumption that extension of power was the test of excellence in government, he established a philosophic basis for accepting as

rational and as a fit subject for reflection, that consolidation of states which was so prominent a fact of the times. In suggesting that the logical limit of this consolidation in any case was the limit of ethnic homogeneity, he projected an influence which was felt in the nineteenth century. But the doctrine of nationality, which has thus far played so prominent a part in the expansion of states, has in reality no logical relation to Machiavelli's fundamental principle. Already a multitude of other bases for conquest, more adequate to later necessities, are familiar to current thought. Nationality has proved merely a temporary and transitional phase of the trend towards expansion on Machiavellian lines, which has in fact no logical limit save that of power.

3.3.5 POLITICS AS STRUGGLE FOR POWER

Machiavelli was the first exponent, as he is one of the clearest, of power politics. Machiavelli identified politics as the struggle for the acquisition, maintenance and consolidation of political power.

Machiavelli also accepted conflict as permanent and universal, seeing it natural, unlike his predecessors who viewed social conflict as unnatural and curable by certain kinds of social systems. He understood struggle in terms of war between states for power and domination. Within a state, the cause for domestic instability and strife was the desire among the majority for security of their lives and possessions, while a small number, the oligarchs, sought to dominate and control the masses. Machiavelli felt that a well-ordered state ensured the well-being and security necessary to combat social conflict and the radical selfishness of human nature.

Machiavelli also formulated the "West's first general theory of conspiracy". He believed that most political situations were conspiratorial or counter-conspiratorial in nature. In the *Art of War*, he equated conspiracy with military combat, requiring surprise, secrecy, planning, preparedness, flexibility, swiftness, decisiveness in execution, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and cunning. He also understood political and military leadership as being identical. He founded modern military science, thus influencing those followed him in the later periods.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Elaborate Machiavelli's view on Statecraft.

2. Critically examine Machiavelli's view on separation of ethics and politics.

3.3.6 CRITICAL EVALUATION

Machiavelli's theory of separation of Ethics and politics is subject to criticism. A critical examination reveals that it suffers from the following defects. Firstly it puts premium on the misdeeds of the politicians. The politicians or rulers under the garb of protecting the integrity of state may commit all sorts of crimes. Secondly there is no guarantee that the interest of the ruler and the public be the same. There is no control on the rulers as to what are the interests of the state. The ruler of province may deviate from the interest of the state and subserve his own interest. Thirdly Machiavelli's theory of "end justifies the means" goes directly against the present dictum that "Means justify the End". Fourthly, Professor Allan has pointed out that "Machiavelli's judgement of Human nature that men are born bad and cannot be good until they are made good is wrong. It is because of this factor that religion cannot be a factor as a private affair. This cannot be a reason for separation of religion from politics.

3.3.7 EXERCISES

1. Is the State above the morality? Justify Machiavelli's concept of religion and politics for the state.
2. "The inherent egoistic and aggressive tendencies of man cannot be checked by employment of moral means". Justify the statement in the light of separation of religion from politics.
3. "The state was neither moral nor immoral, It was unmoral" Do you think

there is a double standard of morality in Machiavelli's concept of separation of religion and politics.

4. Machiavelli corrected the tendency to make of political science a mere congeries of moral and religious precepts. Do you agree with this?
5. Machiavelli was the first exponent of power politics. Elaborate.

3.3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Waper C.L, *Political Thought*, London: St.Paul's House, 1973

Suda J.P., *A History of PloiticalThought*, Vol 1 &2 ,Meerut, K.Nath&CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell,Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Vol17,Issue 2 May 1923.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)
Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)
Unit III: MACHIAVELLI

3.4 MACHIAVELLI'S VIEWS REGARDING PRESERVATION AND EXTENSION OF STATE POWER

– V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

- 3.4.1 Introduction**
- 3.4.2 Forms of Government**
- 3.4.3 Machiavelli's Views on the Extension of State Power**
 - 3.4.3.1 Methods for the Expansion of State Power
- 3.4.4 On the Preservation of Dominion**
- 3.4.5 Let us sum up**
- 3.4.6 Exercises**
- 3.4.7 Suggested Readings**

3.4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- Machiavelli's division of governments in to various forms;
- Machiavelli's views on the extension of State Power; and
- Machiavelli's suggestion regarding preservation of state power and domain.

3.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Machiavelli's views regarding the extension and preservation of state power or what many says the maxims to the ruler developed out of his ministerial correspondence, study of history and its lessons, the wisdom of the ancient and

from examples of great and noble deeds. He cautioned unwise princes that they would come to grief if they ignored these maxims, for by adhering to them they would be free from their dependence on fortune. He believed that history taught, and to ignore its lessons would be suicidal. He used Livy's history of the Roman republic as a reference point, and instructed them to imitate the conduct of Rome in every aspect.

3.4.2 FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Machiavelli's treatment of the classification of governments starts with a perfunctory adoption of the Aristotelian system, namely, monarchy, aristocracy and constitutional democracy, with the three corresponding corruptions—tyranny, oligarchy and democracy and says that a mixed form is the best and most stable. Rather than elaborating on what kind of mixed form is good, Machiavelli concentrated on the characteristics and relative advantages of all these forms. Among his works, *The Prince* is essentially a study of monarchy in relation to the extension of political dominion or state power, and *The Discourses* is a study of popular government in relation to the same end.

For a community in which a general economic equality prevails, Machiavelli holds that the commonwealth or republic is the best and the only possible form of government. The people as a whole are, he thinks, wiser and no more fickle than a prince. The judgement of the people, especially in such matters as the choice of officers and the assignment of honours, is in general sound and unimpeachable. Granting that a prince is best suited to the original establishment of political or legal institutions, a popular government is best qualified to maintain them. In respect to that adaptation to times and circumstances which is essential to the success of any policy, the republic has an advantage over the monarchy, in that the character of the prince will not change with conditions, while among the many characters which participate in the service of a republic, one may always be found that is just suited to the particular needs of a given time.

Machiavelli thus manifests no irrational preference for monarchy; and his judgements in respect to aristocratic power are almost wholly unfavourable. The

antithesis of the great and the masses he considers a prime factor in the life of every city-state, and his feeling is frankly with the latter. The mass of the people he believes to be the best support for an elective monarch, to be the most effective instrument of the maintenance of independence, and to be far less productive of internal disturbance than the aristocracy. The leading motive of the upper class he conceives to be in all cases the passion for the exercise of authority, while the masses desire only peace and order.

A high degree of appreciation for the commonwealth based on the mass of equal citizens, is thus a distinguishing feature of Machiavelli's philosophy. But he fully recognizes that circumstances require different places, and he is particularly attracted by the problem as to what system of organization and action is best adapted to the establishment of far-reaching dominion or to stabilise the state power.

3.4.3 MACHIAVELLI'S VIEWS ON THE EXTENSION OF STATE POWER

The theory and practice of extending monarchic state is chiefly to be found in *The Prince*, while the expansion of republics is the theme of *The Discourses*. The process in each case is regarded by Machiavelli not as involving the blending of two or more social or political organisms, but as consisting in the subjection of a number of states to the rule of a single prince or republic. The French and Spanish monarchies, in whose constitutions Machiavelli finds much to admire, are regarded as groups of states rather than as single organizations, and in his plea for a united Italy he clearly has in mind a similar union. "No province", he says, "was ever united or happy save by becoming subject in its entirety to a single commonwealth or a single prince, as has happened in France and in Spain".

In *The Prince* the chief heads of the discussion are, first the acquisition and second the extension of princely power. Under the first head are set forth the methods by which principalities are founded, illustrated by the policy of great persons who are acquired power by their own resources and abilities and who

owe their success to good fortune and the aid of others. All these heroes were founders of new states. The extension of dominion by a prince already at the head of a government gives rise to what Machiavelli calls a mixed principality. His discussion of the methods best adapted to the creation and enlargement of such organizations exhibits most fully the philosopher's intellectual acumen.

3.4.3.1 METHODS FOR THE EXPANSION OF STATE POWER

The line of least resistance to the ambitious prince is through peoples of his own race. It is easy to hold acquisitions made in the same country (*provincia*) and where the same language is used; the conqueror has merely to extinguish the line of the former prince and let the old institutions remain. But acquisition of states in a country differing in language and institutions from that of the conqueror involves more complex problems, the solution of which was, on the whole, achieved most successfully by the Romans. The most serious difficulties to a conquering prince arise in connection with a state that has been under republican government prior to the conquest. Here the name of liberty and the memory of the ancient constitution will always serve as an inspiration to revolt; and the only safe policy is utterly to destroy the community.

With all his admiration for the strong man, and all his confidence that the ability and resources one truly great can determine the fate of states, Machiavelli nevertheless has a just appreciation of the persistent power inherent in the fundamental institutions of a community. The surest test of the great man is his ability to introduce and maintain a new social and political constitution. The reformer is hampered by the open hostility of those who derive profit from the old order, and by the luke warmness of those who have only hope, but no certainty, of benefit from the new. The prince who takes over the sovereignty of a state and leaves it to go on under its old institutions has a simple task; but he who assumes power in order to reform the constitution undertakes the most doubtful and dangerous of enterprises. Success in this respect is what justifies the assignment of high position among statesmen and the key to their success. Machiavelli characteristically finds in the fact that they all took pains to have at

hand armed force sufficient to defend the new constitutions when persuasion ceased to be effective. That the inherent excellence of a new constitution is no guarantee of its permanence is proved, Machiavelli thinks, by the failure of reforming prophets who have not sustained themselves by arms.

The tendency towards extension of dominion is, in Machiavelli's opinion, inevitable in both republics and monarchies. A prince is restlessly impelled to such a policy with a passion for power, which is natural to men, and a republic, if not impelled by choice, is sure to be driven to it by necessity. If the constitution of a republic is no such as to be suited to a policy of expansion, the foundations of the state will be torn away when the necessity for such a policy arises, and the constitution will be destroyed.

In carrying out the extension of its dominion, the Roman Republic set an example which, in Machiavelli's opinion, no commonwealth can do better than implicitly follow. The elements of the Roman system he summarizes thus:

- increase the population of the city;
- acquire allies rather than subjects;
- establish colonies in the conquered territory; turn all booty into the treasury;
- carry on war rather by field campaigns and pitched battles than by sieges;
- keep the state rich and the individual poor; and with the utmost care maintain a well-trained army.

It is noteworthy that the greatest stress here, as in the discussion of successful monarchy, is put upon the force of arms. It is Machiavelli's fixed belief that a well-trained citizen-soldiery is indispensable in a republic, not only for the purpose of enlargement, but even for maintaining existence. Both his active career in the Florentine administration and his philosophical writings testify to his interest in the substitution of a popular militia for the mercenary bands that constituted the bulk of the fighting forces of his day. In the *Discourses* he devotes a very clever chapter to demonstrating the falsity of the common saying that "money is the sinews of war". Not money, but good soldiers, are in reality the

essence of strength; for, he says, “money will not always procure good soldiers, but good soldiers will always procure money”.

Machiavelli’s maxims for would-be tyrants are always shrewd. His recommendations to the prince, to hold his power, could be categorised in four different ways.

(a) *Use Force Ruthlessly*

This is perhaps the most important rule for the prince to observe, and it is particularly important in “new monarchies”, i.e., in former republics whose free regimes have been overthrown by one who hopes to rule despotically. Machiavelli says:

When those states which have been acquired are accustomed to live at liberty under their own laws, there are three ways of holding them. The first is to despoil them; the second is to go and live there in person; the third is to allow them to live under their own laws, taking tribute of them, and creating within the country a government composed of a few who will keep it friendly for you.

Machiavelli further says that “the government, being created by the prince, knows that it cannot exist without his friendship and protection, and will do all it can to keep them”. He opines that whoever becomes the ruler of a free city and does not destroy it, can expect to be destroyed by it, for it can always find a motive for rebellion in the name of liberty and of its ancient usages, which are forgotten neither by lapse of time nor by benefits received...”. In taking a state the conqueror must arrange to commit all his cruelties at once, so as not to have to recur to them every day and win them over by benefiting them. “Benefits should be granted little by little, so that they may be better enjoyed”.

(b) *Use Persuasion Artfully*

According to Machiavelli, the prudent prince will not depend on force alone to maintain himself power. In the long run, force is an expensive and inefficient instrument of government. There exist many devices for lulling the people into peace and quiet, yet without making any real concessions to them. One of the most important of these propaganda techniques is religion.

Machiavelli begins his discussion of religion by showing how Roman policy was furthered by skilfully playing upon the religious feelings of the people.

Whoever will examine the actions of the people of Rome as a body, or of many individual Romans, will see that these citizens feared much more to break an oath than the laws; like men who esteem the power of the gods more than that of men.... And whoever reads Roman history attentively will see in how great a degree religion served in the command of the armies, in uniting the people and keeping them well conducted, and in covering the wicked with shame... In truth, there never was any remarkable lawgiver amongst any people who did not resort to divine authority, as otherwise his laws would not have been accepted by the people.

Therefore, for Machiavelli, everything that tends to favour religion should be received and availed of to strengthen it. This should be done the more, the wiser the rulers are, and the better they understand the natural course of things.

(c) Act Decisively

For the prince, the one sure way to destruction is to hesitate. So Machiavelli says that it is safer to make mistakes, so long as one moves firmly, promptly, and decisively, than to lose the initiative by procrastination and uncertainty. All wise princes should consider not only present but also future discords and guard against them. If “one waits till they are at hand, the medicine is no longer in time as the malady has become incurable”. As doctors say, hectic fevers are “easy to cure” at their “beginning” but “difficult to recognise”. But in course of time, when they have not at first been recognized and treated, become easy to recognize and difficult to cure. “Thus”, Machiavelli says, “it happens in matters of State; for knowing afar off the evils that are brewing, they are easily cured. But when, for want of such knowledge, they are allowed to grow so that every one can recognize them, there is no longer any remedy to be found”.

(d) Maintain a Strong National Army

It is obvious that a prince cannot act decisively without a strong army at his

back. In urging the advantages of a “regular” army, drawn from the citizenship of the state, Machiavelli says:

The arms by which a prince defends his possessions are either his own, or else mercenaries, or auxiliaries, or mixed. The mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous, and if anyone supports his state by the arms of mercenaries, he will never stand firm or sure, as they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, faithless, bold among friends, cowardly among enemies.... Ruin is only deferred as long as assault is postponed; in peace you are despoiled by them and in war by the enemy. The cause of this is that they have no love or other motive to keep them in the field beyond a trifling wage, which is not enough to make them ready to die for you. They are quite willing to be your soldiers so long as you do not make war, but when war comes, it is either fly or decamp altogether.

Here Machiavelli gives the example of Italy and how it was ruined by having relied on mercenary arms.

But with all Machiavelli’s stress on physical force as the foundation of the greatness of states, he will not, in last analysis, concede that this factor is as decisive as craft. He holds it unquestionable truth that men never raise from insignificance to greatness without the use force and craft; but while force without craft is never sufficient, craft without force will meet with success. This principle applies not only to principalities, but also to republics, as he amply demonstrated by reference to the careers of the Romans.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1 Elaborate Machiavelli’s views on extension of state power.

2. Explain Machiavelli’s idea of *virtu* and its importance in effective statecraft.

3.4.4 ON THE PRESERVATION OF DOMINION

While the more or less definite conviction that every government must either extend its authority or perish, gives to Machiavelli's doctrine of enlargement the chief importance in his philosophy, nevertheless his works abound in striking presentations of the principles on which depends the ordinary peaceful working of both monarchic and republican institutions.

For the stability of princely governments, the first great rule of policy is

respect for the established institutions and customs of the land. Men who are well governed, and whose familiar ways of life are let alone, will not seek for any further liberty. This is a consideration which should guide both hereditary and usurping monarchs. In the former class, however, Machiavelli's interest is not very great; with ordinary situation the hereditary prince has an easy task. But the newly established prince has to confront a more troublesome situation, and the dictates of sound policy for such a ruler are always in Machiavelli's mind. *The Prince* embodies a comprehensive analysis of the art of tyranny, with conclusions that in very many respects coincide with those of Aristotle in his discussion of the same subject.

Because all government rests ultimately on force, the prince, Machiavelli says, must have a good army—a proposition which excluded dependence on foreign mercenaries or allies. He must, on the whole, be economical with his own money and that of his subjects, but lavish in distributing the spoils of war. Severity rather than mildness must characterise his attitude in public affairs, but above all things he must keep his hands off the property and the women of his subjects. He should endeavour to be, so far as possible, at the same time feared but not hated by the people; and accordingly those duties of administration which involve coercive responsibility should be performed by subordinates, while acts of grace should be attended to by the prince in person. To quote from Machiavelli:

From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved more than feared, or feared more than loved. The reply is, that one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting.... And men have less scruple in offending one who make himself loved than one who makes himself feared; for love is held by a chain of obligation which, men being selfish, is broken whenever it serves their purpose; but fear is maintained by a dread of punishment which never fails....

Machiavelli further says that the prince must embrace every opportunity to develop a reputation for high purposes and character. He must keep the people busy with great enterprises, must surround all his actions with an air of grandeur,

must take open and decided part in the controversies of neighbouring states, must pose as the patron of distinguished ability in the fine arts, and, finally, must liberally encourage the useful arts of commerce and agriculture, and refrain from interacting with them by burdensome taxation.

These dictates of enlightened despotism are thoroughly blended, in their presentation, with the maxims of non-moral conduct which have already been described. The combination is a pretty good picture of the actual working of monarchic government in Machiavelli's own time. His corresponding discussion of the principles of republican government also involves a faithful reflection of actual conditions. But on this subject there is distinguishable at times an undertone of personal feeling which is totally lacking in *The Prince*, and which gives evidence of the fact that at heart Machiavelli had a preference for popular government. He says

The law-giver should, however be sufficiently wise and virtuous not to leave this authority which he has assumed either to his heirs or to any one else; for mankind, being more prone to evil than to good, his successor might employ for evil purposes the power which he had used only for good ends. Besides, although one man alone should organize a government, yet it will not endure long if the administration of it remains on the shoulders of a single individual; it is well, then, to confide this to the charge of many, for thus it will be sustained by the many....

This shows that Machiavelli did not exclude the possibility, even in contemporary Italy, of a government which would take the form of an enlightened monarchy, or even, eventually, of a republic.

Machiavelli's idea of a commonwealth, or republic, is wholly that of antiquity, namely, a city-state. The thought that popular government could be organised for a whole "province" never appears. So also, as in ancient thought, the commonwealth implies the rule of the mass of the people as distinguished from the aristocracy. "Liberty" is used, without discrimination, to designate either independence with respect to any external power, or a condition in which

government is in the hands of the people rather than of the nobles or an individual. The ancient distinction between “pure” and “corrupt” republics is maintained by Machiavelli, “corruption” meaning the absence of a sense of equality among the citizens. “Corruption” is recognized as an economic rather than a political phenomenon, caused by the unequal accumulation of wealth, and as such the philosopher does not undertake to discuss the ways and means of preventing it, but merely assumes its existence. His problem is to indicate what is essential for the maintenance of popular government in either pure or corrupt communities.

Machiavelli paid considerable attention to the interrelationship of constitution, custom and law and their influence on the permanence of republican government. Machiavelli consistently maintains the distinction between the fundamental law of the state and ordinary legislation. Legislation and custom, he sees, are closely interdependent; a change in custom will easily be followed by corresponding changes in the laws. But the constitution does not thus share these changes. Remaining intact, it becomes by degrees out of harmony with custom and legislation, and therefore a source of ruin to the state. An adaptation of constitution as well as law to the varying conditions in a state is indispensable to the preservation of republican government. If the constitution is not flexible, the necessary adjustment will be effected, after disastrous delay, suddenly and by violence rather than gradually and by peaceful procedure, and the result is likely to be the entire destruction of the old order, as happened in Rome. But modification of the fundamental law in republics should always be made with the least possible deviation from ancient forms, however great the change in substance; for people are in general content with appearances and do not penetrate to the realities of things.

No less noteworthy than this appreciation of constitutional reform as a means of escaping revolution is Machiavelli’s appreciation of the necessity of provision in a republic for the exercise of absolute power by some officer of the government in great emergencies. The dictatorship he regards as one of the most essential features of the republican constitution of Rome, and one of those which contributed most to the greatness of the state. Popular governments particularly need provision for prompt and efficient action in critical times, from the fact

that the normal action of the administration, requiring as it does the cooperation of many wills, is feeble and slow. If the constitution does not provide for the necessary concentration of authority, the constitution will be broken when the stress comes and the requisite action will be taken regardless of the fundamental law. Thus, however, a precedent will be created in a good cause which may later be followed in a bad. The Roman dictatorship, therefore, carefully limited as it was by well-defined methods of creation and termination, furnishes a model for all free governments.

This judgment upon the necessity of dictatorial power in republics was as sound as it was unusual. On another prominent feature of Roman history, Machiavelli likewise takes issue with the common opinion. The party controversies between plebs and nobles he regards not as evidence of unsoundness and sources of disaster in the state, but as an indispensable condition of Roman greatness. His reasoning approaches that of the modern school which sees in friction and strife the conditions of continuous existence. One must not be deceived by the noise and tumult of party contention. These are not of the essence of the matter. Under cover of the shouting and the stress of the controversy are produced results which, while not consciously in the purpose of the contestants, are of vital importance to the state. Party struggles furnish a necessary vent to the emotions and ambitions of the common people, test the powers and demonstrate the ability of the leading citizens, and call into existence the institutions and laws which prove the mainstay of the government in later days. All these results are discoverable in the history of Rome, and all are essential to an expanding republic. Channels through which the feeling of the common people may find adequate and harmless expression are, in Machiavelli's opinion, of the greatest importance, and he suggests various other means to this end, particularly approving ample facilities for the making and judicial investigation of charges against public characters. Men of real distinction and marked ability are always looked upon with suspicion by the masses. In times of peace and quiet they are wholly neglected in republics, and the leadership falls into the hands of the rich and well connected. An escape from the perils of such a tendency was found by Rome, he thinks,

in the policy of incessant war, through which the best of her citizens were kept always to the front.

For the republic which would correspond most closely to Machiavelli's ideal, therefore, vehement internal party strife and an ever aggressive foreign policy would be normal and indispensable conditions of existence. This again throws a strong light on the divergence, which the many resemblances serve to emphasize, between the Machiavellian and the Aristotelian politics.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What are the different forms of government according to Machiavelli.

2. Do you think Machiavelli's classification of government is still relevant today?

3.4.5 LET US SUM UP

Machiavelli's political writings belong less to political theory than to the class of diplomatic literature, of which a great volume was produced by Italian writers of his age. Never has the game of diplomacy been played more fiercely than in the relations between the Italian states of Machiavelli's day. Diplomatic writing and Machiavelli's works as well, has characteristic merits and defects. There is the shrewdest insight into points of weakness and strength in a political situation, the clearest and coolest judgement of the resources and temperament of opponent, the most objective estimate of the limitations of a policy, the soundest common sense in forecasting the logic of events and the outcome of a course of action.

This is Machiavelli's most conspicuous quality. He writes almost wholly of

the mechanics of government, of the means by which states may be made strong, of the policies by which they can expand their power, and of the errors that lead to their decay or overthrow. Political and military measures are almost the sole objects of his interest, and he divorces these almost wholly from religious, moral and social considerations, except as the latter affect political expedients. The purpose of politics is to preserve and increase political power itself, and the standard by which he judges it is its success in doing this. He often discusses the advantages of immorality skilfully used to gain a ruler's ends, and it is this which is mainly responsible for his evil repute. But for the most part he is not so much immoral as non-moral. He simply abstracts politics from other considerations and writes of it as if it were an end itself.

3.4.6 EXERCISES

1. For a community in which a general economic equality prevails, Machiavelli holds that the republic is the best possible form of government. Elaborate.
2. Why Machiavelli hold that acquisitions made in the same country are easy?
3. With all his admiration for the strong man, Machiavelli nevertheless has a just appreciation of the persistent power inherent in the fundamental institutions of a community. Explain.
4. What are all those elements, according to Machiavelli, helped Roman Republic in carrying out the extension of its dominion?
5. “When those states which have been acquired are accustomed to live at liberty under their own laws, there are three ways of holding them”. What are these three ways?
6. According to Machiavelli one of the most important of these propaganda techniques is religion. How?
7. “The mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous...” says Machiavelli. Why?
8. According to Machiavelli, for the stability of princely governments, the first great rule of policy is respect for the established institutions and customs of the land. Elaborate.
9. Machiavelli opines “It is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting....” Why?
10. What are all the things suggested by Machiavelli to prince to develop a reputation for high purposes and character?
11. At heart Machiavelli had a preference for popular government. Explain.
12. Machiavelli paid considerable attention to the interrelationship of constitution, custom and law and their influence on the permanence of republican government. Elaborate.

13. In what circumstances Machiavelli supported the necessity of absolute power or dictatorship?
14. According to Machiavelli Party struggles furnish a necessary vent to the emotions and ambitions of the common people. How do you understand this?

3.4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Parekh, B., *Contemporary Political Thinkers*, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982

Suda J.P., *A History of Political Thought*, Vol 1 & 2, Meerut, K. Nath & CO., 2010.

Nelson, Brian R., *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*, Wave land Press, 2015.

Gettell, Raymond G., "The Nature of Political Thought", *American Political Science Review*, Vol 17, Issue 2 May 1923.

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT

John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) was an English philosopher, political economist and civil servant who contributed widely to social theory, political theory and political economy. His most well-known and inspiring works include *A System of Logic*, *Principles of Political Economy*, *On Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*, *The Subjection of Women*, *Three Essays on Religion*, and some of his *Autobiography*. In his writings, Mill argues for a number of controversial principles. These writings have become the cornerstone of political liberalism. Considered as the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century, Mill's conception of liberty justified the freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state and social control. Mill is the most ardent supporter of liberty of thought and expression. He suggests the self-development of men and women for the benefit of the society as he is certain that all wise and noble things come from the individuals. To him, there can't be any self-development without the extension of liberty to the individual. So, he establishes the link between liberty and self-development. He espoused equal liberty for both the sexes-males and females. In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill strongly argued for the equal status of women in three key areas: Right to vote, Equal opportunities in education and employment. Mill regards representative democracy as a necessary precondition for the progress of citizens of any state as it ensures the promotion of common interest of a society instead of the partial and sinister interests of some group or class. Through his writings Mill advocated for limited state and government as he considers them as the instruments for the promotion of individual development and freedom. In this unit, we will discuss about J.S. Mill's conception of Liberty, Equal Rights to Women as well as his ideas on Representative Government and Relevance of his ideas on Modern State and Government.

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)
Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)
Unit IV: J. S. Mill

4.1 CONCEPT OF LIBERTY: THOUGHT, EXPRESSION AND ACTION

– Amit Kumar Sharma

STRUCTURE

- 1.1.0 Objectives**
- 1.1.1 Introduction**
- 1.1.2 Rationale of Liberty**
- 1.1.3 Mill's Definition of Liberty**
- 1.1.4 Liberty of Thought and Expression**
- 1.1.5 Liberty of Action**
- 1.1.6 Criticism**
- 1.1.7 Let us Sum Up**
- 1.1.8 Exercises**
- 1.1.9 Suggested Readings**

4.1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the concept of Liberty of Thought, Expression and Action as given by J.S Mill.
- Appreciate the definition and various aspects of Liberty as given by J.S. Mill.
- Critically analyse J.S Mill's concept of Liberty.

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

J.S.Mill was taught to be a utilitarian who would give primacy to the utility of a thing over any other aspect and follow the principle of greatest happiness of the greatest numbers. Unlike the earlier utilitarians who emphasized on the quantitative utilitarianism, his love for liberty of the individual led him to emphasize the qualitative dimension that changed the entire utilitarian framework. In the words of C.L.Wayper, 'To strict utilitarians, liberty is always subordinated to the principle of Utility itself. To Mill it is something fundamental, more of an end even than the principle of Utility itself. It is that passionate conviction, glowing through its pages that has made Mill's Essay *On Liberty* the great English classic that it is, with which only Milton's *Aeropagitica* is fit to be compared.' For Mill, the pursuit of individual happiness will result in social happiness and it's only through liberty that an individual can be happy. He makes liberty as the basis of individual happiness which in turn enhances social happiness. Hence, freedom is the precondition for human happiness. For him, freedom of thought, expression, action and association for the individual is of paramount importance. The state and the society should provide maximum freedom to the individual so that he/she can think, express and act freely for self-development as well as social development. In fact, Mill's essay *On Liberty* is the finest defence of liberty of thought and discussion ever written by anyone.

4.1.2 RATIONALE OF LIBERTY

J.S.Mill is the most asserted supporter of liberty of the individual. He wanted to promote the self-development of men and women for the benefit of the society as he is certain that all wise and noble things come from the individuals. To him, there can't be any self-development without the extension of liberty to the individual. So, he establishes the link between liberty and self development. He was of the firm belief that when individuals are left free to make their choices in life, they make use of many of their faculties. The continuous use of human faculties leads to their further development/improvement. In his own words, 'The human faculties of perception, judgment,

discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised in only making a choice....the mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used.....He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties, he must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision.” He very deftly explains the connection between the development of human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity and the liberty of the individual to make his own choices. He holds that the individuals who do something because others do it or say it have no need of any other faculty than the ape like one of imitation. In other words, doing a thing just because it’s a custom or dictated by a group doesn’t lead to the self-development as none of our faculties are involved in it.

4.1.3 MILL’S DEFINITION OF LIBERTY

In *On Liberty*, J.S.Mill expounds two definitions of liberty. First, he defines liberty as ‘being left to oneself; all restraints qua restraints is an evil’. ‘Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.’ Thus, he defines liberty in the broadest sense and seeks greatest amount of freedom for the individual when he/she pursues his/her creative impulses and energies for self-development. The society has no power/right to restrain an individual when he/she acts for himself/herself without hurting anyone else. Mill divides an individual’s action into two categories: self-regarding and other-regarding. Those actions as concern only the individual executing them and do not affect others in any way are known as self- regarding actions. On the other hand, those actions of the individual as affect or involve others are other-regarding actions. As far as self-regarding actions are concerned, Mill demands absolute freedom and no interference whatsoever from anyone. But when it comes to other regarding actions, the society/government is justified in putting some restraint on the individual action. In the words of J.S.Mill, “The only part of the conduct of any one, for which is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of

right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.”

To Mill, it was the individuality involving the right of choice that mattered the most. In case of self-regarding actions, he considers coercion or interference as antithetical to the self-development of the individual. He cites various reasons for the same. First, the evils of coercion far outweighed the good achieved. Second, individuals were so diverse in their needs and capacities for happiness that coercion would be futile. Third, since diversity was in itself good, other things being equal, it should be encouraged. Last freedom was the most important requirement in the life of a rational person.

Mill’s second definition of liberty is that “liberty consists in doing what one desires”. This definition of liberty is very different from the one as being left alone. He illustrates this definition of liberty through an example of a person who desires to cross a bridge that is not safe. The person desires to cross the bridge and does not wish to fall into the river while doing so. Hence, we will be legitimately justified in stopping the person from crossing the bridge and thus prevent harm from being inflicted on him. It can be clearly discerned from the example that Mill has opened the door for state interference in the individual sphere. In the words of C.L.Wayper, ‘If once it be admitted that somebody may know better than you know what you desire, and that liberty is to do what you desire, then even the activities of the Grand Inquisitor, torturing a man’s body to prevent him being damned and thereby ensuring to him the salvation he desires, can be justified.’ So, according to Barry, Mill understood liberty not only as involving absence of restraints but also as self-mastery involving the exercise of choice.

After having established the connection between liberty and the self-development of the individual, Mill goes on to specify the liberties/freedoms that he thinks must be extended to the individuals their self-development. In the words of Sabine, ‘For Mill, freedom of thought and investigation, freedom of discussion, and the freedom of self-controlled moral judgment and action were goods in their own right.’ Of these, liberties of thought and expression, liberty of action have been explained below.

4.1.4 LIBERTY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

J.S. Mill is the most ardent supporter of liberty of thought and expression and his defence of the same was one of the most powerful and eloquent expositions in the western intellectual tradition. Mill believed that truth is the precondition for human development and every opinion or argument contains a part of the truth. So, every individual should be given the maximum freedom of thought and expression so that truth or rationality gets expression for the progress of the society. There should be no interference even at the level of thoughts an individual has. Human beings are rational beings. They observe the phenomena and happenings around them and form opinions or thoughts about them by applying the faculty of judgment. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for Mill that an individual should be absolutely free at the level of thinking as it's the thinking process that gives us the power to understand truth. The government or the society has no right to put restraints on what an individual should think or not. When it comes to liberty of expression including the liberty of speaking and publishing, Mill holds that even if one person has an opinion or argument which is different from that of the rest of the society, he/she should be allowed to express it without any persecution. In Mill's own words, 'If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.' It's here that Mill makes it amply clear that majority or numbers do not represent the truth. Even minority view can be nearer to truth than the majority one. Every view has to be tested only when it's confronted by the opposite view.

For Mill, the dominant ideas of the society are formed by the dominant class that is interested in putting forward its own interest. So the dominant ideas can't be said to represent the interest of the society as a whole. It is more likely that the suppressed minority opinion is true and those suppressing it will only prevent or deter mankind from knowing the truth. Mill did not believe in the infallibility of the human reason. That's why, he holds that society is not justified in coercing even a single dissenter into silence for adhering to a view that is different from that of others. By suppressing a dissenting view, the mankind/society shall be at loss. The dissenter's views may be true and so would benefit

the society in its progress. It is also a possibility that his/her view may be partly true and thus complementing the majority view. Finally, if his/her view is false, then the controversy would strengthen and vindicate the already held majority view. In the words of C.L.Wayper, 'It will be seen that Mill is a firm believer in survival of the fittest in the world of ideas, and that he is convinced that truth is fittest to survive. He wanted freedom of expression for the incorrect opinions also as it's only through interaction and dialogue that opinions evolve and the truth can be discerned. It's only by constantly being able to refute wrong opinions that we hold our correct opinions as living truths.

According to Mill, the real danger to the freedom of speech and expression of the individual doesn't come from government but from the public opinion shaped by the majority. The public opinion controls even the thoughts of an individual. It subtly restricts the domain of individual thoughts. The pressure of the society dehumanizes the individuals and even destroys their individuality as it prevents them from following their nature. The creative potential of the individual gets suppressed by the collective opinion. It's so oppressive that it invisibly suppresses the individual expression. It constricts the space for expression of the individual creativity. In the words of Sabine, 'The threat to liberty which Mill chiefly feared was not government but a majority that is intolerant of the unconventional that looks with suspicion on divergent minorities, and is willing to use the weight of numbers to repress and regiment them.'

4.1.5 LIBERTY OF ACTION

As explained above, Mill divides individual actions into two categories namely self-regarding and other-regarding. The self-regarding actions include those actions of the individual, which concern only the individual performing them. Mill asserts that there should be no interference on the part of state and society as far as self-regarding actions are concerned. No coercion, whatsoever, be allowed in this area. The other regarding actions are those actions of the individuals as directly affect others. These actions involve others and hence curtail their freedom. So, there is need to put restrictions on the other-regarding actions

of the individual. It's here that Mill opens the door for state interference in individual sphere and thus creates space for welfare state to emerge. The inadequacy of classical liberals is addressed by Mill and the positive dimension is added to liberty.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What is the rationale of liberty according to J.S.Mill.

2. What is the "harm principle" in Mill's theory of liberty.

3. Critically evaluate Mill's views on liberty.

4. How does Mill justify individual freedom in a democratic society.

4.1.6 CRITICISM

- a) **Prophet of an Empty Liberty and an abstract individual:** Ernest Barker has criticized J.S.Mill as the Prophet of empty liberty and an abstract individual. An individual is inseparable part of the society. Mill envisages an individual isolated from the whole. Liberty of individual can't be seen in isolation of the society. That's why; Ernest Barker uses the above phrase for Mill.
- b) **Very difficult to draw line between self-regarding and other-regarding actions:** Bosanquet argued that there is no individual action that doesn't

affect the other members of society. So the demarcation between self-regarding and other-regarding action does not hold water when analyzed practically.

- c) **No analysis of relationship between freedom and responsibility:** According to Sabine, 'The fundamental difficulty with Mill's argument was that it never really analyzed the relationship between freedom and responsibility.'
- d) **Ambiguity on Legislation:** Though Mill developed theoretical framework on liberty, yet when it comes to practical legislation, he is not clear. For example, he supported compulsory education, regulation of business and industry in the interest of public welfare, but regarded prohibition of sale of alcoholic liquors as an infringement of liberty of the individual.

4.1.7 LET'S SUM UP

Like all other philosophers, J.S.Mill has his shortcomings and limitations but his contribution to the political thought on liberty has been remarkable. His

modification of Utilitarianism by bringing in the qualitative dimension to measure the preference of the pleasures rescued the liberal thought from irrelevance. Mill's ethics was utilitarian chiefly in the sense that he thought of the value of personality not as metaphysical dogma but as something to be realized in the actual conditions of a free society.

Mill's liberalism accepted political and social freedom as itself a good, not because it contributed to an ulterior end but because freedom is the proper condition of a responsible human being. To live one's own life, developing one's own native traits and capacities, is not a means to happiness; it literally is a substantive part of happiness.

He held that liberty is not only an individual good but also a social good. The freedom extended to individual leads to his/her development which in turn develops the society as a whole. If an individual is silenced or coerced, the benefit that the society can get from his/her ideas and actions is lost.

The function of liberal state in a society is not negative but positive. It cannot make its citizens free merely by refraining from legislation or assume that the conditions of freedom exist merely because legal disabilities have been removed. His passionate support for the freedom of thought and expression strengthened the democratic theory.

4.1.8 EXERCISES

1. Define Liberty and discuss the relationship between Liberty and self-development as given by Mill.
2. Discuss why Mill Considered Liberty of Thought and Expression important?
3. State how J.S.Mill is considered to be the most asserted supporter of liberty of the individual?
4. Write a briefly why J.S Mill is considered as the Prophet of empty liberty and an abstract individual?

4.1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Annas, J, An Introduction to Plato's Republic, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988

Aristotle, The Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982

Brian, Nelson, Western Political Thought, Pearson, New Delhi, 2006

Barker, Ernest, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, London:

Methuen, 1906 Sabine, George and Thomas L. Thorson, A History of Political Theory, New Delhi: OUP & IBH, 1973

Jones, W. T., Master of Political Thought: Machiavelli to Bentham: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947

Ten, C. L., Mill on Liberty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980

Wayper, C. L., Teach Yourself Political Thought, Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 2007

4.2 MILL'S VIEWS ON WOMEN EQUALITY

– Amit Kumar Sharma

STRUCTURE

- 4.2.0 Objectives**
- 4.2.1 Introduction**
- 4.2.2 Legal Subordination of Women**
- 4.2.3 Subjugation of Women is Not Natural**
- 4.2.4 Advantages of Women's Equality to Society**
- 4.2.5 Criticism**
- 4.2.6 Let's Sum Up**
- 4.2.7 Exercises**
- 4.2.8 Suggested Readings**

4.2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- why J.S.Mill considers the subjugation of women unnatural and his basic stand on the Equality of Women;
- how equal treatment given to women increase the democratic citizenship; and
- comprehend the striking shortcomings in the arguments given by J.S Mill.

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

J.S.Mill was the staunchest supporter of the freedom of the individual and

didn't want any restriction on the same. He espoused equal liberty for both the sexes-males and females. He in collaboration with his wife Harriet Taylor wrote *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, a work which was far ahead of its time in its application of the principle of liberty to the position of women. He regarded improvement in the position of women as a concern not restricted to women alone, but of entire humanity. In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill strongly argued for the equal status of women in three key areas: Right to vote, Equal opportunities in education and employment. With the advent of the modern times, the liberty of the individual was considered to be paramount but due to the consolidated traditions it could not be extended to the women in the equal measure. Like all the subjugations in the ancient times, Mill considers the superior physical strength of the man to be the chief reason for the subjugated condition of the women. In Mill's own words 'The inequality of rights between men and women has no other source than the law of the strongest.' The women even in the 19th century were made to lead a life that was even sometimes worse than that of the slaves. The slavery was done away with the dawn of the modern era but the subjugation of women continued unabated through the legal framework.

4.2.2 LEGAL SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN

J.S.Mill explains the position of women in British society in the 19th Century and expounds his own stand on the improvement of the same through the very starting lines in *The Subjection of Women*.

'The principle that regulates the existing relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other –is wrong itself, and is now one of the chief obstacles to human improvement; and it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality that doesn't allow any power or privilege on one side or disability on the other.'

The legal subordination of the women to the men was duly protected and promoted by the mid-19th century English law about the marriage contract. Mill was so opposed to this law that when he married Harriet Taylor in 1851, he wrote a formal protest against the laws that would govern their marriage. According to these laws, all the property belonged to the husband and the married

woman could own no property even the one gifted by her parents. Even after divorce, whatever was earned by the woman belonged to him. The law conferred guardianship of the children on husbands only. A mother did not become a legal guardian of her children in the event of the death of her husband unless expressly desired in the will of the deceased. If a woman chooses to leave her husband, she could not claim his property including her children. So, the legal framework that was supposed to be based on the principles of liberty and equality was itself oppressive for the women whose life was made entirely dependent on the male counterpart.

4.2.3 SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN IS NOT NATURAL

Mill was perturbed by the continuation of the unequal relationship between men and women even in the modern age when the principles of liberty and equality have become the basis for every relationship. He pointed out that this subjugation of women is not based on reason. He contested the general perception that woman's subordination was natural. To begin with, like all unequal relations, the subordination of women to men was the result of the superior physical strength of the men. But with the advent of modern era, the laws recognized the inequality of the sexes and extended further credence to the same. Hence, it was how the unequal relationship of man and woman created through sheer physical force was made seemingly natural by the laws of modern times. Consequently the physical strength became a virtue in a man, the opposite renunciation, patience, resignation and submission to power have been regarded as characteristics of a single and graceful woman. Mill argues, 'The adoption of this system of inequality never was the result of deliberation or forethought, or any social ideas, or any notion whatever of what would be best for humanity or the good order of society. It arose simply from the fact that from the dawn of human society every woman was in a state of bondage to some man, because she was of value to him and she had less muscular strength than he did.'

Unlike slavery and political absolutism, the gender inequality continued to exist because all the men had an interest in sustaining women's subordination

as they were the beneficiaries of the patriarchal system. They controlled the property and the body of women. It enhanced their self-esteem to be male. The women had no choice but to lead this subjugated life controlled by their male counterpart. As explained above, a married woman had no existence without her husband. Her all life was dependent on him. Remaining unmarried was also not a choice for the women as they were deprived of the educational and professional opportunities. Both law and custom prohibited women from seeking any means of livelihood other than being a mother and wife. So, a woman was not free within marriage nor was she free to remain unmarried. Mill favoured equality between husband and wife. As member of the British Parliament, he passionately supported the Married Women's Property Bill. In his view, the unequal relationship within marriage where husband exercises dominance and power over their women debases the men themselves. So, he contends that an equal relationship based on mutual friendship and respect would be advantageous to men too. Moreover, the women can win their liberation with the support of men. A marriage contract based on equality of married persons before law was not only a sufficient, but a necessary condition for full and just equality between the sexes.

It was not that the women were kept in this condition because of the physical strength only. They were prepared for this subordinated role through socialization, education and training. From their very childhood, the women were socialized to be submissive, yielding and accommodating and live for others, their husband, and children. They were not taught to be independent with self-will and self-control. Mill was of the firm belief that like men, women too are rational beings and possess immense capacity and talent but they have been denied the opportunity to groom the same. First, we hold that women can't do certain things and then do not allow them to do the same. It is very unfair on the part of society that half of the humanity was not provided the opportunity to prove its worth. Basically, the unequal relationship has deliberately been maintained so as to confine the women mostly to the household chores and rearing of the children thus denying them the participation in the public sphere. Once they are given freedom to participate in the public sphere extending to them the

access to education and employment, they can develop and sharpen their capabilities.

Opposing the argument that the nature of the women is different from that of men, Mill held that it's a fallacy deliberately propagated to maintain the status quo. He argues that for centuries the women have been subjected to suppression and their nature has been shaped by the circumstances of subjugation. Moreover, we have not seen free women in free society. So, it is imperative that women be granted freedom so that they can fully express themselves.

Mill expounded his support for equal political rights for the women in his work, *Consideration of Representative Government*. In the political sphere too, Mill could not see any reason to discriminate between the two sexes as far as the right to vote and representation in the legislature were concerned. He explained that many women in history had proved their mettle in politics defying the generally held views on women's capabilities. He cited the examples of Joan of Arc, Elizabeth and Margaret of Austria to highlight the political acumen of the women. Mill hoped that political rights would enable the women to voice their view into the law making process. As the law itself was protecting and promoting the subordination of women, winning the political rights would create the scope for them to change the legal framework. He saw law as an instrument to better the condition of the women and so once they obtain the right to vote and representation in the legislature they would be in a position get the discriminatory laws amended in their favour.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Who was Harriet Taylor and what was her influence on Mill's views on women.

2. What is the main argument in Mill's "The Subjection of women"

4.2.4 ADVANTAGES OF WOMEN'S EQUALITY TO SOCIETY

Mill deliberated on as to how the society shall be benefitted by granting equal rights to women

- 1) Strengthening the democratic citizenship:** The site of origin and maintenance of the hierarchical relationships has been the patriarchal family that has been based on inequality between the two sexes. In the traditional families, the power is concentrated in the hands of husband/father/master and the wife, children and servants have to obey him. To

Mill, such families are antithetical to the modern democratic polities based on the values of liberty and equality. He strongly held that the members of these patriarchal families can't be good democratic citizens as neither they have experienced nor practiced equality in their relationships within their families. Once, the women are vested with freedom and equality, the family would no more be a school of despotism. In the interest of democratic citizenship then, it was necessary to obtain equality for women in the family.

- 2) **Doubling the mass of mental faculties for the society:** In the society dominated by the patriarchal values, the men came to have occupied the public sphere while the women were relegated to the private sphere of household chores. So half of the talent pool of the society was unutilized as the women were hardly motivated or allowed to move beyond the confines of the household. Moreover, the men have also not faced competition from the women in the public sphere. Hence, extending equality to women would double the mass of mental faculties available to the society. Society would benefit not only because there would be more doctors, engineers, teachers and scientists, but men in the professions would also perform better because of competition from their female counterpart.
- 3) **Increase in the overall happiness of the society:** The suppression unleashed by the patriarchal society robbed women of the real happiness. They sacrificed their own happiness and lived for the happiness of their husbands and children. It violated the utilitarian principle of greatest happiness of the greatest number as half of the population live a suppressed and unhappy life. So, by giving women equal rights, their happiness would be increased manifold and this would satisfy the utilitarian principle of greatest happiness of the greatest numbers.
- 4) **Full Expression of the Human Nature :** According to Mill, the oppressive relationships are disadvantageous not only for the oppressed but also for the oppressor. So the subjugation of women debases the men too. Mill argues, 'All the mankind's selfish propensities, the self-worship,

the unjust self-preference, are rooted in and nourished by the present constitution of the relation between men and women.' Hence, the dawn of women equality would not only liberate the women but also uplift the men morally.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain Mill's views on the equality of women. What arguments does he offer in support of gender equality.

2. Mill argues that gender roles are socially constructed rather than natural. Comment.

4.2.5 CRITICISM

1. **Confinement of the women to home only :** In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill holds that the women who marry in fact choose a career of taking care of their husband and children. Hence, he confines them to the private sphere of home only and deprives them of their participation in the public sphere of associational life. In this way, he denies the married women the opportunity to improve themselves by rising above the narrow confines of family.
2. **Views restricted to middle class women only:** In his *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill exhorted the need to open industrial occupations to both males and females. But he neglected the question as to how women of all classes could find and keep their jobs. In fact, when he talks about the emancipation of women, it's basically middle class women who are

at center of his analysis.

3. **Neglected the plight of sisters, daughters and single women** :In *The Subjection Of Women*, his main focus is on the woman as mother and wife. His analysis hovers around the married women but does take into account the plight of daughters, sisters and single women living alone or parental roof.

4.2.6 LET'S SUM UP

After studying Mill's views on women's equality, we are now in a position to evaluate his role in advancing the discourse on women's right to vote, education and employment. As described above, the condition of women in the mid 19th Century Britain was that of subordination in all the fields-Education, Marriage, Politics and Employment. Their condition was even worse than the slaves and

same was protected by the legal framework. In such prevalent conditions, Mill's articulation of women's equality and freedom was of immense importance. Mill was the first male philosopher of considerable stature and repute to consider the 'Woman's Question'. In *The Subjection of Women*, he explained the basis of women's inequality and argued for the emancipation of women for the betterment of society. His intervention in the discourse on women's equality played a pivotal role in strengthening the women's movement of that time. Even as member of British Parliament, he whole heartedly supported the bills espousing equality and freedom for women. He was of the firm belief that the real freedom and equality for women can be achieved only by changing the laws protecting the male dominance in the social sphere. For this it's important that the women be extended the right to vote and the right to contest parliamentary elections so that they are in a position to get the discriminatory and oppressive laws amended on their own initiative. He very deftly dismantled the argument that projected the subordination of women as natural. He argued like all dominations, the subordination of women had its origin in the superior physical strength of men and this ancient rule could not be sustained forever to keep the women subjugated even in the modern times. For him, the conditions of equality and freedom are not only for the betterment of women but also for the entire society. He linked women's equality with the strengthening of democratic citizenship, doubling of the mass of mental faculties for the society, increase in the overall happiness of the society and full expression of the human nature. Unlike Aristotle and Rousseau, J.S.Mill has full faith in the rationality and capability of the women. In the end, he is highly consistent in his views on liberty as he sees it equally valuable for both the sexes.

4.2.7 EXERCISES

1. Write a short note on the legal subordination of women.
2. Why Mill considers Subjugation of Women as not natural?
3. Write a various advantages for the Society on account of Women's Equality.

4. Discuss J. S Mill's stand on the Equality of Women. What advantages does the society will have when women have equal rights? Discuss Mills views.
5. What was the main criticism against J.S Mill when it comes to his ideas on Women's Equality?
6. How does the equal treatment of women strengthen democratic Citizenship?

4.2.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Annas, J, An Introduction to Plato's Republic, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988

Aristotle, The Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982

Brian, Nelson, Western Political Thought, Pearson, New Delhi, 2006

Barker, Ernest, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, London:

Methuen, 1906 Sabine, George and Thomas L. Thorson, A History of Political Theory, New Delhi: OUP & IBH, 1973

Jones, W. T., Master of Political Thought: Machiavelli to Bentham: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947

Ten, C. L., Mill on Liberty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980

Wayper, C. L., Teach Yourself Political Thought, Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 2007

B. A. Semester III (Political Science)

Course No. PS-301 (Western Political Thought)

Unit IV: J. S. Mill

4.3 MILL'S VIEWS ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT: PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND PLURAL VOTING

– Mukesh Sharma

STRUCTURE

- 4.3.0 Objectives**
- 4.3.1 Introduction**
- 4.3.2 Mill on Representative Government**
- 4.3.3 Proportional Representation**
- 4.3.4 Plural Voting**
- 4.3.5 Let Us Sum Up**
- 4.3.6 Exercises**
- 4.3.7 Suggested Readings**

4.3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- Mill's Views on Representative Government with specific reference to Proportional Representation and Plural Voting.
- The efficacy of the methods of plural voting and proportional representation to fulfil the purposes of representative government.
- How representative government promotes the individual good and democratic credentials.

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

J. S. Mill is the most influential and brilliant of the 19th century liberal thinkers. Apart from his strong advocacy of individual liberty and championing the rights of women, Mill stood for the justification of representative government as the most preferable form of government. He supported democratic institutions for expanding the sphere of individual freedoms from any type of tyrannical power. On that basis Mill is rightly regarded as a reluctant democrat. He perceived the need for laying the foundations of a liberal society as a basic condition for a liberal state and government. He defended free speech and the right of the individuality. In short, Mill championed the cause of promotion of individual freedom, women's rights, representative government and welfare state.

His essays *On Liberty* (1859) and *The Subjection of women* (1863) were classic elaborations of liberal thought. However, his *The Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) provided an outline of his ideal government based on proportional representation, minority rights and promotion of institutions of self-governance. He also played an important role in drawing a distinction between the political and economic spheres and in working out the implications of liberal theory in these spheres. In the political sphere he proved to be a strong supporter of constitutional and representative government. He also laid the foundations of the welfare state.

4.3.2 MILL ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mill regards representative democracy as a necessary precondition for the progress of citizens of any state. Thus, he considers Representative Government as the best form of government. He examines the efficacy of a government on bases of degree of the success of a government to fulfill adequately the purposes of government. For Mill, the point of having a government was that it performed two main functions: it must use the existing qualities and skills of the citizens to best serve their interests, and it must improve the moral, intellectual and active qualities of these citizens. A despotic government may be able to fulfil the first purpose, but will fail in the second. Only a representative

government is able to fulfil these two functions. It is a representative government that combines judiciously the two principles of participation and competence which is able to fulfil the two functions of protecting and educating the citizens.

According to Mill, representative government ensures the promotion of common interest of a society instead of the partial and sinister interests of some group or class. The participation in the political process must be as extensive as possible, so that every individual has a say in controlling the government and thus protecting his interests. It is on this basis that Mill demanded the right to vote for women. He advocated the extension of the suffrage to cover everyone except those who could not read and write, did not pay taxes.

Mill recommended compulsory education, for that would make individual citizens wise, competent, and independent judges. He always emphasized that representative democracy was only possible in a state that was small and homogenous, an assertion that has been nullified by the success of plural democracies like India.

4.3.3 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

As representative democracy gives undue prominences and power to sheer numerical majority, it tends towards collective mediocrity. It may lead to under representation of the minorities in the parliament and therefore suppression of their interests. Ordinarily, in a representative democracy, the majority party succeeds in securing a larger number of seats in the parliament than its proportionate number of votes would justify. As a rule, minorities suffer from under representation in the parliament. To guard against this injustice to minorities and to make sure that majorities and minorities get their due share of representation in the parliament, Mill supported the system of proportional representation which he regarded as necessary for representative democracy.

Mill maintains that it is an essential part of democracy that minorities should be adequately represented. No real democracy, nothing but a false show of democracy, is possible without it. To guard against the injustice to minorities and to make sure that majorities and minorities get their due share of

representation in the parliament, Mill supported the system of proportional representation which he regarded as necessary for representative democracy. He switched his allegiance to proportional representation as a means of allowing the wise and noble few to exercise their due influence over the mindless majority. He argues that, a legislature should represent all the sections of the electorate and no minority should go without any representation in the legislature. Legislatures are compared to maps. One cannot draw a map of a country ignoring any part of the country. All the parts of the country should be included in the map. Similarly, all the sections of the electorate should be represented in the legislature.

The advocates of proportional representation point out that the majority principle is based on the assumption of a bi-party system, where there are only two major political parties which compete in the elections. In this bi-party system the majority rules and the minority remains in the opposition and criticize the government. But, really speaking in this society there are various sections with their own peculiar problems and opinions. To make the legislature a true mirror of the nation, it is essential that all the sections are directly and more so proportionately reflected in the legislature.

According to Mill, the principle of proportional representation allows the minorities to be given a voice, and for all views to be brought to the table for serious consideration. The views of a minority may be overruled after serious debate and deliberation, but what Mill is against is the idea of not allowing the views of the minorities to be given some consideration.

In any real equal democracy every or any section would be represented, not disproportionately but proportionately. A majority of the electorate would always have a majority of representative but a minority of the electorate would always have a minority of the representatives. The supporters of proportional representation further argue that under this system there will not be any necessity to readjust or redraw the boundaries of the constituency to equate the number of electors of electors in the constituency on the basis of increasing population.

In the scheme of proportional representation through the method of

preferential voting, as devised by Thomas Hare, Mill saw one of the very greatest improvements yet made in the theory and practice of government, by giving both to the majority and to the minority representation in proportion to their numbers, it would tend to decrease the power of former and increase that of the latter. Mill's special tenderness for the rights and opinions of minorities caused him to see in proportional representation a means of obviating the danger of majority tyranny.

Mill did not greatly fear persecution of isolated individuals who expressed heterodox opinions, because such individuals were seldom considered dangerous to the community. What he did fear was persecution of minority groups, because organised minorities roused fears for the safety of the established order and invited attack. Protection of minorities was therefore, the true test of freedom of opinion. And for that reason Mill advocated proportional representation, which was, in his view, the most effective method of protecting the freedom of the individual to express opinions that roused general hostility. It was this same impetus for wanting everyone to be represented that made Mill support Hare's system of proportional representation. In the absence of proportional representation, Mill pointed out that minorities went unrepresented.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain Mills views on proportional representation.

2. Briefly state the Mills views on Representative government.

4.3.4 PLURAL VOTING

Representative democracy, though generally better than other forms of

government, suffers from two dangers i.e. (1) general ignorance and incapacity in the controlling body in the state and in the average member in the parliament and (2) the danger of the democratic machinery being in the controlling hands of a section of population whose interests are not identical with the general welfare of the whole community.

Moreover, though he supported universal suffrage, he gave the idea of weighted suffrage i.e. plural votes to higher educated citizens. This would give proportionate weight to men of superior intelligence and in order to prevent the rich higher educated men practicing class legislation, he was in favour of the poor getting plural votes by proving their superior intelligence by voluntary

examinations. Thus, Mill's weighted suffrage suggests that he was not in favour of political equality but was for intellectual aristocracy.

Thus, his belief in participation led him to advocate a widening of the franchise, his belief in competence led him to recommend plural voting. Mill opined that the franchise should not be widened without plural voting being introduced. Plural voting meant that with everyone – having at least one vote, some individuals would have more than one vote because they were, for example, more educated. It assumed a graduated scale of educational attainments, awarding at the bottom, one additional vote to a skilled laborer and two to a foreman, and at the top, as many as five to professional men, writers and artists, public functionaries, university graduates and members of learned societies.

Plural voting would ensure that a better caliber of representatives would be elected, and so the general interest would not be hampered by the poor quality of members of Parliament. Mill sought to combine his two principles in other institutions of representative democracy as well. Taking the example of representative assembly, Mill maintains that this body must be a committee of grievances and 'a congress of opinions'. Every opinion existing in the nation should find a voice here; that is how every group's interests have a better chance of being protected.

At the same time, Mill also stood for legislative competence and administrative skills. He argued that an amateur legislative body is suited neither for the business of legislation nor of administration. Legislations were to be framed by a group of competent legal experts and administration should be in the hands of the bureaucracy. Mill's arguments employed two kinds of competence, instrumental and moral. Instrumental competence is the ability to discover the best means to certain ends and the ability to identify ends that satisfy individuals' interests as they perceive them. Moral competence is the ability to discern ends that are intrinsically superior for individuals and society.

Morally competent leaders are able to recognize the general interest and resist the sinister interests that dwell not only in the government but also in the democratic majority. The purpose of plural voting is to ensure that morally competent leaders get elected to the legislature.

Mill prescribed registration tests for checking performances, universal education for all children and plurality of votes to the better educated, in order to balance the lack of voting rights to the uneducated. He also recommended the disqualification of three categories of dependents: a) those who were unable to pay local taxes; b) those who were dependent on public welfare would be excluded for five years from the last day of receipt; and c) those who were legal bankrupts and moral deviants like habitual drunkards. He, however, championed equal voting rights for all irrespective of their sex or colour.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What are the qualifications Mill suggests for voters.

2. What is the “tyranny of majority “as discussed by Mill.

4.3.5 LET US SUM UP

Mill asserts that the best form of government for the people at a time is the one that best achieves two goals: (1) improving the virtue and intelligence of the people under its jurisdiction, and (2) organizing such good qualities of the people as currently exist to promote as far as possible the long-run common good (the legitimate purposes of government). According to Mill, democracy may be expected to be more conducive than any other form of government for organizing such good qualities of the people to promote the common good.

However, Mill argues that representative institutions should be assigned only limited functions, consistent with their having supreme power in the last resort. The representative (elected) body is not fit to administer public policies. The executive branch of government should be separate and distinct from the

legislative. Thirdly, the detailed drafting of laws is another task fit only for qualified experts. There should be a legislative commission responsible for drafting laws.

To Mill there is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community, with every individual having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty. But at the same time, Mill was very alive to the dangers and weaknesses of democracy. He feared democratic despotism as something worse than monarchical despotism. Extreme democracy would kill individuality.

Though Mill's ideas regarding individual, democracy, representative government and proportional representation are not perfect and contain evident shortcomings, yet they have potential to guide political systems towards better form of government, and that's what they did in the history of political development that followed in Europe.

4.3.6 EXERCISES

1. Mill stood for the representative government as the best form of government. Deal with Mill's views on representative government as one of the best forms of the government.
2. Discuss the efficacy of the methods of plural voting and proportional representation to fulfil the purposes of representative government.
3. Evaluate the major arguments of Mill in favour of representative government to promote the individual good and democratic credentials.
4. Discuss the merits of proportional Representation
5. Write a brief note on plural voting.

4.3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Annas, J, An Introduction to Plato's Republic, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988
- Aristotle, The Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982
- Brian, Nelson, Western Political Thought, Pearson, New Delhi, 2006
- Barker, Ernest, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, London: Methuen, 1906
- Sabine, George and Thomas L. Thorson, A History of Political Theory, New Delhi: OUP & IBH, 1973
- Jones, W. T., Master of Political Thought: Machiavelli to Bentham: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947
- Ten, C. L., Mill on Liberty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980
- Wayper, C. L., Teach Yourself Political Thought, Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 2007

B. A. Semester III (**Political Science**)
Course No. PS-301 (**Western Political Thought**)
Unit IV: J. S. Mill

4.4 RELEVANCE OF MILL'S IDEAS ON MODERN STATE AND GOVERNMENT

– V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

4.4.0 Objectives

4.4.1 Introduction

4.4.2 Mill's Ideas on Modern State and Government

4.4.2.1 Mill's Views on Emergence and Functioning of Political
Institutions

4.4.2.2 Utility Principle and the State

4.4.2.3 Limited Role of the State

4.4.2.4 State as an Instrument of Progress and Freedom

4.4.2.5 Mill's Criterion of Good Government

4.4.2.6 Individual Interests and Government

4.4.2.7 Government Services should not be Monopolized

4.4.3 Relevance of Mill's Ideas on Modern State & Government

4.4.4 Let Us Sum Up

4.4.5 Exercises

4.4.6 Suggested Readings

4.4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- know J.S Mill's ideas on political Institutions like state and government;

- understand why he considers State and Government are the instruments for the promotion of individual development and freedom; and
- comprehend relevance of his ideas in the contemporary context.

4.4.1 INTRODUCTION

As it has been discussed in the previous lessons, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) profoundly influenced the shape of nineteenth century British thought and political discourse. Mill's political philosophy is a multi-faceted one. He was a great individualist, a great utilitarian, a renowned liberal philosopher, and also a "qualified socialist". Mill embraced the central premise of the utilitarian school, that the measure of all moral rules, political and social arrangements including the state and the government was their effectiveness in advancing the happiness of the greatest number and this makes him a staunch supporter of the limited state activities. At the same time, Mill recognized that collective state action was sometimes necessary if the utilitarian objective of achieving his expansive notion of the greatest good for the greatest number, the object of all moral action was to be realized. In this lesson we make an attempt to understand Mill's Ideas on Modern State and government and their relevance for contemporary times.

4.4.2 MILL'S IDEAS ON MODERN STATE AND GOVERNMENT

Any understanding of Mill's ideas on Modern State and Government as well as their relevance to contemporary times must begin with Mill's consideration of Political institutions that include State and Government.

4.4.2.1 MILLS VIEWS ON EMERGENCE AND FUNCTIONING OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In his great work, *Considerations on Representative Government* he strongly proclaims that Political institutions are the work of men and owe their origin and whole existence to human will. He adds, Men did not wake on a summer morning and find them sprung up. Neither do these institutions resemble

trees, which, once planted, “are ay growing” while men “are sleeping.” Thus “Like all things, therefore, which are made by men, they may be either well or ill made; judgment and skill may have been exercised in their production, or the reverse of these.”

Mill further reiterates, “it is also to be borne in mind that political machinery does not act on itself. As it is first made, so it has to be worked, by men, and even by ordinary men. It needs, not their simple acquiescence, but their active participation; and must be adjusted to the capacities and qualities of such men as are available.” It thus, implies three conditions:

1. The people for whom the political machinery like government is intended must be willing to accept it; or at least not so unwilling as to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to its establishment.
2. They must be willing and able to do what is necessary to keep it standing.
3. And they must be willing and able to do what it requires of them to enable it to fulfill its purposes. The failure of any of these conditions renders a form of government, whatever favourable promise it may otherwise hold out, unsuitable to the particular case.

At the same time he also asserts that people may not be prepared for good institutions, but kindling a desire for them is a necessary part of their preparation. He adds “To recommend and advocate a particular institution or form of government, and set its advantages in the strongest light, is one of the modes, often the only mode within reach, of educating the mind of the nation not only for accepting or claiming, but also for working, the institution”.

4.4.2.2 UTILITY PRINCIPLE AND THE STATE

Mill’s attachment to and love for utility is beyond all sorts of doubt. He regards utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions, and he applies the Utility Principle to the state too. For him the state must have utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being. Thus for Mill, Utility is the guiding and motivating force of every action launched by the individual or the state. Hence any measure devoid of utility cannot be accepted.

At the same, time to what extent a measure or policy is capable of producing utility is to be judged by the individual himself and not by the state. Because, he believed that individuals possess sufficient reason and intelligence. So it is the duty of the state authority to allow persons to exercise their intelligence and freedom so that they can reach any fruitful decision regarding the capacity of a policy in producing utility. It is not the function of the state to decide beforehand which measure has utility and which has not. So Mill's concept of utility is designed to curb the functions of the state in a considerable way.

Following Mill's application of utility principle to the State, we shall look at his ideas on State and Government in the subsequent section.

4.4.2.3 LIMITED ROLE OF THE STATE

In the last few lines of *On Liberty* Mills says,“ The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of individuals composing it and a state which postpones the interests of their mental expansion and elevation, to a little more of administrative skill or of the semblance of it which practice gives, in the details of business; a state which dwarfs its men in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish.” Mill has said – **“state which dwarfs its men”**.

Mill thought that only in an atmosphere of limited state proper or real freedom gets the opportunity of progress. Self-development, proper freedom, greatest happiness of the largest number and limited power and function all are closely related. In the opinion of Mill the state is for the individuals and the individuals are not for the state.

4.4.2.4. STATE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PROGRESS AND FREEDOM

Mill's strong support for individual has made him a great advocate of the

limited functions and role of the state; rather he advocated that the state must serve as an instrument of progress and freedom for everyone and every individual must have the freedom of opinion and the reasons advanced by him are as following:

1. Any opinion we silence may be the true opinion and by silencing that opinion the authority of the state deprives the society of a true opinion. This is unjustified. Nobody has any right to deprive one of any true opinion.
2. The silenced opinion may be partly correct and the prevailing opinion may not be completely correct. From the conflict between these two the final truth may come out. In that case, it would not be prudent for any civilized society to silence an opinion. There should be proper arrangements in every society for the ventilation of all sorts of opinion. The simple implication is that the activities of the state shall be limited.
3. Mill finally observes that any prevailing opinion may be completely true. But such a complete truth is nothing but a dogma and it must be challenged by the society. Only the uncontrolled opinion can challenge such a dogma.

As to the expression of opinion, Mill thus came to the conclusion that it is not the business of the state or government to seek to control the opinion of individuals. They must enjoy full freedom. The complete freedom of body and mind was thus of prime importance to J. S. Mill and he was not prepared to make a large amount of relaxation. Only for the sake of self-protection the intervention of the state can be allowed. To put it in the words of Mill, **“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of the civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”**

This way Mill sanctions state interference only for the purpose of self-protection. He comes to the view that in the present set-up of society the persons may not be in a position to protect or defend him from the assault of others. And, in the absence of state intervention, and in the case of his inability, the person will face destruction which any civilized community cannot allow. By propounding this concept in a quite bold manner Mill proceeds to advocate a

limited state role. Mill prescribed that the state can interfere with the activities of individuals which are likely to affect the interests of other persons. Mill divides the functions of persons into self-regarding and other-regarding.

Thus the idea of self-development motivated Mill, in a remarkable way, to propound the theory of limited state and this point has been emphasized by thinkers like Ebenstein to say “In championing liberty Mill has a broad goal in mind – the “Greek ideal of self-development.” It is the privilege of every human being to use and interpret experience in his own way, and the act of choosing between alternatives brings man’s moral faculties into play”. The point to be emphasized is that only proper freedom can be a help for the individual in his efforts of self-development. If he is obstructed by the authority his spontaneity will be discouraged, thus harming his own development.

4.4.2.5. MILL’S CRITERION OF GOOD GOVERNMENT

In his great work *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), he asserted that an important criterion of good government was “the degree in which it tends to increase the sum of good qualities in the governed, collectively and individually. Mill expressed his views on representative government by saying that we can only decide which the best form of government is only by investigating which form of government fulfils most passably the purposes of government. Mill specified that a good government executes two functions.

- I. It must use the existing qualities and skills of the citizens to best serve their interests.
- II. It must improve the moral, intellectual and active qualities of these citizens.

A tyrannical government may fulfil the first purpose, but will fail in the second. Only a representative government is able to fulfil these two functions. It is a representative government that combines wisely the two principles of participation and competence which is able to fulfil the two functions to shield and educate the citizens. Thus Mill considered Representative democracy as compulsory for development as it permits citizens to use and develop their

faculties fully. Mill was fully aware of the weaknesses and danger of democracy. Thus, he developed several conditions for the success of representative government. Such conditions include; a) Self-helping Character of Citizens, b) Willingness of the Citizens to preserve the democratic institutions. Mill was particularly disappointed by the insufficient representation of minorities in British parliament and the tyranny of the majority over the minority. In order to guarantee adequate representation of minorities, Mill supported the system of proportional representation, plurality of votes to the higher educated citizens, limited powers to the legally elected majorities and open ballot system. At the same time, Mill stressed that representative democracy was only possible in a state that is small and homogeneous.

4.4.2.6. INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS AND GOVERNMENT

Mill believed that individuals have a far greater understanding of their own surroundings in terms of enterprise decisions than any government agents and bureaucrats could ever possess. Even if one were to imagine that they possessed the same knowledge as the actors in the different corners of the division of labour, those representatives of the government would never have the same incentive to use that knowledge as productively and profitably as the separate individuals in the market arena.

However, in fact, there is more knowledge in the minds of all the members of a society combined than any one or group of government officials could ever know or master, Mill pointed out. Thus, it was better to leave the use of such dispersed and personal knowledge to those who possessed it, rather than the government taking on commercial and enterprising tasks for which it was not competent. In addition, given the reality of self-interest on the part of all members of society, whether in the market or in government, Mill warned the presumption needed to be the constant danger of misuse and abuse of political power and governmental position.

Mill Further feels that security of person and property are essential for individual and social prosperity. By security, he means the completeness of the

protection which society affords to its members. This consists of protection by the government and protection against the government. The latter is the most important.

4.4.2.7. GOVERNMENT SERVICES SHOULD NOT BE MONOPOLIZED

Even though Mill believed that the government in a liberal society should extend its responsibilities beyond the narrower confines of a more strict laissez-faire policy, he remained critical of any monopolization of such tasks.

For instance, he believed that the state involvement in education was essential to assure the development of a generally literate, intelligent, and informed citizenry. While considering the government funding and supplies essential for the functioning of educational institutions, Mill insisted that the government must claim no monopoly for its education, either in the lower or in the higher branches. It is not endurable that a government should either de jure or de facto, have a complete control over the education of the people. To possess such a control, and to actually exert it, is to be despotic. A government that can mould the opinions and sentiments of the people from their youth onwards can do with them whatever it pleases. Thus for Mill, nothing was more to be feared than total government control over any facet of life that would threaten to stifle the creative, innovative and uniquely original ideas that only emerge from diverse and free minds able to think and experiment.

Mill also considers specific areas of public action that could be shown to address social needs as a whole while still allowing one's individuality to develop. Provision for minimal public education, prohibition of child labour, minimum wage, and old-age insurance all qualified as areas where state action was imperative if human freedom were to advance. In his principles of Political Economy (1848), Mill acknowledged a role for the state in devising an equitable tax system, in funding infrastructure projects and basic research.

In the subsequent section we also look at the relevance of Mill's ideas in the present day context.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. Explain Mill's views on Utilitarianism.

2. What are the key functions of government according to Mill.

4.4.3. RELEVANCE OF MILL'S IDEAS ON MODERN STATE & GOVERNMENT

Following the liberal tradition, Mill eschews the absolute state, affirming the superior value to individual liberty. His advocacy for limited government cannot be understood as anti-government as such; rather he was hostile to concentrations of coercive power and to the arbitrary use of power against rights and freedom of Individuals. Looking at some of the lessons learnt from history and the dangers of unconstrained government today we are seeing around us in liberal world, Mills arguments for the limited government and State remain still relevant against the tyrannical and excessive governments as they stand for constitutionally limited government, with the delegated authority and means to protect individual rights, but not so powerful as to destroy or negate them.

While the American experiment in limited government generated a degree of liberty and prosperity that was virtually unimaginable, this experiment revealed flaws, of course, none of which was more striking and repugnant than the toleration of slavery, for it deprived an Individual of his property in his own person. That particular evil was eliminated by the Thirteenth Amendment to the American Constitution, showing the self-correcting nature and basic resilience. What is needed for the survival of limited government is to some extent the fulfillment of conditions that Mill puts forth for the successful working of representative democracy and an informed citizenry jealous of its rights and ever vigilant against unconstitutional or otherwise unwarranted exercises of power, and officeholders who take seriously their oaths of office and accept the

responsibilities they entail.

On the other hand, withdrawal of State from providing various services in the context of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization irrespective of the question of good or bad, make Mill's arguments that "Government Services Should Not be Monopolized and individual know what is good for him" relevant even today. At the same time whether such withdrawal of State would lead to the greatest happiness of the greatest number would still remain to be a question unanswered.

Mill's apprehension that in a representative government a numerical majority might direct the government to be run in its own interest and it might go against the interests of the minority. Indeed, Mill suggested that a tyranny of the majority was potentially more dangerous than the monarchies or oligarchies of the past, since when "the people" assert their sovereignty there remain few if any of the intermediary institutions of society to protect and support the threatened individual from the abuse of the "masses." Mill believed that every individual must have the freedom of opinion and he felt by silencing such opinion, the state deprives the society of a true opinion. Such a great belief held by J.S Mills exerts great relevance in today's world where the opinion of the minority of does not count, ignored, silenced, or even punished for the free expression of such opinion. Mill rejects out rightly the claims made in some nations that a government is entitled to interfere with a free press when the public so demands. The best government is no more entitled than the worst either to dictate or silence opinion. Although for him freedom of discussion is not a natural right, it is a supreme priority in the life of a progressive society. As Mill felt, there should be proper arrangements in every society for the ventilation of all sorts of opinion, even the minority opinion must count. Thus, Mill's appeal for the adjustment of franchise still remains to be a hope for many societies.

Mill applies the concept of Utilitarianism to the actions of the government and creates certain rules that governments should follow in order to create most amount of pleasure to the most amount of people. And for Mill, the greatest way to ensure pleasure was the protection of individual liberty. He argued that people should generally be free to do what they choose, so long as it does not harm anyone else. This argument of Mill holds greater relevance in today's world where one comes across the curtailment and negation of individual freedom and basic rights across the borders.

Above all as Mill says like all things, which are made by men, political institutions like state and government may be either well or ill made. Judgment and Skill may or may not have been exercised in their production. Thus, it must be borne in mind that political machinery does not act on itself; it has to be worked by men and even by ordinary men. It needs, not their simple acquiescence,

but their active participation; and must be adjusted to the capacities and qualities of such men as are available.” Mill’s argument for the active participation of citizens in making and bettering intuitions and checking the despotic tendencies of the governments holds truth and relevance forever.

It may be remembered that the relations between individual, society, and state is a theme constantly pursued throughout Mill’s writings, a theme which achieves a special and impressive focus in *On Liberty*, a classic much misunderstood and the most controversial of all his works. Mill’s broad aim is to establish the primacy of the individual and the freedom essential for the abundant growth of his inherent powers. This task, as he conceived it, was compelling because of the circumstances in a critical age of transition, which witnessed the emergence of democracy, improved and enlarged media for expressing opinions, the threatened tyranny of the majority.

Reading the current lesson in connection with the other three lessons studied in this unit the students are further encouraged to make sense, formulate their opinions and articulate the relevance of Mill’s ideas on Modern State and Government through their own comprehension.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Note: Use the space given below for your answer. Use separate sheet if space is not sufficient.

1. What is the relevance of Mill’s political ideas in the modern context.

2. How does Mill justify state intervention in Individual liberty.

4.4.4. LET US SUM UP

The above discussed ideas of Mill emanate from his staunch belief in his central premises of Liberalism and Utilitarianism. Thus, one finds a little mention

of State in his writings and his ideas can be found here and there as only as part of other writings that include: *On Liberty*, *Principles Political Economy and Considerations on Representative Government*. For Mill, the political institutions like Modern State and Government are mere instruments for the furtherance of individual liberty and development. Hence they should be limited in their nature and the services of the government cannot be monopolized. Thus even though he considered representative democracy best form of government, his skepticism towards its functioning makes him to put several conditions on which the representative democracies should function. Towards this, as discussed in the lesson some ideas put forth by Mills remain more relevant than ever in today's political context.

4.4.5 EXERCISES

1. Write a brief note on J.S Mill's ideas about political institutions.
2. Discuss J.S Mill's ideas on Modern State and Government.
3. Cite the reasons why J.S Mill articulates for the limited role of State and Government.
4. To what extent do you agree with J.S. Mill when he states Mill believed that every individual must have the freedom of opinion and he felt by silencing such opinion, the state deprives the society of a true opinion". Cite your own examples.
5. To what extent do you agree with Mill's argument "Government Services Should Not is monopolized"?
6. Giving various possible examples, enumerate the relevance of J.S. Mill's Ideas on Modern State and Government.

4.4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Annas, J, An Introduction to Plato's Republic, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988

Aristotle, The Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982

Brian, Nelson, Western Political Thought, Pearson, New Delhi, 2006

Barker, Ernest, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, London:

Methuen, 1906 Sabine, George and Thomas L. Thorson, A History of Political Theory, New Delhi: OUP & IBH, 1973

Jones, W. T., Master of Political Thought: Machiavelli to Bentham: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947

Ten, C. L., Mill on Liberty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980

Wayper, C. L., Teach Yourself Political Thought, Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 2007
