

**Institute of Distance and Open Learning  
Gauhati University**

**MA in Political Science**

**Paper I  
Political Theory**

**Block 1  
Greek Political Tradition**

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## **Block Introduction:**

Political theory is one of the core areas in political science. Different schools of thought and many political scientists throughout the ages have enriched the domain of political theory. Greek political philosophy is one of the most ancient political philosophies of the world which is preserved till date. Many thinkers have gone to the extent of saying that Greek political philosophy provides the foundation of European political philosophy. Therefore, it is pertinent for the students of political science to know about Greek Political Tradition.

In this block of the paper ‘Political Theory’, we are dealing with the Greek political tradition. Here, we are going to discuss the two great Greek philosophers — Plato and Aristotle and their contributions to political theory. In the first unit, we shall discuss the ideas of Plato in a detailed manner. Plato, who is termed as utopian thinker had tried to draw the picture of an ideal state based on justice. He was born about four years after the beginning of the twenty-five-years long Peloponnesian war leading to the crisis of Athenian democracy and resultant political turmoil. Thus, the period of growing up in a city at war was instrumental for his intellectual development and Plato’s political ideas are shaped by the constant political turmoil. Moreover, execution of his teacher Socrates in a democratic rule influenced him to a great extent. His first book *Republic* where we encounter the description of an ideal, well-regulated community in which the educational curriculum is designed to promote respect for law, reason, authority, justice and self-discipline is regarded as his masterpiece. This unit focuses on Plato’s view on Justice, Ideal State, Education, Philosopher Kings and Communism of Property and Wives. Reading of this unit will help you to comprehend the ideas of Plato and assess his contributions to political theory.

Aristotle’s intellectual contribution to the world of political philosophy makes him a monumental figure in the history of political theory. His long association with his teacher Plato has influenced his ideas. However, he is not a blind supporter of Plato and repudiates Plato’s idea of Philosopher Kings and gives due place to laws in administration. Aristotle’s wide-ranging series of treatises focus on various disciplines like aesthetics, biology, ethics, logic, physics, chemistry, zoology, politics and psychology. In the second unit, we shall discuss the main political ideas of Aristotle like his theory of Citizenship and Slavery, Classification of Governments, Justice, Ideal State and Revolutions. Aristotle has been influential in the history of political theory as he has invented the scientific method of analysis, i.e. drawing conclusions through comparative and empirical methods.

In this block we have two units.

**Unit 1:** Plato

**Unit 2:** Aristotle

# Unit 1

## Plato

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### 1.1 Introduction

Greek political tradition has contributed significantly to the field of political science as Western political philosophy has its origin in ancient Greek society. In this unit we shall discuss the great Greek philosopher Plato and his ideas.

Plato is considered to be the founder of philosophical idealism. He was born in 428-27 BC in Athens. He was a disciple of Socrates and the Socratic ideas helped in formulating his views to some extent. Besides Socrates, Plato is also influenced by thinkers like Pythagoras and Heraclitus. He tries to draw a picture of a perfect state for which he is considered as a utopian thinker. Though Plato is criticized for being utopian, it is very pertinent to study his ideas as his theories aim to establish a just and welfare society.

Plato, in his first book *The Republic*, has dealt with the concept of justice in a detailed manner. So, in this unit we shall discuss the idea of justice propounded by Plato. Moreover, this unit is also going to help you comprehend the Platonic ideas about the ideal state as well as its major features. We also plan to deal with Plato's view on Communism of Property and Wives. Plato has faced criticisms from various quarters for his ideas. Therefore, in this unit our focus will be on broader study of this famous thinker by taking into account the various criticisms levelled against Plato's ideas. Lastly, in this unit we attempt to trace the relation between Platonic communism and modern communism tracing the similarities as well as the differences.

## 1.2 Objectives

This unit is designed to help you understand the major ideas of Plato, one of the founding figures of western political theory. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- *describe* Plato's view on Justice
- *discuss* his conception of Ideal State
- *explain* the concept of Communism of Property and Wives
- *trace* the connection between Plato's concept of Communism and Modern Communism

## 1.3 Plato on Justice

You all know that the concept of justice is very important in the study of state and government. The concept of justice occupies an important place in Plato's celebrated work, *The Republic* and he is in favour of providing justice to all sections of the society. He considers justice as an integral and essential part of the state. However, it must be remembered here that Plato's concept of justice is different from the modern concept of justice. While formulating the concept of justice, Plato has dealt with the various existing definitions of justice.

He first deals with the idea of justice given by Cephalus. Cephalus defines justice as telling the truth, being honest in word and deed and paying one's debts. Another thinker Polemarchus points out that justice means 'giving each man his due' or 'what was fitting'. Thus, justice is doing 'good to friends and harm to enemies'. Thrasymachus continues the discussion and defines justice as the interests of the stronger party, namely the ruler. According to him, while the strong makes all the rules, the weak – the subjects – merely obey them.

Plato criticizes all these viewpoints and opines that justice is something internal. Plato's justice has two implications- personal and social. It exists in the individual and the state. The personal implication of justice means a disposition on the part of man which prevents him from doing an act out of a sense of duty. Social implication of justice means a group of persons or class should not interfere in the rights of other classes. He considers justice as the only remedy against the political and social ills of the city state.

Plato puts forward his idea of justice with the help of the theory of three classes and three souls. He is of the opinion that every human soul has three qualities: rationality, spirit and appetite with justice as the fourth virtue. Plato further says that in each soul, one of these qualities would be the predominant faculty. The corresponding virtue of reason is wisdom. Therefore, the individual with the predominance of the rational faculty constitutes the ruling class. Again, the corresponding virtue of spirit is courage. The people having spirit as the dominant quality are, therefore, warriors or soldiers. According

to Plato, these two classes together constitute the guardian class in the society.

Thus, according to Plato, individuals whose dominant quality is appetite develop a fondness for material things. The artisans and the producing class belong to this group. The people belonging to this group love money. To him appetite is the lowest and reason is the highest virtue. Thus, justice in the individual means that every individual is assigned a place and function in the society according to his dominant virtue. Plato's justice also stands for harmonious existence of all the virtues in a person.

Justice in the state exists when all citizens occupy the respective positions and perform their duties without interfering in the affairs of others. Plato's concept of justice is based on three principles.

- It implies functional specialization, viz, allotment of a specific function to every individual according to his capacity.
- It implies non-interference by various classes in each other's sphere of duty and concentration on its own duties.
- It implies harmony between the three classes representing wisdom, courage and temperance respectively.

So, now we see that justice with regard to the individual implies harmonious operation of each part of the individual viz, reason, spirit and appetite. This makes the individual virtuous and social. Plato also emphasizes that justice should not be individualistic but collective. Platonic justice stands for rendering services to the community as a whole. Thus, his concept of justice is not simply legal but universal.

### ***Criticism of Plato's idea of Justice***

You have already learnt about Plato's idea of justice in this section. However, you know that his concept of justice has been subjected to various criticisms. Some of the criticisms levelled against Platonic justice are as follows:

- Plato's concept of justice is based on moral principles and it lacks legal sanction. It does not envisage any clash of individual wills and conflict between various interests.
- Platonic concept of justice requires the enforcement of the principle of division of labour. It expects everyone to perform the allotted duties to the satisfaction of the society. But it is impracticable in the modern states.
- Plato believes that every individual possesses three qualities and he should devote to the development of only one faculty. Thus, he wants every individual to live by one-third of his personality abandoning the other two.
- Plato's concept of justice provides absolute ruling power to the philosopher class only. Thus, Platonic justice creates inequality in the

society. He also states that the philosopher kings should enjoy absolute power and should not be bound by laws. However, he overlooks the fact that such absolute power in the hands of few may lead to degeneration and corruption.

- This concept is also criticized as totalitarian as it overlooks the humanitarian principles like equality, individualism and freedom.
- Platonic conception of justice subordinates the individual to the state.
- Plato’s concept of justice gives rise to a class-state in which ruling is the privilege of a particular class.

Though Plato’s concept of justice is criticized on various grounds, it should be remembered that his concept of justice stands for devotion to duties and functional specialization.

**Stop to Consider:**

**Division of classes of the society with respect to their virtues according to Plato:**

<u>Virtue</u>	<u>Soul</u>	<u>Class</u>
Wisdom	Rationality	Rulers
Courage	Spirit	Soldiers
Temperance	Appetitive	Artisans

Your understanding of such a division of classes as propounded by Plato will help you in comprehending the contributions of Plato as a political theorist to a considerable extent.

**1.4 Plato on Ideal State**

Plato’s idea of justice is followed by his idea of Ideal State. In his book *The Republic*, Plato has projected the picture of an ‘Ideal State’ which is criticized as unrealistic and unrealizable. According to him, in the Ideal State the rulers should be the philosopher kings with higher education and knowledge. So he draws out a scheme of education for the people of the Ideal State.

Plato’s Ideal State has certain unique characteristics. You may find them very difficult to implement in the modern world, but there lies the uniqueness and utopian thinking of Plato. The salient features of Plato’s Ideal State are as follows:

**1.4.1 Rule by Philosopher Kings**

The concept of rule by the philosopher king is the most original conception in the political philosophy of Plato. His concept of Philosopher King is a corollary of his idea of Justice and it is the basis of his Ideal State. He is of the firm belief that the affairs of the state can be set right only if wise and educated people rule the nation. According to Plato, the philosopher king is a lover of wisdom and seeker of truth. Therefore, he is in a better position to determine the welfare of the community than the ordinary person.

So, Plato states that,

*When the supreme power in man coincides with the greatest wisdom and temperance, then the best laws and the best constitution comes into being; but in no other way.....Until Philosophers become kings in this world, or till that we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands....there is no other road to real happiness, either for society or the individual. (Plato 1955:282)*

Plato further believes that the interests of the philosopher king and that of the state are identical. In fact, the philosophers have no interests apart from the welfare of the members of the community. Plato's Philosopher rulers are the product of comprehensive and rigorous training of education that spreads over a period of 35 years.

Thus, you can see that the philosopher rulers are assigned absolute powers by Plato. The rulers are not accountable to public opinion or bound by customs and written laws. According to Plato, since the philosopher rulers are the embodiment of virtue and knowledge, there is no logic for public control over their actions. However, he also states that a philosopher should have a good moral character and a sound mind and at the same time he should also possess qualities of a ruler, namely, truthfulness, high-mindedness, discipline and courage. According to him, a philosopher king is a lover of truth and above physical and material pleasures. He has to live an ascetic life with high thinking.

Plato also advocates communism of property and the communism of wives for the philosopher kings. In the following section we shall discuss in detail about the theory of Communism of Property and Wives as put forwarded by Plato.

#### **Stop to Consider:**

##### **Life Sketch of Plato:**

Plato was born in Athens of Greece around 427 BC in an aristocratic family and died around 347BC. His father's name was Ariston and mother's name was Perictione. He met Socrates at the age of 20 and become a great disciple of him. He excelled in the study of music, mathematics, poetry and rhetoric. Socrates' execution in 399 BC was a turning point in Plato's life. He established an Academy in Athens in 386 BC. He devoted much of his time in the later period of his life in teaching in the academy. Plato never married. His major works were: *The Republic*, *the Statesman* and *the Laws*, besides several important dialogues.

Reading of the above paragraph will make you understand the life and the background of the great Greek Philosopher Plato.

#### **1.4.2 Plato on Education**

Plato believes that education plays a vital role in bringing unity and harmony in the society. According to Plato virtue is knowledge and it is the duty of



the state to impart that knowledge. His *The Republic* is considered to be one of the finest treatises on education. Education in Plato's ideal state is an essential instrument to realize justice. Plato's scheme of education is a mixture of Spartan and Athenian systems. According to Plato, education has individual as well as social aspect.

### ***Features of Plato's Theory of Education***

Plato has discussed the concept of education in detail. Like his other theories, his theory of education also has certain peculiar features. Let us discuss here the unique features of his theory of education.

- a) Plato advocates state controlled and state regulated education. According to him, state alone can produce philosopher kings.
- b) Plato's education is compulsory for all in the society. All the classes of the society should get the opportunity of education. However, only the guardian class should opt for higher education in his scheme of education.
- c) Plato's scheme of education provides for elementary as well as higher education. Thus, he divides education into three stages: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Primary education is imparted to children between the ages of 6-14 years. At this stage only music and gymnastics are taught. Secondary education is extended up to the age of 18. At the tertiary stage every student between the ages of 18-20 years is bound to undergo military training.
- d) Plato without distinction advocates education for women also. He is in favour of women holding public offices like men. Therefore, he is in favour of providing education to both the sexes for building their character and achieving full justice in his ideal state.
- e) Plato also emphasizes on strict censorship of all literary and artistic works to ensure that the young minds do not come under the corrupting moral influence of art.
- f) Plato's education aims at the moral as well as physical development of the child. According to him, a healthy mind can reside only in a healthy body and it is essential that education should develop both the mental and physical health.
- g) The chief objective of Plato's scheme of education is to produce the Philosopher Kings. The philosophers after passing through a rigorous scheme of education are expected to govern the country in the interest of the masses.

### **Stages of Plato's Education**

As mentioned earlier, Plato deals with the concept of education systematically and thoroughly. His scheme of education can broadly be divided into two stages—Elementary and Higher Education. Elementary education starts from

the very childhood and continues to the age of 20 while the higher education covers the period from 20-35 years of age.

### ***Elementary Education***

Plato's elementary education is sub-divided into three stages—

*First Sub-Stage (0-6yrs):* According to Plato, in the first stage of elementary education the children should be taught simple religious and moral truths. The children should also learn the lesson of good manners and good taste.

*Second Sub-Stage (6-18 yrs):* In the second stage education should be both physical and intellectual. In this stage, Plato has provided for music for the soul and gymnastics for the development of the body. It also emphasizes on the development of moral principles. He also puts restrictions on certain types of instruments of music like flute. Emphasis is laid on cultivation of memory and the study of natural sciences. Thus in this stage, a student should be educated in music, gymnastics and elements of sciences.

*Third Sub-Stage (18-20yrs):* This is the last stage of elementary education in Plato's scheme. In this stage, physical education is imparted not only for the development of the body but also for strengthening body and mind. This stage also provides for compulsory military training for both man and woman.

### ***Higher Education***

Higher education in Platonic scheme of education starts at the age of 20 and continues till the age of 35. This stage can be further divided into two sub stages

*First Sub-Stage (20-30yrs):* At this stage, men and women are imparted systematic scientific education. In this stage, education is both intellectual and physical. Emphasis is laid on mathematics, arithmetic, astronomy, logic and development of dialectic power. Besides, provision for training in public service is also an essential part of education at this stage.

*Second Sub-Stage (30-35 yrs):* At the age of 30 after a test, some candidates are selected for the last stage of education. Those who are qualified in this test are given further training on mathematics, science and dialectics. Plato emphasizes on dialectics as he believes that it is the only system of knowledge through which the highest reality can be achieved. This stage of education is very much essential for the philosopher kings.

According to Plato, from the age of 36, after passing through this scheme of education, the guardians should exercise their authority in the state.

### *Criticism of Plato's Education*

- a) The higher stage in Plato's scheme of education is meant for the guardian class only which excludes the majority of the population.
- b) This scheme of education is very lengthy. After devoting a major period of life for attaining education, the rulers will hardly get time to devote to other pursuits.
- c) Plato's scheme of education is far from reality. The philosopher kings having all the theoretical knowledge may fail to deal with the practical realities of life.
- d) Plato's scheme of education is also envisaged to be illogical as there is no relation between one stage and the other.
- e) Plato's plea for censorship of arts and literature is highly derogatory as the censorship is likely to destroy the creative instinct of the artists and poets and also influence its free flow.
- f) In Plato's scheme of education no provision exists for imparting education in the art of administration. It is difficult to understand how a philosopher king trained in gymnastics and dialectics will be able to deal with the real problems of administration.
- g) Plato makes no provision for technical and vocational training.

Despite its shortcomings it cannot be denied that Plato helps to improve the system of education that existed in Athens and Sparta. He deserves credit for emphasizing that education must aim at moral as well as physical development.

- *Restriction on Art and Literature:* According to Plato, in the ideal state there should be restrictions on the production of art and literature. According to him, people should be allowed to read only the literature which aims to promote high moral character.
- *Building Character:* Plato is of the view that in an ideal state, efforts should be made for building the character of both men and women. He considers both men and women as integral part of the state and therefore, believes in their equal treatment.
- *Proper Administration of Justice:* According to Plato, justice is an integral part of the state which keeps various organs and individuals in close harmony with each other. Therefore, he pleads that justice should be properly administered.
- *Functional Specialization:* Plato is a great advocator of functional specialization. He is of the view that everyone should perform functions assigned to him and should not try to go beyond their duties.

- *Division of Classes*: Plato's idea of justice and functional specialization is closely related to his idea of division of classes. According to him, the ideal state consists of three classes—rulers (philosopher guardians) at the top to govern the state, soldiers (military guardians) to defend and peasant and artisans to work for the betterment of economic condition of the state.
- *Absolute power of the Philosopher kings*: Plato does not wish to impose any limitations on the authority of the philosopher king. According to him, the philosopher kings are the virtue in action. He has so much faith in the philosopher kings that he goes on saying that they can never be corrupted.
- *Retention of Slavery*: Plato believes that in an ideal state it is essential that the ruling class should have sufficient leisure because without that rulers should not be in a position to devote their time for the development of the masses. In fact, slavery for him is an integral part of his idea of state.

### **Stop to Consider:**

#### **Major Works of Plato**

*The Republic* is the best known work of Plato. In Greek, republic means justice. This book is written in the form of dialogue. It is written in 380-370 BC. *The Republic* is divided into ten books. This book can be considered as a treatise on Justice, Education, Human Psychology and Political Economy. The book starts with the quest of understanding the "Idea of the Good" and explains how a perfect soul can be developed. This book is considered to be a great work in the field of ethics, metaphysics, philosophy and politics. Book I of *The Republic* deals with the concept of Justice and humanity. Book II, III and IV are devoted to education and subjects like reason, spirit and appetite. Book V, VI, VII are concerned with the subjects like ideal state and definition of good and bad. In Book VIII and IX one finds Plato's review of the working of the state and the individuals while Book X deals with the relationship between art and human soul. Since a major portion of this book is devoted to education, Rousseau considers *The Republic* not only a political work of great value, but also as one of the finest treatises on education. Nettleship is of the view that the book (*The Republic*) may be regarded as a philosophical work, but as a treatise on social and political reform. It is written in the spirit of a man not merely reflecting on human life but intensely anxious to reform and revolutionise it. (Nettleship 1967:6)

The next great work of Plato is *The Statesman*. It is written in 360 BC when he is about 67 yrs old. In this book Plato acts like a practical idealist while dealing with

the subjects like the role of individuals in politics. It is different from his previous book *The Republic* in the sense that in the latter book he has lost much of his idealism and become practical.

*The Laws* is written at a mature age of 80. In this book he emphasizes on the importance of laws in administration. Plato also confesses that since it is difficult to find out a philosopher king, it is essential to keep the ruler under laws. He had also given up the idea of communism of wives and property and went to the extent of saying that human beings require these institutions.

**Check Your Progress :**

- a) Who made the following statement ?  
'Justice is telling the truth, being honest in word and deed and paying one's debts.'
- b) Write true or false:  
Justice is discussed in Plato's work *The Laws*.
- c) How does Thrasymachus define justice?
- d) Who are the two guardian classes as described by Plato?
- e) Fill in the gaps:  
According to Plato, the philosopher king is a lover of \_\_\_\_\_ and seeker of \_\_\_\_\_.
- f) Write two features of Plato's education system.
- g) What is the maximum number of population in the law state of Plato?

### 1.4.3 Criticism of Plato's Ideal State

Plato's concept of Ideal State has faced criticisms from various thinkers. Some of the arguments advanced against this conception are:

- a) It is believed that Platonic Ideal State will be totalitarian in nature as the philosopher kings are given absolute power.
- b) His advocacy for slavery in ideal state can not be supported.
- c) In his Ideal State Plato has ignored the role of working and producing classes.
- d) Plato's concept of Ideal State has been criticized for being utopian which is difficult to establish.
- e) Plato's idea of Philosopher King has also faced with lot of criticisms as they are not trained in the art of governing the people.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Plato’s concept of Ideal State faces severe criticisms. However, it must be admitted that he has made valuable contribution to political theory by depicting the ideal state where he sets forth certain targets for the succeeding generations to thrive for. Moreover, we must consider the fact that Plato’s theory is formulated in different periods under different social environment.

#### 1.4.4 Plato’s Law State

It needs to be mentioned here that in his first book *The Republic*, Plato tries to depict an Ideal State. However, in his last book *The Laws*, his orientation becomes more practical. Plato emphasizes more on philosophic laws than philosopher rulers. Therefore, the ideal state depicted by Plato in this book is known as the second best state. The constitution of the law state is the combination of several ingredients.

In *The Republic*, the ruler of the ideal state is a philosopher king who is above law. But the law guardians in the ‘law state’ are servants of law. He also considers that laws are necessary for the moral excellence of the citizens. Thus, it recognizes the sovereignty of law. A human being cannot be absolutely impartial and impersonal, whereas the law stands for these qualities. Therefore, in *The Laws*, Plato emphasizes on bringing the ruler under the domain of law.

<b><u>The Model of Government of the Law State</u></b>			
<b>General Assembly (5040)</b>			
Law Guardians (37)	The Council (360)	Generals (3)	City and Market officers
Education Minister (The Prime Minister)	12 Groups each group with 30 members		
<b>Judiciary</b>			
Arbitration Court Judges	District Court (12)		Court of Select
<b>Local Government</b>			
Central City Inspectors	Market Inspectors	Village Inspectors	Associates
This classification in tabular form will help you to understand Plato’s idea on State in his Law State.			

*General Assembly:* According to Plato, the maximum number of citizens in the law state should be 5040 and all of them should also be the members of general assembly. The population is divided into four classes on the basis of property. The attendance of the first two classes in the meetings of general assembly is mandatory.

The chief function of the general assembly is to elect the law guardians, the council, the generals and other magistrates and officials. It has the judicial power to conduct trial for the enemies of the law state. For the amendment of the law state also the consent of the general assembly is required. It has also the power to grant the right to reside to the foreigners for more than 20 years.

*The Council:* It is a smaller body in comparison to the general assembly composed of 360 members. Ninety members are elected from each class. The council has to keep vigil over the day to day activities of the state. The term of the council is 1 year. The members of the council are divided into 12 groups each having 30 members. Each group functions as the chief executive for one month. The council convenes regular or special meetings of the general assembly. Each group of the council works in collaboration with the law guardians known as executive magistrates.

*Law Guardians:* The general assembly elects 37 law guardians. The law guardian should be of minimum 50 years and can work for 20 years. Their main function is to see that the citizens obey the law. There is a president of the law guardians who also works as law-guardian. The president is also known as Prime Minister.

*Judiciary:* There are three levels of courts in the judiciary in Plato's law state. The lowest court is the voluntary court or the board of Arbitration. It is composed of friends and neighbours who are aware of the concerned cases. District court is at the second level. Law state is divided into 12 districts each having one district court. The third level of judiciary is known as the court of selected judges. The term of the court is one year. Plato has not put much emphasis on local self-government. The Law state has provision for central city inspectors and market inspectors. Each district has 5 village inspectors and 12 youth associates. They are mainly engaged in construction of roads, water supply and irrigation.

*The Nocturnal Council:* In the 12<sup>th</sup> book of *The Laws*, Plato emphasizes the rule of wisdom. He relegates general assembly, the council and the courts to a secondary position and creates a new body called Nocturnal Council of philosophers.

Thus, it is clear that Plato comes back to the basic principle of *The Republic* at the end of *The Laws*. He advocates for philosophic training through nocturnal council and establishes the sovereignty of the philosopher king again in place of rule of law. Therefore, he considers the law state only as the second best state.

**SAQ:**

After reading Plato’s idea of Ideal State, do you think such an idea can be realized in the present time? Give reasons in support of your answer. (40+80 words)

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.....  
.....  
.....  
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**1.5 Plato on Communism of Property and Wives**

In the previous sections of this unit, you have already learnt that Plato has regarded the philosopher kings in high esteem. His philosopher kings are above laws but at the same time some restrictions are also put on them. Plato is a strong opponent of the institution of property for the guardian classes. He states his theory of communism for the guardian classes in his book *The Republic*. According to Plato, communism is the only path for the spiritual reformation of the guardian community. He advocates communism of property for the guardian community to achieve and strengthen the unity of the state. According to Plato, the guardians should not be allowed to possess any movable or immovable property. They are not allowed to possess house, land and gold. He believes that wisdom for the guardian is more precious than land, gold or silver which are the causes of many impure, unholy and unworthy actions. The guardian classes should, therefore, be free from the temptation and should not possess gold or silver. Plato’s communism is called ‘half communism’ as it is applicable to less than half of the total members of the ideal state. The guardians are not followed to have families also. A guardian cannot serve his society if involved in family and property matters.

**1.5.1 Communism on Property**

Plato has stated various reasons for advocating communism of property for the guardian classes. He believes that private property is the root cause of nepotism, favouritism, particularism, factionalism and other corrupt practices among rulers. According to him, the guardian classes should not possess any gold or silver. They are allowed to have small amount of property necessary for living. The reasons behind the restrictions as follows——

- a) He believes that the combination of economic and political power corrupts a man. For attaining political purity and efficiency, persons possessing political power should not be allowed to have economic power.



- b) Communism of property follows as a necessary consequence of the idea of justice. Plato believes that justice in a state prevails when the philosophers rule wisely, soldiers fight bravely and producers produce honestly.
- c) According to Plato, private property is the root cause of all social evils. He believes that private property gives rise to selfish considerations and takes away the attention of the guardian from the public service which stands in the way of justice.

Thus, you find that Plato's Communism of property is meant only for the guardian classes. His communism of property has three ideas behind it. Firstly, it aims at preparing the guardians for their special tasks of providing selfless services to the people. Secondly, it helps in separating economic and political power. Thirdly, it will help in bringing unity in the state. Plato also believes that retention of private property can generate the idea in the minds of the common people that their rulers are also a party in the race for amassing wealth.

### ***Criticism of Plato's idea of communism of property***

Plato's theory of communism of property has been subjected to severe criticism. The major criticisms levelled against Plato's communism of property are as follows:

- a) The acquisition of ownership of private property is a natural instinct of human beings. Hence, communism of private property goes against the natural instinct of human beings.
- b) Plato's scheme is meant for the guardian classes or the philosopher kings only. Thus, concentrating only on the marginal group, he has failed to include the workers, the peasants and all those who form the majority in the society.
- c) It is through the institution of private property that certain healthy social instincts like 'charity' and 'benevolence' develop which ultimately help in the formation of healthy society. In the absence of private property, the guardian classes will not be in a position to perform such activities.

Though Platonic conception of communism of private property is severely criticized, one cannot deny the importance of his theory of communism of private property. Plato rightly points out that the concentration of economic and political powers in the same hands is bound to give rise to corruption. Besides, this theory is a logical extension of his theory of justice and philosopher kings.

### **1.5.2 Communism of Wives**

After communism of property, Plato discusses his theory of communism of wives in his *The Republic*. He realizes that the abolition of the institution of

private property without the abolition of the family would result in the failure of the whole scheme. According to Plato, the guardian classes should not be disturbed by family affection. He further believes that family stands in the way of the unity and integrity of the nation. Plato has given the reasons for prescribing communism of property and wives for the guardian classes. The reasons are as follows:

**a) Political Reasons:** Plato emphasizes on establishing equality in the state. He regards family as a stumbling block in the attainment of unity in the state as family affection is a potent rival of loyalty towards the state.

**b) Moral Reasons:** During Plato's times, the condition of women in Athens was deplorable. Plato is of the view that women should be allowed to enjoy their legitimate and due position in the state. He is of the view that women possess the same mental capacity like men and women are, therefore, fit for all public duties.

**c) Eugenic Reasons:** Plato favours communism of wives on eugenic ground also. He feels that through a system of temporary marriage regulated by state, the creation of a better and intelligent race is possible.

It must be remembered here that through communism of wives, Plato aims to reform the system of conventional marriages leading to the emancipation of women. He believes that conventional marriage leads to the subordination, subjugation and seclusion of women. Plato deplores the fact that in the conventional system, women seem to have no other function except the reproductive function. They are also responsible for nurturing and rearing the children within family. Thus, the state misses the services of about half of the population of the state. Abolition of family will destroy the centre of selfishness and result in the emancipation of woman and set them free for the services of the state.

Regarding the ideal age for marriage, Plato believes that it should be between 25-55 for men and 20-40 for women. According to Plato, man and woman guardians should stay in common barracks and live together. He believes that the state should control the marriages in the state. He is also of the view that care should be taken in the selection of mates. The brave man should be combined with the beautiful woman as far as possible. Communism of wives provides the regulation in the growth of population also.

Again, after the birth of the child, the state-maintained nursery will take care of it thereby reducing the burden and responsibility of parents. Since the children of the guardian class will grow up in such an environment, they will not be attached to their family and respect all elders irrespective of relationship ties. Through communism of wives, guardians will be free from family affection and love as nobody will be entangled in the family ties revolving around children, wives and husband.

Thus, as you can see that Plato's Communism of woman or wives is meant only for the guardian classes i.e. the philosopher kings and the soldiers. Like communism of private property the majority of the population such as the peasants, the artisans etc. are not included in Plato's scheme. Plato also suggests that weak and disfigured children should be immediately killed because in the long run they will be a burden on the state.

*In the words of Plato,*

*Good men will not consent to govern for cash or honours. They do want to be called mercenary for exacting a cash payment for the work of government, or thieves for making money on the side; and they will not work for honours, for they are not ambitious....the worse penalty for refusal is to be governed by someone worse than themselves. That is what I believe, frightens honest men into accepting power, and they approach it not as if it were something desirable out of which they were going to do well, but as if it were something desirable out of which they were going to do well, but as if it were something unavoidable which they cannot find anyone better or equally qualified to undertake. (Plato 1955:89-90)*

### ***Criticism of Plato's Idea on Communism of Wives***

Like Plato's communism of property, his communism of wives also faces severe criticisms. The criticisms are as follows:

- a) Plato does not see any difference between the state and the family. But state and family are two separate institutions.
- b) Plato's Communism of wives is bound to lead to social disharmony and is detrimental to the interest of the society.
- c) Children, in Plato's scheme of communism, will be deprived from parental love and care. It is known to all that something which belongs to all is nobody's responsibility. The children brought up without parental affection shall have only dwarfed personality.
- d) Like the communism of property, Plato's communism of wives is also applicable to the guardian classes only. It demands tremendous sacrifice from the guardian classes and consequently makes them unhappy.
- e) In his scheme of communism, the sacred institution of marriage is reduced to a mechanical process.

Despite the criticisms levelled against Plato's communism, it must be remembered that his aim is to establish a just society ruled by a wise and virtuous ruler. He believes that only without emotional ties and economic

greed a person can provide selfless service to the masses. Therefore, his theory has relevance even today as we have numerous examples of rulers involved in corrupt practices for their kiths and kin and love for property.

**Stop to Consider:**

Plato is criticized to be the anti-democratic who supports aristocratic rule of noble families. In Plato's time aristocracy is declining in Greek city-states. Therefore, he and his teacher Socrates attempt to revive and reform aristocracy for the welfare of the people. Through his ideas Plato wants to counter the emerging democratic movements of traders and artisans in Athens. Plato is of the firm belief that democracy leads to moral corruption and degradation. While dealing with the concept of Ideal State, Plato has curbed individual freedom for the common good. He has advocated for the rule of Philosopher Kings who are above laws. These principles of Plato go against the democratic principles. That is why he is often considered as anti-democrat.

So, Plato aims to establish a just and welfare state in an anti-democratic way. It is because he has faith on the rule of the philosopher kings who devoid of family and property provide selfless service to the state. Moreover, Plato does not consider all the members in the society worthy of being ruler. Therefore, for the interest of the larger society, he advocates the rule by the knowledgeable. Now seen in the context where democracy is adopted in most of the countries of the world, Plato is criticized as an anti-democrat for his ideas.

### **1.6 Difference between Plato's Communism and Modern Communism**

We have already learnt that Plato advocates communism of wives and property for the guardian classes. However, it must be remembered that Plato's communism is different from the concept of communism understood today.

In the present scenario, we view communism in the context of Marxism which has an economic basis. But it must be remembered that Plato's communism is not based on economic grounds. The chief motive of Plato is to establish a just society ruled by the philosopher kings. Basis of Platonic communism are evils of love for private property and family.

Modern communism talks about class struggle between the two classes, namely, haves and have-nots. But in Plato's communism, we do not find the existence of such classes and, therefore, there is no mention about the conflicts between classes in his scheme of communism.

Again for establishing a just society and to provide selfless service to the community, Plato advocates the communism of wives and property for the guardian class. Thus, Plato's communism goes to the extent of controlling family lives of the guardians. However, in modern communism such considerations are not present. Marxian communism stands for ending exploitation of one class by another powerful class. But Plato's communism stands for functional specialization and devotion to duty.

Another difference between Marxian communism and Platonic communism is that Marxian communism believes that with the advancement of communism the state will gradually wither away. On the other hand, Platonic communism believes that practice of communism will lead to the establishment of just and ideal state.

Practice of Marxian communism leads to a classless society. On the other hand, in Plato's communism distinct classes emerge. In Marxian communism changes can be brought by evolutionary and revolutionary means.

Another difference between Platonic communism and modern communism is that while Platonic communism is regional in character, modern communism is international in nature. Marxian communism has urged all the workers of the world to unite.

**SAQ:**  
How far Plato's idea of communism of Property and Wives is justifiable?  
(In 80 words)

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**Check Your Progress:**

1. Mention three reasons for Plato's Communism of Property.
2. What is communism of wives according to Plato?
3. Write three differences between Plato's communism and modern communism.
4. Fill in the blanks:
  - a). According to Plato the guardians should not be allowed to have any property \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b). Plato's Communism of property is only for the \_\_\_\_\_ classes.

**1.7 Summing up**

After going through this unit, you must have gained a comprehensive knowledge of the major ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato and his enduring significance in contemporary political science. You have also learnt that Plato is a utopian thinker as all his ideas aim at establishing an ideal and just state. Because of his craze for idealism, he has ignored the practicability of those theories. After reading this unit, you are now in a position to comprehend Plato's idea of justice and trace its difference from modern concept of justice. Moreover, you can also explain his views on ideal state,

scheme of education and the role of philosopher kings in the ideal state. You have also learnt Plato's concept of communism of property and wives. As mentioned earlier, Plato's utopian ideas aiming to establish a just society is criticized by various theorists and we also addresses the important issues raised against Plato. His famous disciple Aristotle has also criticized his master's utopian ideas. In the next unit of this block we shall discuss Aristotle in detail and try to trace the similarities and differences between them. However, one cannot deny the relevance of Plato's theories even in the contemporary world.

### **1.8 References and Suggested Readings**

1. Ernest Barker 1977 *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors*, Methuen & Co. ltd, 1977, London
2. Mukherjee Subrata and Sushila Ramaswamy 2007 *A History of Political Thought: Plato to Marx*, Prentice Hall India, New Delhi.
3. Plato 1955 *The Republic*, Harmondsworth, Penguins.

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## **Unit 2**

### **Aristotle**

#### **Contents:**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Differences between the Ideas of Plato and Aristotle
- 2.4 Aristotle's Classification of Government
- 2.5 Aristotle's View on Slavery
- 2.6 Aristotle's View on Citizenship
- 2.7 Aristotle's View on Ideal State
- 2.8 Aristotle on Revolution
- 2.9 Aristotle on Justice
- 2.10 Summing up
- 2.11 References and Suggested Readings

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous unit of this block, we have discussed elaborately the ideas of Greek Philosopher Plato. As is a disciple of Plato, Aristotle is profoundly influenced by his master. Although Aristotle differs from Plato on many grounds, his works testify the shaping influence of his master. His writings include physics, metaphysics, poetry, theatre, logic, politics, government, ethics, biology and zoology. Aristotle's attempt to study the problems of politics scientifically has helped to the formation of the scientific core of political science. He is, therefore, rightly regarded as the father of political science for his intellectual contribution.

As you have seen, this block concentrates on the discussion of the Greek political tradition in the light of the major contribution of Plato and Aristotle. In unit 1 of this block we have already discussed Plato in great details. In this unit, we shall focus on the major ideas of Aristotle and discuss the differences between the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. The unit also aims to deal with Aristotle's classification of Government which he draws after studying as many as 158 constitutions. Our discussion will also focus on Aristotle's view on Slavery and Citizenship. As you know, Aristotle supports slavery but only with some modification in the system of slavery. Moreover, he has also elaborately discussed the causes and remedies of Revolution and we shall make an attempt to discuss his theory of revolution. Keeping the originality of Aristotle's endeavour in mind, it is important for us to know his views on these issues which are still relevant in various contexts.

#### **2.2 Objectives**

The unit aims to help you understand the major ideas of Aristotle's. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- *differentiate* between the ideas of Plato and Aristotle
- *explain* Aristotle's classification of the Government
- *describe* the views of Aristotle on Ideal State
- *discuss* Aristotle's idea on Slavery and Citizenship
- *explain* Aristotle's view on Revolution and Justice.

### 2.3 Differences between the Ideas of Plato and Aristotle

Plato and Aristotle, the two great political philosophers belong to the Greek Political Tradition. As mentioned earlier, Aristotle is a disciple of Plato and therefore, his ideas are also shaped by Plato's ideas. Though Aristotle's long association with Plato is the reason behind an intellectually vibrant relation, he never misses the opportunity to criticize his master. While Plato is regarded as the first writer of political philosophy, Aristotle is revered as the first political scientist. Before discussing the differences between these two great philosophers, let us have a look at the similarities between them.

Both Plato and Aristotle consider state as an agency for promoting social and economic welfare of the people. The main concern of both these Greek thinkers is to improve the conditions and functioning of the Greek city states of their times. They defend aristocracy and believe that the art of ruling cannot be learnt by all. Both the thinkers denounce democracy as an ideal form of government.

In the previous unit, we have already discussed the importance of education in Plato's scheme. Plato's emphasis on education is echoed by Aristotle as he also considers education as an important factor in the promotion of the welfare of the state. Both the thinkers justify the idea that individual and state are not in conflict with each other, rather they work in harmony for their mutual interests.

Again, both the thinkers position the rulers in high esteem and believe that the ruling class should be exempted from manual work and they should devote their time only for mental work. Thus, both of them justify slavery. Moreover, both of them want to confer citizenship rights to few people. Therefore, we may regard both Plato and Aristotle conservative in so far as extension of citizenship rights is concerned.

Plato and Aristotle believe that the state develops from family and thus it is family writ large. Moreover, they believe that politics and ethics should not be separated from each other and should go hand in hand to stop degeneration of the state.

But we must admit the fact that Aristotle is not a blind follower of Plato. The chance of studying many constitutions helps him to gather first hand information of the working of government in different states. Unlike Aristotle, Plato does not make such an empirical study. Aristotle also differs from his



master on several other grounds like the Ideal state, dimension of ethics and the causes of revolution. Now, let us have a look at the main differences between the ideas of these two great Greek philosophers:

- The main focus of Plato is on the establishment of a perfect society. In unit I, we have studied the blueprint created by Plato in *The Republic* for establishing a utopian society. Aristotle, unlike Plato, does not emphasize on establishing a perfect society. In *The Politics*, Aristotle states that the existing society itself should reach the best possible system that could be attained.
- Plato relies on deductive method while Aristotle adopts inductive method in drawing theories.
- We have also found in the previous unit that while dealing with the concept of Justice Plato states that a society consists of three distinct, non-hereditary classes. The philosophic guardians are to be placed in a position in which they are absolute rulers. Aristotle disagrees with the idea of one class holding absolute political power. The failure to allow circulation between classes excludes those men who may be ambitious, and wise, but do not belong to the right class of society to hold any type of political power.
- Both Plato and Aristotle agree that justice exists in an objective sense, i.e. it dictates a belief that all the individuals should enjoy a good life irrespective of their social status.
- We have also learnt that Plato depicts his ideal state on the basis of certain assumed principles like the rule of philosophy, communism etc. On the other hand, Aristotle tries to do it by bringing certain changes in the prevailing institutions.
- Both the philosophers differ on the theory of revolution too. According to Plato, revolution is generally a palace revolution i.e., when the power is transferred from one hand to another. He does not accept change and equates it with decay or corruption while Aristotle considers change inevitable and a movement towards ideal.
- Plato proceeds from the universal or the ideal to the particular while Aristotle proceeds from the particular and concrete to the universal.
- Another difference between these two political thinkers is that while Plato subordinates politics to ethics, Aristotle gives priority to politics.

However, both the Greek philosophers are obsessed with the idea of improving the existing Greek society. Plato, a political philosopher, is in the pursuit of philosophical truth. Aristotle was concerned with the citizen and the design of political institution. Aristotle was highly influenced by the philosophy of Plato but at the same time he did not completely support the utopian ideologies of Plato.

## Stop to Consider

### Principal Works of Aristotle:

Aristotle is a scientific thinker who relies heavily on methods of observation, empiricism and comparison. He has written on a wide range of subjects including ethics and metaphysics, art and poetry, economics and politics, physics and mechanics, physiology and medicine, astronomy and logic. The writings of Aristotle may be broadly categorized as follows:

- a) **Logical Works:** ‘Categories’, ‘Topics’, ‘Prior’, ‘Posterior Analytics’, ‘Propositions’ and ‘Sophistical Refutation’....all these are edited under the title of Aristotle’s *Organon*.
- b) **Scientific Works:** ‘Physics’, ‘On the Heavens’, ‘Growth and Decay’, ‘Meteorology’, ‘Natural History’, ‘On the Soul’, ‘The Parts of Animals’, ‘The Movements of Animals’ and “The Generation of Animals’.
- c) **Aesthetic Works:** ‘Rhetoric’ and ‘Poetics’.
- d) **Philosophical Works:** ‘Ethics’, ‘Politics’ and ‘Metaphysics’.

Thus, the works of Aristotle mentioned here give us an idea about the diversity of his thinking and the intellectual contribution to the field of knowledge.

## 2.4 Aristotle’s Classification of Government

Aristotle’s classification of government deserves greater attention as they are realistic. We have already discussed the Ideal State of Plato in the previous unit. It must be mentioned here that unlike the theory of his predecessor Plato, it is possible to apply Aristotle’s principle of classification to the real world. In books III-IV of his *Politics*, Aristotle has dealt elaborately with constitutions and governments.

Aristotle classifies government mainly on two criteria——

- a) Number of persons wielding supreme power.
- b) Purpose (good or bad) for which supreme power is wielded.

Like his teacher Plato, Aristotle is also of the view that the good state aims at promoting the welfare and happiness of the people. But when government ignores these noble aims and work in an evil way for promoting the selfish ends of those wielding supreme power to the detriment of the larger interest of the community, they latter become perverted.

Again Aristotle blends empirical and normative criteria in his classification. The classification not only describes but also lays down instructions regarding what ought to be the ideal state.

### Table on Aristotle's Classification

<b>First Principle:</b> Number of persons exercising supreme power	<b>Second Principle: Purpose of Exercising Supreme Power</b>	
	<b>Normal form of government</b>	<b>Prevented form of government</b>
One	Monarchy	Tyranny
Few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many	Polity	Democracy

Now, by looking at the above table you will know that the form of government is monarchy or tyranny, if supreme power is vested in the hands of one man. A government by one man is regarded as monarchy, if it aims at the realization of good life. Normally a monarch keeps before his mind a high and unselfish aim to promote the well-being of the people. When the ruler forgets the public good and aims at promoting his own good, he degenerates into a tyrant. Thus, one man's normal rule is monarchy; but its perversion is tyranny.

Again, Aristotle believes that the form of government is aristocracy or oligarchy, if power is vested in the hands of a few. The normal government of a few people aiming at public good is aristocracy. The perverted form of aristocracy is oligarchy.

You will find in the table that the third type of government is polity or democracy, ruled by many. The normal rule by many is regarded as polity while its perverted form is regarded as democracy.

In Aristotle's classification, the lowering of the aims of the state results in perversion whether it is the rule of one, few or many. Monarchy degenerates into tyranny, aristocracy degenerates into oligarchy and polity becomes perverted in the form of democracy. Here again, we should remember that democracy here is to be understood not in the modern sense but in the Aristotelian sense. Today, in the present world we do not talk of polity; what is polity to Aristotle is democracy to us, what is democracy to Aristotle is mob rule of Oligarchy.

#### ***Merits of the Classification:***

There are various merits of Aristotelian classification of Governments. They are as follows:

- a) Credit should be given to Aristotle for his classification which is one of the earliest of its kind.
- b) Aristotle's approach is scientific and systematic. He classifies governments after making a thorough and exhaustive study of all the types of government known in his time.

- c) Aristotle's qualitative and quantitative classification is of practical use. It is Aristotle who sets the ball of classification of government rolling.
- d) Aristotle outlines in his classification that degeneration in governments can take place.
- e) Aristotle uses a definite scientific method to classify governments. He does his job of classifying with two clear cut principles in mind.

***Demerits of the Classification:***

Aristotle's classification of government is also criticized for its demerits. The demerits are as follows:

- a) Aristotle does not distinguish state from government. This flaw is serious as it is a very significant difference in political science
- b) Aristotle's classification is inadequate as far as modern territorial states are concerned.
- c) Aristotle ignores various social and economic factors which influence the growth of the state. He only provides an ethical base of the state.
- d) The structure of modern government is highly complex. Aristotle's classification presumes governments to be in the pure form which is not the case today. It is difficult to find a pure form of governments anywhere today.

Thus, you see that Aristotle's classification of governments has both merits and demerits. However, it must be said that in spite of the defects, Aristotle's classification is still relevant in contemporary or present political scenario. The end of the state is considered as a criterion to classify states. It can be regarded as a pioneering work for the classification of governments.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. How does Aristotle define a citizen?
2. Who are excluded from citizenship in Aristotle's theory of citizenship?
3. Fill in the gaps
  - a). Residential qualification entitles \_\_\_\_\_ and slaves to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b). Aristotle's citizens are those who are able to participate in the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ areas of government.
  - c). In book \_\_\_\_\_ of his *Politics*, Aristotle has dealt elaborately with constitutions and governments.
  - d). When the ruler forgets the public good and aims at promoting his own good, he degenerates into a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Write two criteria on which Aristotle classifies governments.
5. What are the three normal forms of governments according to Aristotle?

## 2.5 Aristotle's View on Slavery

Slavery is a common factor during Aristotle's time. The institution of slavery is also prevalent in old Greece. Aristotle justifies slavery and considers it as an integral part of the Greek social order. It must be mentioned here that Aristotle is both defender and reformer of slavery. Therefore, his concept of slavery is very controversial as a result of his belief that people are naturally slaves or masters.

Aristotle starts his discussion on slavery with the question, 'who is a slave?' His concept of slavery is linked to his concept of citizenship. It must be remembered that Athens, in the fifth and fourth BC is one of the best known Greek city states whose economies are based on slavery. According to Aristotle, slavery is natural and not conventional. Therefore, Aristotle's theory of slavery states that some people are naturally slaves and others are naturally masters.

According to Aristotle slaves must have powerful bodies but are unable to rule over themselves.

In his book *Politics* Aristotle says,

*But that those who take the opposite view (that is, who hold the view that slavery is not natural) have in certain way right on their side, may be easily seen. For the words slavery and slave are used in two senses. There is a slave and slavery by law as well as by nature. The law of which I speak is a sort of convention – the law by which whatever is taken in war is supposed to belong to the victors. But this right many jurists impeach, as they would an orator who brought forward an unconstitutional measure: they detest the notion that, because one man has the power of doing violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject.* (Adapted from the following link: [http:// oregonstate.edu/instruct/ phl 302/distance \\_arc/las \\_casas/ Aristotle-slavery.html](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/distance_arc/las_casas/Aristotle-slavery.html))

According to Aristotle 'He who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man'. He is also of the view 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'. (Adapted from [http:// www.healingtheland.com/resources/discovery/Aristotle.html](http://www.healingtheland.com/resources/discovery/Aristotle.html)). According to Aristotle, natural slavery is neither good nor bad, it simply exists. His theory of natural slave is related to his theory of justice and freedom. Slaves during Aristotle's time are free and living a just life. A slave is separate from the master; therefore if a slave is truly a natural slave there will be no conflict between the rulers and the ruled.

In Aristotle's view the state is made up of households and the parts of the households are those individuals who compose it. A complete household consists of slave and free man. Aristotle considers slaves as the living

possession and property of his master. He believes that slaves possess no reasoning power but has the power of understanding and following reasons. He says that those who are not virtuous are slaves. Aristotle's main presumption is that men have different capacities and those with lower capacities should be considered as slaves. Thus, the slaves belong to the masters but the masters do not belong to the slaves. He however, says that a slave should not be a Greek and preferably come from an inferior race.

Here we must remember that though Aristotle defends the institution of slavery, it is not exactly in the form in which it existed in his time. He distinguishes between two kinds of slavery, namely- slave by nature and slave by law. Aristotle's definition of natural slave includes those who are by nature inferior in quality and cannot guide themselves as they are not guided by reason. On the other hand, legal slaves are those who are made slaves by force like war captives or the war prisoners enslaved by conquerors. There are various reasons for Aristotle's justification of slavery. Now let us discuss the various grounds on which Aristotle justifies slavery:

- *Natural Inequality of mankind:* Aristotle is of the firm belief that men by nature are unequal in terms of their capacities for imbibing virtue. Nature has not endowed all men with similar qualities. There are persons who possess high sense of reason and who are fit to command. There are others whose intellectual standard is low and who are fit to obey only. It is a natural phenomenon that the inferior must be subordinated to the superior. As the soul rules over the body and the reason over the appetite, similarly those who have reasoning capacity should rule over those with less power of understanding.
- *Providing Leisure:* According to Aristotle, slavery is necessary because it will provide leisure for the virtuous which is essential for the welfare of the state.
- *Law of Nature:* Aristotle opines that it is in the law of the nature that superior rules over inferior. For him superiors are the masters because they are governed by reason, while the slaves are of inferior quality as they cannot guide themselves. He believes that as soul rules over the body and the reason over the appetite, similarly those with lesser capacity of reasoning should obey those possessing higher capacity of reasoning.
- *In the interest of Slaves:* Aristotle justifies slavery in the interest of the slaves themselves. Since the slaves do not possess rational faculty and cannot regulate appetite by reason, it is good for him to be governed by the higher authority as a slave.
- *Attainment of Perfection:* According to Aristotle, it is with slavery that perfection can be attained. Slaves and masters are just complementary and not contradictory to each other. The institution of slavery is thus a social necessity.

As mentioned earlier, Aristotle does not give unqualifiable support to the institution of slavery. He justifies it under certain specific conditions, namely,

- Those who are naturally inferior should be made slave or treated as slave. He is against the idea of enslaving the prisoners of wars. He does not consider the legal slaves as slaves as they are intellectually superiors.
- Slaves should not be harshly treated but must be given human treatment.
- There should be provision for emancipation for those slaves who show good conduct and develop the capacity for reasoning and virtue.
- Aristotle again says that masters have no right to misuse power and authority.
- The bitterness of feeling between the two should be removed by creating a common interest between the masters and the slaves. Both should have friendly relation with each other.

***Criticism of the view:***

a) *No criterion of Classification:* Aristotle has not fixed up any criterion to determine as to who is natural slave and who is not. By saying that some people are by nature slaves, he has made it a hereditary institution which is most undesirable.

b) *Classification Unjustified:* According to Aristotle human beings can be divided into two classes –superior and inferior. But it is difficult to divide human beings simply into two such classes.

c) *Racial Prejudices:* Aristotle faces criticisms for his view that all non-Greeks are barbarous. He is of the view that war prisoners if they are not Greeks may be made slaves.

Thus you see that Aristotle’s theory of slavery faces various criticisms in the later period. Though Aristotle’s theory may not sound valid in today’s contemporary context, yet we have to examine it in the light of circumstances in which he defends this institution. He justifies slavery as he wants to maintain the social fabric of ancient Greek society. We must appreciate the fact that he has made lasting contributions to political philosophy by his theory of slavery. Aristotle’s justification of slavery denotes his essential political conservatism and realism. Thus, slavery is an essential part of national economy and emancipation of slaves can be detrimental to the integrity of the entire social fabric which Aristotle is keen to maintain.

**SAQ:**  
 Distinguishing Aristotle’s concept of Slavery from Modern concept of Slavery. Do you think that slavery can be justified in the present time?  
 (80+40 words)

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 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Write two similarities and two dissimilarities between Plato and Aristotle.
2. Fill in the gaps:
  - a). Plato relies on \_\_\_\_\_ method while Aristotle adopts \_\_\_\_\_ method in drawing theories.
  - b). Aristotle's theory of natural slave is related to his theory of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. How does Aristotle define a slave?
4. Write three justifications of slavery given by Aristotle.
5. Mention two criticisms levelled against Aristotle's theory of justice.

**2.6 Aristotle's View on Citizenship**

After dealing with Aristotle's concept of slavery, we shall now discuss his concept of citizenship in this section. The concept of citizenship is discussed by various schools of thought beginning with the Greeks. In ancient Greek city-states, there is always a class of citizens privileged by birth to take part in the political life of the city-states. Citizenship entitles a man the membership of the city state that included a minimum share of political activity. In book III of *Politics*; Aristotle views citizenship as the central and the most fundamental characteristic of Greek city-state and wants to conserve the existing institution of citizenship. In order to give a clear idea, he attempts an analytical definition of the state in which individual citizens are a constituent element of the state.

Aristotle deals with citizenship from the positive and negative points of view. Firstly, he deals with the disqualification citizenship in his definition. According to him, a citizen is not the one who resides in a particular place because slave and aliens also reside in the same place. Residential qualification entitles foreigners and slaves to citizenship. He then says that citizens enjoying legal rights cannot be called citizen because legal rights can be possessed by anybody. Likewise, a descent from a citizen does not entitle a person to become a citizen.

After discussing the disqualifications of a citizen, Aristotle defines a citizen as the person who participates in the administration of justice in the legislature as a member of the deliberative assembly. Thus, you find that the basic qualification of citizenship according to Aristotle is the exercise of some civic responsibilities.

Aristotle again states that the definition of citizenship must differ according to the form of government. Aristotle's main view about the nature of citizenship is that the work of the citizens actively engages man's rational capacity and the work involves serious responsibilities. According to Aristotle, rational citizens who are free are the ones who are responsible for the business of the state without being distracted by the mundane affairs. As we have found in the previous section, Aristotle has, therefore, justified slavery for the guardian classes.



Thus, you have learnt that Aristotle’s citizens are those who are able to participate in the deliberative and judicial functions of government. He denies the right to citizenship to the major section of the society as he does not grant the status of citizenship to women, slaves, children and alien residents. He considers the young as immature and old as infirm to perform the duties of a citizen. Again, he excludes women from citizenship right as he believes that women lack the deliberative faculty and the leisure to understand the working of politics. Aristotle also believes that the number of citizens should always be restricted so that a small and cohesive political community can be established.

Thus, from the above discussion we can conclude that according to Aristotle, a good citizen is one who lives in harmony with the constitution. Such a citizen should have sufficient leisure to perform his responsibilities. He should also possess virtue and moral goodness. Aristotle also states that the citizens should get proper education to perform their duties efficiently.

**SAQ:**

Do you think the criteria of citizenship as provided by Aristotle are relevant in a modern democratic state? Give reasons in support of your answer. (80+60 words)

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**2.7 Aristotle’s View on Ideal State**

Like his master Plato, Aristotle also discusses the concept of ideal state. However, unlike Plato, Aristotle emphasizes on establishing an ideal state that can be realized by all mortals. He is not concerned with the best state but to the best attainable state. Being a realist, Aristotle believes that a form of government cannot be the best prototype for all governments. Therefore, it is often stated that what Aristotle calls an Ideal State is always Plato’s second best state. According to Aristotle, an ideal state should aim at the moral improvement of the citizens. He advocates small city states instead of big states. Like Plato, he believes that an ideal state should have an elaborate system of education keeping with the spirit of the constitution. He favours the division of labour in an ideal state. In such a division, slaves enjoy a special position as they are essential for the leisured class. Again, Aristotle is of the view that there should be impersonal rule with supremacy of law in the ideal state. An ideal state should be self-sufficient in all aspects. He has also laid great emphasis on the role of middle class in the ideal state. The qualities like spirit, courage and intelligence are essential for the character of the people in ideal state.

## Elements of the Ideal State

Thus, Aristotle favours a 'Golden Mean' or middle path for his Ideal State. According to him, the 'golden mean' should be adopted in every sphere in the state like the composition, structure, deliberation and decision making, government, law and legislation, liberty and justice, territory and population, agriculture, trade, commerce, education and health, arts, science etc.

We have read Plato's classification of society into three groups in the previous unit. Aristotle also divides the society into three classes. However, his classification is different from Plato's. According to him the three classes are—the very rich, the middle class, and the very poor. He believes that the very rich excel in beauty, strength, birth or wealth; but they grow to be arrogant, violent and criminal who fail to obey laws. Therefore, the government by the rich may become despotic. On the other hand, the very poor are weak, disgraced having inferiority complex, jealous and often violate law. Therefore, they are not fit to rule. Rule by either of these classes will result in the division of society because of conflicts, jealousy and bitterness. The best way is to follow the 'golden mean' and government, therefore, should be run by the middle class citizens who can ensure stability in the state. He who stands in the middle is called 'arbiter'. The rule of the middle class is thus the 'best mixture of the political elements...it is called golden means.'

As we have already learnt, Aristotle advocates the rule of the middle class which ensures both liberty and equality in the state. Liberty under golden means implies the life lived by the rule of the constitution. Here liberty also implies that every one should have the privilege to rule and the responsibility to be ruled in turn.

According to Aristotle, three elements determine the nature of the government. These are...

- a) Deliberative (in the modern system legislative)
- b) Magistracy (executive)
- c) Judicial. (Judiciary)

The above mentioned elements together constitute a government. In case of democracy, we find more deliberation while if some deliberate about all, it is called oligarchy. But when the deliberative class is somewhat numerous elected from those who have a moderate qualification and offices of government are open to those who have the required qualification, than the oligarchy becomes polity or constitutional government.

Aristotle is of the view that monarchy is the best state provided the monarch is the embodiment of virtue. Aristocracy formed by the best men may appear to be the best practicable government, but it may gradually degenerate into oligarchy. He regards democracy as the rule by the crowd. The best state

should be a mixture of aristocracy and democracy which combines numbers with excellence, ability and efficiency with responsibility. Polity or constitutional republic is the result of such a mixture. Strength and excellence consists neither in number alone, nor in wealth alone, nor in military and political ability alone but in a combination of these. The economic base of such a government will be found in the middle class.

Aristotle identifies certain material conditions of the best state. These are as follows:

- *Population*: In an ideal state, the population should not be either too large or too small to be inadequate. There is need for state control and regulation of population not only from the point of view of size but also family welfare, health and nutrition, economic viability; military necessity etc. The character of the population in the state should be good.
- *Territory*: The best state should also be moderate in size. It should be such that the citizens could comprehend it in 'a single view' so that it becomes easy to defend it and relate it to the neighbouring states. The territory should be large enough to be self-sufficient economically, politically, militarily and even spiritually.
- *Social Structure*: Aristotle's best state should have a well-knit social structure that co-ordinates integral part with the necessary conditions. Integral parts of the state are the citizens, the slaves, the artisans and women. The social structure aims at providing services of food and agriculture, tools, arts and crafts, arms and defence, property, public worship, political deliberations etc. Different classes of people will perform different tasks according to their social status and skills.
- *Lay out of the Best State*: While making the layout of the best state, certain factors should be taken into account. These factors are: health, defence, convenience of political activity, beauty of appearance etc.
- *Education*: Like his master Plato, Aristotle also believes that education should be state controlled and must cover the whole life. It should also cover all aspects of life from leisure to the matters of war and peace. His scheme of education starts at the age of 5 and in the first stage it continues to 7 and in the next to 14. In the third stage, from 14 to 21, the citizen ceases to belong to himself or his family alone as he belongs to the state. Special emphasis here should be given to reading, writing, drawing, gymnastics and music. Thus, Aristotle believes that education can mould the entire character of the population. Therefore, the primary object is to adapt the citizen to the constitution and the form of government.

Aristotle's Ideal state has faced with many criticisms. But one must remember the fact that like other political thinker, he is also the product of his time and society. However, he tries to draw a picture of ideal state which can be of practical use also.

## 2.8 Aristotle on Revolution

Part V of Aristotle's *Politics* deals with the various problems of revolution. Aristotle begins his theory of revolution with the assumption that change is inevitable in every society and change represents the movement towards an ideal state. He derives his conception of change from his understanding of science and nature. While dealing with the concept of revolution, Aristotle appears thorough and scientific. He follows inductive methods for the study of his philosophy. Accordingly, his ideas about the causes and remedies of revolution are based on the study of 158 constitutions and his practical knowledge of the working of many states. He has also dealt with general and particular causes of revolution. The scientific analysis of the subject springs from his desire to study and analyze the causes of the frequent revolutions which occur in the Greek city-states in his time. Therefore, he prescribes certain measures to prevent revolution.

Aristotle has given a broader meaning and definition to the term revolution. According to him, revolution possesses two-fold meaning. The first meaning is relating to the constitution. This type of revolution occurs when there is any change in the constitution irrespective of the condition whether the change is major or minor. This change may be from monarchy to oligarchy.

The second meaning of revolution is related to the authority. This type of revolution occurs when there is any change in the ruling authority though there may not be any change in the constitution. An example of the second type of revolution occurs when tyranny is replaced by monarchy.

According to Aristotle, revolution is of varying degrees. It may emerge due to change in the institution. It can be direct or indirect affecting an institution directly or indirectly. Thus, every change in law leads towards revolution. He also states that the chief cause of revolution is the desire for equality. However, he has also dealt with various other reasons of revolutions. Aristotle has given both general and particular causes of revolution. The causes of revolution, according to Aristotle, are as follows:

- *Different interpretation of justice*: Different interpretations of justice give rise to conflicting claims by different classes and leads to revolutionary conditions. Moreover, he also believes that one of the

major causes of revolution is injustice. Denial of justice may result in the emergence of revolution.

- In all revolutions, the desire of the minority for effective superiority appears to be the leading condition. There are various conditions like economic disparity, fear of the law or abuse, personal rivalries, racial antagonisms which may be regarded as important causes of revolutions. (adapted from Outline of Great Books, Volume I)

In democracies, revolutions occur mainly due to the demagogic attack on wealth. While in oligarchies revolutions occur from the oppressive conduct of the oligarchy or because of exclusion of certain people from the government etc.

- In aristocracies, revolutions emerge from a number of reasons like—the jealousy of those excluded from power, personal ambitions and great inequality of wealth.
- The psychological factors play a very important role in the emergence of revolutions. Fear is regarded as a general cause of revolution by Aristotle. Again, when a particular individual occupies a position of strength, a particular revolutionary condition is created. Through revolution a section of the society tries to acquire profit, honour, superiority, etc. Feelings of negligence, fear of opposites and dissimilarity also lead to the emergence of revolution.
- For the preservation of polities, minor illegalities must be particularly guarded against. In oligarchies, personal rivalries, abuses of power by individuals etc. are the major causes of revolutions.
- Aristotle also discusses the reasons for the emergence of revolutions in monarchy. According to him if the monarch acts like a protector of the common people, there is less chance of revolution in the state. On the other hand, when the monarch becomes tyrant and aims only at personal welfare, there is every possibility of the emergence of revolutionary impulse.

### **Particular Reasons for Revolution**

The particular cause of revolution in democracy may be the unchecked power of the demagogues. In an oligarchy, oppression of the masses leads to revolutionary situation, while in aristocracy; rule of a small minority may lead to the revolution. He also believes that revolution in aristocracy may lead to the establishment of democracy in the state. Further he states that in monarchy, revolution may emerge due to fear, contempt, insults, hatred and desire for the expansion of territories.

Thus, it can be seen that Aristotle has discussed the causes of revolutions in a detailed manner and proceeds to discuss the remedies. The remedies of revolutions discussed by Aristotle are as follows:

To avoid revolution, according to Aristotle, the ruler should win the confidence of the common people in such a way that the masses do not feel as separate entities. This should particularly be done with regard to national income and expenditure. Proper selection of the people for running the administration is also very important. Education of the common people is important and they should be educated in the spirit of the constitution. Aristotle also believes that no drastic changes in the state should be made which make the people unhappy. So, the government should be moderate in its attitude. Moreover, the government or the ruling authority should not neglect any minor event. Such negligence of minor issue may create major problems later.

He also opines that proper care should be taken to include all the sections of the society so that no one feels excluded. He again states that all important and high offices should be given on short-term basis as far as possible as retention of power for a long time by one person may prove to be dangerous. For avoiding revolution, Aristotle believes that the ruler should not keep the people in dark.

According to him, to prevent revolution in a monarchy, the ruler should inculcate a spirit of obedience to law. In an aristocratic or oligarchic government, efforts should be made to distribute offices in a democratic line. Rulers should be in good terms with the common people to avoid inculcating a sense of inferiority in a particular section. Thus, they should try to establish a feeling of equality in the society.

In a tyranny, revolution can be avoided by the divide and rule policy and also by employing a strong spy system. The ruler should keep the masses busy in non-political activities and cut down lavish expenses and observe conventional rites and practices. He should respect the religious sentiments of others and participate in the religious worships.

**SAQ:**

After Reading Aristotle’s theory of Revolution try to find out at least two revolutions in the world that resulted from the causes mentioned by Aristotle. (80 Words)

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## 2.9 Aristotle on Justice

We have already read elaborately on Plato's discussion of the concept of justice in his book *The Republic*. Like his predecessor, Aristotle assigns great importance to the concept of justice. Both of them believe that justice is the very essence of the state and no polity can endure for a long time unless it is based on a scheme of justice.

For Aristotle, justice is a complete virtue, though not absolute. In other words, a completely just man in Aristotle's view is a completely virtuous man. Unlike Plato, Aristotle's concept of justice is not dependent on functional specialization. Aristotle believes that end of the state is the promotion of good life. The realization of this end depends on the life of common action. For that the citizens should develop the quality of law-abidingness. A just and law-abiding citizen according to Aristotle is one and the same. Justice, therefore, to Aristotle is the name of the great moral virtue and excellence of character which is indispensable in social and public relations. He calls it as the complete virtue.

Aristotle deals with the notion of 'Particular Justice' and according to him; particular justice is based on the conception of the state as an association of equals. As a member of an association, an individual has the rights in relation to the whole and he has also the right against the each. He proceeds to describe Distributive and Corrective justice next.

Distributive justice means that offices and honour, rewards and dues, goods and services are distributed among different social classes according to their contributions based on merit, defined in accordance with the spirit of the constitution. His main argument is that since every citizen of the state makes a contribution to the realization of common good, it is necessary that he must receive honour in proportion to the amount and kind of contribution he makes to the life of the state.

Again, every state fixes its own standard of measuring the worth and due of a man. A democratic state will suggest that offices, honour and other rewards should be distributed in equal share to the citizens of the state. That is to say, distributive justice in democracy insists on absolute equality. An oligarchic state will suggest that wealth should be regarded as the right standard of measurement for the distribution of offices, rewards and honours, while the aristocratic state insists on virtue. Distributive justice in this state insists respectively on proportionate equality based on wealth and virtue.

Corrective, rectificatory and remedial justice see that the proportionate equality so established may not be distributed or violated. Rectificatory or remedial justice is meted out by a judge in matters like criminal law, where

the merit of a person is not the consideration. Aristotle has also illustrated the corrective justice with example. He has given illustration of a buyer who goes to the market and purchases a commodity from a seller but does not pay the price of the commodity and disturbs proportionate equality, because in doing so, he denies the seller his right to receive the cost of his commodity. Corrective justice in this way prevents an individual from making encroachment upon the rights of his fellows.

In this way, the particular justice of which the distributive justice and corrective justice are the parts may be defined in the light of the above discussion as the quality of an association of equals, which awards to its members according to their contribution, the offices and other rewards, it has to bestow, and should prevent encroachment by one member upon the sphere of another.

According to Aristotle, distributive justice means that offices and wealth, rewards and dues are distributed among different social classes according to their contributions based on merit, defined in accordance with the spirit of the constitution.

Aristotle believes that revolutions emerge in a society when equals are treated unequally. He regards equality as crucial to social justice and justice as central to equality.

#### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Write four material conditions of Aristotle's Best State.
2. Fill in the blanks
  - a). Part \_\_\_\_\_ of Aristotle's *Politics* deals with the various problems of revolution.
  - b). Aristotle regards \_\_\_\_\_ as the rule by the crowd.
3. Write three causes of revolutions as pointed out by Aristotle.
4. Mention three remedies as suggested by Aristotle.
5. Differentiate between the ideas of Plato and Aristotle on Justice.

### **2.10 Summing up**

After reading this unit, you are in a position to discuss the main ideas propounded by Aristotle. You are familiar with the fact that being a disciple of Plato, Aristotle is influenced by his ideas and there are similarities between the two. But, Aristotle's works are regarded as important critique of Plato's ideas. Being a realist, he criticizes Plato on various grounds for his utopian ideas. This unit familiarizes you to the major ideas of Aristotle on classification



of governments, slavery and citizenship, ideal state; Justice and Revolution. The reading of this unit will help you to discuss and explain Aristotle's ideas and also assess his contribution to political philosophy.

## 2.11 References and Suggested Readings

1. Ernest Barker 1977 *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors*, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1977, London
2. Mukherjee Subrata and Sushila Ramaswamy 2007 *A History of Political Thought: Plato to Marx*, Prentice Hall India, New Delhi.

### LINKS

[http://www.publicbookshelf.com/public\\_html/Outline\\_of\\_Great\\_Books\\_Volume\\_I/aristotle\\_bdh.html](http://www.publicbookshelf.com/public_html/Outline_of_Great_Books_Volume_I/aristotle_bdh.html)

[http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/distance\\_arc/las\\_casas/Aristotle-slavery.html](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/distance_arc/las_casas/Aristotle-slavery.html)

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning  
Gauhati University**

**MA in Political Science**

**Paper I  
Political Theory 1**

**Block 2  
Reaction to Medieval Tradition-The Renaissance**



**Contents:**

**Block Introduction–**

**Unit 1 : Medieval Tradition**

**Unit 2 : Niccolo Machiavelli**

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### **Block Introduction:**

In this block we are going to discuss the medieval tradition and the important thinkers influencing the medieval philosophy and culture. In Europe Medieval period started from 500 A.D. to 1450 A.D. During the Medieval period the non-political activities predominated and political thought did not make any progress. The Medieval period is also known as the 'Dark Age' as there was lack of intelligence among the rulers and education was neglected. Here one must remember that Medievalism is not absolute and appears to offer different aspects of interpretation in different contexts. The term 'Medieval' refers primarily to Europe. In this block, an attempt is made to explore the ideas prevailing in the Medieval period as depicted in the writings of the thinkers like St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas. Medieval philosophy includes the 'Pre-scholastic', 'Scholastic' and 'late Scholastic' periods. Though the Medieval period has been termed as the dark period of history, it is indeed difficult to subscribe to the view that Middle Ages are devoid of political ideas because human thought can never be divided into watertight compartments in terms of time. During the Medieval period various developments took place which affected the attitudes, values, ideas and institutions of mankind. Machiavelli (1469-1527) has been considered as the first modern political thinker and it is believed that Medievalism ends with Machiavelli. The church-state relationship has dominated the Medieval period. De Ecclesiastica Potestate and John of Paris have asserted the supreme papal power. The Papalist during that period also believed in the supremacy of the church. The Secularist like Marsiglio of Padua and William of Ockham on the other hand did not accept the supremacy of the church and showed great respect for the laws. Thinkers like Jean Givson argued that papal supremacy is dangerous and therefore he stood for the reformation of the church.

In the first unit we shall discuss the ideas of two prominent thinkers St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas, influential for the study of Medieval period. Augustine has put forward the theory of two states. He has subordinated state to the church. According to him, peace is the love for all

human beings. He also feels that man has dual nature. One is the earthly nature and the other one is the spiritual nature. He is of the view that man shall possess property according to his needs. According to Augustine, justice prevails in the city of God. He also favours the institution of slavery. In the first unit we shall discuss the ideas of St Augustine regarding state and church, peace, human nature, property, justice, slavery etc. We will also be dealing with the ideas of St Thomas Aquinas here to help you comprehend the issues central to Medieval period. Aquinas believes that state is a natural institution and it exists for the development of man. Like Augustine he also believes in the supremacy of church over state. He also deals with the classification of government. Aquinas is of the view that the 'goodness' or the 'badness' of a government depends on the functions which it performs. It is worth mentioning that he does not assign any negative function to the state. Sovereignty according to Aquinas is indivisible. He has also given a four fold classification of laws. . We shall discuss his ideas on state and supremacy of church, classification of government, functions of the government, sovereignty, functions of monarch, classification of law, etc in this unit.

The second unit of this block deals with Machiavelli who is regarded as a child of Renaissance. Here an attempt is made to draw the connection between Machiavelli and Renaissance. Machiavelli is also known as the political thinker to formulate the modern concept of state. This unit will introduce you to Machiavelli's ideas of state and human nature. Moreover, in his celebrated work, *The Prince*, he had given advises to the ruler on statecraft and expansion of the territory. His advices to the ruler and his views on religion and morality are also discussed in this unit.

This Block contains two units:

**Unit 1:** Medieval Tradition

**Unit 2:** Niccolo Machiavelli

# Unit 1

## Medieval Tradition

### Contents:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Medieval Period as the 'Dark Phase' in History
- 1.4 Important Thinkers of Medieval Period
  - 1.4.1 St. Augustine
  - 1.4.2 St. Thomas Aquinas
- 1.5 Summing up
- 1.6 References and Suggested Readings

### 1.1 Introduction

In this block we are discussing the Medieval period and its important thinkers. The Medieval period in Europe was the period between the end of classical antiquity and the Renaissance viz. from about 500 A.D. to 1450 A.D. It is difficult to demarcate between ancient and medieval period. The Medieval period lasted for 1000 years. The word medieval has its origin in Latin and means 'pertaining to the middle ages'. The main sources of medieval ideas of politics are the *Bible*, the father of the church and especially St. Augustine, the text books of canon and civil law and works of Aristotle especially the *Politics*.

This unit is an attempt to analyze Medieval period and examine the reasons which contribute to its emergence as the dark phase of history. During the Early Middle Ages the non- political activities predominated and political thought did not make any progress. This period was often called the dark age of history as there was no political speculation i.e. no origination of new ideas in political field. It was also believed that there was lack of intelligence among the rulers and education was neglected. Moreover, this unit will also

deal with the important thinkers of Medieval period particularly St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. St Augustine was regarded as a saint and eminent Doctor of the Church in the Catholic Church and Anglican Communion. Among the orthodox, he is called Blessed Augustine or St. Augustine the Blessed. St Thomas Aquinas was also known as Doctor Angelicus and Doctor Communis. He was the foremost classical proponent of natural theology and the father of the Thomistic school of theology and philosophy. Here an attempt is made to introduce you to the political ideas of St. Augustine like the relationship between State and Church, ideas of peace and justice, human nature, property and slavery. Reading of this unit will also help you to learn St. Aquinas's ideas on State, government, sovereignty and law.

## **1.2 Objectives**

In this unit we are mainly dealing with the two important thinkers of Medieval period, viz, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. However, we are also going to study the contributions made by them as well as other thinkers of Medieval period to the history of political philosophy. Therefore, after reading this unit you will be able to:

- *describe* the core idea of Medieval period
- *discuss* the relationship between the church and the state in the Medieval period.
- *analyse* the ideas of St. Augustine
- *explain* the ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas

## **1.3 Medieval Period as the 'Dark Phase' in History**

This unit is an attempt to study the two important political philosophers of Medieval period. We all know that all political thinkers are influenced by the period to which they belong. The Medieval thinkers are also influenced by the socio-political situation of that period. Therefore, before discussing the ideas of medieval thinkers, it is important to discuss the Medieval period.

This period is remarked by certain features for which it is termed as the 'dark phase' of history. The term Middle Ages describes the period which is a deviation from the path of classical learning supposed to be reconnected by Renaissance scholarship. Originally, the term characterizes the Middle Ages as a period of intellectual darkness existing between the extinguishing of the light of Rome and the Renaissance or rebirth from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Today it is frequently applied only to the earlier part of the era, the Early Middle Ages. The Early Middle Ages exemplifies the trend of depopulation, de-urbanisation and increased barbarian invasion. During this period, barbarian Goths, Vandals and Huns invaded Europe from the north and east. They destroyed many fine buildings and works of art existing during the Roman period. During this period, knowledge survived only in monasteries and there were very few schools. Many of the old arts and crafts were lost and the phase is called the dark ages.

This period witnessed the cultural and economic decline and disruption that took place in Western Europe following the decline of the Roman Empire. The concept of a dark age originated with the Italian scholar Petrarch in 1330's and was originally intended as a criticism of the characteristics of Latin literature. Petrarch regarded the centuries since the fall of Rome as dark compared to the light of classical antiquity. Later, the historians restricted it between the Roman period and High Middle Ages. This period witnessed not only the lack of Latin literature but also the lack of contemporary written history, general demographic decline, limited building activity, and material cultural achievements in general.

Christian writers including Petrarch himself used traditional metaphors of 'Light versus Darkness' to describe 'Good versus Evil'. Petrarch wrote that history could be divided into two periods- the classic period of the Greeks and Romans followed by a time of darkness, in which he saw himself as still living. In the conclusion to his epic *Africa* written around 1343 he opined "my fate is to live among varied and confusing storms. But for you perhaps, if as I hope and wish you will live long after me, there will follow a better age. This sleep of forgetfulness will not last for ever. When the darkness



has been dispersed, our descendants can come again in the former pure radiance”. (Petrarch, 134, *Africa IX*, 451-7). By the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, humanists such as Leonardo Bruni believed that they had sensed the beginning of a third modern age.

When the modern scholarly study of Middle Ages arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term ‘dark ages’ was widely used by historians. However, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a radical re-evaluation of the Middle Ages as well as the question of the terminology of darkness. However, many historians are of the view that the Medieval period often seems ‘dark’ to us because of the paucity of historical records compared with both earlier and later times.

### **Stop to Consider:**

Medieval Europe and Dark Age:

In the late Middle Ages, the term ‘dark ages’ has become restricted to distinct times and places in medieval Europe. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries in Britain, at the height of the Saxon invasions, have been called the darkest of the dark ages. However, here you should remember that this period cannot be regarded as ‘dark’ all over the world. For Example, at this time, the Arab empire is often considered to have experienced its golden age rather than dark age. Therefore, it can be said that Petrarch’s concept of dark age corresponds mostly to a Christian period whereas the use of the term today applies mainly to the least Christianized cultures and periods in Europe.

Films and novels often use the term dark age with its implied meaning of a time of backwardness. For instance, the popular movie, ‘Monty Python’ and the ‘Holy Grail’ humorously portrayed knights and chivalry, following in a tradition begun with *Don Quixote*. The 2007 television show ‘The Dark Ages’ from the history channel called the dark ages ‘600 years of degenerate, godless, inhuman behaviour’.

The public idea of the Middle Ages as the dark ages also reflected misconceptions regarding the study of nature during that period. The contemporary historians of science David C. Lindberg and Ronald Numbers discuss the widespread popular belief that the Middle Ages are a time of ignorance and superstitions, the blame for which is to be laid on Christian Church for allegedly placing the word of religious authorities over personal experience and rational activity.

#### **1.4 Important Thinkers of Medieval Period**

It is known to all that political philosophy is the study of city, government, politics, liberty, justice, property, rights, law and the enforcement of a legal code by the authority. However the Medieval political philosophy did not deal with these issues. Many thinkers discussed political philosophy in the Medieval period.

The first name that comes to our mind while preparing the list of important thinkers of Medieval period is Saint Augustine. Saint Augustine's early Christian philosophy is basically a rewriting of Plato in a Christian context. The main change brought by Christian thought was the moderation of the stoicism and theory of justice of the Roman world. Augustine also preached that one was not a member of his or her city, but was either of citizen of the city of God (*civitas Dei*) or the city of Man (*Civitas Terrona*). In the next section of this unit, we will discuss the contribution of Saint Augustine in a detailed manner.

Now we will discuss the contribution of some of the thinkers influential to Medieval philosophy. To start Philip IV, king of France 1285-1314 and his conflict with Pope Baniface VIII and Pope Element V gave rise to a body of writings of great interest to the history of Political thought. Of these the most important were Griles of Rome's *De Ecclesiastica Potestate* and John of Paris's *De Potestate Regia Et Papali (On Royal and Popal Power, 1302)*. Both were the assertion of supreme Papal Power and attempt

to restate the dualism of Duo Sunt. John of Paris reasserts the traditional distinction between ownership and ruler ship.

The Papalists, on the whole, believed in the supremacy of church and had far conviction and faith that in the church-state controversy, the former had a prior place. To them, the relation between church and God was direct whereas the relation between state and God was indirect. Gregory VII (1013-1080) was one of the staunchest supporters of church, who pleaded that church should be absolutely free from the control of secular authorities. John of Salisbury (1115-1180) characterized as the first English political theorist was another supporter of church supremacy. Saint Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) was a liberal papalist and believed that church should not interfere in state affairs unless such interference was seriously warranted and most unavoidable. In Medieval political philosophy, Saint Thomas is the most meticulous thinker who deals with varieties of law.

The Secularists were the thinkers who did not agree with the Papalists that church was the soul of the state and that it had any superior or supreme position as compared with the state. On the other hand they believed that the state was an essential institution for the welfare of Medieval. Dante's *De-Monarchic* (1311) was a book full of great ideas and he gave the Secularists the philosophy which becomes the basis of thought by all subsequent political thinkers. Marsiglio of Padua (1270-1340) was one of the strongest champions of secular cause. His philosophy is original in nature and he has been characterized as one of the greatest political thinkers in Europe after Aristotle. His ideas are embodied in his work entitled *Defensor Pacis* completed in 1324. He stood firmly against church authority and had great respect for the laws. William of Ockham (1280-1347) was a contemporary of Marsiglio. The first of Ockham's Political writings, *The Work of Ninety Days* was a defence of Franciscan poverty against Pope John. He was very conservative and wanted to separate religion from politics. His greatest contribution to political philosophy was that he gave logical conclusions to the philosophy of Marsiglio.

The Councilor Movement stood to reform degeneration of church and its organization which required solid reforms. It was also believed that church council had definite superiority over Pope. The prominent French church man and academician Jean Givson (1368) argued that papal supremacy was dangerous and hence he advocated the reformation of church. Thinkers like Pierre d' Ailly, Henry of Langenstein, John Major, Jaques Almain also supported the same idea. Wycliffe was one of the religious reformers of Middle Ages and stood to denounce church supremacy. His ideas and philosophies are available in his works like *De-Domino*, *De-Officio Regis* and *De-civile Dominio*. John Huss was influenced by him and opined that church organization required radical reforms and the claims of the church for supremacy had no sound and solid reasons. Another thinker of the same line was Nicholas of Cusa who was one of the exponents of councilor movement who also believed that people were immediate source of power and authority in a state. Pierre Dulears is known to us through his Pamphlets, the most important of which was "De Recuperatione Lerre Sancte". He was also a strong supporter of monarch and secular authority, as against church authority.

Repudiation of scholasticism commenced with Italian Renaissance. The Republican doctrines commonly associated with the so called civic humanists of the Renaissance (especially in Italy) were not entirely antagonistic to Aristotle. Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) converted Aristotle into a civic humanist. The humanists realized that the quality of civic life depended heavily upon the wealth generated by trade, commerce and other economic activities. Grian Franscisco Poggio Bracciolin (1380-1459) contended that industriousness and self-acquired possessions constituted the foundations of morality. There has been a tendency for scholars to equate Italian humanist Political Thought almost entirely with the civic version of humanism. B. Sacchi known as Platina (1421-1481) and Giovanni Pontans (1426-1503) among others wrote treatises *De Principum* to conduct themselves and display their majesty.

### 1.4.1 St. Augustine

St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) is one of the greatest church fathers who influence subsequent development of political and religious thought. He lived in the early part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century often characterized as the formative period of Christian thought. Augustine belongs to a period of transition from ancient to medieval age. We can also say that Medievalism begins with St. Augustine. He is the most important figure in the history of Christian church after St. Paul. Son of Pagan father and Christian mother, he is converted to Christianity by St. Ambrose of Milan. He is appointed as the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, where he remains till death. St. Augustine is deeply influenced by his predecessors like Plato, Cicero. Christianity and the Stoic Political Philosophy have also influenced him. In this section, we will discuss his major ideas.

#### **Stop to Consider:**

##### **Major Works of St. Augustine:**

Political Philosophy of St. Augustine is contained in his book De Civitate Dei popularly known as The City of God which is completed during the period of 413-426 A.D. It has been divided into 22 books out of which the first ten books are regarded as defense of Christianity from Pagan attacks. The remaining 12 books deal with the construction of city of God. This work contains two of Augustine's most important ideas namely, the conception of Christian commonwealth and a philosophy of history. Discussing the significance of the book, Prof. C.H. Malwain has said, "City of God had probably a greater influence on subsequent medieval political thought than any other book written in the early Middle Ages."

#### ***Augustine on State and Church :***

According to St. Augustine, state is the result of sin and provides divine remedy for all the sins. According to him, it is of divine origin and inferior

only to the city of God. He does not agree with the Greeks that state is based on justice because justice cannot prevail in non-Christian states and hence justice is the attribute of church and not of the state. The church is derived from the God itself. State is the kingdom of devil. It is necessary for the existence of church because it sanctions man, money and material necessary for church. If the laws of the state do not violate morality, the laws must be obeyed because the state has divine sanction. It is the remedy for the sins of the people.

According to Augustine, a state which has adopted Christian rules replicates God's rule and rest of the states replicate Satan's rule. In Christian states, behind every action of the state authorities there is perfect justice, divine plan and purpose. Man should obey such state because its authorities are serving the purpose of God. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Augustine has subordinated the state to the higher authority of God. Only the laws which are viewed as moral from the point of view of the church should be obeyed and thus obedience to the authority of state laws is not absolute but relative. A Christian obeys a secular authority because behind state laws ultimate higher will of God remains hidden. In this way Augustine has subordinated state to the church. He has tried to maintain two separate authorities- temporal as well as spiritual but has given prior place to spiritual laws over temporal laws. According to him, a Christian should seek guidance from the church and that both should help each other mutually.

#### ***Augustine on Peace and Justice :***

The city of God realizes two important virtues- justice and peace. Peace, according to Augustine, is not mere absence of conflict. It means a positive relationship. According to him, peace is one of the good qualities of good state which can be attained only in the Kingdom of God. It does not mean end of war but all embracing love for human beings. In order to maintain peace it is essential that men should obey only universal laws and all should be taught to love each other. It can be temporal as well as spiritual peace. Peace is the aim of the earthly state as well as that of the city of God.

According to Augustine, justice is conformity to order and respect for duties arising from the order. An individual is just if he fulfills these duties. Absolute or universal justice is to be found outside the state, in universal order. Justice is not bound by time and space. Justice, according to him, is conformity to order and as such can prevail only in the city of God. It means respect for duties and obligations but is not absolute. A man cannot act just both to the state as well as the family. Absolute justice is possible only in a universal city of God in which universal laws are obeyed. These laws also conform to the universal order. In cases of conflict, the individuals are justified in obeying universal order if there is a conflict between the secular order and the universal order. Justice thus, symbolizes the city of God as it is difficult to achieve in a pagan state.

**SAQ**

Do you think Augustine's theory of state is relevant in the present context?  
(80 words)

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***Augustine on People and Human Nature :***

Augustine has clear and definite idea of "A people". In very concise words, he has said, "A people is an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love".

According to him, man has dual nature. The earthly nature is represented by temporal requirements in the state whereas spiritual demands can only be cherished in the city of God. His body belongs to the state and soul to the church.

### ***Augustine on the Conception of Two Cities :***

Augustine has developed his conception of two cities- the City of God and the City of Devil in the book *De Civitate Dei*. With the help of this conception he tries to explain the downfall of the Roman Empire. According to him, all earthly states are liable to destruction. But there is a city that endures destruction, and that eternal city is the City of God. The City of God is popularly known as Civitas Dei and His worldly state is known as Civitas Terrana. The City of God or the Civitas Dei is universal in time and space. It is founded on the love of God and aims the promotion of good and justice. Civitas Terrana or the worldly state on the other hand, is based on self-love. It pursues evil and aims power. According to Augustine, the church is the concrete embodiment of Civitas Dei because it is in the church alone that virtue and goodness prevail. The state is a weapon of the church for the promotion of good and hence both are interdependent. Augustine's conception of a true Civitas Dei depicts a Christianized state from which non-believers are excluded. The church leaders enjoy the supreme power. It is a divine kingdom on earth based on Christian virtues and with the saved people as its citizens. His City of God is meant for everybody but does not include everybody. Men can become the member of the City of God by grace. Since all men do not deserve grace, all men are not members of the City of God. The real qualification for membership of the City of God is grace and not race, state or class. The City of God has its origin in the creation of angels whereas the Civitas Terrana commences with the fall of Satan. One is founded on earth by the pious Abel, the other by the impious Caine. One is founded on the hope of heavenly peace and spiritual salvation, the other is founded on earthly, appetitive and possessive impulses of the lower human nature. According to Augustine, all human history is a dramatic story of the struggle between these two cities and according to him, the ultimate victory must fall to the City of God. In this way he explains the fall of Rome. According to this interpretation, all earthly empires must pass away because they are mortal.



### ***Augustine on Property :***

Augustine supports the institution of private property and feels that it is legitimate. Although it is a conventional and not natural institution, this convention should be preserved. He however feels that one should possess the property required for his legitimate and reasonable needs. He feels that it is essential for each individual for proper execution of his duties. According to Dr. A.J. Carlyle, “All Christian thinkers including St. Augustine believed that all property is the gift of God and it was his will that the earth which he had created should be common possession of all man and satisfies the needs of all; it was avarice which created rights of private property. It is, therefore, just the man who claims for his private property that which was given to the man in common should at least distribute some of this to the poor”.

### ***Augustine on Philosophy of History :***

Augustine aims to save Christianity and wants to wipe out the impression that new gods are responsible for the fall of Roman Empire. He wants to establish that human history is the manifestation of divine will. It is the will of God that there should be kingdom of God on earth. There is a pre-planned goal for the establishment of Christian commonwealth. According to Augustine, there is a constant struggle going on between good and evil in which former is destined to prevail over the latter leading to spiritual salvation.

### ***Augustine on Slavery :***

Like Plato, Augustine also supports the institution of slavery but does not feel that it is essential to enable the citizens to perform their duties properly. He also does not contribute to the idea that slavery should be retained for the pleasure of others or that it is a natural institution. In his philosophy, slavery is regarded as a divine retribution for the sin. A man is a slave for the sins he has committed. The slaves are deprived of full freedom as they fail

to act in accordance with the standards of religion and morality. He, therefore, suggests that in order to achieve purification all slaves should remain near their masters as such step is essential for their growth.

Thus, to conclude from the above discussion we find that Augustine is the most influential thinker of Middle Ages and his philosophy practically remains the foundation of the Medieval philosophy. Augustine also challenges the idea that the state should be obeyed under any circumstances. The concept of universal society, as expounded by him appears alive in the Middle Ages. Geltell is of the view that his philosophy gives a crystallized body of thought at a very critical period of history. His convention of Christian commonwealth becomes the basis of the Holy Roman Empire to a great extent. Dr. J.E. Greeve says, “So inclusive were Augustine’s genius and so satisfying were his formulations that he was equally the father of Medieval Roman Catholicism and (after St. Paul) the inspiration of Protestant Reformation”.

**SAQ**

Make a comparative study of Aristotle and St. Augustine’s ideas of slavery. (60 words)

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**Check Your Progress**

1. Do you think Augustine can be regarded as the inspiration of protestant Reformation?
2. Trace the core idea of Augustine’s Political Philosophy.

### 1.4.2 St. Thomas Aquinas

In the previous section we have studied the political idea of Augustine, one of the most influential thinkers of medieval period. Here in this section we shall discuss another notable thinker of that period.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) has been frequently called the representative of the Middle Ages. This implies that he combines in himself all the Medieval doctrines. He was born in Sicily in a very noble family with strong imperial traditions. Thomas Aquinas lived at a time when the organization of church had fairly developed and Roman church had become a gigantic spiritual organization. Federalism was dwindling and nationalism was striking at its roots. The need of the hour for the church was to have an exponent who could expound church philosophy in the most systematic ways and also could bring Christianity in harmony with diplomacy. It has perhaps rightly been said that this task was admirably accomplished by St. Thomas Aquinas.

#### **Stop to Consider:**

##### **Major Works of St. Thomas Aquinas**

St. Thomas was a follower of Christian religion and in his writings he was not only influenced by Aristotle, but also freely borrowed from the writings of Cicero and other Roman Lawyers. In subordinating state to church he followed Augustine and borrowed the idea of supremacy of law from John of Salisbury. He was also influenced by scholasticism. His important works are—

1. *Summa Theologica*: In this work, he has treated 'ethical' and 'juristic' concepts.
2. *De-Regimine Principum*: In this work he tries to present Political Science in a systematic way.
3. *Summa Contra Gentiles*: It gives us his view on problems like the classification of government, laws, state etc.

We have already learnt that St. Thomas Aquinas is a follower of Christian religion and he has expounded church philosophy in a systematic way. In this section, we will discuss his political ideas briefly:

***Acquinas on State:***

Unlike all the other Church fathers who believe that the state is the result of sins of men and that government comes into being to punish the people for their sins; Aquinas does not support this general belief. Moreover, he believes that man is a social animal by nature and necessity and state are natural to man. The people come to the state for their fullest development and also for attaining perfection. According to him, state is natural because none can be self-sufficient and the aid and advice of others are always necessary for meeting our social needs. The society provides for exchange of services and hence is essential for human existence. He has a preference for nation state. He believes that state has a positive role to play and it has great educative value which is likely to be seriously jeopardized without state. Like a true church follower, St. Thomas Aquinas however pleads that the Christians should have citizenship rights.

Again, he states that the state should aim to make the citizen virtuous and moral. According to him, monarchy is the most suited form of government in the state as no other form can promote unity. The inferiors should be ruled by superiors for their own interest. In this way Aquinas supports the institution of slavery. According to him, slavery is the divine remedy for the punishment of all sins. He also agrees with Aristotle that some are born to rule while others are born to be ruled.

***Idea of Supremacy of Church:***

Already we have learnt that in the Medieval period the supremacy of Church and religious institutions exist over the state. Aquinas also tries to continue this trend. According to Aquinas, a secular state should always work under the guidance of church because without the guidance of church it shall be neither in a position to give salvation to the people nor in a position to

promote virtuous life, for which the state stands. Since the state is the guiding and controlling authority, therefore, it is superior to the secular authority the way spirit is superior to matter. The church, according to him, has the authority to ex-communicate the ruler. Pope should be obeyed both in secular and religious affairs. Church according to him is the only agency which promotes unity out of the universal disorder and anarchy. It is supreme over all persons and classes and meant not to be disputed. Aquinas however feels that for harmonious working it is essential that both the church and the state should work in close co-operation with each other. According to him, authority of the church over the state is indirect rather than being direct and the interference of the church in the state affairs should be minimum. Aquinas also pleads that even interference cannot be warranted without valid and serious causes. He himself opines that the rulers are subject to the church authority to a limited extent only. According to him, "It was the duty of the political rulers to administer secular affairs in such a way as to further God's will and to this extent the official of the state must be subject to the priests and to the Divine Law of the church".

**SAQ**

Compare Aquinas' theory of state with that of Augustine's. (100 words)

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***Classification of Government:***

After analyzing the nature of state and supremacy of church Aquinas has laid emphasis on the Governmental procedures. Aquinas has classified

governments broadly on two principles——when the supremacy is the product of sins of man, which to him culminates into slavery or when supremacy is the result of social instincts. It is this latter category which, to him, is the basis of civil government and to which he attaches importance. To him civil governments are (i) Secredo, (ii) Royal, (iii) Political and (iv) Economic. According to him no form of government is either absolutely good or bad but it depends on the functions which it performs and efforts taken to make the citizens virtuous. He closely follows Aristotle in giving his classification of governments and classifies them into normal and perverted forms. Monarchy, aristocracy and polity are considered as normal forms of governments and their corresponding perverted forms like tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. As discussed earlier, he however has definite preference for limited monarchy which he feels to be a check on tyranny.

#### ***Functions of Government:***

Acquinas has also dealt with the functions of the government. According to him, a good government is one which performs good functions as there is no other standard for measuring a form of government. Government should pave way for pleasure, happiness and a virtuous life. It should also give better administration, justice, civic facilities and ensure defence of citizens. In other words it should have good system of coinage, maintain population and look after the needy. According to Aquinas, the functions of the state should be: (i) to look after the poor, (ii) to promote unity, (iii) to look after common, instead of individual good and welfare; (iv) to introduce sound system of weights, measures and coinage, (v) to remove hindrances to guarantee the citizen the right living and virtuous life, (vi) to keep roads safe and free, (vii) to maintain peace and happiness and also protect property of the subjects, (viii) to avoid undue taxation and provide economic relief to the subjects and (xi) to reward the worthy.

From the function which Aquinas has assigned to the state, it is clear that like a traditional Christian he does not favour the idea of assigning any negative functions to the state. He thus offers us the idea of welfare state in the modern sense of the term.

**Check your progress:**

1. Write True or False

- a) According to Aquinas 'to promote unity' is one of the important functions of the government.
- b) Aquinas favours supremacy of Church over the State.

3. What is the original name of *Rule of Prince*?

4. State the reasons behind the impulse of the people to join the State as given by Aquinas.

5. Discuss briefly Aquinas's view on classification of government.

***Aquinas on Sovereignty:***

Aquinas has given the idea of sovereignty but only indirectly. According to him, from the political perspective sovereignty is derived from the people while it is derived from God from theological perspective. Sovereignty is indivisible. It is the only source of positive law, the end of which is temporal tranquility of the state. A positive law therefore, must derive from natural law and aim at common good. It must provide directives for human acts of justice. A bad law made by the sovereign creates lawlessness in the society. He has said that the laws of a tyrant sovereign need not be obeyed because obedience to the commands of such a sovereign leads to contempt of conscience. Aquinas' concept of sovereignty is important because he feels that a sovereign draws his authority from the people. He gives the idea that the monarch is a public person ruling for common good. He is duty bound to institute, preserve and promote good life among his people.

***Aquinas on the functions of Monarch:***

According to Aquinas, rulership is merely a trust of office and a place of service. A ruler is required to contribute to the good and welfare of the masses. He should maintain peace and order and provide all useful services

needed for public administration. He should make adequate arrangements for giving justice to the people, should remove hindrances and correct abuses. According to Aquinas, in democracy there are discussions which a monarch should avoid. A monarch should see that he acts in accordance with the laws so that he does not become a tyrant. Aquinas also favours the idea that there should be limitations on the authority of the kings so that he does not feel complacent to become absolute.

### ***Aquinas on classification of Law:***

One of the most important and lasting contributions of Aquinas to the political philosophy is his idea about law. According to him law is the rule and the standard of human action. The end of law is to promote happiness and common good. To operate as law an action must be promulgated by a competent authority. A law is a dictum. According to Aquinas, the will of the sovereign has the force of law.

In his notable work *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas has given four fold of classification of laws namely—(i) Eternal law, (ii) Natural law, (iii) Divine law and (iv) Human law.

- Eternal law governs both animals and inanimate kingdoms. It governs the whole universe. It is identical with reason and is truth in itself. It is the type of law through which God governs the whole of universe.
- Natural law is written in the heart of the people. It is a reflection of divine reason in human beings. It helps in distinguishing between good and evil and also in serving good and avoiding evil.
- Divine law is the onetime of the commands of God through revelation. It is not a result of natural reason, but the gift of God. It varies from community to community and changes from time to time.
- Human law is the onetime of human customs and conventions. It is positive in nature. It has its origin in human wisdom. It is promulgated by the princes.



Hence we can say that according to Aquinas, justice is the basis of law. It is expressed only through law. It is something eternal and gives everyone its due.

Thus we come to the conclusion that St. Thomas Aquinas is one of the outstanding personalities of the Middle Ages. He is an intellectual and liberal thinker. He attempts to revive Aristotelian philosophy in a way not to conflict with the church philosophy. In his philosophy, Aquinas supports the idea of welfare state. Aquinas also favours limited monarchy. Therefore, Aquinas is considered as the greatest synthesizer of theology and philosophy. His philosophy expresses most naturally the convictions, moral and religious upon which medieval civilization was founded. It can thus be rightly said that he was the true representative of the Middle Ages and combines all the characteristics of qualities of his age.

### **Stop to Consider:**

#### **Acquinas on Private Property**

Thomas Aquinas also favours the idea of private property. He is of the view that private property is needed for three reasons —

- A) An individual is more careful to produce and procure which belongs to him alone. In the absence of the sense of possession, nobody will be willing to work hard and will make every effort to avoid such tendency.
- B) Private property provides a sense of responsibility which is always more conducive to the conduct of human affairs.
- C) When each one is satisfied with his own possession, a peaceful state is likely to be ensured.

Thus we find that Aquinas firmly believes that private property is not opposed to natural laws.

## **1.5 Summing up**

After going through the unit you are now in a position to understand the impact of the Medieval period in the field of Political Philosophy. The study of Medieval political thinkers reveals to us a huge collection of ideas of the

masterminds who are the architects of the great movements in the history of mankind. Undoubtedly, these great political thinkers are the products of their times, but to a great extent, they change the times and shape human destiny. This unit has also helped you to assess the Medieval period as the 'dark phase' in history with special reference to the issues and debates central to medieval scholarship and culture. You are now also acquainted with different thinkers of the Medieval period. Among them St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas have contributed significantly to the political philosophy of the medieval period.

This unit has helped you to comprehend Augustine's theory of two states where he subordinates state to the church. He also believes that justice prevails in the city of God. You are now also acquainted with the ideas of St Thomas Aquinas who believes that state is a natural institution and it exists for the development of man. The unit has also helped you learn Aquinas' ideas on classification of government and his four-fold classification of laws.

The impact of Medieval period can be traced in the subsequent political philosophy and in the second unit we will deal with Machiavelli who represents the medieval as well as the modern period. The reading of this unit on Medieval period will help you contextualize Machiavelli and get a comprehensive picture of Medieval and Renaissance philosophy.

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## Unit 2

### Niccolo Machiavelli

#### Contents:

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli
- 2.4 Machiavelli's Idea of State
- 2.5 Machiavelli on Human Nature
- 2.6 Machiavelli's Suggestions to Prince
- 2.7 Machiavelli on Religion
- 2.8 Machiavelli on Morality
- 2.9 Summing up
- 2.10 Reference and Suggested Readings

#### 2.1 Introduction

The Florentine statesman and political philosopher, Niccolo Machiavelli is regarded as the founder of realist political philosophy. Machiavelli is an advocate of Republican Government and supports citizen armies, division of power and restraint of government expenditure for the liberty of the republic. Machiavelli contributes to political theory through *The Prince*, a treatise on statecraft. Written in 1513, *The Prince* is famous as a practical guide which justifies the use of various expediencies in the ruling of a state. Machiavelli's work helps the ruler to exercise political power and his ideas are relevant till today. In this book Machiavelli has argued that it is the skill of the leader that determines the success of a state. The second book *The Art of War* (1520) offers a detailed exploration of the acquisition, maintenance and use of military force in a state.

Besides his contributions to the political philosophy, Machiavelli is also remembered for his historical writings, short stories as well as comedies. He is one of the first political philosophers to study Political Science on the basis of historical actions.

This unit will mainly focus on Machiavelli's ideas on human nature and state of nature. Moreover, we will also discuss at length Machiavelli's advices to the prince which are relevant as the practical guide to the exercise of political power by any ruler. Here, we also plan to examine the impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli and discuss his views on religion and morality.

## **2.2 Objectives**

Machiavelli, the noted political philosopher has contributed to the political theory by advocating a secular approach to politics. During the Elizabethan period, his name is associated with treachery, murder, cruelty, atheism and Elizabethan literature is replete with the example of a character type called Machiavel who is often viewed as an embodiment of evil. But the contribution of Machiavelli in the form of the treatise on statecraft is manifested till today and in this unit we will discuss the relevance of Machiavelli's ideas as well as his contribution to political theory.

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- *examine* the impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli
- *discuss* Machiavelli's ideas on state and human nature
- *evaluate* Machiavelli's suggestions to prince
- *describe* Machiavelli's view on religion

## **2.3 Impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli**

Before discussing the ideas of Machiavelli, it is pertinent to know the circumstances and conditions that shaped the ideas of Machiavelli. The

ideas of Renaissance have profoundly influenced Machiavelli to a large extent and he is regarded as the 'Child of Renaissance'. In the first unit of this block, we have discussed the development of political theory in the medieval period. Machiavelli's writings deviate from medieval thinking marking a significant break and therefore he is also known as the 'first modern political thinker'.

Renaissance was a transition period between the medieval era and the modern world. Renaissance stands for rebirth or revival. Thus, Renaissance signifies a rebirth of the human spirit in the attainment of liberty, self-confidence and optimism. It stands for the essential goodness of the individual, the beauty and the glory of the earth, the significance of the supernatural and the importance of the present etc. During Renaissance, Italy witnessed intense political turmoil affecting and involving the dominant city states of Florence, Milan, Venice etc and the Holy Roman Empire. Affirming the dignity and excellence of the individuals, Humanism is the cornerstone of Renaissance began in the later half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, Renaissance stands for a return to a pre-Christian attitude towards humans, God and nature and signals a breakdown of a unified Christian society. As a child of Renaissance, Machiavelli's writings reflect a secular approach to politics. Thus, his writings make a departure from the medieval writings controlled by the church. Therefore, it can be said that Machiavelli's writings are free from the influences of theology and religion.

**SAQ**

Do you think Machiavelli exemplifies the Renaissance philosophy of humanism? Justify your view. (30+50 words)

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The Renaissance is also a period of great geographical discoveries leading to the development of the concepts of nationalism and nations. Power becomes an important subject of study in this period. Machiavelli also emphasizes the concept of power in his writings. However, it needs to be mentioned that the political situation prevailing in Italy at that time has also influenced the writings of Machiavelli. The political turmoil in Italy due to the imperial domination of countries like France, Germany and Spain has been influential as Machiavelli values the freedom of his country most.

Hence, it is clear to you now that Machiavelli is a product of Renaissance. The impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli is can be traced in Laski's opinion "the whole of the Renaissance is in Machiavelli" (Laski 1936:31). Impact of Renaissance on Machiavelli is evident from his departure from medieval thinking and his effort to make his writing free from religious domination.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Life Sketch of Machiavelli**

Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy on May 3, 1469. His father's name was Bernardo di Niccolo Machiavelli and his mother's name was Bartolommea di Stefano Nelli. His father was a civil lawyer. Along with humanist education, He was also taught Grammar, Rhetoric and Latin. He entered Florentine government in its diplomatic service. At the age of 29, he became the Secretary to the Second Chancery with the responsibilities of handling foreign affairs – diplomatic, administrative and military. His service as a diplomat gave him insights into the actual working of politics. As a diplomat he travelled the major centres of Italy as well as the royal court of France.

Machiavelli has been termed as 'The murderous Machiavel' by William Shakespeare as he sanctions the use of deception, cruelty, force, violence etc for achieving the desired political ends. In 1512, with the change in government in Florence, Machiavelli becomes a direct victim of the regime and he is placed under the form of internal exile on the charge of conspiring against the ruling Medici family. At the later stage of his life, Machiavelli comes closer to Medici family. In 1520 he is assigned to compose a *History of Florence*. *History of Florence* is completed in 1525 and Machiavelli dies in June 1527.

## **2.4 Machiavelli's Idea of State**

Machiavelli is considered to be the first political thinker who formulates the modern concept of state. However, it needs to be mentioned here that Machiavelli does not try to define state. He does not even try to justify the existence of the state. The state of Machiavelli may be understood as an impersonal form of rule possessing a monopoly of coercive authority within a set of territorial boundary. Therefore, it can be said that Machiavelli's views on state can be found when he describes the functions of the rulers, or how a ruler retains and controls power. Moreover, Machiavelli has also dealt with the necessary qualities required for a strong republic. From these ideas of Machiavelli we can get a picture of his idea of a state.

We have already learnt that Machiavelli's approach to politics has been secular. Hence, he considers state as a secular entity that has no connection whatsoever with any religious authority. Thus, according to Machiavelli, the state is independent with no obligation. To Machiavelli, a state exists to fulfill the desire for security of the person and property and it should try and augment the territory and power for itself.

Machiavelli does not agree with the medieval thinking that the power of the state is a single whole and can be centrally controlled. As a believer in liberty, he prefers republic over monarchy. He does not believe in the rule of aristocracy since he considers it as an instrument to loot the ordinary and impoverished people by a few. Therefore, Machiavelli is of the view that a well-ordered state should not allow the rich to buy offices. However, he also believes that an independent and courageous group of people is required for a proper functioning of a republic. Again, it must be remembered here that while discussing State, Machiavelli is particularly concerned with the small Italian republic. He also believes that the major function of the state is the preservation of person and property. To him, the prince or the ruler controls the state as he is imposed with the power to rule. Hence, the character and performance of the government to a large extent depends on the personal qualities of the ruler or the prince. The state should always create the environment where the deserving gets the opportunity to flourish.



As mentioned earlier, Machiavelli deals with the state mainly in his celebrated work *The Prince*. He tries to identify the state with the government or the head of the state. In another work, *L'Arte della Guerra (The Art of War)*, he offers extensive advice on the acquisition, management, and employment of the army for the war.

Machiavelli emphasizes the importance of good laws, religion and a citizen army as the support structures for a stable and strong state. He further states that an army should consist of the citizens of the state between the ages of 17-40 having physical training in arms and military skills as well as the zeal to fight for the country. He defends war in the interest of the state as well as in the interest of the people for protecting their liberty and independence.

We have already learnt that Machiavelli gives due importance to power and emphasizes the proper use of power by the ruler. However, he is against the use of violence for personal reasons. He considers violence necessary to rule in a successful state. As one of the formulators of the concept of modern nation state, Machiavelli strongly believes that common language and common culture play very important role in the development of a modern nation state. He opines that retention of the newly acquired territories becomes easy with one common language, tradition and culture.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Major Works of Machiavelli**

Machiavelli is regarded as the founder of modern political philosophy. His major works are as follows:

***The Prince*** (1513): In this book, Machiavelli has offered certain advices to the ruler. All these advices are meant for preserving the power of the ruler as well as to expand the territory. He has advised the prince for judicious use of violence by respecting the private property and traditions of the subjects. During Renaissance, Italy witnesses intense political conflicts and violence in large-scale. *The Prince* is written in this backdrop and therefore all the advices

incorporated in the book are meant for strengthening the state and establishing a strong ruler. In the conclusion of the book, Machiavelli calls for Italian unity and end of foreign intervention.

*Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius (1513-21)*: In this book, Machiavelli emphasizes that for the survival of a republic, a spirit of patriotism and civic virtue must foster among the citizens. Thus, this book imparts the lesson on the structure of a republic i.e. how a republic should be started and structured including the provisions of checks and balances.

**His other works include:**

*A Discourse About the Provision of Money* (1502)

*Portrait of the Affairs of Germany* (1508-1512)

*Portrait of the Affairs of France* (1510)

*The Art of War*, (on high military science) (1519-1520)

*The Mandrake* (a five-act prose comedy with a verse prologue) (1518)

*A Discourse About the Reforming of Florence* (1520)

## 2.5 Machiavelli on Human Nature

Machiavelli is regarded as one of the important political philosophers. However, he has also dealt with certain non-political problems. In the previous section, we have discussed Machiavelli's view on state of nature. He mainly discusses the human nature in his famous book *The Prince*. The following lines of Machiavelli offer an idea of his views on human nature.

*“Men in general...are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain; as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours,” but their “love is held by a chain of obligation which, men being selfish, is broken whenever it serves their purpose” (The Prince, p: 61, 1950)*

Machiavelli has depicted a very dark picture of human nature. His idea of human nature contradicts the belief and thoughts of humanists. In some

occasions, he has gone to the extent of equating human nature with animal nature. According to him, individuals are wicked, selfish and egoistic. For Machiavelli, man is self-centred and greedy and he seeks his own interest rather than anybody else. Individuals do well only when they are under compulsion or there is some personal gain. Machiavelli considers individuals to be very greedy who work for profit only.

He also believes that individuals lack honesty and justice. Therefore, he is prepared to work against collective interests provided their own interests clash with them. Moreover, individuals are timid and always try to follow established customs without opting for resistance. Thus, they always follow a middle path avoiding all kinds of dangers.

Being very greedy, individuals love property more than their kiths and kins. Machiavelli states that an individual can easily forgive the murder of his father, but never forgives the seizure of property. The individuals remain dissatisfied and unsatisfied. They always desire power, glory and material well-being. Such ambitions make man dissatisfied and discontent.

In this way, according to Machiavelli, human beings are selfish, ungrateful, ambitious, anti-social and anarchical. He is criticized for his views on human nature. We all know that human beings are not as bad as Machiavelli has portrayed. So, it can be said that Machiavelli's portrayal of human nature is only partial which fails to give us a complete picture.

However, as we have already studied, Machiavelli is a product of his time. He belongs to a period when Italy is divided into small fragments. Therefore, he advocates for a strong ruler who is aware of the inherent bad qualities of human beings. Machiavelli points out the negative qualities of the human beings so that the ruler can check the wicked nature of the individuals and establish a strong and stable nation.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Why is Machiavelli regarded as the ‘Child of Renaissance’?
2. Discuss briefly Machiavelli’s idea of state.
3. How does Machiavelli depict the human nature? Do you agree with Machiavellian idea of human nature?

**2.6 Machiavelli’s Suggestions to Prince**

*“...a prince must not have any objective nor any thought, nor take any art, other than the art of war and its ordering and discipline; because it is only art that pertains to him who commands. And it is of such virtue that not only does it maintain those who were born princes, but many times makes men rise to that rank from private station; and conversely one sees that when princes have thought more of delicacies than of arms, they have lost their state.”*

*(Machiavelli, Niccolo, Ed. Angelo M. Codevilla. 1997)*

In his most celebrated work *The Prince*, Machiavelli has discussed in detail the nature and skills necessary for the rulers. Written in 1513-14, the book is published posthumously in 1532. Dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici, *The Prince* offers practical advice on how to rule a city like sixteenth century Florence. We all know that Machiavelli is of the strong belief that a state is literally owned by the ruler. Therefore, according to him the nature of the governance is determined by the qualities and skills of the rulers. Through the book called *The Prince* which consists of 26 chapters, he has criticized the moralistic view of authority. He differs from the various important political thinkers including Plato who try to draw a relationship between moral goodness and legitimate authority.

According to Machiavelli, there is no moral basis to judge the legitimate and illegitimate uses of power. The real concern of a ruler is the acquisition and maintenance of power and goodness of the ruler does not ensure power.

Machiavelli has warned the prince against excessive generosity, strictness or kindness and stressed the need for moderate behaviour (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007). He strongly believes that it is necessary for a successful ruler to know how power is to be used. Moreover, Machiavelli considers the relationship between the rulers and the ruled as similar to the one between father and the children. He also believes that the state is the highest association in the society and therefore, individuals should merge themselves for the interests of the state.

Machiavelli considers the virtuous and stable state as the greatest moral good and therefore any action to protect the country is justified. In his famous work *The Prince*, Machiavelli deals with the art of ruling state offering advice to the rulers to maintain and if possible enhance power. He considers sound law and strong military forces as the two strong pillars of a successful state. He states that ‘...a wise prince should establish himself on that which is his own control and not in that of others; he must endeavour to avoid hatred, and is noted.’ (Machiavelli: *The Prince*: Chapter XVII. Constitution.org. Retrieved 2009-04-08, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The Prince](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Prince))

He emphasizes strong military power and fortifications for the defence of the state. He believes that a self-sufficient prince should be able to win any enemy on the battlefield. Thus, the main concern of a prince is war. Machiavelli also favours hunting by the prince for keeping his body fit. Again, for intellectual strength Machiavelli advises the prince to study the life of great military men to imitate their success and avoid their mistakes.

Again, Machiavelli does not want the prince to be very generous towards his subjects. According to Machiavelli, such generosity will only increase the greed of the ruler. So, he believes that guarding against people’s hatred is more important than building up a reputation for generosity. Therefore, the prince should carefully deal with the finance without being more generous. Again, Machiavelli says that it is better for the prince to be feared than loved. However, it is the duty of a prince to ensure that he is not feared to the point of hatred. He also believes that fear is necessary for uniting the

troops also. For commanding the respect of the soldiers the prince can be cruel at times.

*“...a prince must not care about the infamy of cruelty in order to keep his subjects united and faithful; because with very few examples he will be more merciful than those who, because of too much mercy, allow disorders to go on, from which spring killings and depredations: because this normalcy offend a whole collectivity, while those executions which come from the prince offend an individual.” (Pg. 61 Chapter 17, Machiavelli, Niccolò, Ed. Angelo M. Codevilla. 1997)*

The prince should also try to keep his words because a prince is praised for keeping words. However, he is also praised for the illusion of keeping words. Hence, according to Machiavelli a prince should not unnecessarily break the words. He must seem to be generous while spending money, appear to be compassionate while ruling the armies cruelly, and act with great cunning while cultivating a reputation for integrity.

Again, according to Machiavelli, the Prince should not interfere in the affairs of the property and women of his subjects for interference in these affairs may affect men's sensibilities leading to resistance by them. Besides, he should possess good leadership qualities. He should choose competent advisors to assist in the governance.

The first and foremost duty of a prince according to Machiavelli is to try and expand state's territory. He should also try to establish his image as the defender of weaker states. He has also advised the prince to play fox and lion. As a lion, he should be ready to act ruthlessly with courage. At the same time he should also handle the affairs with cunningness and shrewdness of a fox. Again, the prince should be cunning enough to detect the conspiracies of his enemies as well as courageous enough to fight against the enemies. A prince had to fight with the help of laws of civilized societies and force of the brutes. Machiavelli is also critical about the human nature. Therefore, according to him, force is necessary to control the people who are wretched and dishonourable. In the words of Machiavelli:

*“as (men) are bad, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them” (The Prince: 64) (Machiavelli 1950).*

For the purpose of defending the state against any conspiracy, the prince can spread the network of his intelligence and deception whenever necessary. He should also thoroughly and severely punish the conspirators.

The prince has also to pay great deal of attention to the economic prosperity of his subjects. Because the prince can command respect of the people only when he can guarantee economic prosperity of his subjects. Thus, the success of a prince to a great extent is judged by the economic condition of the people living in the state. A prince should always aim at the glory of the state and his personal honours and dishonours are deeply associated with those of his state.

Machiavelli places the prince above laws. The prince must be ready to protect the interest of the state at any cost. He is of the opinion that there should be two codes of conducts in the state, one for the individual and the other for the state. Both the conducts should not be combined at any stage. The prince should not follow any of these two conducts. In other words, the prince stands above all conducts. His major concern is to protect the interest of the state without bothering about the morality and immorality of the means to achieve those ends.

Thus, we can see that Machiavelli has given tremendous power and authority to the prince. However, it must be remembered such power and authority is delegated to the prince for the protection of the state only. He has even gone to the extent of saying that the prince should exterminate the families of the rulers whose territories he wishes to possess. The members of the ruling families of such territories should be murdered so that they cannot plan any revenge in the future.

**SAQ:**

Do you think morality is necessary for the art of statecraft? Justify your argument with reference to Machiavelli's views on morality. (50+50 words)

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***The Criticisms of Machiavelli's Suggestions to Prince :***

We can say that *The Prince* which is regarded as the masterpiece of Machiavelli is the source of his political philosophy. It thoroughly prescribes the art of government. However, Machiavelli has been criticized severely for his advices to the prince. He is criticized for the effort to combine despotism and individualism. The criticisms against his advice to the prince can be listed as below:

- We have also noticed that Machiavelli has given absolute power to the prince and made him above laws. Thus, he has established absolutism of the prince with the power to use violence.
- Again, Machiavelli's idea goes against the idea of individualism. He has sacrificed individuals at the altar of the state and spoken about two different codes of conduct for the individuals and for the state. In such a situation, there is every possibility of the emergence of revolution.
- Machiavelli is also criticized for advocating narrow nationalism. In the present time, there is a call for internationalism. Therefore, his philosophy can not be termed as modern.



- Machiavelli has totally overlooked the moral principles. He has asked the prince to ignore morality for the interest of the state. At the same time he does not advise the prince to look after the moral progress of his subjects.
- Moreover, he has also depicted a very gloomy picture of the human nature. It is also seen that Machiavelli has underestimated the intelligence of the common man when he says that man in the street can never be an effective political participant.

Though Machiavelli has been criticized for his advices to the prince, one must remember the fact that while writing the book he is influenced by the prevailing conditions of Italy. *The Prince* is a book of practical interest as Machiavelli does not talk about an ideal ruler, but highlights the actions and qualities that enable a ruler to rule in the best possible way. For his practical ideas Machiavelli is also described as ‘the murderous Machiavel’ by William Shakespeare as he sanctions the use of deception, cruelty, force and violence for achieving political ends.

### **Stop to Consider:**

#### **Machiavelli on Forms of Government**

While discussing his ideas of state, Machiavelli makes an attempt to classify the governments. Like his predecessor Aristotle, he also classifies government as normal and perverted. The normal forms of governments are monarchy, aristocracy and limited or constitutional democracy. On the other hand, the corresponding perverted forms of governments are tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. Again, Machiavelli considers a mixed form of government as the best attainable form of government. He also emphasizes a close relationship between the economic development and the political stability of a state. He does not prefer the rule of one on hereditary basis, i.e., monarchy.

Machiavelli believes in a normal state, the citizens are law-abiding and patriots. Such a state can expand and grow and the citizens are always ready to defend their state.

**SAQ**

Do you think a leader/ruler following Machiavelli’s advice can meet with success in the present time? Justify your view. (30+50 words)

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**2.7 Machiavelli on Religion**

Machiavelli is born in the period of Renaissance. Before him, medieval thinkers emphasise on religion and consider it to be the basis of the state. Machiavelli makes a departure from his predecessors of medieval period by attacking the Church and the clergy for their failure to provide moral inspiration. He discusses on religion and its role in the formation and maintenance of political authority in his celebrated works, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*.

In the previous unit of this block we have discussed the connection between the state and the Church in the medieval period. We have learnt that in the medieval period the state is believed to serve as a department of the church and as such church fathers assume supremacy over the affairs of the state. They consider the sanction of the church as important for the functioning of the state. They compare the role of the church with that of the soul and say that as soul has the supremacy over the body so the church enjoys supremacy over the state. Machiavelli has made an attempt to divorce religion from politics and speaks against the supremacy of church over the state. Therefore, he is seen as propagating anti-Church. However, we must remember that Machiavelli is not against religion. Contrary to medieval thinkers, he tries to subordinate religion to the state. He considers religion as necessary not only for the social life of man but also for the health and

prosperity of the state. However, he does not consider religion to be the end in itself.

Thus, to Machiavelli, state is always the end and religion should only serve the interest of the state. He thus differs from the views of Aristotle and Plato who consider state from the ethical points of view. Therefore, according to him, the actions of the state cannot be questioned by individuals or be judged by individual moral standards.

According to Machiavelli, religion is good only when it establishes peace. Thus, religion is a social force but not a spiritual force. He views religion from a utilitarian perspective. It plays a very significant role in the society through its concepts of rewards and punishment which in turn help in inducing proper behaviour and good conduct necessary for the well-being of the society. He advises the prince to take steps to cultivate belief in religion, even if he is not a believer in religion. Thus, it can be said that Machiavelli is the first thinker to look upon religion as a coercive force. Thus, Machiavelli admires qualities like courage, self-assertiveness, ambition, intelligence and strength of the ruler.

Because of his beliefs in such virtues he criticizes Christianity since it makes man charitable and weak, glorifies qualities like renunciation, humility, otherworldliness, charity, etc. however, at the same time, he retained the basic Christian views on the differences between good and evil. He advocates for a religion in Italy that can serve the interests of the state. It can also be said here that the rulers should always endorse religion in order to maintain power.

**SAQ**

Why does Machiavelli think religion to be a coercive force? Elaborate the reasons given by Machiavelli to justify his view. (60+50 words)

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## 2.8 Machiavelli on Morality

While discussing the concept of morality, Machiavelli differentiates between public and private morality and assigns the former a preferential place and position over the latter. He is very seriously concerned with the display of high moral standards and qualities in public life. According to Machiavelli, a successful ruler should also aim at acquiring, maintaining, consolidating and increasing power. Therefore, to achieve that end Machiavelli even supports the use of immoral or wicked ways. Thus he firmly believes that the end justifies the means. For achieving the ends, Machiavelli advocates two different sets of moralities for the rulers and subjects. According to him, an individual may follow different moral values like independence, purity, loyalty and trust. However, a ruler may follow different norms and values for conducting the affairs of the state successfully.

Thus, we can see that Machiavelli distinguishes private morality from public morality. The morality of the state is different from the morality of the individuals. According to Machiavelli, state morality can be termed as the morality of success while the private individuals should display the high moral standards. He again states that a ruler can be compassionate, humane, loyal, and honest and may conform to the high standards of morality like compassion, good faith and honesty in times of stability in the state. However, in times of strife, chaos and disorder, these high standards of moralities will lead to the destruction of the state.

So, we can say that Machiavelli strongly promotes a secular society and feels that morality is not necessary but stands in the way of an effectively governed principality. The unstable condition of Italy is the major reason behind Machiavelli's belief.

Machiavelli has faced severe criticisms from various political thinkers for his views on religion and morality. Thinker like Strauss considers him as a teacher of evil. However, we have mentioned earlier, Machiavelli emphasizes the success of the prince who can always consolidate and increase power. Therefore, his perspective of morality is different for the rulers. In the words of Machiavelli:

*I will even venture to say that (the virtues) damage a prince who possesses them and always observes them, but if he seems to have them they are useful. I mean that he should seem compassionate, trustworthy, humane, honest and religious, and actually be so; but yet he should have his mind so trained that, when it is necessary not to practice these virtues, he can change to the opposite and do it skillfully. (Machiavelli 1950:85)*

Thus, we can conclude that Machiavelli's thinking is different from other medieval thinkers. He has made the first attempt to separate religion from politics. He keeps politics above everything and religion and morality are given a subordinate place to politics. Again, he does not believe in divine law and makes the church a part of state, but not independent of state. It must be remembered here that the ideas of Machiavelli are shaped only by the time and situations where he lived. He is of the firm belief that religion and morality cannot play a significant role in the Italian politics of his time.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Assess the relevance of Machiavelli's masterpiece *The Prince* in contemporary politics.
2. According to Machiavelli, what is the first and foremost duty of a prince?
3. Write a note on the advices for a prince as given by Machiavelli.
4. Trace the difference between Machiavelli and the medieval thinkers with specific reference to religion and morality.
5. How does Machiavelli differentiate between public and private morality?

## 2.9 Summing up

After reading this unit, you are now in a position to discuss Machiavelli's ideas on Human nature, and his advice to the prince. We have also learnt from this unit that Machiavelli is hailed as the child of Renaissance which has brought changes in socio-cultural and scientific fields of Italy. Moreover, he has also witnessed the turmoil prevailing in Italy for which he advises the prince to follow certain rules. It is interesting to note that he has even prescribed different type of morality for the prince. Machiavelli is concerned not with what makes a good human being, but what makes a good prince. He believes that the prince should be the sole authority determining every aspect of the state. This unit also helps us to learn that Machiavelli depicts a dark picture of human nature which goes against the thinking of humanists. He characterizes man to be self-centred and not willing to act in the best interest of the state. He has also given certain advices to the prince to maintain his power and expand the territory of the state. Although Machiavelli has been criticized for his ideas, he is termed as the founder of the modern day secular politics.

## 2.10 Reference and Suggested Readings

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### **Links:**

Machiavelli: *The Prince*: Chapter XVII. Constitution.org. Retrieved 2009-04-08, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Prince](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Prince)

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning  
Gauhati University**

**MA in Political Science**

**Paper I  
Political Theory (1)**

**Block 3  
Individualism and Liberalism**



**Contents:**

**Block Introduction–**

**Unit 1 : Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)**

**Unit 2 : John Locke (1632-1704)**

**Unit 3 : Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)**

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## **Block Introduction :**

This block on Individualism and Liberalism is an attempt to introduce you to the dynamics of the theories surrounding Individualism and Liberalism. It is observed that Individualism and Liberalism basically emphasizes the need to remove obstacles in the path of human progress, liberate men from the bondage imposed by the society and government and thereby emancipate the enormous potential inherent in men. The independence and self-reliance of the individuals is the cornerstone of Individualism and Liberalism. Individualism and Liberalism rose against the absolute authority of the state, church and the feudal lords in the sixteenth century and it was the product of the Age of Reformation. Individualism and Liberalism makes great demands on the operation of human reason ever since John Locke has argued that men is capable of executing God's purpose for the world themselves. Since Locke's argument, Individualism and Liberalism appear to be the dominant concern of the political philosophers as evident in the scholarly writings. In this block we are going to study Individualism and Liberalism as depicted in the writings of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. After going through this block you will be able to distinguish the differences that existed among scholars regarding these two ideologies and analyze their views. Apart from Individualism and Liberalism, political theory since Radical Reformation till the second half of the eighteenth century was dominated by the idea of social contract. This block is also an attempt to contextualize Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau in the context of Individualism and Liberalism. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are noted social contract theorists and their views regarding human and state of nature along with their preferred governmental system are influential to political theory. In this block, our attempt is to provide you a detailed account of their political philosophy with special reference to the idea of social contract tracing the connection between social contract and Individualism and Liberalism

Unit 1 deals with Hobbes' social contract theory and his views on human and state of nature. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, is considered to be the first masterpiece of social contract theory. In this book, Hobbes aims to establish an absolute government through a social contract. His views on human nature and state of nature have also drawn attention of the political

thinkers. After reading this unit, you will be able to analyze Hobbes' contribution towards political theory.

Unit 2 deals with Locke's ideas regarding social contract and his contribution towards political philosophy. Locke argues in his famous work *The Second Treatise on Government* that everyone including the sovereign belongs to the civil society. So, everyone including the sovereign is obliged to obey the law. Locke has favoured a limited government. Locke's idea of nature of human beings in the state of nature is different from Hobbes'. He has made an attempt to invent a new version of social contract by which the sovereign can also be constrained by contract.

In Unit 3 of this block we are going to deal with Rousseau and his contribution to Political Science. His ideas have influenced the French Revolution and laid the foundation of modern political thought. Rousseau also paves the way for the establishment of democracy through his idea of 'General Will'.

Reading of this block will help you to comprehend the ideas of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau in the context of Individualism and Liberalism and social contract theory and assess their contributions to political theory.

In this block we have three units.

**Unit 1 :** Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

**Unit 2 :** John Locke (1632-1704)

**Unit 3 :** Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

# Unit 1

## Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

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### 1.1 Introduction

In this block, we are discussing individualism and liberalism and Hobbes's ideas are integral part of the discussion of individualism and liberalism. Hobbes is an English philosopher who can be regarded as the founding father of modern political philosophy. His vision of the world is strikingly original and his main concern is the problem of social and political order. The philosophy of Thomas Hobbes is perhaps the most complete materialist philosophy of the seventeenth century. Hobbes is also known for his ideas on Social Contract. Scholars have gone to the extent of saying that the *Leviathan* (1651) is the greatest masterpiece of political philosophy written in English (Oakeshott 1975). This book is a reflection of the civil strife in England following the execution of Charles I (1600-1649). It bears the mark of the conflicting situation prevailing in England at that period which must have influenced Hobbes in shaping his ideas on human nature and state of nature. Hobbes attacks implicitly or explicitly the three great current styles of political argument in England like Divine Right, social contract in its libertarian form, and the ancient constitution.

In this unit, we will make an attempt to deal with Hobbes' ideas of human nature and state of nature. According to Hobbes, human beings are selfish, mean and wicked in the state of nature. Therefore, he believes that human beings enter into a contract for preserving their interest in the society. Thus, state and politics are artificial creations of human beings for their survival. This unit will also deal with Hobbes' views on natural right, liberty and laws of the individuals. Moreover, we will also try to analyze Hobbes as an individualist and absolutist and assess his contribution to Political Theory.

## **1.2 Objectives**

This unit is an attempt to analyze the ideas of Hobbes. After reading this unit you will be able to

- *explain* Hobbes' views on human nature and state of nature
- *discuss* Hobbes' views on natural right, liberty and law
- *analyze* Hobbes' ideas of Social Contract.
- *examine* whether Hobbes is an individualist or absolutist

## **1.3 Hobbes' View on Human Nature and State of Nature**

Human nature has always been a central theme of discussion of political philosophers as it is the base of all human activities. The depiction of human natures by the philosophers has always been a reflection of their time. As a social contract thinker Hobbes also deals with the state of nature. In his famous work *Leviathan* we find his views regarding human and state of nature. From his writings it is clear to us that he considers the individual not a rational creature but an embodiment of passions, emotions and desires. Hobbes further views the state of nature, a period of human history preceding the establishment of the civil state are an extension of human nature. Now, in the following subsections we will discuss his views regarding human nature and state of nature in brief.

### **1.3.1 Hobbes on Human Nature**

We have already learnt that Hobbes discusses the concept of human nature and state of nature at length while dealing with the theory of social contract. Hobbes makes the individual the spring board of his thought. The

presumption of Hobbes is that motion of particles creates sensation in human mind. According to him, there is a relation between stimulus and sensation which leads to the occurrence of mental phenomenon as it comes into being as a result of the relation. Refusing to assign individuals a rational status, Hobbes states that emotions and passions are innate and reason is artificial. According to him, movement of particles either helps or stands in the way of vitality and the creations and aversions of desires depends on the movement. Each man desires something which will enhance his vitality and pleasure in the movement in his mind. Thus for Hobbes, what a man desires is good and what he dislikes is evil. He asserts that the conception of good or bad is not fixed or objective but subjective which undergoes change. In other words, according to Hobbes, human beings are highly self-centered. Every man becomes successful in getting his desired things. He also believes that man is self-centered and the desire for security is his fundamental need and this factor plays an important role in his theory. Each individual is solitary and consequently each one has his own concept of pleasure, pain, good or bad. Hobbes has very clearly said that no individual is capable of behaving independent of external stimuli.

Again Hobbes believes that human beings are by birth equal. However, the desire to possess the same things brings them in clash with each other. He says that competition, glory and differences make people brute and quarrelsome. As all men are roughly equal and apparently desire similar things, there is bound to be war where every man fights against every man. In short, Hobbes says that man is essentially selfish, contentious, quarrelsome, mean, wicked, non-altruistic, irrational, impulsive and self-centered. Hobbes's views on human nature are quite similar to the views expressed by Machiavelli. In the previous block we have already discussed the views of Machiavelli on human nature. The only difference between the two thinkers on this issue is that while Machiavelli does not assign any reason for the bad nature of man, Hobbes tries to explain it in scientific terms.

In this way, we can see that Hobbes has given a very gloomy picture of man in the state of nature. He holds that all men are by nature equal. However, none of them is strong enough to be safe against others. They are also affected by the same three passions viz. desire for safety, desire of glory and desire for gain. The desire for gain leads to violence when the object of desire can neither be divided nor enjoyed in common. Naturally, in such a

situation human beings develop a sense of distrust towards each other. This sense of distrust is evident from the situations when a man goes around against his fellow human beings with arms in hands, closes his doors against his neighbours etc.

Thus, we can say that Hobbes' concept of human nature is based on two factors

- All men are equal
- Man is not an idle spectator in political drama but always ready to struggle and achieve something noble, gentle and higher.

However, Hobbes' views on human nature have been severely criticized on the following grounds

- According to Hobbes, human beings are highly irrational in the state of nature. But he suddenly assigns human beings the faculty of reason with the help of which they create state. Thus, he contradicts himself on this ground.
- Hobbes has said that people are quarrelsome, nasty and brutish. But he has not given any convincing argument as to how they become peace loving and rational all of a sudden.
- His assertion that all men are equal also seems far removed from practical experiences.
- His ideas of human nature are not very convincing. It is wrong to believe that human beings are always nasty and brutish. In actual practice, people do not quarrel with each other unless they are forced to do so.

Nevertheless, it can be said that there are desires which prompt men to fight with each other. Such desires have made man nasty and brutish in the state of nature and made him stand against the valid desires of others to satisfy his own desires.

## Stop to consider

### Life Sketch of Thomas Hobbes:

Hobbes was born in England on April 5, 1588. He was the second son. His father was the vicar of Charlton and Westport. He was brought up by his uncle. He was a bright student and mastered a number of languages like Greek, French, Italian and English. He was educated at the Westport church and then passed to the Malmesbury School. He was forced to flee to London after being involved in a fight with a clergyman outside his own church. At university Hobbes appears to have followed his own curriculum. He was little attracted by the scholastic learning. He completed his B.A. degree in the year 1608. His master Sir James Hussay recommended him as a tutor to William, son of William Cavendish who was the Baron of Earl of Devonshire. He became a companion to the younger William on a grand tour of Europe in 1610- 1615. He was exposed to European scientific and critical methods during the tour. His first publication was a translation in English of Thucydides' *History of Peloponnesian War* in 1629. He used to write verses in Latin and English. At the later stage of his life, Hobbes translated Homer's *Odyssey* and *Illiad* into English. In November 1640 he fled to France and stayed there till the winter of 1651-1652. During his time outside of England, Hobbes became interested in why people allowed themselves to be ruled and what would be the best form of government for England. In 1657 the Leviathan was reported to the parliamentary committee as the most poisonous piece of atheism. In 1647, he fell seriously ill. But in spite of his ill health he published his famous work the Leviathan in the year 1651. In 1683 the leviathan was condemned and burned in the Oxford University. He finally died of paralysis on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1679.

## SAQ

Do you agree with Hobbes' views of Human nature? Give reasons in support of your argument. (20+80 words)

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### **1.3.2 Hobbes on State of Nature**

After reading the previous section of this unit which familiarizes us with Hobbes' view on human nature, now we proceed to discuss his views on the state of nature. Before proceeding to discuss Hobbes' views on the state of nature, we must remember that his view on the state of nature is only an extension of human nature. Hobbes believes that before joining civil state, people lived in the state of nature. According to him, the state of nature is in a state of war as insecurity is the only secure thing in the pre-state society. One is secured as long as the strong spares him. The life and property of the people are always at stake in the state of nature. In short, in such an environment, the life of man appears to be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. The absence of any common superior to hold all the people in check leads to a state of constant war of all against all. The state of nature is characterized by perpetual war and fear because of three reasons namely competition for acquiring means for gratifying identical competitions, the fear of being surpassed by others in power and desire for admiration and recognition as superior. According to Hobbes, unless there is a common sovereign power to regulate and control, competition, conflicts, clashes and quarrels are unavoidable.

Again Hobbes argues that there can be no distinction between right and wrong in the state of nature because such a distinction presupposes the existence of common standards and conduct, a common law to judge that conduct and a common law giver. Again there is no distinction between just and unjust in the state of nature because there is no common superior (sovereign) or law. When there is no law there can be no justice. There is no right to private property in the state of nature because the possession of a thing depends upon the power of a person to keep it.

However, Hobbes' views on the state of nature have faced severe criticisms on several grounds. To elaborate, historically his theory is not founded on facts and in fact he has himself not tried to establish the existence of the state of nature. Thus according to Hobbes, it is all imaginary and there is no end to the flight of imagination. Since his whole theory is based on human nature and it is a well established fact that man by nature is not nasty and brutish, therefore, the whole basis of his theory and its super structures is wrong and not founded on solid facts. Hobbes in his theory has stated no standards to find out as to what is right and wrong to judge the actions of the people in the state of nature.



### **Stop to consider**

#### **The major works of Hobbes:**

1. *Leviathan*. Hobbes' great philosophical tract is published in the year 1651. In this book, he has elaborately portrayed the conditions prevailing in the state of nature along with the description of men living in such a state. He deals with the origin of the state and nature of sovereignty and finally the creation of absolute, indivisible and inalienable authority of the sovereign.

2. *De Cive*. In this book Hobbes tries to establish the superior authority of state by saying that both spiritual and temporal lords should bow before the authority of lord sovereign.

3. *De Corpore*. This book deals with human nature.

So, the books written by Hobbes and their contents familiarize us with the major ideas and issues of Hobbes.

### **Check Your Progress**

#### **Choose the correct option:**

1. According to Hobbes, human beings are nasty, brutish and quarrelsome. (true/false)
2. According to Hobbes, the state of nature is
  - a. A period of peace and plenty
  - b. A state of constant war
  - c. Regulated by the religious law
  - d. None of the above

### **1.3.3 Hobbes' Idea of Social Contract**

After reading the previous sections, we know that Hobbes is one of the famous theorists of social contract who has given a very gloomy picture of the state of nature where the people are selfish, nasty and brutish and live in a state of constant war with each other. The basis of Hobbes's argument can be stated simply though the implications of the argument are far-reaching. Social contract imagines the societal situation that exists before the emergence of civil society. Hobbes terms the condition of men living without government as the State of Nature and paints a bleak picture of it. Men without government and the settled social living made possible only by the

existence of government will be roughly and naturally equal. They can escape from it only by setting up a common power which is capable of restraining and protecting every individual at the same time. They surrender their rights to the will of one in the hope of getting peace and security. In this contract, the sovereign is not the party. Thus, whereas all are equal before the contract, after the contract out of all the equals one superior is created. All rights are transferred to a common depository. In this way state is created and the individuals surrender their natural rights which are assured by the state.

Thus we can summarize the main characteristics of Hobbes' idea of the Social Contract in the following ways——

- The parties involved in to the contract are individuals and not groups or associations of any sort.
- The state is based on reason and not on fear.
- The sovereign is not a party to the contract and cannot be guilty of violating the contract.
- The contract once entered is perpetual in nature. A lawfully constituted sovereign can be replaced only by a unanimous decision of the commonwealth.
- The minority has no right to object to the choice of the majority in the selection of the sovereign.
- The individuals surrender all their rights to the sovereign except the right to live.

So we can say that Hobbes favours the system of absolute monarchy and supremacy of the king through his social contract.

**SAQ**

Do you think that Hobbes' social contract can bring peace in his State of Nature? (50 words)

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#### **1.4 Hobbes' Views on Natural Right, Liberty and Law**

We have already discussed Hobbes' views on social contract on the light of his views on human nature and the state of nature. Now, in this section we will discuss his views on natural right, liberty and law.

According to Hobbes, before joining the civil state the people lived in the state of nature where they enjoyed every freedom. Hobbes also assumes that in such a state of nature none possesses reasoning power but is guided by impulses and passions. At that stage, he enjoys right to life and liberty but the only rule to enjoy the right is the use of force. Hence, in such a state one can keep with oneself what one has. When one joins the civil society he agrees to surrender all his rights to the sovereign except the right to life.

Hobbes' emphasis on absolute and unlimited character of sovereignty is likely to give the impression that he does not concede any right or liberty to the people under the Leviathan. This feeling is further strengthened by the fact that he does not concede to the individual any right against the sovereign. According to Hobbes, freedom is a private pursuit of the individual. It means that each individual can create his own conception of freedom within a framework of state authority. Liberty, according to Hobbes, is whatever the law permits and on which the law is silent. Liberty implies absence of restraints and coercion. Hobbes identifies and safeguards the private sphere of the individual where none can exercise control.

The only freedom or right which an individual is permitted firstly includes the freedom to do what the laws of the state do not forbid and secondly the rights which the individual cannot have surrendered under any covenant. Liberty in the first sense is not of much significance because it does not constitute any limitation on the authority of the sovereign. Regarding the freedom of the second category, Hobbes allows the individual the right to disobey the state if he is asked to do anything which endangers his life or body. However, it will be wrong to infer from the above that Hobbes does not permit liberty to the individual under Leviathan. He does permit liberty, but his liberty is essentially of a negative nature. Hobbes justifies the grant of liberty within the limitation of laws and does not find any contradiction between the two. Therefore, until the sovereign interferes with the individuals, he can do anything, but once there is a clash between the individual and the sovereign, the former has to become subservient to the latter.

In so far as the right to life is concerned, Hobbes accords it a prominent position in his scheme and permits this right even against the will of the sovereign. Regarding the other rights which individuals enjoy through silence of law, Hobbes refers to the right to buy and sell and otherwise contract with one another; the right to choose their own abode, diet, trade and life and the right to educate their children according to their liking. We can say that Hobbes concedes liberty and freedom to the individual but it is essentially of a negative character and is conceived in relative terms.

Again, Hobbes defends the right to private property. According to Hobbes, there will be no undue interference from the sovereign in the private affairs of the individuals including economic activity. The individuals will have the liberty to buy and sell and otherwise contract with one another. The state can provide charity for the destitute. But it is not the responsibility of the state to actively promote the 'felicity' of the subjects.

Again, Hobbes provides the individual with an absolute right, namely the right of self preservation. The sovereign cannot command a man to kill, wound or maim himself. This right is an inalienable right of individuals since the basic motive for surrender of their power is self preservation. If the sovereign fails to protect the individual, the individual has the right to resist the sovereign. Resistance is justified only when the sovereign seeks to destroy the individual directly. These are the dictates of reason. According to Hobbes, the laws of nature are proper laws since they are delivered in the word of God. We should remember here that natural laws in Hobbes' theory do not mean eternal justice, perfect morality or standards to judge the existing laws. According to Hobbes, natural law is a general rule found out by reason by which man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or takes away the means of preserving the same. Hobbes argues that to attain justice and harmony in society, the law of nature must be enforced by some coercive power. In the state of nature, there exists neither any giver nor interpreter of laws.

Now let us discuss here the three categories of law as pointed out by Hobbes viz. Law of Nature, Civil Law and Divine Law.

- *Law of Nature*- The law of nature is considered as Articles of Peace. Hobbes argues that the most fundamental law of nature states that each person should seek to live with others in peace. He preaches that the

law of nature stands for individual sacrifice in order to achieve social peace. He desires the laws of nature to be supported by swords as the covenants without the swords are words only and possess no value.

- *Civil Law*- Civil laws are those laws and regulations which have the sanction of the sovereign behind them and are also permitted by him. Their obedience is checked by the use of force where necessary. The civil laws are sanctioned and interpreted by the sovereign only and he is above all laws.
- *Divine Law*- Hobbes defines divine laws as the command of the sovereign. The divine law supersedes the civil law. But the sovereign is the supreme authority to interpret the divine law.

However, Hobbes is of the opinion that the civil law or the law of the sovereign is the supreme law and it prevails over every other types of law. A custom becomes law if the sovereign feels that it fulfills the aim of collective social interest. According to Hobbes, people have no right to question the reasonability or non-reasonability of the law sanctioned by the sovereign. Every rightful civil law passed by the sovereign is just. He can amend and change every law on his own. No one can compel him to either modify or remove any law from the statute book. There are no limitations on the laws enacted by the sovereign in the nature of natural law, divine law or international law. In case, the law enacted by the sovereign clashes with the categories of other law, it shall reign supreme.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Hobbes' view on Sovereign**

The sovereign is created as a result of the contract and enjoys all the powers surrendered by the people at the time of concluding the contract. He is not a party to the contract. The contract is irrevocable. According to Hobbes, the person to whom the rights are surrendered is the sovereign. He is the great Leviathan before whom all need to bow. He is the preserver of peace, hope for prosperity, development and security. Hobbes' sovereign is not a party to the contract and remain above all laws. The sovereign enjoys the power to determine on behalf of the entire community as to what should be done to maintain peace and order and promote general welfare. The sovereign enjoys absolute powers to make laws and this power of the sovereign is not limited by any human authority, superior or inferior. The sovereign is the source of distinction between good and bad, moral and immoral, just and unjust.

### **1.5 Hobbes as an Individualist and Absolutist**

We have already read in the previous sections that social contract theory depends on the view of individuals being autonomous in some important sense. We have also seen that to trace the origin of individual autonomy is a vexed question. In Hobbes's case, this difficulty does not arise. It has often been remarked how susceptible Hobbes is to the influence of the scientific and philosophical currents of his day, both English and continental. Hobbes has been carried up and down for his political theory which has been described as pure and naked despotism by some thinkers while the others consider him as the greatest individualist. The first view seems to be based on superfluous reading of the philosophy of Hobbes. In reality he is a great individualist and the theory of absolute sovereignty generally associated with Hobbes is basically the necessary compliment to his individualism.

As we have already seen, the rationale behind Hobbes' theory of ardent absolutism is the concern for the peace and security of the person and property of the individual which lends the tinge of individualism to Hobbes' theory. Hobbes does not talk about vague things like public good or general good and his main concern is the individuals who desire to live and enjoy protection for the means of life. The prominent position accorded to the individual by Hobbes is evident from the fact that he allows the individual the right to resist the sovereign if the latter attacks his life as the contract is finalized for self-preservation. In certain contingencies the individual is permitted to refuse to serve as a soldier as the service may endanger his life. Hobbes also allows the individual to withdraw allegiance from the sovereign who is incapable of securing his life. The right of resistance granted to the individual carries with it the right of the individual to judge for him when his life is endangered. Hobbes does not think in terms of common will or collective will. According to Hobbes, each one has left his freedom enjoyed in the state of nature only on the condition that his life will be secured. As soon as he feels that either his life is insecure or the behaviour of the sovereign is endangering his life, the individual can resist the authority of the state and sovereign. Another condition under which the individual can resist the sovereign arises when the sovereign is weak and unable to discharge his functions. The individuals can also resist the authority of the sovereign when they are forced to leave the state of nature, join the civil state and accept the supremacy of the sovereign.

Here we must remember that the greatest sign of individualism in Hobbes is visible in his delineation of the treatment of the individuals. He believes that they are equal in knowledge and development and the rationale behind his support for absolute rule is the fact that as an individualist he does not believe in the idea of privileged classes. The absence of privileged class can be reconciled by the institution of absolute monarchy. Thus, according to his model, it is not anti-individualism when he does not assign moral as well as political functions to the sovereign and the state. Hobbes' state stands for public safety and he does not ask the state to perform the functions of looking after the well-being of the individuals. He clearly says that he wants to give the individuals sufficient scope for their development. Apart from these examples, Hobbes has made individual a distinct and separate unit throughout his philosophy. In his contract he has made individual and not group or family, the party. The individual continue to exist before and after the contract. Hobbes has made the state not an end in itself but only the means to an end, the end being the individual and protection of his life.

It is evident from the above account that Hobbes' philosophy is pregnant with the strongest seeds of individualism. He makes the individual the centre of his thought. After raising the individual to such heights, Hobbes feels that if the individual is not kept in proper check, it will lead to the destruction of the civil society giving rise to anarchy. This will tantamount to return to the state of nature characterized by war of all against all. To check such a possibility, Hobbes feels the need of a supreme power which possesses the power to take appropriate action to prevent such a degeneration of the individual. Hobbes realizes that covenants without swords are simply words and he concedes absolute authority to his sovereign to guarantee that the covenants are observed by the people.

However, Hobbes does not stop with the grant of absolute powers to the sovereign but also ensures that he is not able to use it for his selfish ends. He gives the sovereign the power to make laws or rules by which it may be possible to determine what is just and what is unjust; or what is good and what is evil. The civil laws enacted by the sovereign are largely based on the laws of nature and therefore his laws cannot be absolute. Again the laws are made with the sole objective of maintenance of peace for which the individual surrenders his natural liberty. The sovereign makes the laws for the benefit of the individual and is subject to the judgment of individualism.

Hobbes has assigned his sovereign the responsibility of checking the anti-social tendencies of the individuals without destroying their individuality. Though his sovereign is absolute, yet he has been characterized by Hobbes as the representative of his people. In this way Hobbes negates the right of absolutism. Hobbes grants to the individual certain rights and imposes certain obligations on the sovereign towards his subjects. Thus, from this discussion it is evident that Hobbes is more interested in the individual than the sovereign.

Seen in this context, it will be sheer mockery of Hobbes' political philosophy to charge him of absolutism. In fact, as Prof. Wayper has said, "he is perhaps the greatest individualist in the history of political thought."

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Hobbes' Views on Women:**

Hobbes accords some fairly robust equality to women on the ground that they are sufficiently equal in strength. He argues that women are as capable as men. So they do not require any protection from men. The mother constitutes authority and guarantees protection to a child by virtue of giving birth to the child. In Hobbes' state of nature, every woman who has children becomes both a mother and a lord. But if the mother is taken prisoner, she loses her right of authority over her child. In that situation, she can select the person who will exert authority over her child in her absence. According to Hobbes, the idea of female subordination is a human creation. In the state of nature described by Hobbes, the natural domination of mother is accepted as it is she who can declare the father of her child. Hobbes argues that marriage is not based on natural ties of sentiments between generations. According to him, it arises from the consent of its individual members. Though, Hobbes is a supporter of equality of sexes yet he gives the father exclusive jurisdiction within the family, thereby defending patriarchy. While discussing the succession to the sovereign in the state, he wants it to pass from one male child to another.

### **Hobbes' Contribution to Political Theory**

The reading of the previous sections of this unit has helped to familiarize us with Hobbes political philosophy. Hobbes is credited to have offered a theory of absolute sovereignty and freed his sovereign of all shackles. He



declares sovereignty as an indivisible and inalienable personality. His theory forms the basis of all definitions given by political thinkers in this regard. Hence, it has rightly been said that Hobbes is the first political philosopher who stands for unlimited sovereignty.

- Hobbes is the first thinker to conceive state as a human institution. He clearly states that God has no role in the origin of the state. He does not believe that there was any mystery in the creation of the state.
- He is the first great individualist with his emphasis on the fact that the state is merely a means for the promotion of the interest of the individual. Hobbes has made absolute sovereign as a necessary part of individualism and both are combined together and made dependent on each other.
- Utilitarianism, a logical corollary of his individualism is another important contribution of Hobbes to political thought. Hobbes clarifies that people leaves the state of nature and joins civil society only because they want to gain something out of that. Unless the state proves useful and is capable of discharging its obligations, it has no right to demand obedience from the citizens.
- Hobbes is the first thinker to emphasize the supremacy of the matter in relation to mind. He asserts that matter affects the sensation as well as the whole chain of perception, memory, imagination etc and in this respect he anticipates Marx. While developing his theory of materialistic interpretation of history, Marx is greatly influenced by Hobbes' idea of the supremacy of the matter in relation to mind.
- Again, Hobbes applies the true scientific method to the study of Political Science and emphasizes that all human ideas and social phenomena are derived from moving particles.
- Hobbes makes morals at par with politics and affects a complete severance between the two. Machiavelli is often given the credit of separating ethics from politics, but it is Hobbes who provides a rational basis to this separation.
- Hobbes repudiates the classical doctrine of the law of nature and advocates the concept of positive law. Hobbes proves to be a guiding genius for scientific legislation. He clearly states that it is the man-made law and not the natural law which matters most in all the legislation relating to human affairs. He asserts that only man-made law can be effective in human affairs.

- Hobbes is the first thinker to conceive the theory of factious corporation. In his contract, the individuals surrender all their power to a person and authorize him to will and act on behalf of all the constituents. He gives the idea that the multitudes cannot act and that an individual alone can act in the name of the people.

Seen in terms of his numerous contributions to political philosophy, we can agree with Hacker that Hobbes creates a theory which embraces Psychology, Sociology and Political Science and integrates these into a coherent theoretical framework.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. After joining the civil state the people surrender all their rights except the right to —————. (Fill in the blanks)
2. What are the three categories of law described by Hobbes?
3. Why Hobbes' liberty is called the negative liberty?
3. According to Hobbes, international law acts as a limitation on laws. (true/false)

### **1.6.1 Critical Appreciation of Hobbes' Political Philosophy**

In the previous sections of this unit, we have already discussed the major ideas of Hobbes. We have also assessed the contributions made by Hobbes towards the field of Political Science. He is remembered for the creation of a theory which embraces Psychology, Sociology and Political Science and integrates these into a coherent theoretical framework. However, Hobbes' successors have criticized him on various grounds. Now in the following section, we will discuss the criticisms leveled against him.

- It is difficult to understand how the masters of Hobbes' state of nature become the law abiding and docile citizens of the society. The sudden transformation of the individual from savage to the civilized seems illogical.
- His theory leads to despotism, pure and simple and the individual is virtually reduced to the position of a slave with no right to resist the oppressive and tyrannical rule of the absolute sovereign. Thus, gross materialism, atheism and despotism of Hobbes fail to appeal to his contemporaries as well as succeeding generations.

- The so called scientific method applied by Hobbes has not been found practicable by the modern thinkers. They have found it difficult to apply geometry or the study of social sciences in general and the science of politics in particular.
- Hobbes' philosophy is mainly influenced by his personal predilections and prejudices. He is motivated by the sole consideration of defending the royal absolutism. Besides, he is wrong in insisting that common terror is the sole bond of union among the individuals.
- He represents secularism which is unacceptable to the church, the prime representative of theocracy. It cannot reconcile itself to the philosophy of Hobbes which thrives on elevating the state and sovereign reducing the church into a mere department of the state. The unqualified low position assigned to the church by Hobbes is a source of constant criticism by church fathers. Hobbes almost stirs the whole existing order and creates a sense of great dissatisfaction in many of the existing institutions including the church.
- The believers of divine rights of kings do not support Hobbes' theory of social contract as it makes the monarch a by-product of contract and not a descendant of God on earth. Even granting the monarch unlimited authority and powers do not satisfy the supporters of divine rights of kings.

Thus, we have seen that Hobbes is criticized severely on various grounds. However, it is certainly wrong to say that Hobbes' political philosophy has not exercised any influence on the history of political thought. Hobbes is remembered not only a great thinker of the seventeenth century but also as a thinker whose influence can be traced in various schools of contemporary thought. Even his critics appreciate his contribution to political philosophy. We can rightly conclude with the saying of Sabine that, "Hobbes is probably the greatest writer on political philosophy that the English speaking people have produced."

**SAQ**

Do you consider Hobbes an individualist or an absolutist? Give reasons for the support of your answer. (80 +60 words)

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**1.7 Summing up**

As stated earlier, Hobbes is the greatest political philosopher who is credited for conceiving state as a human institution for the first time. His idea of social contract aims at creating an absolute Sovereign authority who can establish peace and security in the state of nature. In this unit, we have dealt with Hobbes’ major ideas with reference to his works like *Leviathan*. Reading of this unit has enhanced our understanding of Hobbes’ philosophy. Hobbes regards civil society as artificial, man-made and *Leviathan* offers us a message tinged with profound, gloomy and fearful conservatism. In this unit, we have also learnt that according to Hobbes, any man without a Sovereign is really an outlaw who can be killed at will. Hobbes idea of man as a rational egoist is based on his idea of state of nature. This unit also helps us to learn that Hobbes contributes to the utilitarian philosophy in the form of the idea that human beings enter into a contract for their own welfare. Apart from being one of the exponents of social contract theory, Hobbes is also considered as a great individualist for the promotion of the interest of the individuals in the society. As specified earlier, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau are also major exponents of social contract theory. After familiarizing you with Hobbes’s ideas in this unit, we will be dealing with the views of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau in the next two units for a comprehensive and comparative account of Individualism and Liberalism.

## 1.8 References and Suggested Readings

1. Mukharjee, Subrata & Sushila Ramaswamy. A History of Political Thought, Plato to Marx, Prentice Hall, New Delhi, 2003.
2. J.S.McClelland, A History of Western Political Thought, Routledge. London and New York, 1996.

### Links:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Hobbes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hobbes)

<http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/nature/hobbes-bio.html>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes/>

<http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/3x.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural\\_and\\_legal\\_rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_and_legal_rights)

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## **Unit 2**

### **John Locke (1632-1704)**

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#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this block we are discussing individualism and liberalism and you know that Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau constitute the most important contributors in this area. In unit 1 of this block we have discussed Hobbes at length. In this unit we shall attempt a comparative analysis of Hobbes and Locke.

This unit will also deal with Locke's views on law, rights, property, human nature, state of nature etc. John Locke is an English philosopher and he is considered as the first British empiricist. His writings have influenced the American revolutionaries. John Locke has also contributed to the growth of classical republicanism and liberal theory as reflected in the American Declaration of Independence. Locke's concepts of constitutionalism, toleration, natural rights, limited consensual, law based authority, pluralism, property have a significant impact in establishing and nurturing a liberal society in England beyond the English settlement of 1688. Moreover, his concepts are influential in inspiring similar traditions in America, France and Holland.

The American and the French revolutions and the constitutional edifice in the United States are Lockean in spirit.

## **2.2 Objectives**

This unit attempts to deal with the ideas and views of Locke who has made significant contribution towards the growth of ideas like constitutionalism, natural rights and human nature. After reading this unit you will be able to-

- discuss* Locke's views on human nature and the state of nature
- analyze* Locke as an individualist
- explain* Locke's views on private property
- discuss* Locke's views on natural right and natural law

## **2.3 Locke on Human Nature and the State of Nature**

In the first unit of this block we have learnt Hobbes' view on human nature and the state of nature. Now in this unit, we shall discuss Locke's ideas on Human nature and the State of Nature. Different political thinkers are influenced by the philosophies and ideas of their predecessors. In Block I of this paper, we have learnt how the ideas of Aristotle are shaped by the ideas of his predecessor Plato. In the arena of Social Contract theory also, it is found that Locke's ideas are influenced by Hobbes. Hence it is easy for us to read Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1681–3) as a straight attack on Hobbes. The most famous sentence in the *Second Treatise of Civil Government* is that 'though this (the State of Nature) be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence'. Like Hobbes, Locke begins with a hypothetical State of Nature, gives an account of it, and then proceeds to show how men come out of it. Locke's State of Nature differs from Hobbes' as for Locke, life is recognizably social in the state of nature in a sense Hobbes will never allow. Hence to Locke the State of Nature is a state of liberty. Here Locke means that men bound by Natural Law in the State of Nature will be able to recognise and respect the Natural Rights of others. In the following sections we will discuss his views on human nature and the State of nature.



### 2.3.1 Locke on Human Nature

Locke's depiction of the human nature differs from Hobbes' description. Locke does not offer a systematic account of his views on human nature and we get a glimpse of his views from the scattered ideas in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. Locke believes that human beings are capable, efficient, considerate and basically decent. According to him, human beings are endowed with a natural social instinct. Locke does not agree with Hobbes that human beings become quarrelsome, savage and brutish for the sake of pleasures. He believes that people are essentially peace-loving and not quarrelsome. They are not always selfish and sometimes they are altruistic also. He feels that people always want to achieve the ends by peaceful and rational methods. In the pre-state civil society, goodwill, mutual understanding and sense of mutual cooperation prevail and govern their social relations.

However like Hobbes, Locke also considers all human beings as equal. He stresses on the point that all human beings are born equal, if not physically than morally. Locke believes that every individual enjoys certain natural rights viz. right of life, liberty and property. His enjoyment of these rights springs not from any position, strength, wealth etc. but from the fact that he is a human being and possesses reason. He stresses that these rights should be respected. Children do not enjoy these rights as they lack developed mind. Locke has also said that everyone is bound by duty to obey moral and natural laws. It is the duty of the state to protect indefensible rights. Locke has made it clear that every human being wants to substitute his pain with pleasure. Things which we consider good give us pleasure whereas those termed evil lead to pain.

According to him, all human beings possess certain basic rights even though the rights may not be recognized. Locke does not agree with the idea that man is a centre of blind passions. He is of the opinion that man is a moral and social being. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he has said that every individual is basically endowed with social instinct. Basically each individual is decent and socially capable of ruling himself. The people are not quarrelsome and want to lead a peaceful life. They are not always selfish but basically rational. In short, Locke assumes that human beings are basically decent, orderly, sociable and capable of ruling themselves.

### ***Criticism:***

However, Locke's concept of human nature has been criticized on the following grounds.

- On the one hand Locke says that every human mind at the time of birth appears to be a clean slate without imprints. It is the world which creates sensations which subsequently get deepened. On the other hand, he has claimed that from the birth every individual has certain natural rights and these rights should be protected. Hence, these statements are contradictory.
- Locke has also been criticized on the ground that he has failed to give any concrete reason as to why human beings are sociable and good in nature since birth. He has also provided no reasons to believe that the people are capable of governing themselves. Though he believes in the application of scientific reasoning to the study of every problem, yet he has advanced no scientific grounds or basis for this.

It has been said that each and every individual wants maximum pleasures for the self. He wants to avoid pain. On the other hand, Locke enjoins his people that they should struggle for maximum public and general happiness. It is not clear how a person, who is basically keen to achieve maximum happiness for him, can be expected to promote greatest happiness for the public all of a sudden.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Life sketch of John Locke:**

Locke was born on 29 August 1632 in a small thatched cottage by the Church in Wrington, Somerset, about twelve miles from Bristol and was baptized on the same day. Soon after Locke's birth, the family moved to the market town of Pensford, about seven miles south of Bristol where Locke grew up in a rural Tudor house in Belluton. In 1647, he was sent to the prestigious Westminster School in London. After completing his studies in Westminster School he was admitted to the Christ Church, Oxford. Locke was awarded a Bachelor's Degree in 1656 and a Master's Degree in 1658. He also obtained Bachelors of Medicine in 1664. Locke's political life started when Shaftsbury, the founder of the Whig movement became Lord Chancellor in 1672. From the very beginning of his life

Locke came in contact with Lord Ashley, who was the founder of Whig party. In 1666, he met Ashley for the first time. Within a year of the meeting, Locke joined Ashley's household in London. This incident proved to be a turning point in Locke's life. The Glorious Revolution was another potent influence on him. This influence was so significant that his whole political philosophy moved round it. His notion of human nature was an outcome of this revolution. Sydney who was executed for treason in 1683 was another influence on Locke. He stated that the authority resided with the people. Thus Locke borrowed this idea from him though he presented it in his own way and style. Locke died in 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1704 in Essex.

All thinkers are influenced by their time and the surrounding environment. Therefore, a reading of the above paragraph will help you to comprehend the background of Locke which helped him in formulating his ideas.

### **2.3.2 Locke on State of Nature**

We have already mentioned that Locke's view on the state of nature is a logical extension of his views of human nature. He agrees with Hobbes that there is a stage in human history when there is no state and the people live without any controls and regulations. Like Hobbes, Locke does not consider the state of nature as the state of war of each against all. On the other hand, he considers it as an era of "peace, good-will, mutual assistance and preservation". He conceives the state of nature as a pre-political rather than a pre-social condition. As social beings, people have lived together in perfect peace and harmony and the society, Locke believes, is quite well organized. Locke also believes that in the state of nature life is not intolerable and there is no perpetual hostility. Peace and reason prevail in the state of nature as the fellow beings are socially inclined towards each other and have a mutual bond of union among themselves. The spirit of sociability and brotherhood characterize such state and all are happy, equal and free and possess the right to property. Thus, we can say that the life of the people in Locke's state of nature appears to be different from Hobbes' depiction as both offer contrasting pictures.

Locke also argues that before living in the civil state, the people are living in the state of nature characterized by peace and prosperity. It is a state of goodwill governed by the law of nature. He again states that the law of

nature is based on the principle of equality. Locke stands for the idea that personal liberty matters most in the state of nature than physical liberty. He further believes that though there is no common authority in the state of nature, the consequence is not anarchic. Locke highlights three deficiencies in the state of nature. These are:

- The lack of an established, settled and known law. Because of the lack, law can be interpreted by each individual in his own way leading to a confusing state.
- The Lack of an impartial judge who can interpret and execute the law of nature without personal whims.
- The Lack of an executive organ which can enforce a just decision.

Individuals agree to enter into a contract and create the state chiefly to remove these inconveniences and uncertainties of the state of nature.

**Check your progress**

1. Write true or false

- a) According to John Locke, human beings are nasty and brutish.
- b) Locke considers the state of nature as the state of war of each against all.

2. Write a brief note on Locke's view on human nature.

2. According to John Locke, what is the condition of the state of nature?

**SAQ**

Make a comparative analysis of the human nature and the state of nature as depicted by Hobbes and Locke. (100 words)

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## 2.4 Locke's idea of Social Contract

We have already learnt that according to Locke, state is created by the individuals through a contract to remove some inconveniences and uncertainties of the state of nature. We have also learnt that social contract is an extension of the pre-existing morality which exists in the state of nature. Locke stresses on God's permissions rather than on God's prohibitions that is natural rights before natural law. They become an asset rather than a liability, something men desire to keep rather than to give up. Restricting the Hobbesian natural right to a given number of natural rights makes natural right much more manageable, and, being manageable, natural rights can be retained within the framework of civil society.

Now, we must remember here that Locke's social contract is a contract of each with all. It is a contract under which each individual agrees to concede to the community as a whole. The individuals surrender only those rights whose exercise introduce an element of distraction in the state of nature and the surrender of these rights makes peace secured. Thus the individuals surrender the rights to interpret the law for them, to execute it and to punish anyone who transgresses these rights. The rest of the rights remain the same even in the civil society. There are certain important features of Locke's idea of social contract. These are–

- It is a double sided contract in which the sovereign is not outside the contract but forms a part of it.
- Locke gives only limited powers to the community. The civil community which is to interpret and execute law is as much bound by it as the individual is.
- The social contract of Locke is unanimous. His contract is based on the consent of the people.
- Locke's contract is enforceable on the present generation only. It is not compulsory for all the subsequent generations to follow the contract.
- After signing the contract, Locke does not dissolve the state of nature.

Locke's idea of social contract is irrevocable in the sense that once people have entered into the contract, they cannot revert back to the state of nature unless the government is dissolved.

Thus we can say that, social contract is a double process for Locke. Men therefore, have a right of rebellion, and perhaps even a moral duty to rebel if government begins to frustrate God's purpose for the world. In all events, the Lockean 'sovereign' is a party to the contract to set up government.

Hence, it is clear from the above discussion that unlike Hobbes', in Locke's social contract, two contracts take place and he does not prefer absolute monarchy. We can therefore, say that Locke is a supporter of the limited form of monarchial system.

### **Stop to consider**

#### **Principal works of John Locke**

Locke wrote thirty five books touching all walks of life. His first works namely *Two Tracts on Government* (1662) and *Essays on the Law of Nature* in Latin (1664) were written at Oxford. His whole philosophy was based on the ideas expressed in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* published in 1679. It was forbidden as a text for tutorial discussions in Oxford and its colleges. In his *An Essay Concerning Toleration* (1667) he campaigned vigorously for toleration. Some of his minor works like *Second Letter on Toleration* (1691) and *Third Letter on Toleration* (1692) were written in response to the criticism made by Jonas Prost. In 1693, *Some Thoughts on Education* and in 1695 *the Reasonableness of Christianity* were published. In the *First Treatise* Locke offered a detailed critique of Robert Filmer's *Patriarchia*, a quasi-religious attempt to show that absolute monarchy was the natural system of human social organization. The *Second Treatise on Government* developed Locke's detailed account of the origin, aims and structure of any civil government.

## **2.5 Locke on Individualism**

After discussing Locke's ideas on human nature, state of nature and social contract; we are now going to discuss Locke as an individualist in this section. We already know that Locke is one of those few political philosophers of his age who stands against the idea of his time and boldly expressed his political ideas. He is not convinced that the individual has no standing whatsoever and he is only an insignificant and subordinate organ of the society. On the other hand, he believes that the individual has a definite standing. Locke displays himself as an ardent individualist in his writing.

Now, we will discuss the main features of the individualist philosophy of Locke.

It must be remembered that Locke accords a fundamental position to the innate and natural rights in his scheme and asserts that the natural rights of life, liberty and property belong to the individual due to the fact of his very personality. In the philosophy of Locke, individual occupies the supreme place and for that purpose he even gives the individual the right to resist the sovereign. In other words, to him the natural rights are prior to the state.

Again, we have also learnt that the state is created for the protection of the natural rights and the happiness of the individual. According to Locke, the individual is the end and the state stands for preserving the rights and freedoms of the individuals. Locke believes that a state where the interests of the individuals are best protected can be termed as the best state. It is the foremost duty of the state to preserve, protect and honour the innate and natural rights of mankind. It may be noted here that Locke seeks rights and freedom for all men without distinction. Locke attempts to base the government on the consent of the individuals. He considers the government based on the consent of the individual as the legitimate government. The government will be regarded as illegitimate if it is not based on the consent of individual. According to Locke, law can have no binding force without the consent of the individuals. Viewed in this context, he does not consider an absolute government or monarchy as the true government because it is based on caprice rather than reason. The belief in the individual consent also implies that people can withdraw their consent if the state violates its trust.

Locke assigns purely negative functions to the state. It interferes only when the rights of the individual are endangered. Otherwise the individual is left completely free to pursue his moral, material and intellectual pursuits. As a staunch individualist, Locke cannot reconcile with the idea of assigning positive functions to the state which can lead to state intervention in the personal affairs of the individual. In his social contract, Locke has said that the state should confine its functions to checking the violations of the rights of individuals. It can only interfere when there is infringement of rights of individuals. Locke proves himself a great individualist by assigning only negative functions to the state. He has left the individual isolated and alone in many fields, particularly in his personal affairs.

Locke's views on property further confirm him as an ardent individualist. He says that property initially owned in common becomes private property of an individual after he mixes his labour with it or imparts a bit of his individuality to the common object. According to him, property in which individual adds his labour becomes his private property and none has the right to touch or snatch that. This is probably the best way to emphasize the importance and worth of the individual and Locke assigns a prominent position to the law of nature and insists that even the state law must conform to it under all circumstances. According to him, secular law cannot be above natural law. Thus he places the state completely at the mercy of the individual.

Locke displays his strong individualist bias in his views on revolution. He authorizes the individual to rise in revolt against the state if it transgresses its limits or fails to carry out its part of obligation. He has also said that the state can be justified to the extent to which it can protect as well as strengthen the rights of the individuals. The happiness of the individuals or love for individualism is the end of the state. If the state fails to do so, the individual can revolt against it. Thus in Locke's scheme of things the state is reduced to the position of a hand-maid of the individual who rules supreme. A state should bestow and not snatch rights.

Again, Locke's faith in pleasure and pain, which forms the starting point of his philosophy, proves him to be an ardent individualist. He says that all the actions of an individual are motivated by the desire for pleasure and avoidance of pain. Locke therefore, concludes that every individual should be spared of pains and given maximum pleasure. So he has stressed on the pleasure of the individual and not of the society.

Locke advocates division of power, because he is convinced that it is an essential pre-condition for the preservation of individual freedom. Unless there is division of power, it will be futile to talk about individual freedom.

It is evident from the above discussion that Locke is an ardent individualist. In fact some of the scholars have criticized Locke for carrying individualism to such an extreme. Prof. Laski says, "Locke reduced the state to a negative institution, a kind of gigantic limited liability company". By assigning purely negative functions to the state, Locke, in fact, ensures the domination of the strong over the weak and rich over the poor. According to some critics, Locke does not pay any attention to the moral upliftment of the individual.



But it cannot be said that his individualism has no value. In fact, Locke theory forms the basis for the development of theories of liberalism and utilitarianism which subsequently became popular.

**SAQ**

Make a critical evaluation of Locke as an individualist (80 words).

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**Stop to consider**

**Locke on Revolution**

Locke was in favour of Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England. He believes that people have every right to revolt against the government if it fails to protect their rights. He also holds the opinion that government holds power only for the welfare of the people. If the government fails to perform the functions, the people have every right to resort to arms and set up new government. The government loses its legitimacy as soon as it becomes arbitrary and exceeds its authority. But according to him, right to revolution does not mean encouragement for rebellion. People are permitted to revolt only when they have lost their patience and all the other methods have failed. Locke’s support of Glorious Revolution is evident from the fact that the background of the *Second Treatise* is provided by the years of rebellion against the English Throne. It is also believed that the preface of the text has defended the philosophical and political concepts of the Glorious Revolution.

**2.6 Locke on Private Property**

We have already discussed Locke as an ardent individualist and it is apparent from his views on private property. Private property is an age-old institution. It is the subject matter of many controversial theories both in political as well as economic fields. Locke firmly believes that the institution of private property is essential for the development of mankind. He believes that man is an entrepreneurial animal. He has right to own private property. Locke uses the word property in both broad and narrow senses. In a broad sense,

it covers a wide range of human interests and aspirations. Conceived in a narrow sense, it refers to material goods. According to Locke, state comes into being to protect the natural rights of life, liberty and property of mankind. He believes that of all the rights, the right to property is the most sacred and the valuable one. He believes that the state must preserve private property for the happiness of the citizens. According to Locke, private property always constitutes an important source of joy.

Locke's theory of property is a labour theory of property. He believes that God gives the world to men for his common use. People can keep the fruits of their labour with them as long as they follow the basic rule of not wasting anything. There must be enough left in common for others.

He justifies ownership of private property on different grounds. Now let us discuss the grounds on which Locke has justified private property.

- First, Locke justifies private property on religious grounds. According to him, God has given mankind the appropriate means for making use of the resources. It is the duty of the individuals to develop the resources so that they can actually sustain life.
- Another justification for the retention of private property as given by Locke is that property is the result of human labour. He says that men put their labour by way of tilling and sowing the land. It is his labour which makes the land worthy of possession and converts lands into private property. He argues that it is human labour which distinguishes private ownership from common ownership. Labour is the exclusive and unquestioned property of the labourer and by mixing his labour with a piece of land, an individual acquires the right to possess whatever he has made out of that material.
- Social sanction and recognition from the past is another justification for owning private property.
- Another justification is that private property emerges in the society and continues to exist even today whether we like it or not.
- Locke has justified the institution of private property on historical ground. History has witnessed that people who do not own property, suffer under tyranny and people without property are deprived of their liberty. Hobbes believes that encouraging the institution of private property appears to be a valid guarantee for all kinds of liberty. He believes that private property is the natural right of every individual and the state must protect this right.

Thus, we find that according to Locke the ownership of property is created by the application of labour. According to Locke, unused property is a waste and an offence against nature. Labour not only creates property but also determines its value. The right to property is a natural right and therefore, it comes prior to the government. Locke argues that property represents human entitlements. He states that the chief objective or the main aim of the union of human beings into a commonwealth is the preservation and protection of their property. The purpose of all government is to secure the material possessions of all human beings. Locke identifies property with society. He states that even if the commonwealth is based on freely elected representatives, it cannot alienate property from its subjects arbitrarily. No government can deprive an individual of his material possessions without the consent of the latter. The state is created for the sole protection of property. Therefore, no part or whole of the individual's property can be alienated without his consent. Locke also states that no taxes can be levied without the consent of the individuals. Otherwise it invades the fundamental right to property. Locke defends property that is directly acquired through one's labour. He avoids the issue of inheritance or transactions as gifts. Here we should remember that Locke divides the society into two classes with different rights viz, classes owning property and classes without property.

Locke's views on private property have been criticized by many political thinkers. C. B. Macpherson sees Locke as a defender of unrestricted capitalist accumulation. Macpherson argues that Locke's views on property makes him a bourgeois apologist, a defender of the privileges of the possessing classes. Macpherson's arguments are challenged by Dunn, Laslett, Tully, Wood etc. They argue that Locke can at best be seen as a spokesman of agrarian capitalism. Locke's stress on the importance of labour and industry for higher productivity becomes apparent during the Enclosure movement. The Enclosure movement is a protest against confiscation of land without the consent of the individual owner.

### **Stop to consider**

#### **Locke on Government:**

Locke believes that state and government come into being for the welfare of the people. According to him, the state should create some standards by which the individuals can judge what is wrong and what is right. The government should provide the subjects an impartial authority to settle down the disputes. According to Locke, the government should also safeguard the interest of its individuals from the outside agencies. Locke believes that government can be divided into three forms, namely, monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. He is of the view that limited democracy is the best form of government. By limited democracy Locke means that form of democracy in which power has been delegated to the representatives guided by the electorates.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Locke's labour theory of property greatly influences Marx's labour theory of value. (True/False)
2. Which one of the following statements of Locke confirms that he is an individualist?
  - a. The natural rights are prior to the state.
  - b. He seeks rights and freedom for all men without distinction.
  - c. He bases the government on the consent of the individual.
  - d. All the above.
3. Why according to Locke individuals enter in to contract in the state of nature.
4. Mention four grounds on which Locke justifies private property.

## **2.7 Locke's View on Natural Right and Natural Law**

In the previous sections of the unit we have learnt that Locke believes that before joining the civil state, people have lived in the state of nature. The state of nature is a state of peace, goodwill and mutual understanding as people are peace loving and understanding. Life is not intolerable in the state of nature. The state of nature is only a pre-political society and not a pre-social society. Locke's view on natural law is simple. According to

him, there are certain laws whose content is set in nature by God and has universal validity. By the law of nature Locke means a set of rules for human behaviour. He agrees with Grotius that law of nature is only legal in character but it represents moral and rational reasoning of the society. It is a conduct and code of rules which governs all people at all time. Locke's law of nature is based on two factors

1. Reason
2. Equality of all in relation to each other.

He has tried to pinpoint as to how the people should behave with each other. By the law of nature he promotes equality in independence. According to him, it is everybody's birth right. For him, it is the pre-condition of natural law. Locke argues that all should be free and equal to act and think within the bounds of natural law. The act of people should not violate the law of nature. The violation of law under certain circumstances is decided by reason. Those who violate the law of nature should be punished by everyone. According to Locke, the fundamental natural law is that the human life should be preserved as much as possible. The natural law as stated by Locke has faced some serious criticisms.

- The natural law has not been codified properly. There is no standardized legal norm for the codification.
- The natural law can be interpreted by every individual in the way he likes as there is a lack of an established, settled and known law. Hence, there will be as many interpretations of law as the individuals wish. Consequently, it will lead to a confusing state in practice.
- A law must have an accepted judge to interpret it. But in the state of nature there is no such judge to interpret the natural laws. Obviously, when people are their own judges, the passions are bound to rise.
- There is no executive power to enforce the natural law and that makes the law meaningless.

Thus, we know that Locke conceptualizes rights as natural and inalienable. According to Locke, there are three natural rights.

- *Right to life*- everyone is entitled to live once one is born.
- *Right to liberty*- everyone is entitled to do anything one wants to so long as it does not conflict with the first right.
- *Right to property*- everyone is entitled to own all one creates or gains through gift or trade so long as it does not conflict with the first two rights.

These rights protect our freedom to control our own lives consistent with the rights of others to do the same. Locke argues that the natural rights alone are solely capable of maintaining a harmonious society. Locke also opines that man is originally born into a state of nature where he is rational, tolerant and happy. In this original existence, man is entitled to enjoy the rights of life, liberty and property. Locke believes that the preservation of these natural rights is only reason for the existence of government.

### **Stop to consider**

#### **Locke's view on state**

Locke assumes that the state is composed of three powers viz. legislative, executive and federative. Legislative power is the most important power. Locke assigns supreme power to the legislature but does not grant it absolute power. People can curtail its power if it acts contrary to the trust reposed in it. The executive power includes the judicial power also. Locke assigns it the duty of enforcing the law and permits it to impose necessary penalties in accordance with the laws. Locke limits the power of the executive wing by making it dependent on the legislature. The federative power includes the duty to protect the interest of the community and the individual citizens in relations to other communities and citizens.

## **2.8 Critical Appreciation of Locke's Political Philosophy**

Locke has been criticized by many thinkers on various grounds. In the following section we attempt a critical appreciation of Locke's political philosophy.

- Locke takes a mechanistic view of state and society which is not correct. The state and society are not institutions which can simply be created or destroyed by the individual at will. There are certainly more complicated motives involved in the formation of the community than Locke wanted us to believe.
- Locke's philosophy suffers from logical inconsistencies and he does not stick to any particular opinion. For e.g. at various times he asserts that the sovereignty resides with the individual, the community, the government and the legislature. At the very initial stage of his theory of social contract he gives us the impression that the individual and his rights are absolute. But a little later he attributes supremacy to the community as a whole. As he proceeds further he vests the supreme power in the government as a trustee of the community. And finally he asserts that the supreme power inside the government rests with the legislature. At another stage he even suggests that a single person can have supreme power if the executive power is vested in him and he has a share in the legislature. It is indeed difficult to make out what Locke actually wants to convey.
- Locke refers to the original contract without specifying the outcome of this contract- whether it is society or state. Probably to overcome this difficulty he envisages a second contract, though he does not make a specific mention of it.
- There is a clear contradiction of the denial of innate ideas and belief in inborn natural rights.
- Locke gives supreme powers to the majority and treats its acts as acts of the community as a whole. It does not matter whether a person is deprived of his so called natural rights by a single individual or the majority. Locke fails to realize that even the majority can be despotic.
- Again, Locke wrongly assumes that natural rights can exist in the pre-civil society in the absence of an enforcement agency.
- His theory of natural laws is also deficient in so far he fails to explain how and from where the law of nature originates and why it should be binding even without the power of enforcement. His views on law of nature are quite unconvincing.

- Locke after painting a very bright picture of the state of nature fails to give any convincing arguments as to why people decide to descend from Golden Age to Iron Age.
- Locke's theory of tacit consent is defective in so far as it contains no provision for continuity of consent and the contract once concluded is binding on all the succeeding generations.
- Locke has depicted the man of his state of nature leading a highly moral and civilized life, enjoying certain rights and duties. This is more of a picture of a civil man than a man living in the primitive society.
- Locke has been criticized for depriving the state of all moral authority and assigning it purely negative functions. He specifically debar the state from undertaking functions like promotion of education, morality, scientific and intellectual development. In this way his theory is contrary to the notions of modern welfare state.

### **Stop to consider**

#### **Locke on Religion**

Locke is a supporter of religious tolerance. Locke believes in religious tolerance except in the case of those who has foreign allegiance. Further, according to Locke, the church should not interfere with the state affairs. The state should not interfere in the religious beliefs of its individuals. He argues that the state should not intrude in the religious affairs of the individuals except when peace of the state is threatened. Locke has assigned the civil magistrates the function of regulating religious practice for peace, safety and security of his people. He believes that church and state are two separate organizations and should be treated as such. He does not support religious persecution also. Religious tolerance is essential for human and national development.

## **2.9 Contribution of Locke**

In this unit we have discussed various ideas of the English political thinker John Locke. We have already read the criticisms leveled against John Locke. Though his views have been severely criticized, it cannot be denied that he is one of the most influential thinkers in the field of modern political thought. He is the first thinker to draw a distinction between society, state and gov-



ernment and to put them in proper chronological order. He opines that society comes prior to state and this idea is accepted even today. According to him, society existed in the state of nature and was followed by the state and ultimately the government came into existence to exercise the powers of the state as its trustee.

Locke has contributed significantly to the political theory the doctrine of natural rights. According to Dunning, “the most distinctive contribution of Locke to political theory is his doctrine of natural rights”. He stresses that the state stands for the preservation of these rights. According to him, state comes into being to uphold these natural rights. Locke also emphasizes the doctrine of supremacy of community on which Rousseau’s theory of ‘General Will’ is based.

Locke also opines that the individuals have the right to revolt against the state if the state fails to achieve the ends for which it is created. His views on the right to revolt are influential as the people of America and France have tried to translate his views into actual practice. Though these two revolutions differ from each other, they share common heritage from Locke. His ideas on constitutionalism, toleration, natural rights, limited consensual and law-based authority and private property have profoundly influenced the political establishment of England, America, France and Holland.

Locke is also regarded as the champion of liberalism of eighteenth century. In fact it is believed that liberalism as a political creed began with Locke. He argues that if the state goes beyond its jurisdiction, its authority must be restricted. In this way, Locke provides the basis for the development of the idea of a democratic state based on popular institutions and constitutional government. He also emphasizes the principle of consent of the governed and majority rule which form the basis of the modern democratic institutions.

Locke regards the concept of separation of powers as an essential ingredient for preservation of individual liberty. His idea provides the basis for Montesquieu’s classical theory of separation of powers.

It can also be said that Locke’s thought contains the seeds of utilitarianism. He greatly emphasizes the general happiness of the people which is later adopted by Bentham. While dealing with utilitarian ideas, Bentham adopts

Locke's concept of state as a machine, but he brushes aside Locke's theory of natural rights. In this we can say that though Bentham does not follow Locke blindly, he is indebted to Locke for the basic principles of utilitarianism.

Locke delineates the idea of popular sovereignty which had a preference even over political sovereignty. In his set up everything revolves round the individual whom he conceived lived even before the state came into existence. There is no denial that his conception of individualism is much more ahead of the modern individualist. He can claim to have a place as the forerunner of modern individualism.

Locke lays great emphasis on the principles of toleration and secularism. He for the first time reduces church to a voluntary society which can exert no power save over its members. The state was expected to remain neutral in religious matters unless the views expressed at the religious meetings posed a threat to the peace and existence of the state. He gives a death blow to notions of divine rights and asserted that state is human institution. He does not favour interference of god or religious leaders in the affairs of the state.

It is found that Locke has tremendous influence on political institutions of his own time and also on the posterity. French Huguenots, The Dutch, Montesquieu, Rousseau were greatly influenced by him. The impression of Locke on the American declaration of independence is quite clear.

## **2.10 Summing up**

The political theory of Locke depends for their plausibility on the different pictures of the state of nature. This unit provides you a comprehensive account of Locke's political philosophy. After reading this unit, you are now in a position to discuss Locke's view on the state of nature and human nature. Locke's state of nature is different from the concept given by Hobbes. Locke considers human beings as the moral beings. He considers state of nature as state of liberty where natural laws prevail. Moreover, you have also learnt that Locke is considered to be one of the important social contract theorists after Hobbes. According to Locke, the social contract is a contract of each individual with all. The individuals surrender only those rights through

the contract whose exercise introduce an element of distraction in the state of nature and makes its peace secure. Locke has also discussed at length the natural rights and natural laws. According to him, there are three kinds of natural rights, viz, right to life, liberty and property. He also believes that the natural rights are solely capable of maintaining a harmonious society. In this unit, you have also learnt that Locke has contributed significantly to the growth of constitutionalism and utilitarianism. Rousseau's formulation of the theory of 'General Will' draws on Locke's idea of the supremacy of community. In the next unit of this block, we will be dealing with the views of Rousseau who is also considered to be an important social contract theorist. After familiarizing you with Locke's ideas in this unit, in the next units we attempt to give you a comparative study of Locke and Rousseau.

## 2.11 References and Suggested Readings

1. Mukharjee, Subrata & Sushila Ramaswamy. A History of Political Thought, Plato to Marx, Prentice Hall, New Delhi, 2003.
2. J.S.McClelland, A History of Western Political Thought, Routledge. London and New York, 1996.

### Links:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Locke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke)

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/>

<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=39026>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/93360/John-Locke-on-Property-Rights>

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## **Unit 3**

### **Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)**

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#### **3.6.1 Rousseau on Representative Government**

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#### **3.8 References and Suggested Readings**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Rousseau is a great political philosopher, educationist and essayist of the eighteenth century. He is also known as a great novelist, composer of music and a theorist. His ideas and political philosophies have influenced the French Revolution and the development of modern political and educational thought.

The great eccentric Rousseau is a genius but he often faces criticisms for his conflicting and contradictory ideas. He is a staunch advocator of individual freedom. However, at times he also advocates collectivism. Many thinkers have viewed him as a precursor of modern totalitarianism. Rousseau criticizes property as the root cause of all evils and at the same time defends property in civil society. He also criticizes religion but refuses to assign any place to the atheists in his republic.

The influence of Rousseau's ideas can be seen not only in politics and government but also in education, literature, religion, morality, customs and manners. He paves the way for the great revolutions that take place within a decade of his death. Rousseau's intellectual contribution to the world makes him a monumental figure in the history of political theory and through the idea of "General Will", he contributes the idea of popular will and democracy to the world of political philosophy.

In this unit, we shall discuss Rousseau as an individualist and as a theorist of social contract. Hence, here we shall deal with Rousseau's ideas on Human nature and the State of Nature. His idea on General Will receives great attention by the political thinkers. Therefore, we shall also attempt to study his idea on General Will and the criticisms it has faced with in this unit.

### 3.2 Objectives

Rousseau is an important figure in the history of political theory as his major ideas of individualism, collectivism and theories of social contract have helped to shape the course of political philosophy. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- *discuss* Rousseau's view on the State of Nature
- *describe* Rousseau's views on Human nature and Private Property
- *explain* his ideas of Social Contract
- *examine* Rousseau's ideas on General Will

### 3.3 Rousseau on Human Nature and Private Property

In the previous units of this block, we have already discussed the ideas of Hobbes and Locke on human nature. The concept of social contract is an important aspect of Hobbes and Locke's theorization of the system of government. Following them, Rousseau continues the discussion on social contract. While elaborating the idea of social contract, Rousseau deals with the concept of natural man.

Rousseau observes that,

*'the first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said "This is mine" and found people naive enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor, you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'*

(Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 1754)

Rousseau differs from Hobbes for asserting that man, in the state of nature is wicked. On the other hand, he opines that ‘uncorrupted morals’ characterizes the state of nature. However, Rousseau does not believe that human beings act morally in the state of nature. He further believes that the terms like ‘justice’, ‘wickedness’ are inapplicable to pre-political society. Thus, Rousseau is of the view that human beings, in the state of nature may act with the ferocity of an animal. Consequently, human beings are good only when they are self-sufficient and not subject to the vices of political society. In this way, the natural goodness of humanity, as defined by Rousseau, is the goodness of the animal which is neither good nor bad.

In his *Discourse on Inequality* (1754), Rousseau traces man’s social evolution from the primitive state of nature to the modern society. To quote Rousseau

*The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked. Then only, when the voice of duty takes the place of physical impulses and right of appetite, does man, who so far had considered only himself, find that he is forced to act on different principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although, in this state, he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that, did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it forever, and, instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man. (The Social Contract, Chapter 8)*

Thus, from the above statement, we can find that Rousseau believes that man, in the state of nature is equal, self-sufficient and contented. In short, every man in the state of nature lives a life of idyllic simplicity and happiness. In his *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau further argues that civilization has robbed the individual of the natural freedom and made him cruel, selfish

and bloodthirsty. Therefore, he regards the human beings in the state of nature as the 'noble savages'.

In the words of Rousseau,

*But from the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality too disappeared, property was introduced, for work became indispensable, and vast forests became smiling fields, which man had to water with the sweat of his brow, and where slavery and misery were soon seem to germinate and grow up with crops (Rousseau 1958: 199)*

Now we can trace the connection between the thinkers as like Hobbes, Rousseau also believes that in the state of nature, the institution of private property is absent. Moreover, Rousseau also believes that the civil society has emerged to protect the property of a few and the institutionalization of property rights put an end to the sense of self-sufficiency that existed in the state of nature, thereby bringing misery to the majority.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Life sketch of Rousseau:**

Rousseau was born in Geneva on June 28 in 1712. His mother died soon after his birth and his father deserted the family. Rousseau was put to school by one of his uncles. But he did not enjoy formal education and at 16 Rousseau ran away from home and for 14 long years he roamed around Europe. In 1742 Rousseau came to Paris to earn his livelihood. He became the secretary to the French ambassador in Venice from 1743-1744. In 1749 the Academy at Dijon announced a prize for the best essay on the question: '*Has the progress of sciences and arts contributed to corrupt or profit morality*'. Rousseau worked on the essay and won the first prize. After winning this award, Rousseau turned into a great literary person from a non-entity. After that he wrote many books among which *The Emile* and *The Social Contract* have drawn great attention of the political philosophers of the world.

Besides, his contribution to the field of Political Science, Rousseau also made significant contributions in other fields like opera and music. One of his operas, 'Le Devin du Village' (The Village Soothsayer) became an instant hit in Paris in 1753. A Dictionary of music written by Rousseau can be regarded as another notable contribution of him. However, despite the success and fame, Rousseau was persecuted for religious reasons. His two valuable works *The Emile* and *The Social Contract* were burnt in Paris as well as in Geneva. Rousseau went in to hiding facing the threat of imprisonment. He died in 1778.



### **3.4 Rousseau on the State of Nature:**

After discussing Rousseau's idea on Human nature in the above section, now we are going to discuss his idea on the state of nature. Like his predecessors, Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau also begins his theory of social contract with a description of the state of nature. However, Rousseau's theorization is different from Hobbes and Locke although we can trace the similarities between them. To elaborate, Rousseau agrees with Hobbes and Locke that in the state of nature, self-preservation is men's basic drive. We have already learnt that while describing the state of nature, Hobbes regards man as wicked by nature. So, according to him, the state of nature is characterized by a state of war where men fight against each other. For establishing peace and security in the society, men enter into a mutual contract in order to surrender all their rights and possessions in favour of the 'Sovereign'. Locke, on the other hand, believes that the state of nature is a state characterized by peace and goodwill. But the inconveniences in the state of nature prompt people to enter into a contract for an orderly living.

Again, we have found that Hobbes believes that society is the corrupting force that transforms 'natural man' into a wicked man. Rousseau argues that Hobbes has failed to define the state of nature correctly. According to Rousseau, in the state of nature a man will be like a savage whose actions are primarily determined by immediate needs like the desire for food, sexual satisfaction and sleep. In such a state of nature man fears only hunger and pain. Rousseau considers the savage as the solitary animal and for him 'State of Nature' is much more than just a removal of government. To him, it also includes removal of all the cultural aspects like beliefs, languages etc. In such a situation, Rousseau believes that self-love and pity are the only sentiments that characterize and remain in our nature.

So, we find that according to Rousseau, human beings possess positive qualities in the state of nature and all the negative aspects of human nature are the result of the interaction with the society. He, therefore, views society as 'artificial' and 'corrupt' and argues that the furthering of the society results in the continuing unhappiness of humankind. Rousseau also opines that the progress of knowledge has made governments more powerful leading to the consequent loss of individual liberty.

Thus, Rousseau points out a fundamental division between society and human nature. According to him, human beings are good because they are self-sufficient and the vices of the society fail to affect them. He also thinks that the development of the society, especially the growth of social interdependence, has been inimical to the well-being of the human society. Hence, it is clear to us that, according to Rousseau, men are free in the state of nature and enjoy all rights incidental to their persons.

### **Stop to consider**

#### **Major works of Rousseau:**

1. *The Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, 1750
2. *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, 1755
3. *The Discourse on Political Economy*, 1755
4. *Julie or the New Heloise*, 1761
5. *The Emile or on Education*, 1762
6. *The Social Contract*, 1762
7. *The Confessions (Rousseau's Autobiography)*, Part I, 1782 and Part II, 1789
8. *Reveries of the Solitary Worker*, 1782
9. *Judge of Jean Jacques*, 1782

Rousseau's idea of the state of nature is similar to Locke's idea. According to Rousseau, the natural man leads a life of idyllic simplicity and unrestricted freedom. He believes that the state of nature is pre-social and pre-political. The natural man lives in isolation until his instincts prompt him to seek the company of others. In that sense, he is non-social and amoral. The natural man is, therefore, neither good nor bad, neither happy nor unhappy, neither evil nor virtuous. Like Hobbes, Rousseau also believes that the natural man is guided by a primary need and compulsion of life, namely self-preservation. Rousseau further considers self-interest and sympathy as the two instincts that enable the natural man to satisfy his needs. In this way, Rousseau idealizes man in the state of nature as a 'noble savage'. Thus, Rousseau believes that these noble savages were equal. At the same time, he did not rule out the possibility of having inequalities among them. However, these

inequalities do not hinder the independence and self-sufficiency of human beings as they continue to lead free, healthy, honest and happy lives.

Rousseau's idealization of man as 'noble savage' invites attention to the reasons behind man's rejection of the state of nature in spite of the promise of liberty and happiness. Rousseau believes that the fury of nature translated in the calamities like flood, cyclone or earthquake instills a sense of insecurity in man. Besides, the increase in population leads to various other problems. Consequently, in such a situation, man's sense of self-dependence is diminished when he starts seeking the company of others. Family is the first of the social institutions that comes into existence. With the establishment of family, economic needs also arise leading to the emergence of the concept like private property. Rousseau, therefore, opines that, 'the first man who enclosed a plot of ground and bethought himself saying "this is mine" and found others foolish enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society"'.

Regarding the consequences of private property, Rousseau again says that, "Such was or may well have been the origin of society or law, which bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich, which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right and for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals and subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness"'.

Thus, Rousseau believes that in the state of nature, individual is guided by instinct and not by reason. The life of the individuals in the state of nature is different as the former possessed a will and a desire for perfection. Like Hobbes, Rousseau believes that man in the state of nature is guided by the primary need and desire for self-preservation. Rousseau does not view reason as the innate quality of the individuals. He also believes that the natural man is able to fulfill his needs without much assistance from reason. Reason for Rousseau is an instrument to attain ends, and if one's ends are satisfied effortlessly, then it plays a marginal role. In the state of nature, human beings have limited desires. However, the moment individuals starts reasoning, his range of desires also increases. Since happiness is dependent on the satisfaction of desires, consequently the rational individuals become unhappy. Under such circumstances the natural persons cease to be

happy and his life becomes miserable where both natural equality and innocence of the individual is lost. Rousseau therefore says that,

*Reason is what engenders egocentrism and reflection strengthens it. Reason is what turns man in upon himself....Philosophy is what isolates him and what moves him to say in secret at the sight of a suffering man, "Perish if you will; I am safe and sound" (Rousseau, 1958)*

Rousseau also strongly believes that it is impossible for human beings to go back to the state of nature once society, family and private property come to stay. Therefore, according to him, the problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect the whole common force, the person and goods of each associate. In such an association, an individual uniting himself with all may still obey himself alone and remain as free as ever. In other words, the existing social order known for its inequality and exploitation should be replaced by a new social order in which the community resulting from a voluntary social contract can be strong enough to assure every member both liberty and equality in much greater measure than what he possesses in the state of nature.

Rousseau also believes that in the state of nature, human beings are healthy, good and roughly equal to each other. But later, they become evil, corrupt and unequal. Thus, Rousseau envisages two stages of the state of nature namely, the pre-property state and the post-property state. While the pre-property state of nature is an ideal stage, the post-property state of nature is wretched.

### **Stop to Consider:**

#### **Rousseau as an Enlightenment thinker**

Rousseau belongs to the age of Enlightenment which is also known as the Age of Reason. In this period, thinkers do not establish any particular mode of philosophical speculation, but agree on many fundamental issues. Thinkers of Enlightenment age had faith on the idea on progress and emphasize on the application of scientific methods. Rousseau, as a product of Enlightenment has taken into account these developments. However, he protests against intelligence, science and reason in so far as they destroy reverence, faith and moral institution, the factors on which society is based. According to Rousseau, arts, manners and politeness not only destroy martial virtues, but also deny human nature forcing individuals to conceal 'their real selves'.

### 3.5 Rousseau's Idea of Social Contract

We have already learnt that like Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau also belongs to the Social Contract school. Before Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke gave their ideas on social contract. According to Hobbes, social contract is essential in the state of nature for establishing peace and security for the preservation of life and liberty of every individual. But to Rousseau, peace has no meaning without freedom. Rousseau is of the view that *'Tranquility is also found in dungeons but is that enough to make them desirable places to live in?'* Thus, Rousseau believes that the graveyard peace is no peace. Peace is real only when it is founded on liberty. Therefore, Rousseau will not exchange liberty merely for the sake of peace. To him, to renounce liberty is to renounce the essence of being human.

Like Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau assumes that people enter into a social contract to come out of the wretched and unbearable conditions of the post-property stage of nature. According to him, once the serpent in the form of private property enters in the society, the whole order and peaceful atmosphere is disturbed and all feel the necessity of bringing back the old order of calmness and happy life.

The Social Contract of Rousseau is not one-sided but mutual. Here, men will not surrender themselves to a sovereign or any external agency. According to Rousseau, each man of the state of nature will enter into a contract with every other person. Thus, in the state of nature, each man gives up their liberty to gain more than he has sacrificed. Hence, we can see that according to Rousseau's, the social contract helps to establish a strong common force that leads to the preservation of rights and freedoms of all the individuals in the society and secure peace for all the citizens.

Rousseau discusses his theory of social contract in his famous work *The Social Contract*. According to him, society is inevitable as human life is impossible without it. Forced by such necessity, the individuals make a contract and establish civil society. In *The Emile*, he distinguishes between the state of nature and civil society and states his preference for the latter. In his words:

*Oh! Emile, where is the man who owes nothing to the land in which he lives? Whatever, that land may be, he owes to it the most precious thing possessed by man, the morality of his actions and the love of*

*virtue. Born in the depth of forests he would have lived in greater happiness and freedom; but being able to follow his inclinations without a struggle there would have been no merit in his goodness, he would not have been virtuous, as many be of his passions. The mere sight of order teaches him to know and love it. The public good, which to others is a mere pretext, is a real motive for him. He learns to fight against himself and to prevail, to sacrifice his own interest to the common weal. It is not true that he gains nothing from the laws; they give him courage to be just, even in the midst of the wicked. It is not true that they have failed to make him free; they have taught him to rule himself (Rousseau, 1911)*

From the above statement of Rousseau, it is evident that he prefers the State of Nature than the civil society established through social contract. However, with the increase in men's desire, the possibilities of inequalities also increase. And therefore, the people of the state of nature make a contract. The main features of Rousseau's Social Contract are:

- The individual is made to surrender everything to the society but receives back what he surrenders as a member of the society. In this sense he is not a loser but gainer.
- The individual surrenders all his rights not to any individual but to a body of which he himself is a part.
- The contract gives rise to an organic society. It is a moral being possessing its own life, will and entity. Rousseau calls it public person.
- The contract leads to material and moral transformation of the individual.

Now we are in a position to find an explicit difference between the contracts provided by Locke and Rousseau. While Locke's contract takes into consideration a specific object in view, Rousseau's contract is a continuous process because he believes that the community can grow rich and become fertile only with the constant participation of the individual in the welfare of the society.

Rousseau also argues that state results from a contract between individuals in their personal capacity and individuals in their corporate capacity. Through the social contract, Rousseau merges the individual completely into the state and creates a political society which is based on the consent of all the members. He maintains that this system of equality makes all to surrender their rights.

***Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains:***

In the opening page of his famous work, *The Social Contract*, Rousseau observes that, 'Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains'. As we see, this observation has serious contradictions — how can man be free and yet remain in chains? But such contradiction is only at the surface level as by making this observation, Rousseau actually wants to reaffirm the fact that man is free by birth and by nature and therefore, he is entitled to have a free life in the society. However, in civil society every man becomes a slave of customs, conventions and also of laws as these are invented by a few clever men to perpetuate their power and domination over the vast majority of common men. Rousseau also strongly believes that even the men who claim to be the masters fail to realize that they are slaves of their own creation as they are in constant danger of being deprived of their possessions. Therefore, Rousseau makes this statement before discussing his idea on social contract.

We must remember here that Rousseau is considered to be a great supporter of individual liberty as liberty is the central concept of his thought. His main concern is to deal with the mechanisms through which human beings are forced to give up their liberty. His idea of social contract delineates that the governed agrees to be ruled by the government for protecting their rights and property and ensure happiness. Once rulers cease to protect the governed, the latter are free to choose another set of governors. Thus, we can see that Rousseau makes the governed powerful by giving them the power to change the rulers and thereby paves the way for democratic rule.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Influence of Rousseau's idea on French Revolution**

*The Social Contract* (1762) written by Rousseau has considerably influenced the French Revolution. This book starts with the famous declaration, "man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains". The phrases like liberty, equality and fraternity used in *The Social Contract* inspired the French Revolution. Therefore, Vaughan has opined that Rousseau's ideas are put into practice during the 'later and more terrible phases of the Revolution' (Vaughan, 1962).

Rousseau believes in the natural goodness of man. According to him, human beings are corrupted by the greed and competition of civilization. Rousseau's ideas are based on reason which influenced the French Revolution. According to Rousseau, politics is not based on some fictional social contract, but instead upon the general will of the people in a community. Thus Rousseau emphasized the liberty of the individual which became the hallmark of the French Revolution. This is why Rousseau is regarded as the spiritual father of the French Revolution.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

1. Rousseau considers man as wicked by nature (write True or False)
2. Mention two characteristics of human beings as pointed out by Rousseau.
3. Write two lines on Rousseau's idea of the state of nature.
4. According to Rousseau, why did man give up the state of nature and make a contract?
5. Explain, '*Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains*'.

### **3.6 Rousseau's View on General Will**

Rousseau introduces his concept of 'General Will' first in *The Discourse on Political Economy* and further develops it in *The Social Contract*. According to Rousseau, before joining the society, man use to live in the state of nature in which all are equal and live peacefully. Life, in the state of nature is simple and not organized. It needs to be mentioned here that historically such a society does not exist but Rousseau creates such a society in which people possess the capacity to learn as well as understand. In such



a society, private property does not exist and all co-operate with each other in gathering food. Emergence of private property has disturbed this social setting and created a state of anarchy and disorder.

According to Rousseau, the community established through the social contract is a corporate body with a personality and a will of its own. This common will of the community has been termed as the 'General Will'. In Rousseau's opinion, the social contract makes the community sovereign and therefore, the General Will is also sovereign. By obeying the General Will a man becomes a citizen and not a subject. He also opines that the obedience to the General Will is compulsory for all in the society. If anybody refuses to obey the General Will, he will be forced to obey it. Thus, in Rousseau's words, "The General Will means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free".

We can now comprehend that Rousseau's General Will cannot be arbitrary or oppressive because the sovereign to whom it belongs cannot be arbitrary. He states that, "the Sovereign, merely by virtue of what it is, always what it ought to be". As a result, neither the sovereign nor the General Will can go wrong. Rousseau again says that the General Will always aims the preservation and welfare of the whole and of every part, and is the source of laws.

However, Rousseau's idea of General Will is criticized because of his contradictory opinions. On one hand, Rousseau argues that General Will allows for individual diversity and freedom, but at the same time, the General Will also encourages the well-being of the whole, and therefore, can conflict with the particular interests of individuals.

The General Will of the community has certain distinctive characteristics. According to Rousseau, General Will has no relation to numbers and as such it is not an arithmetical proposition. Thus, the General Will does not represent the will of the majority or the will of the whole community. However, it cannot be regarded as the will of the minority also. Neither, this is the will of a single individual.

We have already discussed that the General Will aims at the general good and it must come from all and apply to all. Each individual in a community has his/her own will. It may be called the 'particular will' of the individual. Each particular will has two different aspects – selfish and general. The

selfish will is also called the actual will of every individual that induces man to think only of his own interest while the general aspect of the particular will asks him to find his own interest in the general interest of the community. Thus the selfish or actual will aims at the good of the individual alone. The selfish wills of individuals in the community clash with each other and cancel each other. As a result, the general aspects of all the individual wills remain. All the general aspects of the individual wills together become the General Will of the community. This General Will of the community is unselfish and aims at the good of all and therefore, it is termed as 'real will'. The real will based on reason and foresightedness of the individuals is higher, nobler and supreme which impels the person to think of the well-being of all rather than his self-interest. Thus it is the moral will.

Again, the General Will must be consciously adopted and continuously operated. To practice the concept of General Will, the citizens must find opportunities to come together, discuss their affairs in common and arrive at unanimous decisions. This is possible only in small societies. While formulating the idea of General Will, Rousseau has in mind the city Republics of Geneva. Thus, the concept of General Will is based on the idea of direct democracy.

The General Will of Rousseau resides in a community and it cannot be alienated from the community. This will of the community cannot be delegated to any person. Likewise, the General Will cannot be represented also. Rousseau does not believe in the representative bodies because such bodies may also develop a will of its own, different from the General Will. Therefore, the General Will has no place in the representative democracy. He further opines that the people of England are free and their General Will gets manifested or translated into actuality only when they go to polls. Such freedom cannot be enjoyed by them in other occasions.

Again, the General Will is opposed to party government. It is because, in a party government, various parties develop their own general wills. In such a scenario, the general will representing the satisfaction and the good of the community as a whole is very difficult to achieve.

Rousseau distinguishes his General Will from the will of the all. He says that whereas the will of the all is merely a majority will which is concerned with the welfare of a few only, the General Will thinks in terms of the good of the

community as a whole. The difference between these two wills can be explained in the following words of Rousseau, “There is often a considerable difference between General Will and the will of all, the former aims at the common interests, the latter aims at private interest and is only a sum of particular wills. But if we take away from the various particular interests which conflict with each other, what remains as the sum of difference is General Will”.

According to Rousseau, the existence of organized groups and associations within a society is again a hindrance to the expression of General Will. It is because General Will is the will of the whole community and therefore, it should not have any rival. Thus, the General Will of Rousseau demands unconditional loyalty of all in the community. When the loyalties are divided, General Will ceases to exist.

Commitment to the General Will is a commitment to what is just and what is moral. General Will can never be arbitrary since it belongs to the community as a whole. Rousseau believes that the, ‘community merely by virtue of what it is always what it ought to be’. Thus, the General Will is the source of all laws. He further believes that there is a close relationship between law and liberty. Therefore, he opines that, “obedience to law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty”.

Thus, the General Will of Rousseau is the corporate will, sovereign will and just will. It is the foundation of moral freedom which makes every individual a free citizen of the state. It is the source of all laws which promote the good of the community as a whole. The General Will is the best safeguard against despotism of any kind.

The theory of General Will advocated by Rousseau has been described as the most revolutionary, distinguishing, impressive and influential doctrine of Rousseau. According to Prof. Jones, “the notion of the General Will is not only the most central concept of Rousseau’s theory, it is also the most original, the most interesting and historically the most important contribution which he has made to Political theory”.

Now, from the above discussion, we can summarise the main characteristics of the General Will as follows:

- It is individualistic. It cannot be divided. Once it is divided, it shall cease to be the General Will

- Like the human will, the General Will cannot be represented by anybody else.
- The General Will is supreme and absolute and nobody can disobey it. It has complete control over the state.
- The General will is a single unit and cannot be alienated. Rousseau's sovereign is the General Will and not any human being. Rousseau's sovereign in fact cannot give up the sovereignty and also cannot pass that onto any other individual. The sovereignty or sovereign and General Will are inseparable and hence inalienable.
- The General Will always aims at the well-being of the community. It is based on the right of reasoning, presumption, wisdom and experience and cannot be swayed by the currents of time.
- Since General Will was based on reason, wisdom, and experience it is permanent.

Thus, from the discussion of his idea of General Will, we can say that Rousseau's idea of General Will paves the way for the present form of democratic system. So, we can say that Rousseau has supported the idea of direct democratic system where every one can participate in the decision making process of the government.

**SAQ**

Do you think that Rousseau's idea of social contract is more acceptable than that of Hobbes and Locke? (50 words)

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**3.6.1 Rousseau on Representative Government:**

We have already learnt that Rousseau supports the system of direct democratic system. In the present context, we understand democracy in the light of the representative governmental system. But Rousseau does not favour a representative parliamentary government. Instead, he advocates for a participatory democracy as it guarantees freedom, self-rule, equality and

virtue. Rousseau advocates the establishment of a democratic sovereign through his idea of 'General Will'. However, he does not advocate any form of direct democratic government in the Social Contract. Rousseau, on the other hand warns humanity against the democratic government.

In his *The Social Contract* Rousseau further states that,

*In the strict sense of the term, a genuine Democracy never has existed, and never will exist. It is against the natural order that the greater number govern and the smaller numbers be governed. It is unimaginable that the people remain constantly assembled to attend to public affairs, and it is readily evident that it could not establish commissions to do so without the form of administration changing.*

Another important factor for opposing representative and democratic government is that Rousseau wants to make a clear distinction between legislation and execution. He opposes democratic government as in this system, the same person acts as the sovereign as well as the government. So in the words of Rousseau,

*It is not good that he who makes the laws execute them, nor that the body of the people turn its attention away from general considerations, to devote it to particular objects. Nothing is more dangerous than the influence of private interests on public affairs, and abuse of the laws by Government is a lesser evil than the corruption of the Lawgiver (the Sovereign); which is the inevitable consequence of particular considerations. (?)*

Rousseau further believes that freedom, self-rule, equality are the major pillars of democracy and the governments which fails to fulfill those criteria can never claim an individual's obedience. Rousseau rejects the English Parliamentary System of government as he believes that it only gives the people the illusion of freedom but not the absolute freedom. According to him, English people are free only during the time of elections and once they elect their representatives, they tend to lose freedom.

Thus, he states that,

*Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated.....the people's deputies are not and could not be, its representatives; they are merely its agents and they cannot decide anything faintly. (Rousseau 1958:141)*

To enjoy absolute freedom, Rousseau proposes direct participation in legislation. Though he rejects representative institutions, he feels the need that the democratic institutions should protect the true freedom of the individual.

Again, Rousseau assigns significant role to the legislators. According to him, the role of the legislator is to transform individuals and change human nature, alter the constitution with the purpose of strengthening it and bring about a complete moral existence to an otherwise partial one. (adapted from Mukherjee, 2007)

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Rousseau's Idea on Family and Woman:**

Rousseau considers family as the natural and the oldest institution of the human society. Rousseau favours a patriarchal family providing the authoritative powers to the man and believes that the identity of women is related to the identity of man. Rousseau's idea on family is thus based upon his views on woman. He assigns a subordinate position to women in society and believes that women should be educated in such a way that gives them an inferior position in comparison to their male counterparts. Rousseau's view on the nature of the relationship between men and women is rooted in the notion that men are stronger and, therefore, more independent. He also argues that since the functions of men and women differ, their education will also have to be different. Thus, according to Rousseau, while men enjoy the maximum freedom, women should be trained to accept the constraints. In Rousseau's words:

*Woman is specially made for man's delight. If man in his turn ought to be pleasing in her eyes, the necessity is less urgent, his virtue is in his strength, he pleases because he is strong. I grant you this is not the law of love, but it is the law of nature, which is older than love itself.....If woman is made to please and to be in subjection to man, she ought to make herself pleasing in his eyes and not provoke him to anger. (Rousseau 1911:322)*

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Write two characteristics of the General Will.
2. Fill in the blanks
  - a) The General Will aims at the general \_\_\_\_\_ and it must come from \_\_\_\_\_ and apply to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b) The General Will of Rousseau resides in a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Discuss how General Will is different from the will of all.
4. Why does Rousseau advocate participatory democracy? Write briefly on Rousseau's idea of representative government.

### **3.7 Summing up:**

After reading this unit, you must have gathered a comprehensive knowledge of Rousseau's ideas. Rousseau has made lasting contribution to the field of Political Science through his ideas on human nature and social contract. We have also learnt that Rousseau as an advocate of liberalism has emphasized individual liberty. Rousseau differs from Hobbes in regard to the nature of human beings. According to him, human beings are good only when they are self-sufficient and not subject to the vices of political society. In short, every man in the state of nature lives a life of idyllic simplicity and happiness. Rousseau considers the human beings in the state of nature as the 'noble savages'.

This unit also helps us to comprehend Rousseau's idea on state of nature and social contract. His idea on General Will has received wide attention from the political philosophers. The General Will of Rousseau resides in a community and it can not be alienated from the community. In his opinion, General Will is the will of the whole community and therefore it should not have any rival. Again, we have found that Rousseau distinguished General Will from the will of all. Moreover, after reading the unit we come to the conclusion that Rousseau does not favour a representative parliamentary government. Instead, he advocates for a participatory democracy as it secures freedom, self-rule, equality and virtue. Through his idea of 'General Will' Rousseau has advocated the establishment of a democratic sovereign. Apart from the ideas which enrich the domain of political theory, the attempt to reconcile individual interests with the larger interests of the society is Rousseau's major contribution to the field of Political Science

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning  
Gauhati University**

**MA in Political Science**

**Paper I  
Political Theory 1**

**Block 4  
Utilitarianism and Idealism**



**Contents:**

**Block Introduction–**

**Unit 1 : Jeremy Bentham**

**Unit 2 : J.S. Mill**

**Unit 3 : George W.F. Hegel**

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### **Block Introduction:**

Utilitarianism as an ideology flourished in England from the middle of eighteenth to the middle of nineteenth century. The Utilitarians believe that pleasure alone is good and desirable for its own sake. They also argue that an action can be termed as right only when it produces the greatest happiness possible. The utilitarian thinkers repudiate the theory of social contract. According to them, individual's obligation to the government of the country is also guided by the principle of utility. Again, for the Utilitarians, man is a complex being with diverse interests. They do not consider individual to be self-contained. According to them, state is a necessary instrument for the promotion of general happiness. David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and John Stuart Mill are the four major utilitarian thinkers.

The idealist school started in Germany which is regarded as a homeland of the idealist school. Kant, Hegel and Fichte are the important idealist thinkers. The idealist theory of state is known by various names – the absolutist theory, the philosophical theory, the metaphysical theory and the mystical theory. Idealism can be traced in the writings of the classical Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. According to Socrates and Plato, state is a necessary and ethical institution and aims at realizing the moral end.

In this block on Utilitarianism and Idealism, we shall discuss two of the Utilitarian thinkers— Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill as well as the idealist thinker Hegel. In Unit 1 on Bentham, we find that Bentham's greatest contribution is that he makes the principle of utility a criterion for classifying the elements of jurisprudence. He therefore advocates the codification of law. Bentham believes human beings are actually swayed by the two factors—pain and pleasure. In the second unit, we shall discuss Mill as a Utilitarian thinker. He continues Bentham's discussion on pleasure and pain. But he differs from Bentham's idea as he believes in the quantification of pleasures. In the third unit on Hegel, we find that as an idealist thinker Hegel assigns rationality to the state. He considers monarchy as the best form of government.

Bentham's ideas and speeches influenced French revolutionaries and were appreciated in Spain, Russia and Portugal. Mill made Benthamite Utilitarianism more humane by revising it. His ideas on liberty and representative government are his major contribution to political philosophy. Hegel provided philosophical background to Marxism and communism and in this block; our attempt is to offer you a comparative perspective for a better understanding.

In this block we have the following four units.

**Unit 1:** Jeremy Bentham

**Unit 2:** J. S. Mill

**Unit 3:** George W.F. Hegel

## **Unit 1**

### **Jeremy Bentham**

#### **Contents:**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Bentham on Political Society
- 1.4 Bentham on Law and Rights
- 1.5 Bentham's ideas of Pleasure and Pain
- 1.6 Bentham on Administration of Justice and Punishment
- 1.7 Bentham as a Moral Philosopher and Reformer
- 1.8 Summing up
- 1.9 References and Suggested Readings

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Jeremy Bentham was an English jurist, philosopher and legal and social reformer. He was a political radical and a legal theorist in Anglo-American philosophy of law. He is best known for the advocacy of utilitarianism, the concept of animal rights and the opposition to the idea of natural rights. His position includes arguments in favour of individual and economic freedom, the separation of the church and the state, freedom of expression, equal rights for women, the end of slavery, and the abolition of physical punishment (including that of children), the right to divorce and decriminalization of homosexual acts. He is probably the best known in popular society as the originator of the concept of the panopticon.

This unit on Bentham is an attempt to deal with the ideas of Bentham regarding political society, law and rights. Here, we will also introduce you to his notion of sovereignty. Besides, in this unit, we will make an attempt to

discuss his concept of administration of justice and punishment. Thus, in this unit an attempt is made to analyze Bentham as a moral philosopher and a reformer.

## **1.2 Objectives**

This unit is an attempt to analyse the ideas of Bentham. After reading this unit you will be able to

- *explain* his views on political society, law and rights
- *discuss* his notion of sovereignty
- *explain* his concept of administration of justice and punishment
- *discuss* Bentham as a moral philosopher and reformer

## **1.3 Bentham on Political Society**

“when a number of persons are supposed to be in the habit of paying obedience to a person, or an assemblage of persons, of a known and certain description (whom we may call governor or governors) such persons altogether (subjects and governed) are said to be in a state of political society.” (Bentham 1977: 140)

From the above definition, we can see that Bentham considers the state as a group of persons organized for the promotion and maintenance of happiness and acting through law to that end. According to Bentham, the state is primarily a law making body. He looks at the state as a contrivance designed by men for the promotion of their pleasure or happiness. State is not an end in itself. It exists merely to promote the happiness of its members. According to him, people obey the authority of state because of its utility.

Again, Bentham has propounded an individualistic or atomistic conception of state. He does not believe that the state is the product of any social contract. According to him, man submits to the requirements of law and government for their interest to do so. Therefore, he opines that if any group

of men living in a society and if in this group some of the members pay obedience to other members, whether one or more in number, the group altogether constitutes a political society.

His state is a sovereign state. It is the hall-mark of a sovereign state that it does nothing illegal. To speak of it as exceeding its authority is an abuse of language. This is true of the free state as well as the most despotic of the states. But Bentham also admits that a written constitution can limit the governmental power. In his state, all men have equal rights and all must be equal before the law. One of the most urgent tasks of state, according to Bentham, is to ensure a greater equalization of property.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Life Sketch of Jeremy Bentham**

Bentham was born in Spitalfield, London into a wealthy Tory family. He began his study of Latin at the age of 3. He went to Westminster School and in 1760 his father sent him to Queens College, Oxford, where he took his Bachelors Degree in 1763 and his Masters Degree in 1766. He was trained as a lawyer and was called to the Bar in 1769. He became deeply frustrated with the complexity of the English legal code which he termed as the 'Demon of Chicanery'. During the period 1791-94, Bentham actively campaigned for his model prison Panopticon. Despite his adamant opposition to the natural law, language and principles of the 1776 Declaration of Independence and the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man, Bentham welcomed both the American and French Revolution. He was made an honorary citizen of French Republic in 1792. In 1823 he co-founded the Westminster Review with James Mill as a journal for the Radicals- a group of younger disciples through whom Bentham exerted considerable influence in British public life. Bentham died on June 6, 1832.

Again Bentham has said that the state has no integral relation with the moral life of the citizen. Hence, though the state seeks to change his behaviour; it cannot change him. It cannot help him to develop his character, to bring out the best in him. For it is not the state that moulds the citizens, it is the citizens that mould the state. In this way, Bentham's state is a trustee for the individual. It is a democratic state in true sense. According to him, the interest of the individual is superior to the interest of the state. He mainly assigns negative functions to the state. According to him, the most important function of the state is to make laws which enable the citizens to know the felicific and non felicific tendencies of various types of action and remove all the hindrances which stand in the way of individual's pursuit of self-interest. Bentham believes that, people obey the government as long as it promotes the general happiness. But when it fails to do so, people have a right to disobey it. Thus, according to him, the only justification for the existence of the state is the promotion of utility. He asserts that the people have a moral right and duty to resist the state if the utility of resistance is greater than the evil of resistance.

#### **1.4 Bentham on Law and Rights**

As we have already learnt Bentham's views on political society, in this section we will discuss his ideas regarding law and rights. According to Bentham, laws of the state are not rooted in the natural law. It is simply a command expressing the will of the sovereign. Thus, according to him, a law that commands morally questionable or morally evil actions, or is not based on consent, is still law. Again, Bentham points out certain negative aspects of law. He feels that law is an evil as it restricts liberty which is painful. However, Bentham also points out the positive role to be played by law and government, particularly in achieving well-being of the community. He considers law necessary to maintain social order. He further states that good laws are clearly essential to good government. Hence, we can say that Bentham has visualized law both from positive as well as negative perspectives.



According to Bentham, the worth of laws always depends on the general obedience given to it and the utility it promotes. The aims of model laws are security, substance, equality and abundance. According to him, people are punished mostly because of the mistakes of legislators who do not pass proper and healthy laws. Sometimes, even such laws are passed which are more respected in violation rather than in obedience. Bentham feels that state is contrivance and it is the foremost duty of legislators to see that laws passed by them promote utility.

It needs to be mentioned here that Bentham wants to remove the defects present in the English law and judicial procedure. He cannot accept that the English common law is faultless because it has an ancient origin and is developed by eminent jurists. He has no respect for the antiquity and wants that the law must be in keeping with the needs of time. Bentham insists that the old laws must be judged on the basis of their utility. If any existing law does not contribute to the happiness of the individual, it should be discarded.

**SAQ**

Do you think that Bentham's idea of state as primarily a law making body is valid? Give reasons in support of your answer (20+ 60 words)

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After discussing Bentham's views on laws, now we will discuss his views on rights in the light of his understanding of natural law. Bentham's views on rights are, perhaps, best known through his attacks on the concept of "natural rights" that appear throughout his work. Bentham's criticisms here are rooted in his understanding of the nature of law. According to him, rights are created by the law, and law is simply a command of the sovereign. The existence of law and rights, therefore, requires government. Rights are also usually correlative with duties determined by the law. Therefore, it can be assumed

that there are no natural rights prior to the establishment of state. And hence, Bentham discards the concept of natural rights. He feels that there are no rights anterior to government. Again, Bentham believes that the existence of natural rights has been derived from the theory of social contract. In the previous block on Individualism and Liberalism, we have already discussed the social contract theories according to which individuals form a society and choose a government by surrendering their rights. But Bentham criticizes it by saying that it does not even serve as a useful fiction to explain the origin of political authority.

Again, according to Bentham, the idea of a natural right is “anarchical.” Since a natural right is anterior to law, it cannot be limited by law. If everyone has such freedom, the result will be pure anarchy. To have a right in any meaningful sense entails that others cannot legitimately interfere with one’s rights. This implies that rights must be made capable of enforcement. Such restriction, as noted earlier, is the province of the law.

Bentham is of the opinion that ‘nature’ is a very vague term and as such the concept of ‘natural rights’ is equally vague, uncertain and undependable. He however, justifies the existence of private property and perhaps the influence of Locke on him inspires his justification. According to Bentham, since the state is the sovereign and supreme authority and exclusively responsible for giving laws, there is no justification in claiming natural rights against state sovereignty and hence absolutely unjustified. On normative grounds, Bentham points out that the natural rights helps an individual to rise up in arms against whatever one does not like.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **The Major Works of Bentham**

- *Principles of International Law*: It is published in the year 1798. In this book, Bentham argues that universal peace can only be obtained by first achieving European unity. He hopes that some form of European parliament will be able to enforce the liberty of the press, free trade, the abandonment of all colonies and a reduction in the money spent on armaments.

- *Catechism of Reformers*: It is published in the year 1809. Here Bentham criticizes the law of libel as he believes it is so ambiguous that judges are able to use it in the interest of the government. Bentham also points out that the authorities can use the law to punish any radical for hurting the feelings of the ruling class.
- *Constitutional Code*: It is published in 1830. This book deals with the most detailed account of Bentham's ideas on political democracy. In this book, he argues that political reform should be dictated by the principle that the new system will promote the happiness of the majority of the people affected by it. He argues in favour of universal suffrage, annual parliaments and vote by ballot. According to him, there should be no king, no house of lords and no established church. This book also includes his view that man as well as woman should be given the right to vote. In this book, he also addresses the problem of how government should be organized. This book also suggests the continual inspection of the work of politicians and government officials. Bentham feels that they should be continually reminded that they are the servants, not the masters of the public.
- *Fragments of Government* (1776) and *Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation* (1789): In these books, Bentham argues that the proper objective of all conduct and legislation is the greatest happiness of the greatest number.
- *Essays on Political Tactics*: It is published in 1791. This book contains the earliest and perhaps the most important theoretical analysis of parliamentary procedure ever written. Bentham discusses some central themes like the publicity of proceedings, the rule of debate, the conduct of deputies and the proper steps to be taken in composing, proposing and voting in a motion. He even discusses the minor issues such as the size of the assembly room and the costume of the deputies in this book.
- *Discourses on Civil and Penal Legislation* (1802)
- *Theory of Punishments and Rewards* (1811)
- *A Treatise on Judicial Evidence* (1813)
- *Papers on Codification of Public Instruction* (1817)

The discussion of the central thematic concern of Bentham as depicted in his writings will help you assess his contribution to political philosophy.

Interestingly, even though Bentham undermines the sanctity of natural rights formulations, he recognizes the importance of rights as being crucial for the security of the individual. He rejects the idea of not only natural and inviolable rights of property, but also the idea of absolute right to property as the government has the right to interfere with property in order to ensure security. Bentham distinguishes between the sudden and critical attack on property from the fixed, regular and necessary deduction from the wealth of the people. The regular and necessary deduction is needed to finance and support the functions and services rendered by governments. He defends the need for adequate compensation in case of a violation of individual's right to property. According to Bentham, property is neither natural, nor absolute, nor violable. Therefore, we can say that what Bentham calls the real rights are fundamentally legal rights. So far as rights exist in law, they are protected.

Here we must remember that Bentham is widely recognized as one of the earliest proponents of animal rights. He argues that animal pain is very similar to human pain. According to him, the ability to suffer, not the ability to reason, must be the benchmark of how we treat other beings. If the ability to reason are the criterion, many human beings, including babies and disabled people, will also have to be treated as things. He also speaks for a complete equality between the sexes. He is also one of the earliest philosophers to argue for decriminalization of homosexuality and equal rights for homosexuals. In two extended essays, unpublished during his lifetime, he puts forward a detailed logical argument against the stigmatization of same sex relations.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Comment on the creation of the state as specified by Bentham.
2. Mention the reasons stated by Bentham behind the obedience of state and law by the people.
3. Write True or False
  - a). Bentham has discarded the concept of natural law.
  - b). Bentham believes that the state is a product of social contract.
  - c). Jeremy Bentham is regarded as the father of individualism.
4. Write a note on Bentham's views on law.

**SAQ**

Do you agree with Bentham's view on Rights? Give reasons in support of your answer. (20+80 words)

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**1.5 Bentham's ideas of Pleasure and Pain**

*"Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. (Bentham, 1789)*

Bentham finds pain and pleasure to be the only intrinsic values in the world. He believes that we desire pleasure and want to avoid pain. Only pains and pleasures give us the real value of actions. Whether it is private or public life, people are concerned with maximizing their happiness. According to Bentham, human beings by nature are hedonists. Each of their actions is motivated by a desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Every human action has a cause and a motive.

*“Take away all pleasures and all pain and you have no desire and without a desire there can be no action.” (Bentham ibid : 40)*

He has also given the idea that pleasure and pain are both simple and complex. According to him, whatever produces greatest amount of pleasure and minimum amount of pain is good and things which produce only pain without the pleasure are evil. This concept of pleasure and pain is defined by Bentham as physical as well as spiritual. Again, Bentham provides a classification of various kinds of pleasures and pains. Pleasures and pains may be caused by various kinds of sensations, thoughts, emotions, memories, expectations and associations. Simple pleasures and pains may be combined to form complex pleasures and pains. Pleasure may also be caused by the satisfaction of desire, and pain may be caused by the frustration of desire.

Bentham explains that the sensitivity to pleasure or pain may vary among individuals, and that each individual may respond differently to the same pleasure or pain. If rewards for good conduct or punishment for bad conduct are to be administered fairly, then these rewards and punishments must account for the differences that may occur among individuals in their sensitivity to pleasure or pain. According to him, pleasure is intrinsically good and pain is intrinsically evil.

Bentham’s classification of 12 pains and 14 pleasures attracts the attention of the political thinkers. The 14 pleasures according to Bentham are-

*Sense, Wealth, Skill, Amity, Good name, Power, Piety, Benevolence, Malevolence, Memory, Imagination, Expectation, Association and Relief.*

Now let us have a look at the simple pains enumerated by Bentham:

*Privation, Sense, Awkwardness, Ill name, Enmity, Expectation, Association, Memory, Imagination, Piety, Benevolence, Malevolence.*

He further states that all pleasures and pains differ in sensitivity and sensibility and lists as many as 32 factors which influence sensitivity of pleasure and pains. These factors include health, strength, firmness of mind, sensibility, insanity, sex, age, education, etc.

Bentham proposes a system for measuring the amount of pleasure and pain that an action produces. This system is called the felicific calculus. This is also known as the utility calculus, the hedonistic calculus or the hedonic calculus. This felicific calculus is an algorithm formulated by Bentham for calculating the degree or amount of pleasure that a specific action is likely to cause. Bentham's system identifies the seven aspects of an action's consequence that can be used to compare the results of different deeds. Bentham calls these elements or dimensions. These are as follows-

- Intensity: How strong is the pleasure?
- Duration: How long will the pleasure last?
- Certainty or uncertainty: How likely or unlikely is it that the pleasure will occur?
- Propinquity or remoteness: How soon will the pleasure occur?
- Fecundity: The probability that the action will be followed by sensations of the same kind.
- Purity: The probability that it will not be followed by sensations of the opposite kind.
- Extent: How many people will be affected?

Bentham distinguished pleasures quantitatively rather than qualitatively. He, therefore, regards pushpin as good as poetry. By that he means that if a simple child's game like hopscotch or pushpin causes more pleasure to more people than a night at the opera house, the society should devote more resources to propagating hopscotch or pushpin than running opera houses. He does not differentiate between pleasures and in that sense he is not an elitist. He does not assign any inherent grading to activities and treated them at par in terms of their contribution to individual happiness.

According to Bentham, there are four sanctions regarding pains and pleasures. The physical or natural sanction implies those pleasures and pains which are not the product of any human efforts but have been given by

nature in course of time. The moral sanction implies the sanction which is promoted by goodwill or contempt by the hands of our fellow beings. Then he mentions about public sanctions by which he means legal sanction which is given to the individuals by the magistrates in exercise of their legal powers. The religious sanction follows from religious doctrines.

Hence, it can be concluded here that in the hands of Bentham, the theory of pleasure and pain evolves into a scientific principle to be applied to the policies of the state, welfare measures and for administrative, penal and legislative reforms. Using the yardstick of utility, Bentham and his followers desire the restructuring of government and legal institutions to maximize individual happiness.

### **Stop To Consider:**

#### **Bentham on Sovereignty:**

It must be remembered that, unlike Austin and Hobbes, Bentham does not think that the powers of the sovereign are to be unlimited or illimitable. Instead, he dismisses talk of illegality of actions of government as absurd unless it is possible to limit these actions by conventions. He accepts the division of sovereignty as a federal system. He also envisages the possibility of constitutional law. According to him, sovereignty rests with the people, and has to be exercised by the 'constitutive authority' i.e. the electorate. The task of a sovereign is to harmonize different individual interests and promote social cooperation through legislation in form of punishment, rewards, encouragement and incentives. Bentham feels that the individuals have no right to resist the sovereign. The legal duty of the people is only to extend unconditional obedience to the sovereign. He has justified right to resistance only under very exceptional circumstances.



## **1.6 Bentham on Administration of Justice and Punishment**

Bentham is concerned with the way in which justice is being administered in the country. He stands for codification of laws and pleads that laws should be enacted in the way that these are understood by all. In justice, there should neither be any uncertainty nor unnecessary expenses. He also believes that justice delayed is justice denied. Regarding the present system of justice, Bentham is of the view that in it justice is not given but only sold at different prices, which suits the pocket of the lawyers. This is the most undesirable situation and as such corrective measures must immediately be taken so that justice becomes available to all and is cheap. Bentham as a utilitarian believes that real justice is less important than apparent justice. In other words, he believes that seeing justice done is more important than justice actually being done.

While dealing with the concept of justice, Bentham has also reviewed the concept of punishment. He also discusses whether a punishment will create more pleasure or more pain for a society. He calls for legislators to determine whether punishment creates more evil offence. Instead of suppressing the evil acts, Bentham argues that certain unnecessary laws and punishments can ultimately lead to negative and more dangerous vices. Thus, we can say that according to Bentham while punishment is sometimes reformatory sometimes it fails to control the actions of human beings.

It needs to be mentioned here that Bentham's utilitarian perspective on punishment is greatly influenced by Cesare Beccaria. Influenced by him, Bentham forms some harsh notions of punishment. He believes that torture can be justified in certain cases. According to him, punishment is a very weak disincentive. There is always a risk that an offender will commit another offence. He believes that torture removes this risk as it does not cease until the subject complies with the demands of authority. He terms legal punishment as the embodiment of an unquestionable evil. According to Bentham, punishment is a particular category of pain, produced not just as the result of some individual action, but of an action that can be termed an

‘offence’. Each and every legal punishment has the potential of becoming morally unacceptable. That is to say, in Bentham’s terms, any offence may be found ‘unmeet for punishment’. In fact, if it can be known for sure that a similar offence will never again be committed, then, from his utilitarian standpoint, he finds no justification for the infliction of any punishment. For Bentham, pain, and thus punishment, is always a social negative, unless it promises greater pleasure in future.

***Bentham’s Favoured Forms of Punishment:***

It must be remembered that Bentham’s preferred forms of punishment certainly undergo a change over the course of his life. It is found that, in his earlier writings a variety of corporal punishments are recommended; in his middle years the panopticon penitentiary is his prime interest; and finally, in the 1820s, he feels an increasing attachment towards banishment and fining. Most importantly, punishment has to provide a variable quantity of pain in response to the varying quantities of mischief caused by offences. In addition to that, an equalization of pain is necessary when the same punishment is applied to different individuals. It should be ensured that the offenders receive the same pain if they commit the same offence.

Again in the late 1790’s, he abandons his support for simple corporal punishment and joins the pursuit of an increased use of penal incarceration. His theory of punishment includes the reformation of the criminals. He believes that a great many criminals and evil-doers are capable of improvement and that they can be restored to society as useful and self-respecting members. On the strength of this belief, he advocates many principal reforms for the reformation of the criminal and for teaching them some skills while in confinement. He has evolved a scheme known as ‘panopticon’ for the systematic supervision of the daily life of the convicts. He is of the opinion that the prison buildings are to be arranged in such a fashion (semicircular) that the superintendent can have a view of all the cells from his residence. The scheme combines careful supervision and discipline with sympathy and improved environment. The criminals are to be taught

not only useful trades but also to be given elementary education. Moral and religious training should be imparted to them. On their discharge, criminals are to be provided with employment until they are able to regain the confidence of the public and stand on their own feet.

By the early 1790s, panopticon imprisonment has become the dominant mode of punishment promoted by Bentham. It offers adequate punishment for the most, if not all, serious offences. It can inflict both simple and complex punishment as demanded by the occasion. Additionally, it uses the means of reward to reform the prisoners. Bentham envisages panopticon as an institution primarily related with the psychological motivation of the prisoners. But it should also be noted that 'corporal' pain still forms an intrinsic part of the punishment. Thus, it is not simply a punishment of 'the mind', but equally it is an effective punishment of the body.

Throughout the period of Bentham's intense focus on penitentiary imprisonment, the main legal punishment for serious offences continues to be capital punishment. The death penalty is universally attacked by penal reformers in the late eighteenth century, though it is not until 1830 that Bentham publishes the reasons for his own opposition to capital punishment. He draws up a pamphlet on the death penalty, specifically for the people of France, and throughout this text he displays all the fundamental penal principles he has first established in 1776-78. In concise terms, Bentham denounces capital punishment for possessing the detrimental qualities of inefficiency, irremissibility etc. In Bentham's view, the pains resulting from capital punishment, and more particularly from the widespread threat of capital punishment, are judged to be considerable and excessive.

As we have already learnt, Bentham is much interested in the theory of punishment and prison reforms. He opines that the chief end of punishment is to prevent crime. Punishment should not be given in order to take revenge. Punishment should be exactly suited to the purpose. It should be neither more nor less. It should secure the good of the community. If capital punishment is necessary for the safety and security of society, it is justifiable,

otherwise not. According to Bentham, whether capital punishment is to be administered in cases other than murder, it should be determined by their consideration of utility, i.e. their effect upon the general good. The execution of justice should, as far as possible, be exhibited to the public eye so that prospective evil-doers are frightened away from committing the crime.

Bentham believes that punishment should fit the criminal and not vice-versa. He believes that punishment should be graded according to the nature of the crime, the previous character of the offender, his parentage, the circumstances in which the crime is committed, the motive of the criminal, and the kind of persons to whom the injury is done. Punishment, thus is to be certain and impartial in its imposition. As a matter of fact, according to him, the only valid test of the adequacy of a punishment is its ability to secure public welfare.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Fill in the blank.
  - a). Idea of punishment presupposes the idea of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b). Bentham regards punishment as good as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What is Bentham's favoured form of punishment?
3. State the only valid test of adequacy of a punishment advocated by Bentham?
4. Critically examine Bentham's view 'seeing justice done is more important than justice actually being done'.
5. Write a note on Bentham's pleasure and pain theory.

## **1.7 Bentham as a Moral Philosopher and Reformer**

After reading the previous sections of the unit, it can be said that Bentham is a moral philosopher and a reformer. Bentham's moral philosophy consists of three basic principles- the greatest happiness principle, universal egoism and the artificial identification of one's interest with those of others. According to Bentham whether an action is good or bad should be judged from the happiness or utility which it produces. An action which results in pain is sure to be a bad action. According to Bentham, an act of theft is not always bad and can be good as well if it produces pleasure. But if the outcome of action is pain, it is surely bad. As a moral philosopher, he has made it clear that pleasures and pains are our sovereign masters. According to him, these however, proceed from physical, political, moral and religious sources. Regarding physical sources, he has said that temperance conserves health and thus pleasure and intemperance result in ill health and thus pain. To describe the political source, he has said that we know how governmental legislation can result in bringing either pleasure or pain. To elaborate the moral source, we find that praise of an action by the public morally encourages and thus gives pleasure, whereas condemning by the public results in pain. Coming to religious source, he says that when one performs duties towards God, one feels pleasure otherwise the feeling of pain disturbs one. As a moral philosopher, he is of the view that both pleasure and pain can be mathematically measured and arithmetically calculated. In estimating pleasure, he has said that intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, remoteness, fecundity, purity and extent must be taken into consideration. According to his philosophy, principles of pleasure are as certain as those of geometry.

He has also given the idea that pleasure and pain is both simple and complex. In the complex form wealth, skill, amity, good name, power, pity, benevolence, expectation and relief are included, whereas simple form includes pains of privation, sense, awkwardness, etc. All pleasures and pains differ in sensitivity and sensibility and he has listed as many as 32 factors which influence sensitivity of pleasure and pains. These factors include health, strength, firmness of mind, sensibility, insanity, sex, age, education, etc.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Bentham's Views on Church of England**

Bentham was opposed to the Church of England, because he could not reconcile himself to the situation where the bishops could become rich. He also failed to understand how the priests could usefully and purposefully sit in the House of Lords and contribute to its proceedings. He felt that church activities should be checked and priests, bishops should desist from owning huge amounts and private property.

#### ***Bentham as Reformer:***

As we have already seen, Bentham is a firm believer in gradual reform. He has no faith in the violence of a revolution. He believes that there is scope for reform in British society, law and judicial procedure. He has said that procedure in law should be simplified. He also favours codification of laws. In his view, a complicated procedure only serves lawyers and as such the poor are always in a disadvantageous position. He feels that in its present system, justice is simply sold. He has also condemned delays by judges in giving justice. Bentham does not like the idea that the punishment is not proportionate to the crimes and pleads that the end of punishment should be the prevention of crimes.

Bentham is a great social reformer. He believes that all existing social and political institutions must be reformed, if these are to exist. He believes in universal adult franchise and wants that there should be annual elections for the parliament. Bentham is in favour of introducing secret ballot system in order to check intimidation and bribery. He also wants that existing laws should be reformed and hereditary character of House of Lords should be dispensed with. He has propagated a national scheme for improving the health of the people. Bentham also favours national system of education.

Bentham advocates a numbers of practical reforms. The principal among them are: the reform of the corrupt and restricted parliamentary system; a

thorough going municipal reform; the humanization of the terribly cruel criminal law of the time; the improvement of prisons and prison management; the abolition of imprisonment for debt; the elimination of the usury laws; the repeal of religious test ; the reform of the poor law; the suppression of 'tardy beggars'; the utilization of able-bodied paupers; the training of pauper children; the institution of savings banks and friendly societies; the following of a code for merchant shipping; the protection of inventors; the encouragement of local courts; a comprehensive system of health legislation; the creation of the public prosecutors and of advocates for the poor; a thorough-going revision of hereditary rights; the supervision of scientific and philosophical foundation; and the recall of public officials. It is needless to add that many of the reforms which Bentham ardently pleads have been incorporated into the laws of various lands. He suggests reforms in educational field also as he is in favour of the establishment of a vast scheme of national education. His scheme includes two system of education- one for the pauper children and the other for the upper class children. His scheme of education has paid due regard to the capacity of learner. According to him, it is the duty of the state to look after the education of the poor children.

Bentham also suggests that the legislators should be subject to the punishment of dismissal. Bentham's chief interest is in devising systems and methods of legislation that will surely conform to and serve this great end. His services to ethical and juristic science in connection with this work are of utmost value. Bentham also formulates codes of international law, constitutional law, civil law, criminal law which embody principles and fruitful suggestions in later generations. He is eager to see justice administered and happiness secured to the deserving and the oppressed. With this objective, he criticizes the existing laws and the existing machinery for the execution of them. But he never appears to be a destructive critic. His objective is primarily constructive and criticism is simply a means to that end. Bentham emphasizes the need of reforming the existing institutions to transform them into instruments of general good. Most of the legal and parliamentary reforms advocated by Bentham have been carried out in England and other countries.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Name the two sovereign masters as stated by Bentham.
2. Write True or False
  - a). Bentham is opposed to the Church of England.
  - b). Bentham is opposed to the secret ballot system.

### **1.8 Summing up**

Bentham is one of the important thinkers of the utilitarian school of thought. After reading this unit, you are in a position to comprehend his political ideas. The reading of this unit has enabled you to understand Bentham's political philosophy as well as his views on political society, state, law and rights.

This unit has helped you to understand that Bentham is perhaps the first political thinker to point out glaring defects in English constitutional, legal and jail system and stand for their reforms. His jurisprudence is one of the most remarkable achievements of 19<sup>th</sup> century. He has discussed the system of punishment in a detailed manner. Like a practical thinker, he preaches that punishment should not be retaliatory but should aim at reforms. Though Bentham is a radical thinker, he does not suggest far-reaching changes and does not wish to upset the whole political system. His realism can be appreciated with the saying that with Bentham an era of stagnant legislation comes to an end.

You have also learnt that Bentham is one of those thinkers who condemn the theory of social contract and pleads that the government should stand at the bar of public opinion. He thus elevates public opinion in an age in which preaching such a doctrine is considered a symbol of revolution. His government is not a mystery but on the other hand can be tested on the basis of utility. He insists that the state exists for man and man does not exist for the state. In the field of jurisprudence, he is the first political thinker who



boldly demands that the laws should be modified, complicated laws should be replaced by simple ones and these should be given wide publicity. Execution of laws should not only be simple and cheap but quick too.

Bentham has considerably influenced the domain of political philosophy. His ideas and speeches influenced French revolutionaries and were appreciated in Spain, Russia and Portugal. His influence was quite visible in the collapse of Turkish and Spanish empires and Holy Roman Empire. He has suggested the U.S.A and Russian governments to improve their legal systems. His influence on J.S.Mill is quite immense and in the second unit we shall discuss Mill as a reformer of Bentham's utilitarian ideas.

### **1.9 References and Suggested Readings**

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2. Mukherjee, Subrata & Sushila Ramaswamy: *A History Of Political Thought – Plato To Marx* Prentice Hall, 1999
3. Sabine, H George and Thomas L Thorson: *A History of Political Theory* Oxford and IBH Publishing Co: New Delhi, 1973
4. Rao, V. Venkata. *A History of Political Theories*. S. Chand and Company, 2000

#### **Links:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy\\_Bentham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Bentham)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panopticon>

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/bentham/>

<http://skeptically.org/utilitarianismtheethicaltheoryforalltimes/id16.html>

<http://www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/libhe/libhe015.pdf>

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## Unit 2

### John Stuart Mill

#### Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Mill on Liberty
- 2.4 Mill on Representative Government
- 2.5 Mill as the Revisionist of Benthamite Utilitarianism
- 2.6 Mill on State
- 2.7 Mill on Gender Equality and General Discrimination
- 2.8 Summing up
- 2.9 References and Suggested Readings

#### 2.1 Introduction

We have already discussed Bentham's views on Utilitarianism in the previous unit of this block. Now, in this unit we shall discuss Mill's revision of Bentham's Utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill is considered as the last Utilitarian and the foremost of the individualists. He is the most influential thinker of the nineteenth century and known as the champion of individual liberty. In his political theory, liberalism makes a transition from *Laissez faire* to an active role for the state, from a negative to a positive conception of liberty and from an atomistic to a more social conception of individuality. Mill can be regarded as a liberal, reluctant democrat, a pluralist, a cooperative socialist, an elitist and a feminist.

Reading of this unit will help you to understand Mill's ideas on state and representative government. This unit also makes an attempt to analyze Mill's ideas on liberty and his ideas of general discrimination and gender equality. As mentioned earlier, we will also analyze Mill as a revisionist of Bentham's utilitarian ideas in this unit.

## 2.2 Objectives

Mill is the only male thinker of nineteenth century who provides arguments in favour of women and suggests various rights for them. He is also admired for his theory of liberty. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- *analyze* Mill's view on Liberty
- *explain* Mill's ideas on Representative Government
- *discuss* Mill as a revisionist of Benthamite Utilitarianism
- *explain* Mill's view on the state
- *analyze* Mill's view on General Discrimination and Gender Equality

## 2.3 Mill on Liberty

Liberty indicates freedom and it is the foremost requirement for the development of the personality of an individual. Among the various political ideas of Mill, the concept of 'liberty' has received wider attention. In fact, he is regarded as a champion of individual liberty as he insists that neither state nor government should interfere in the life of the individual. He believes that liberty is an essential ingredient for moral development of mankind and thus an end in itself. Mill's development of this doctrine, on the basis of utility, embodies a complete and systematic philosophy of individualism and laissez faire. He emerges as the advocate general of individuality – of the supreme importance of developing the individual in all the completeness of his being so that his active and intellectual nature realize their utmost scope and reach the highest efficiency. Without this, general progress is impossible. In this sense, Mill is an ardent advocate of individual liberty.

Mill defends individual's right to freedom. This right has both positive and negative aspects. In its negative sense, it means that society has no right to coerce an unwilling individual, except for self-defense. Again, in its positive sense, it means the grant of the largest and the greatest amount of freedom

for the pursuit of the individual's creative impulses and energies and self-development. He further states that if there is a clash between the opinion of the individual and that of the community, it is the opinion of the individual which will prevail, unless the community can convince him without resorting to threat and coercion. Thus, Mill considers individuals to be the ultimate judge.

He lays stress on the concept of individual liberty on the grounds that liberty is essential for the development of human personality and that without maximum liberty one cannot develop and becomes stagnant. According to Mill, if every individual is allowed to develop his personality as he likes, it will enrich the world with variety of characters. He further believes that democracy, public opinion and collectivism are dangerous to individual liberty and must be kept within their sphere of activity. Any effort on the part of the government to hamper the full development of personality of the individual leads to monotony, which is no sign of progress of the society.

It is very interesting to note that Mill divides individual activities into two types-

1. *Self- Regarding Actions*- These activities of the individual are concerned with the individual person alone. Mill argued that there should be no interference with self- regarding actions.
2. *Other- Regarding Actions* - These activities of the individual are concerned with other members of the community. Mill argued that there shall be interference with other-regarding actions if it produces positive and demonstrable harm to others.

Though Mill is an ardent advocate of individual liberty, he argues that so long as the action of the individual concerns him alone and does not in any way hamper the interest of others, he can be free and there will be no limitation on him. Thus, Mill permits full freedom in self-regarding activities.

However in case of other-regarding activities, the state or society can impose restrictions on those actions which affect other members of the community.

Mill here admits that as a natural development of this position, it is legitimate to oblige a man to bear his share in maintaining society – conscription is not to be regarded as an unwarranted infringement of liberty. He must not make himself a nuisance to other people.

Again, Mill defends the right of individuality which means the right to choice. As far as self-regarding actions are concerned; he explains why coercion will be detrimental to self- development.

*Firstly*, the evil of coercion out weights the good achieved.

*Secondly*, individuals are so diverse in their needs and capacities for happiness that coercion will be futile. Since the person is the best judge of his own interests, thus he has the incentive and information to achieve them.

*Thirdly*, since diversity is in itself good. Other things being equal, it should be encouraged.

*Lastly*, freedom is the most important requirement in the life of a rational person.

Here we should remember that Mill wants to promote the development of individual men and women as he is convinced that all wise and noble things come from individuals. According to him, there can be no self-development without liberty. It is this connection between liberty and self-development which attracts him most and he goes on to argue that liberty is necessary for the happiness of the society.

### ***Different Types of Liberty***

Mill categorizes liberty in the following ways:

- Liberty of thought and expression
- Liberty of opinion and sentiments
- Liberty of conduct
- Liberty of taste and pursuit

- Liberty of scientific and practical or speculative
- Liberty to unite
- Liberty of conscience
- Liberty to live
- Liberty of association

Mill has made a forceful plea for freedom of thought and asserted that the state has no justification to suppress the independent thinking of an individual even if it is wrong because the truth emerges out of collision of opinion. According to Mill, liberty of conscience, liberty to express and publish one's opinion, liberty to live as one pleased and freedom of association are essentials for a meaningful life and for the pursuit of one's good.

Mill further argues for liberty of tastes and pursuits, of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character. Again, Mill contends that positive liberty i.e. autonomy and self-mastery, are inherently desirable and it is possible if individuals are allowed to develop their own talents and invent their own lifestyles.

Mill's doctrine of the individual liberty of conduct may be summarized under three heads:

- The advocacy of the due recognition of the place and importance of impulse and desire in man. According to Mill the supreme need is to amply acknowledge 'the active and energetic side of the individual's nature'.
- Insistence on the view that spontaneity or individuality is a necessary ingredient for happiness or human welfare.
- Revolt against the conventionalities of society that hinder or seem to hinder the development and expression conduct.

### *Criticism of Mill's View on Liberty*

Though Mill has given an excellent argument on individual liberty, we can criticize his views in liberty on the following grounds-

- Mill has divided human activities into two types which are defective and unacceptable. It is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between self-regarding and other-regarding activities.
- There can be hardly any action of the individual which does not affect other members of the community.
- Mill's concept of liberty is not consistent. He is not clear whether liberty is absence of restraint or freedom to do what one desires.
- Mill's concept of liberty deals with the individual not as a part of the society but in isolation. However, in actual practice the individual is an integral part of the society.
- Mill has advocated liberty of thought and expression but he does not grant absolute liberty in the field of action.
- Mill talks about bestowing maximum freedom to the individual, but when individual is given maximum freedom as conceived by Mill, it leads to inequality among men.

Despite these criticisms, it must be admitted here that Mill is one of the foremost individualists who offer the best vindication of liberty of thought and expression.

#### **Stop To Consider:**

##### **Life Sketch of Mill**

J. S Mill was born on 1806 and he was the eldest son of James Mill. As a child he was subjected to a very hard training by his father and spent most of the time reading books. He learnt Greek, Latin and French languages and was

greatly influenced by the dialogues and dialectic methods of Plato. He also studied the history of Roman Government and felt its influence. The Utilitarian Philosophy of Bentham has exercised the maximum influence on J.S Mill. At the age of sixteen, he founded the Utilitarian Society. He also became the member of Speculative Debating Society and the Political Economy Club. The other thinkers and writers who exercised profound influence on Mill were Coleridge and Wordsworth. Above all, his wife Mrs. Taylor greatly stimulated him. At the age of twenty-three, Mill followed his father into the service of the East India Company, and stayed there until he retired in 1858. He is one of the very few voices raised in England against the treatment of the prisoners after the Indian Mutiny was put down. Mill's intellectual energy alone was enough to make him an eminent Victorian. All the cross-currents of the age—romanticism, positivism, political economy, the suffrage question (including votes for women), birth control, socialism (Mill had generous things to say about the Communards) united in Mill. He was the MP for Westminster from 1865 to 1868. Harriet Taylor died the year before 'On Liberty' came out in 1859. By that time Mill had established himself as one of the leading social scientific thinkers of the day, and, in a happy phrase, he became the schoolmaster of liberalism. He died and was buried in Avignon in 1873.

**SAQ**

Discuss Mill as a champion of individual liberty. (80 words)

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**2.4 Mill on Representative Government**

Now in this section we will discuss Mill's ideas on representative government. In his book *Representative Government*, Mill proceeds to discuss the form of government that will best apply the basic principles of liberty. Ideally,



he considers that form of government to be the best in which “the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort is vested in the entire aggregate of the community”. Again, every citizen has a voice in the expression of the sovereign will and at least occasionally they can take an actual part in the discharge of some public functions. The excellence of such a representative government is to be deduced from two principles:

- Firstly, that any task is done best by those whose rights and interest are immediately involved and
- Secondly, that the moral, intellectual and practical faculties of men are most developed and improved when they are in active exercise.

As a champion of individual liberty, Mill opines the representative government as an ideal form of government as it guarantees individual freedom. He also believes that the best government is that which promotes the virtue and intelligence of the people and its value should be judged by its action. The representative government serves the purpose of citizenship to the highest degree. It imparts political education and training to the citizens by fostering the moral and intellectual qualities of the citizens.

Mill has made three considerations for representative government-

- Mill has considered the representative government as the best form of government as it raises the general standard of intelligence and honesty existing in the community.
- Mill has favoured representative government only for the advanced nations and did not favour it for the backward and colonial people.
- Mill has pointed out that the representative government prevailing in England has various shortcomings. To improve its working and make it fully representative and democratic, Mill favours “Proportional Representation” system.

### ***Basic Features of Mill's Representative Government***

- *Proportional representation*

Mill advocates the system of Proportional Representation to ensure that each section of the society gets representation in proportion to its voting strength. He is unhappy with the inadequate representation accorded to the minorities and the tyrannical attitude of the majority. He argues that in real democracy, every section of the society must be represented proportionally.

- *Right to vote to all*

Mill advocates the right to vote to all without distinction as he believes that all are competent enough to exercise this right properly and intelligently. However, he insists on property and educational qualifications for the voters. He pleads for greater emphasis to voting to persons with better abilities and capabilities.

- *Public voting*

Mill argues for public voting in contrast to secret voting. He says that “*the duty of voting like any other public duty*” should be performed under the eye and criticism of the public.

- *Equal treatment to women*

Mill stands for equal treatment to women and favours that they should enjoy equal status with men. Mill argues that the difference of sex is only external, thus it should not become a disqualification for women and qualification for men.

- *Non-payment to the members of the parliament*

Mill is against payment to the members of the parliament. He asserts that membership of the parliament is an honour and service for which the members need no payment. This will ensure not only efficiency and purity in administration but also leads to economy.

- *Rejection of the idea of annual election of parliament*

Mill also rejects the idea of annual election of the parliament. Once elected, the candidate should be completely free to guide and instruct the state.

### ***Criticism of Mill's Representative Government***

However Mill's representative government can also be criticized on the following grounds-

- Mill is in favour of public voting which is not practicable at the present times. Presently all the countries follow for secret ballot.
- Mill has given more emphasis on giving voting right to the people with educational and property qualification, which is against the principal of equality and democracy.
- If voting is done publicly, the people will not be in a position to vote fearlessly.
- He favours the idea of proportional representation which is impracticable in the present times as it is impossible to give due representation to all people.
- Mill's representative government is meant only for developed countries not for developing countries.

Though, Mill's representative government has the above mentioned shortcomings, he strongly favours representative government, adult franchise and equality of women which are the hallmarks of modern democracy.

#### **Stop To Consider**

##### **Major Works of Mill:**

Like many other nineteenth-century thinkers, John Stuart Mill had to face the crisis of authority which had been implicit in Europe since the French Revolution and which became pressing after the Revolution of 1848. When

Mill wrote his famous essay 'On Liberty', France was going through a phase of Napoleonic rule for the second time. From Mill's attitude the idea how far utilitarianism had travelled since Bentham. In his book *On Representative Government* (1861), Mill makes an important addition to the traditional utilitarian definition of good government. Again in his *System of Logic* (1843) which he began writing in the 1920s, he tries to elucidate a coherent philosophy of politics. One of his important works was *Subjection of Women* (1869), which is the classic elaboration of liberal thought on some important issues regarding the liberation of women in the context of law, rights and liberty. His famous pamphlet *Utilitarianism* (1863) endorsed the Benthamite principle of the greatest happiness of greatest number. Apart from these, some other major works of him are as follows:

*Principles of Political Economy* (1848)

*The Three Essays on Religions* (1874)

*Enfranchisement of Women*

*Dissertations and Discussions*

*Women Suffrage*

**SAQ**

Discuss how Mill's idea of Government can be regarded as the basis of modern democracy. (80 words)

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**2.5 Mill as Revisionist of Benthamite Utilitarianism**

In the previous unit of this block we have discussed Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is a doctrine which believes in greatest happiness of the greatest number. As you know Bentham is the main proponent of the doctrine of

Utilitarianism. Now let us discuss Mill's revisionism of Benthamite Utilitarianism.

Mill is deeply influenced by Bentham in his earlier days but later he does not agree with some of the ideas of Bentham. During his youth, Mill is a great supporter of Bentham's doctrines and radical politics. However in his later years, he has made certain modifications in the principle of Utilitarianism. In the process he not only repudiates the Utilitarian philosophy but practically overthrows the whole of it. Mill's doctrine of Utilitarianism is found in the famous essay "Utilitarianism". He introduces many elements which counter Bentham's Utilitarianism. In this sense Mill's is a revisionist of Bentham's Utilitarianism. He even transforms Bentham's idea of Utilitarianism and gives his own view on Utilitarianism different from Bentham.

In the previous unit we have studied the pleasure and pain theory of Bentham. Mill provides a critique of this theory. To Bentham, pleasure differs only in quantity and one pleasure is as good as another. But, Mill makes a distinction between quality and quantity of pleasure and emphasizes the quality of pleasure.

Mill has revised Bentham's Utilitarianism in the following ways

- Bentham is of the opinion that pleasure differs only in quantity. Mill retains the basic premise of Utilitarianism but distinguishes between higher and lower pleasures and opines that greater human pleasure means an increase not merely in quantity but also in quality of goods enjoyed. Mill insists that human beings are capable of intellectual and moral pleasures superior to the physical ones that they share with animals.
- According to Bentham, pleasure is the only cause and motive of individual's actions. According to Mill, individual pleasure does not give maximum pleasure. On the other hand, it is collective pleasure which gives maximum happiness and joy to the individual. Thus he believes that pleasure comes from outside and not from within. He regarded individual self-development and diversity as the ultimate ends and

important components of human happiness and the principal ingredients of individual and social progress. This is in complete contrast to Bentham's view that pleasure comes from within.

- In Bentham's Utilitarianism, the gulf between self-interest and general happiness is very wide. Mill, on the other hand, has greatly narrowed down the gulf between self-interest and general happiness. He holds that utilitarian standard is not the individual's own greatest happiness but the greatest amount of happiness altogether.

The distinction between the two has been brought out by Prof Maxey "*Bentham's principle of Utility in a society of wolves would exalt exact wolfishness; in a society of saints it would exalt saintliness. Mill was determined that saintliness should be the criterion in any society whatsoever*".

- Bentham considers personal happiness as the sole criteria for all human actions. Mill introduces the concept of good life more than a life devoted to pleasure. He places the moral ends above individual happiness and thus tries to promote virtuous life.

Mill points out that every human action had three aspects – a) the moral aspect of right and wrong, b) the aesthetic aspect, c) The sympathetic aspect of its loveableness. The first principle instructs one to disapprove, the second teaches one to admire or despise and the third enables one to love, pity or dislike.

- Bentham does not attach any importance to liberty because according to him it does not in any way contribute to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. He attaches more importance to security than liberty. Mill, on the other hand, considers liberty essential for the attainment of the principle of Utility and asserts that minority rights can be protected only when all enjoy liberty.
- Bentham advocates secret voting. Mill advocates public voting as he believes that voting is public duty and like any other public duty it should be performed before the public.

- Seventhly, Bentham gives no special treatment to women in his Utility. Mill gives special position to women and gives them educational and political rights for their emancipation.
- Both Mill and Bentham favour democracy but the reasons for their support of democracy are different. Bentham justifies it because of the nature of men. But Mill justifies it because of the condition of men.
- Bentham is in favour of unicameral legislature .But Mill is in favour of bicameral legislature.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Mill's Views on India**

Mill held a respectful office during the British rule in India. From his *Autobiography* and his personal letters, we can analyze his views regarding India. His *Autobiography* indicates that he looks upon his Indian duties as essentially belonging to his official employment. He writes about India and is influenced by his father's pessimistic views on Indian culture. From his writings, we find that he is skeptical about the feasibility and success of representative government in India. Mill believes that centuries of despotisms prevent the people of India from taking an active posture in the public sphere. He also argues that despite attaining high standards of civilization, they are dominated at that time by custom and sufficiently unresponsive to the stimulating ideas of individualism and rationalism. He also marks that it has made Eastern societies essentially passive and stagnant, making it difficult for them to progress on their volition. In this point, we can say that Mill's views are Eurocentric. However, Mill suggests that some form of benevolent despotism or rule by a superior people belonging to an advanced society is best suited for India. In the mean time, he is also critical about the capacity of a foreign government to act in the best interest of its subject, especially in the case of India where the British had very little understanding of their subjects, or sympathy for them. For the development of India, Mill suggests that British

parliament must take permanent interest and responsibility in the Indian affairs. Thus it can be said that Mill favours the British policy and their rule for developing Indian society. As evident from his writings, we find that he is in favour of non- interference in religious practices in India and also advocates gender equality.

### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Fill in the banks

a). Utilitarian Society is founded by.....

b). The best form of Government according to Mill is.....

2. Name the two activities in which Mill divides individual activities.

3. Name the individual activities where Mill advocates full freedom.

4. What was Mill's view on payment to the members of the Parliament?

5. Write a note on Mill's view on public voting?

## **2.6 Mill on State**

State is the legal and the supreme authority. Every political philosopher has discussed the state in their political philosophy. Mill has dealt with state elaborately and rejected the mechanistic view of the state and considers it as the product of the will of the people. His theory of state is based on the classical economic theory of *laissez faire*. Mill believes that the theory of *laissez faire* is the ideal. However it should be kept out for the purposes of education, care of children and the insane, relief for poor, public utilities etc. The basic task for the state, according to him is to ensure that none is starved.



***Basic features of Mill's state***

- Mill rejects the mechanistic view of theories of the state because it completely ignores the human will and neglects the personalities of men.
- He considers state as the product of the will of the people who compose it rather than an instrument for the promotion of their interests.
- Mill considers that the state and other political institutions are the result of human voluntary agency and do not act by themselves. They require an active participation of the individuals and must adjust according to the capacities and qualities of those individuals.
- Mill does not emphasize the negative aspect of state and asserts that state interference is indispensable for the development of the individual personality.
- Mill wants that the state should be regulated to stimulate and utilize the best intellectual and moral qualities of the citizens for the service of the society.
- Mill's theory of state is based on the classical economic theory of "*Laissez Faire*".

**SAQ**

Examine Mill as a revisionist of Bentham's Utilitarianism? (80 words)

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## **2.7 Mill on Gender Equality and General Discrimination**

Mill has discussed elaborately on general discrimination and equality of sexes. Mill's thought and activism can be distinguished from all his predecessors within the liberal tradition because of the application of the principles of liberalism to the question of women. In his book *Subjection of Women*, Mill makes a strong plea for equality of sexes. For Mill, improving women's position by giving them suffrage, education and reemployment opportunities is a stepping stone to progress and civility.

Women are denied equal treatment for long and considered inferior to men. They are not allowed to act according to their wishes and always have to be dependent on their male counterparts. Mill has referred to women as both the subject and the enslaved class as their position is even worse than slaves. Their capacities are spent in seeking happiness for others. A woman is not free within marriage, nor is she free to remain unmarried. Unmarried women are deprived of avenues for leading a good and independent life. There is lack of freedom of choice for women.

The subordination and domination of women are possible for the following reasons –

- Women are physically weak and not as strong as their male counterparts.
- Women have accepted the domination voluntarily without any protest or resistance.
- The psychology of women from childhood is moulded in such a pattern that she accepts all subordination without objection.
- Renunciation, patience, resignation and submission to power have been regarded as the characteristics of a gentle and graceful woman which woman willingly accept from birth.

Again, Mill has argued for three key areas for the equal status to women –

- *Right to vote* – Mill argues that women should be given the right to vote and chose their representatives.
- *Right to education* – Mill argues for women’s education. Unless they are given proper education, they will not understand their capacities and rights and their empowerment will remain impossible.
- *Right to employment* – Mill insists for the right to employment for women because employment will lead to empowerment and progress of women.

From the above discussion it is clear that Mill considers women as bright and gifted as men and once granted the same eagerness for fame; women will achieve the same success. Moreover, a judgment regarding capacities and talent in women can be made only after generations of women benefit from equal opportunities for education and employment. He supports the idea that it is the women who should be able to decide whether to marry and manage a house, or to pursue a career. According to Mill, it is society that has decided marriage to be ultimate aim of a woman. Mill has articulated and defended the right of women to be considered as free rational beings capable of choosing the life they like to lead for themselves rather than being dictated by what society thinks they should be or do. Mill is confident that women, even if granted freedom and opportunities will not fail to perform their traditional functions. It is not a question of a choice between domesticity and career. The reason why men do not grant equal status to women is because they are afraid of marriage on equal terms.

Mill further points out that marriage does not give the women the dignity and equal status she is entitled to get. Once she is married, she is totally under the control of her husband. Hence they must have the right to property, inheritance and custody. A marriage contract based on the equality of married persons before law is not only sufficient but a necessary condition for full and just equality between the sexes. For Mill, equality is a genuine moral

sentiment that ought to govern all relationships including the marital one. Such a sentiment could be instilled and nurtured within a family that had been justly constituted. Mill acknowledged the family as the real school for learning the virtues of freedom and liberation. The boy by virtue of being a male was treated and reared as if he was superior and better thus dismissing the needs and interests of one half of mankind to bear the consequences of sub-ordination and inhumanness. The self-worship of the male in the traditional family was described by Mill as a school of despotism.

A just family will nurture feelings of sympathy in terms of equality and love, rather than sub-ordination and command. Mill desires a transformation of the family to suit the temperament and spirit of the modern age namely the spirit of equality and justice and in the process aims to bring a moral regeneration of humankind.

Mill also suggests some reformative measures for the improvement of women's condition:

- Men should not be vested with absolute powers. Such absolute power within the family and marriage only leads to brutalization of women.
- Women should have the right to decision-making because this will reduce the feeling of negligence and ignorance.
- The dignity of women will be guaranteed if women are given the power to earn their own living. She should be given the right to enter a profession and take up a career.
- Women should have full right in her property and earning.
- Women should be equally paid for equal work with men.
- Women should be given the political right to vote and participate in government and administration as rulers.
- Condition of women can be improved by education, opinion, habits and finally a change in family life itself.

### *Criticism of Mill's view on Gender Equality*

Mill's view on general discrimination and gender equality has various shortcomings which are as follows –

- Mill has failed to address the problems of women in the market place and as a part of the labour force.
- The critics highlight that Mill's main focus in the '*Subjection of Women*' is on wife and mother and he ignores the plight of daughters, sisters etc.
- Mill does focus on the plight of single women in a society thereby giving undue importance to marriage.
- Mill has supported women's power of decision-making but he does not mention how their decisions can be made binding. Thus, it is giving power on one hand and taking it away on the other hand.

However, Mill has made a brilliant study of the plight of women and suggested various measures for the improvement of their condition. He does not believe that women are slaves to customs and it is necessary to improve their position by giving them suffrage, education and employment, the stepping stones to progress and civility.

#### **SAQ**

Critically examine Mill's ideas on gender discrimination and equality of sexes. (60 words)

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## 2.8 Summing up

Mill is one of the foremost individualists or liberal thinker who emphasizes the principle of human progress as the goal of civilization. After reading this unit, we can now draw a conclusion that Mill is one of the supporters of liberty of thought and expression. He highlights the evils of bureaucracy and opposes governmental interference in the economic life of the community. Again, we have also learnt that he is a strong advocator of women's rights. The profound influence of Mill is still witnessed on the contemporary intellectuals. Mill is the first male philosopher of considerable stature and repute to consider the women's question. He applies the liberal principles not only in the public sphere but also in the private realm and remains the only philosopher to emphasize the importance of fairness, equality and independence within the family well as within the state. Towards this end, he advocates women's enfranchisement, quality elementary education for the masses and land reforms for agriculture labourers.

This unit also helps you to understand that Mill makes Benthamite Utilitarianism more humane and consistent. Due to his contribution to Utilitarianism, he is described as the last of the great Utilitarians. Mill's effort to revise and modify classical Utilitarianism by emphasizing the social aspect of the individual as well as the need to assess happiness both quantitatively and qualitatively is significant. He also states that liberty is the chief end of the state and defines happiness to include liberty, individuality, self – development and self – control. Hence, Mill's above mentioned ideas pave the way for many of the changes initiated within English political thought and practice

## 2.9 References and Suggested Readings

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2. Mukherjee, Subrata & Sushila Ramaswamy. *A History Of Political Thought – Plato To Marx* , Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd , 1999
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### **Links:**

<http://www.google.co.in/search=J.S Mill>

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## **Unit 3**

### **George W.F. Hegel**

#### **Contents**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 Hegel's View of State
- 3.4 Hegel's View on Monarchy and Universal Class
- 3.5 Hegel on Rule of Law, War, and International Relations
- 3.6 Hegel on Civil Society
- 3.7 Hegel on Dialectical and Historical Materialism
- 3.8 Evaluation of Hegel's Philosophy
- 3.9 Summing up
- 3.10 References and Suggested Readings

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Hegel is one of the important German thinkers like Kant, Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm, who are the heirs of French Revolution. Hegel is famous for his organic theory of the state. He appears to be the heir of the great idealistic tradition and is believed to have completed the great process of thought that begins with Plato. In the word of Sabine "The significance of political thought of Hegel centers round two points and those are the Dialectical method and the idealism of the nation-state".

In this unit we shall discuss Hegel's contribution towards political philosophy in details. Here, our attempt is to discuss Hegel's view on state. We shall also deal with Hegel's ideas on civil society and war. In this unit, an attempt is made to analyse Hegel's view on monarchy, universal class and international relations. Apart from these, we shall also discuss Hegel's conception of historical and dialectical materialism.



### 3.2 Objectives

Hegel is an inspiration to his contemporaries and successors. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century social and political thoughts are unthinkable without Hegel. After reading this unit you will be able to –

- *analyse* Hegel's view on the state
- *explain* Hegel's view on universal class, monarchy, rule of law, war and international relations
- *describe* Hegel's view on civil society
- *comprehend* Hegel's ideas on dialectical and historical Materialism
- *discuss* Hegel's contribution to political philosophy

### 3.3 Hegel's View of State

As we know, state is a supreme legal entity. Most of the political philosophers have discussed state and Hegel is no exception. While discussing state, Hegel assigns rationality to it. In the words of Dunning "Hegel regarded the state as perfect rationality – in the sense that man has ethical status only as a member of state and that highest duty of man is not to develop his individual faculties, but to be a member of the state and faithfully fulfil his allotted functions therein."

Hegel does not agree with the social contract philosophers that the state originates as a result of social contract. He believes in the philosophy of "natural organism" of the state. According to Gettel, Hegel is of the opinion that the state is a real person and "its will was the manifestation of perfect rationality – the synthesis of universal and individual freedom". He believes that individuals have no rights against the state. The individuals have only an indirect and reflected existence, whereas state possesses the ultimate reality. In his view, the essence of state is freedom and freedom lies in the complete subordination to the dictates of the state. Since the state represents reason,

the freedom of the individuals in the state lies in obeying the state laws rather than disobeying it.

In fact, Hegel believes that the state is of divine origin and it represents the divine will. He describes it as a march of God on earth and completely rejects the social contract theory which holds that the state is the result of a contract. Hegel considers state as the handiwork of God and an embodiment of reason. It synthesizes dialectically the elements within the family and civil society. He perceives the state as an end in itself. The state, for Hegel, is the sole agency which works for the moral upliftment of mankind. It contributes to the enrichment of the individual's personality by purging him of petty and selfish elements. He believes that the individuals have no right against the state and the freedom for the individual consists in the blind obedience to the dictates of the state.

However, as an idealist, Hegel views the state as an organism having "the highest right over the individual, whose highest duty in turn is to be a member of the state". According to Hegel, "The state is not formed by a grant of certain arbitrarily selected powers from the individuals but by taking up unto itself the whole circle of his life. The individual, on the other hand, cannot be conceived apart from community. He is what he is, as a member of it; his whole life physical, moral and intellectual is drawn from it".

Hence we can say that according to Hegel "the state represents reason and guarantees liberty". It is the real personality which represents the real wills of all the individuals. Moreover, Hegel considers the state as the creator of all individual rights and the embodiment of highest social morality.

### ***Features of Hegel's State***

We have already learnt Hegel's views on state which is regarded as essentially divine in origin. Now let us discuss the features of his state.

- The state as natural organism

Hegel agrees with Aristotle in claiming that the state arises because man is naturally and instinctively a social and political animal. According to Hegel,

man is innately a political animal because of a divine spirit moving within him, a divine spirit which can find adequate expression only in the formation of political units. The state is the product of long process of evolution. The family is the most primitive institution, the tribe is developed from the family and then the state develops from the tribe.

- Complete subordination of the individual to the state

The second feature of Hegelian state is that the individual must be completely subordinated to the state and the wishes and desires of the individual must be rejected in favour of the will of the state. The individual and the individual self-consciousness have only an indirect and reflected experience. The ultimate reality is possessed only by the universal mind which is directly embodied in the state.

- Absolute supremacy of the state

The Hegelian state is absolutely supreme. The dictates of the state are higher and more important than the dictates of natural law and subjective morality. In the state, man concerns himself with moral rights and wrong and convinces himself that there are something which are right and something which are wrong. This is the sphere of duty, the sphere of individual's conscience, calling upon each man to perform what he feels he ought to perform.

- The State is superior to society

Another feature of the Hegelian state is that among all the social institutions, state is higher and important than the society and family. Society is dominated by the principles of self-seeking and individuals in society are private persons who pursue their own interest. An institution like society cannot be considered as the goal and aim of evolution. Hegel thinks that a great step is taken when men depart from pure individualism of society as a whole and group themselves together to form voluntary associations called corporations. These corporations resemble the trade unions of the present times. The tendency of mankind to form such groups indicates the perfect union of mankind in the form of the state.

- Monarchy as the best Government of the state

Hegel considers monarchy as the best form of government. He considers all other forms of government as necessarily imperfect. The movement of history is from Despotism (thesis) to a Republic (the antithesis) and from Republic to a Constitutional Monarchy (synthesis). Constitutional monarchy is the final and perfected form of government of all states.

### **Stop to Consider:**

#### **Life Sketch of Hegel**

Hegel was born at Stuttgart in 1770. His father was a subordinate official in the department of Finances of the state of Wurttemberg; and Hegel grew up with the patient and methodical habits of these civil servants whose modest efficiency had given Germany the best governed cities in the world. Hegel was a bright student, who made full analyses of the books he read and copied out long passages. In 1803, he was appointed as lecturer at Jena University, then for a while he edited a paper at Bamberg; in 1812 he became the Head of the Gymnasium at Nuremberg. at Nuremberg, he wrote his *Logic* which captivated Germany by its unintelligibility and won him the chair of Philosophy at Heidelberg, where he wrote his immense *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* on the strength of which he was promoted, in 1818, to the university of Berlin. From that time to the end of his life he ruled the world of philosophy, While at Berlin University, he acted as the official philosopher of Prussia. Here he wrote his *Philosophy of Rights* and delivered lectures which was posthumously published as the *Philosophy of History*. Hegel was hailed not merely as a philosopher of Prussia but as the philosopher of the age like Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas. The writings of the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, French philosophers Montesquieu and Rousseau and the works of Kant and Fichte were influential to Hegel. After publishing an *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (logic, philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit), he was called in 1818 to a

Chair in Berlin, which he held until his death from cholera in 1831.

Major Works of Hegel are

*The Phenomenology of Mind (1807)*

*Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1816)*

*Philosophy of Right (1831)*

*Philosophy of History (1837)*

Hegel also deals with the components of the state. Now we will discuss the components of a state found in the writings of Hegel.

- Rule of Law

The rule of law is one of the key components of the state. Hegel views law as a characteristic of freedom. He uses law in both broad and narrow senses. In the broad sense, it is one of the instruments for realizing social cohesion. Law is seen as one that reflects the ethical values governing cultural life. In the narrow sense, law is linked to positive legal justice.

- Bureaucracy

One of the most important components of the Hegelian state is the class of civil servants or the bureaucracy. This class becomes the universal class because of its commitment to impartiality. The civil servants perform the stupendous task of supervising the entire societal apparatus which Hegel calls the public business. This class of people will be recruited from the middle class.

- Monarchy

The Monarchy is a functional requirement of the state. It is an important institution of the state as it solves the problem of identifying national sovereignty.

However, Hegel in his writing does not refer to any particular state. He is speaking of the ideal state- the state in idea as it exists nowhere in time and place. In such a state, the spirit can contemplate itself with continual complacency.

## **Criticism of Hegel's Theory of State**

Hegel's theory of state suffers from various drawbacks for which it is criticised from many quarters. The criticisms can be summarized as follows-

- Hegel stresses that the state is the end in itself and that individual cannot develop and prosper without the state. But the state cannot be the end in itself; it exists for the sake of the individuals and is an agency for giving freedom to the individuals. Thus, the end is individual and not the state.
- Hegel has made the state an absolute identity and a totalitarian concept which is against the spirit of liberty and democracy.
- Hegel has bestowed the state with enormous powers and given supreme position to the state and has thus created the danger of exploitation and subordination of all.
- Hegel's theory of state almost leads to fascism which is rejected by the world and is dangerous for international peace.
- It is also said that Hegel's theory of state completely subordinates the individual to the state which is very dangerous.
- Hegel believes that it is not the responsibility of the state to be moral and follow any moral code. But if the state does not advance or promote any morality, then it is bound to wither away and consequently the state shall have no right to govern the people.
- Hegel glorifies war and denies aspirations towards human brotherhood which is not acceptable.

Nevertheless, state occupies an important and prominent position in Hegel's political philosophy despite the various shortcomings.

## **Stop To Consider**

### **Hegel and Individualism**

The contemporary social, political and economic situations of Germany were the chief source for Hegel. Germany was ravaged by corruption at all levels of society. So, the integrity of the nation was at stake. As a supporter of nationalism and national state, the unity of Germany received highest priority from Hegel. He strongly opposed individualism. According to him, it was an enemy of national integration. So, people must show their unconditional allegiance to the authority. Groupism and Parochialism had no place in Hegel's philosophy. So he did not intend to treat private interest as the prime interest. In other words, we can say that Hegel totally opposed the idea of individualism. Moreover, his assessment of the individual was very low.

## **SAQ**

1. Do you agree with Hegel's view of state as a divine origin? (80 words)

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2. Why did Hegel regard individual subordinate to the state? (50 words)

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3. Mention three major features of Hegel's state. (40 words)

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### **3.4 Hegel's View on Monarchy and Universal Class**

Hegel has elaborately discussed the universal class in his political philosophy. One of the most important components of the Hegelian state is the class of civil servants or the bureaucracy. These civil servants form the universal class because of its commitment to impartiality. The civil service performs the stupendous task of supervising the entire societal apparatus which Hegel calls the public business.

This class of people will not be recruited from the nobility but from the modern middle classes which symbolize "the consciousness of right and the developed intelligence of the mass of people". This class becomes "the pillar of the state so far as honesty and intelligence are concerned". The recruitment of the civil servants is not hereditary and their recruitment criteria is knowledge and proof of ability. The constitutional state retains its independence from its ruling groups by the mechanisms of free institutions and civil service. The civil servants, like Plato's Guardians have the interests of the commonwealth in mind. Hegel is categorical that the bureaucracy should be open to all citizens on the basis of ability and citizenship. Civil servants should have fixed salaries to resist the temptations of civil society.

Again, we all know that monarchy is the form of Government in which one rules many. In Monarchy the people have to abide by the king and his words are law for the people. Justice, equality, liberty are denied in monarchy. Hegel, in his political philosophy, regards Monarchy as the best form of Government. The Monarchy for Hegel is the functional requirement of the modern state and constitution. This modern constitution accepts separation and division of powers. Hegel holds that division of power guarantees freedom.

Hegel differentiates between the doctrines of separation of powers and his own innovative theory of inward differentiation of constitutional powers. Hegel's supreme concern is to find a method by which he can secure the



unity and integrity of the state. Absolute separation of power leads to self-destruction of the state. Thus to avoid this, Hegel's prescription is that the crown, the executive and the legislative body will have legally differentiated spheres but there shall be cooperation and harmony among these bodies which is necessary for guarantying freedom to its citizens. Interdependence and a cooperative attitude of the three important branches are the preconditions of continuance of the sovereign state. Monarchy at the apex is supposed to signify this unity. The Monarch is the tangible expression of all the features of the constitution. Hegel considers monarchy as an important component of the state as it solves the problem of identifying national sovereignty. Hegel views that for holding this symbolic office of unity, physical power or intellectual gifts are not necessary. Hegel argues that since the manifestation of the state is one, its head should also be an identifiable one. Hegel regards all other forms of government as necessarily imperfect. Some of the advanced liberal contemporaries of Hegel argue that constitutional monarchy is only a passing phase, a half-way stage between despotism (the thesis) and a republic (the antithesis) and from the Republic to a constitutional monarchy (the synthesis). Constitutional monarchy is the final and perfected form of government of all the states.

Hegel's theory of monarchy has faced several criticisms in the later period. The criticisms are as follows:

- According to Hegel, monarchy is the best form of government. But in the contemporary world, monarchy as a form of government is no longer relevant.
- Hegel has stated that monarchy signifies unity. But in reality, monarchy leads to inequality and social divisions in a state.
- Monarchy leads to absolutism and despotism.
- Monarchy stands against democracy and democratic rights.
- Monarchy gives rise to social inequality and curtails public opinion.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Fill in the blanks

a). According to Hegel, the universal class is.....

b).The recruitment criteria for civil servants as specified by Hegel is .....

c). The best form of Government as specified by Hegel is .....

2. Write a brief note on Universal class.

3. Why does Hegel regard Monarchy as an important component of the state?

4. Highlight two defects of Hegel's concept of Monarchy.

**3.5 Hegel on Rule of Law, War, and International Relations**

In this section, we shall elaborately study Hegel's ideas on Rule of Law, War and International Relations.

The Rule of Law is one of the key formulations in Hegel's book called *Philosophy of Rights*. Hegel does not view law as a hindrance to freedom; rather he considers it as a characteristic of freedom.

Hegel has provided two conceptions of law. First he deals with the broad conception of law. According to him, in the wider sense law is one of the instruments for realizing social cohesion. Law is seen not as a code that reflects ethical values governing cultural life. In this holistic concept, justice is linked to the institutional ordering of entire society.

Then he discusses the narrow conception of law. In the narrow sense, law is linked to positive legal justice. Hegel states that it is the law which is the source of our knowledge of what is right or more exactly of our legal rights.

Hegel rejects the conception of higher or natural law and emphasises the conventional principles of law and bases his argument on the fact that modern civil codes are becoming more rational and public. The dignity of the rule of law has to be honoured.

Hegel's legal system lacks the idea of command. The determining characteristics of legal norms are the form which has its basis in practical rationality. The embodiment of rule is more important than command. It is this rule that gives meaning and shape to the rule of law and distinguishes it from arbitrary power. He asserts that commands and orders are specified purposes for identified people whereas the ambit of law is wider as it addressed a larger and unknown audience and is equally applicable to all within its jurisdiction. The basis of rational authority must have the sanction of law.

Hegel also rejects the notion that the purpose of law is the realization of a lofty ideal of human excellence or for the development of human capabilities. The ancient view of law is rejected by Hegel. For instance, for Aristotle, the purpose of law is to instill in citizens a very high level of civic virtue. But for Hegel, all such issues are left to the private discretion of the individual. Hegel is critical of the "the legislation of the ancients" as it is full of precepts about uprightness and integrity which are unsuited by nature to legal enactment because they fall wholly within the field of inner life". For Hegel, the modern rule of law consists of few necessary features common to all. Laws are established by the rationality of free individuals. Laws are impersonal. They must be rational and written. The purpose of written and codified law is that people will know about it. For getting conformity and consent of the governed, laws have to reflect intelligible rules.

**SAQ**

Why did Hegel give supreme importance to Rule of Law? (80 words)

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We know that war is a great curse on the international relations, an epidemic disease of the nation state system. However, Hegel has supported war.

Hegel has discussed in details about war. One of the most controversial aspects of Hegel's political philosophy is his assertion that war "preserves the ethical health of the people". For Hegel war is not to be regarded as an absolute evil and as a purely external accident.

The state, i.e. the political state is an ethical community. It is not an instrument for advancing one's material interests. It is not based on brute force where obedience comes from coercion and fear. It is a union of shared values of good life and demands common sacrifice. The emphasis is on the ethical, spiritual and material characteristics of the state. Hegel considers struggle amongst the states as an essential feature. He asserts that a state can attain its uniqueness and perfection only on its relation to other states. Hegel's defense of war is derived from the idea that the ethical nature of the state is preserved by war. As an ethical entity, it can resort to war in order to maintain itself. War is a moment in the ethical life of the state. The war shows the political strength of a nation and the presence of spirit in it. To Hegel, war is to national life what winds are to sea. Hegel does not consider war as an absolute evil. On the other hand, he considers it as a virtuous activity. He argues that peace corrupts and everlasting peace corrupts everlastingly. War raises the level of consciousness from mere material possessions and interests. During wars common values and commitments are not only preserved but also enhanced. Thus, Hegel glorifies war. If there is perpetual peace, there is bound to be corruption. Peace introduces a sense of stagnation in both men as well as the nations. War goes a long way in strengthening nations and helps in maintaining loyalty of the people for their sovereign and states.

Hegel believes that war has two types of utility. In the negative sense, war demonstrates the limitations of the material world which we can call negative utility. In the positive sense, war unites the people for a common goal.

### *Functions of War*

For Hegel, War performs particular and important functions-

Firstly- War helps in establishing the state.

Secondly- When the state is well established, war acts as a mechanism of preserving the state from the inevitable conflicts generated by a market within the civil society.

Hegel is categorical that since modern political institutions are different from ancient ones in purpose, ambit, scale and mechanism, modern warfare is totally different from the ancient ones. In the ancient period, individual bravery in war and conquest is one of the important indicators of human excellence as it is a sign of individual glorification. But in modern period, personal pride is subordinated to a larger impersonal category, the state. Personal honour and bravery are replaced by a larger cause or ideal. Hegel also believes that since modern warfare is impersonal, it is destined to become less barbaric and more humane than what it is in the past. He also asserts that the invention of guns will make wars more rational, rather than based on personal whims and fancies including personal enmity. Thus the causes of war are sown deeply in human nature and as such war cannot be eliminated and war is the basic characteristic of every stage of human history. In Hegel's words, "War has the highest significance that by its agency, as I remarked elsewhere, the ethical health of the people is preserved in their indifference to the stabilization of finite institutions; just as the blowing of the wind preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of a prolonged calm, so also corruption in nations would be the product of prolonged, let alone perpetual peace".

Hegel's theory of War suffers from the following shortcomings-

- Hegel believes that war alone promotes progress. But it is not true, no war has ever promoted peace and prosperity.
- Hegel believes that war promotes national character but only peace can promote national character and not war.

- Hegel believes that invention of weapons has reduced the brutality of war in present times but in reality; invention of weapons especially nuclear weapons has made war more barbaric and fatal.
- Hegel argues that war helps in strengthening the nations. But, in reality, war weakens the nations.

**SAQ**

Why did Hegel support war? Elaborate with valid reasons. (80 +50words)

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**Check Your Progress**

1. What according to Hegel preserves the ethical nature of the state?
2. According to Hegel what are the two utilities of war ?
3. What are the functions of war according to Hegel?

***International Relations***

Hegel has given his views on international relations. According to Hegel, each state is the end in itself and thus a separate entity in international relations. However, we already know that in the contemporary scenario, no state can survive alone. International relations indicate the relations and interactions between different nation-states.

Hegel discusses international relations from a different perspective. He treats international law simply as a collection of fair usages which are observed by the state as long as they do not conflict with their national interest.

Hence, it can be said that Hegel's firm faith in war hardly leaves any scope for international law and international order. He considers the state as omnipotent and international law in no way restricts its authority. The states conclude treaties among them but these treaties only regulate the conduct of states and are concluded only to achieve a particular purpose. These treaties do not harm the independent entity of the states. The states are independent with regard to one another and each state decides about its position and role in international relations according to its own terms and conditions and circumstances.

Hegel's idea of international relations is criticized on the following grounds:

- No state or nation can survive alone in international sphere as stated by Hegel in his theory.
- Hegel has stated that each state decides its role in international relations according to its own terms but it is not true.

### **3.6 Hegel on Civil Society**

Now, in this section we will discuss Hegel's ideas on civil society which occupies a predominant position in his political philosophy. Before him, many political thinkers have discussed civil society. Aristotle, the father of Political Science is of the view that civil society is identical with the political community. However, Hegel's view on civil society is different from that of others. For Hegel, the nature and basis of civil society are very different from those of the family and the state. The family is governed by love and affection and on the other hand, the state is governed competently and impartially by a universal class- the civil service. Civil society, for Hegel reflects a system of needs where the individual is allowed to pursue his own interest according to his inclinations and abilities. This is an achievement of modern world reflecting division of labour and actualization of a new science-political economy. The civil society is the major arena for the bulk of the people for the major part of their time.

### ***Three Interrelated Things of Civil Society-***

For Hegel, civil society contains three different and interrelated things-

- (a) The system of needs
- (b) The administration of justice
- (c) The need for police and cooperation

Regarding the first need, Hegel has said that these are the particular needs of particular individuals. They are subjective needs. Hegel argues that the needs of animals are limited in scope whereas those of human beings are multiplied. Division of labour is one of the major means of their attainment, as by this the individual's work becomes simpler and his skill increases with the growth in output. They become interdependent leading to a "dialectical advance" as self-interest generates situation where everybody's needs are also satisfied. The cumulative effects of the particular motivations leads to a universal minimum in which each person's enjoyment leads to similar enjoyment by all others out of this complexity of interdependence. By education and the skills of multitudes of people, the general wealth of civil society also increases.

Civil society inevitably gets divided into various classes and estates because of the different levels of skills, outlooks, interests and way of life, opportunities etc. The three broad groupings of the peasantry, the business class and the universal class of bureaucracy mediate between the family and the state. The state being very large and impersonal, the individual's public spirit and feeling of the community has to grow within the ambit of civil society. Hegel's corporation is the mechanism to achieve this by the flowering of professional associations and voluntary organizations.



### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Hegel's Idea of Corporatism**

Hegel's Corporatism was more akin to the idea of liberal corporatism, meaning self-regulating by quasi-autonomous social groups within the ambit of constitutional Government. He also assigned some functions for Corporatism.

They were:

1. It was an essential requirement for actualizing freedom.
2. Another important aspect of corporatism was its welfare functions meant for the underprivileged.
3. The Corporatism also played the role of a mediator between the state and the civil society by facilitating political representation for its members.
4. Write a brief note on Hegel's idea of Civil Society.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Define Hegel's concept of civil society.
2. Highlight the functions of Corporatism.
3. Critically discuss Hegel's idea of International Relation.

### **3.7 Hegel's View on Dialectical and Historical Method**

Dialectical method is one of the most outstanding contributions of Hegel to political philosophy. In propounding this idea, he is greatly inspired by Greek thinkers who believe that each force gives birth to an opposite force.

According to Hegel, the dialectic is not merely a process by which logical ideas are developed. It is a process by which all ideas in the world have developed.

Sabine has said that, “Hegel thought of the world as an endless moving equilibrium, contrary sources supply the dynamism of history but balance can never be permanent, it merely gives a continuity and direction for the change”.

Hegel believes that the progress of human civilisation has not been in positive straight line. The whole process of evolution has followed definite principles through a dialectical process.

### ***Three stages of progress of civilization***

Hegel has identified three stages through which the entire progress of civilization has taken place namely, being, non being and becoming. These can also be called –

- Thesis
- Anti- thesis and
- Synthesis

According to Hegel, the whole process of evolution starts with the universal concept called thesis. The concept gives rise to contradictions known as anti-thesis. The thesis and the anti-thesis, though contradictory concepts, are reconciled in a third concept which combines the good points of both and is called synthesis.

The synthesis again assumes the shape of a thesis and gives rise to contradictions or anti-thesis, once again culminating into synthesis. In this way, the process of development continues.

By applying the categories of a thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, Hegel’s major thrust is to solve the problem of contradiction. It attempts to reconcile the apparent contradictory positions and theories developed by earlier thought processes. As a method of interpretation, it attempts to reconcile the various different traits developed in the past.

Hegel's dialectical method presupposes that ideas and beliefs are to be related to their institutions and social structures. For Hegel dialectics is "the only true method" for comprehending pure thought. For Hegel, there is dialectical pattern in history with the state representing the ultimate body, highly complex and formed as a result of a synthesis of contradictory elements at different levels of social life.

Hegel's idea of dialectic is necessary supplement to his philosophy of history which in turn is based on new logic of synthesis. Hegel has concluded that the philosophy of history represents partial truth and thus each fact supplements the other. From this, he has deduced that the progress starts from inorganic to organic world and that man is the ultimate end of physical evolution. Since man cannot lead a solitary life, he forms family for his requirements which he soon finds inadequate for himself. Thus he becomes a member of the civil society and subsequently that of the state which is ultimately responsible for his final development.

Hegel's dialectical and historical method has various shortcomings

- Hegel has not furnished any rational explanation of the dialectical method.
- Hegel's concept of dialectics is defective in so far as it treats all defects as beginning of victory.
- Hegel's philosophy of dialectics is self-contradictory.
- Hegel's philosophy of history preaches not peace but war which cannot be justified on any ground.

However despite the criticism, Hegel's theory of Dialectics is a remarkable contribution to political philosophy. We can say in the words of Prof. Wayper that Hegel's dialectic is "a new system of synthetic logic replacing the old system of analytic logic, a principle of self-movement through contradiction towards the final goal of perfect realization of spirit".

### **Check Your Progress**

1. What are the three stages of progress of civilization as specified by Hegel?
2. Enumerate two defects of Hegel's dialectical method.
3. Discuss critically Hegel's conception of Dialectical and Historical Materialism.

### **3.8 Evaluation of Hegel's Philosophy**

Like all other political thinkers, Hegel also has critics as well as admirers. While his critics accuse him of propounding a theory of state which paves the way for the worst type of absolutism, his admirers regard him as the most systematic and original political thinker. In this section we will evaluate Hegel's political philosophy.

#### ***Shortcomings of Hegel political philosophy***

The critics of Hegel's philosophy has pointed out the following defects-

- Hegel has treated the state as the embodiment of reason and march of God on earth and raised the state to mystical height. This will lead to the worst type of absolutism.
- Hegel regards the state as an end in itself and completely sacrifices the individual at the altar of the state. He does not permit the individual any freedom or liberty except abiding the law of the state. This in the words of Brown results in "spiritual servitude.....war of national interest and the devotion of beings to Leviathan in peace and Mulch in war".
- Hegel has failed to draw a distinction between state and society. The failure to draw a distinction between the two can lead to the worst type of state despotism because then the state will be interfering even in the social activities of the individual an area exclusively meant for the society.
- Hegel has been condemned for open advocacy of the principle of expediency and complete neglect of moral principles by the states.

- Hegel's relegation of the international law to an insignificant position is very dangerous and does not keep in tune with the spirit of individualism.
- Hegel asserts that the state is moving towards a predetermined goal. He believes in the historical process in which everything is left to history. If we accept his philosophy, it will make men fatalist and inactive.
- Hegel denies the important role of the leaders in the evolution of national history and culture by asserting that all actions proceed according to a divine plan. But it is accepted that the great personalities have exercised profound influence on the course of history.
- Hegel's concept of dialectics is defective in so far as he treats all defects as the beginning of victory and he has not provided any rational explanation for this theory.
- Another criticism of Hegel's philosophy is that Hegel has glorified war as a virtuous activity which shows the political strength of a nation. However this view of Hegel cannot be accepted.
- The critics have rejected Hegel's view that state is the chosen representative of God which has played a pivotal role in the progress of History. While it cannot be denied that the state has played an important part in bringing about order and helped in developing the spirit of rationality, the role played by the other institutions like church in this regard cannot be completely ignored.

However, no one can deny the contributions made by Hegel to political philosophy. Let us now discuss the contributions of Hegel to political philosophy. The admirers of Hegel have highlighted his valuable contributions to the development of political thought. Prof Sabine is of the view that, "The philosophy of Hegel aimed at nothing less than complete reconstruction of modern thought". Prof. Vaughan asserts that Hegel has grasped the connection between the morals and politics and handled the same with a far greater insight than any of his predecessors.

Hegel is also regarded as the first thinker to fully understand and appreciate the implications of the historical method. He has given the idea of progress

and described it as change according to the law of reason. His ideas have influenced many of his successors. In Italy, the impact of Hegel is visible in the writings of Augusto Vera, Benedetto Croce who glorify the state like Hegel. In U.S.A, Morris Palmer and John Dewey are the true Hegelians.

**SAQ**

Make an evaluation of Hegel's philosophy? (80 words)

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**3.9 Summing up**

After reading this unit, you come to the conclusion that Hegel has contributed significantly to the Western political theory. You have also learnt that Hegel rejects the instrumentalist conception of the state as a political community for the promotion and protection of individual aspirations and ambitions. Hegel has placed considerable emphasis on public opinion and advocated limited freedom of the press. This unit has also helped you in learning Hegel's views on rule of law, war and international relations. Hegel stresses on freedom and rationality. Hegel is too authoritarian to be a liberal and too liberal to be authoritarian. Hegel's view on civil society and dialectical materialism draws the attention of political scientists of the entire world. According to him, civil society is different from the family and the state in terms of nature. Civil society, for Hegel reflects a system of needs where the individual pursue his own interest according to his inclinations and abilities

Hegel has exerted considerable influence on subsequent theories of Marxism and Existentialism. He has been claimed as the philosophical inspiration by both Communists and Fascists. The British Idealist T.H Green has adapted Hegelianism to revive liberalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.10 References and Suggested Readings

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#### Links:

[http://www. Google.co.in/search =GWHegel](http://www.Google.co.in/search=GWHegel)

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning  
Gauhati University**

**MA in Political Science**

**Paper I  
Political Theory 1**

**Block 5  
Modern Indian Political Thinkers**



**Contents:**

**Block Introduction–**

**Unit 1 : Mahatma Gandhi**

**Unit 2 : Jawaharlal Nehru**

**Unit 3 : B. R. Ambedkar**



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### **Block Introduction:**

In this block we are going to discuss the modern Indian political thinkers. The modern Indian thinkers are not only political reformers but social and economic reformers as well. The Indian modern thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and B. R. Ambedkar try to remove the evils of Indian society. They have adopted the western values like nationalism, universal brotherhood, equality, liberty etc. and try to apply these values in the lives of Indian people.

In the first unit we shall discuss Mahatma Gandhi who is a prominent leader of Indian National Movement. We shall try to analyze his sociological ideas like his views on women, caste, family etc. We will also try to focus on his economic ideas. He is a supporter of village and cottage industries. He is an advocate of *swadeshi*. We will also discuss his philosophy of *sarvodaya*.

In the second unit we shall discuss the socio-political ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru. His idea of non-alignment forms the basis of Indian foreign policy. The greatest contribution of Nehru as a modern political thinker is his concept of mixed economy. He favours the nationalization of large scale industries. He is a great democrat as well. He provides different interpretation of democracy like freedom, leadership etc. As a socialist he is keen on retaining the Indian character of socialism. He is a democratic socialist and his socialism is based on respect for individual worth and dignity.

In the last unit of this block we shall be discussing the ideas of B.R. Ambedkar. We shall discuss his views on caste system. Our aim here is to discuss him as a leader of the untouchable caste. He criticizes the caste system and also protests the atrocities against the untouchables.

In this block we will have the following units:

**Unit 1 :** Mahatma Gandhi

**Unit 2 :** Jawaharlal Nehru

**Unit 3 :** B R Ambedkar



## Unit 1

### Mahatma Gandhi

#### Contents:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Sociological Ideas of Gandhi
- 1.4 Gandhi's View on *Satyagraha*
- 1.5 Gandhi's Philosophy of Economic Reconstruction
- 1.6 Gandhi on *Ahimsa*
- 1.7 Summing up
- 1.8 References and Suggested Readings

#### 1.1 Introduction

In this block we are discussing the modern Indian political thinkers and Mahatma Gandhi is an integral part of modern Indian political scenario. Mahatma Gandhi is the pre-eminent leader of Indian Independence Movement. He has been described as a prophet, a mystic, a saint, a religious devotee, a moral preacher, a social reformer and a non-violent revolutionary. Mahatma Gandhi is not a theorist but a man of action and he is the pioneer of *Satyagraha* movement. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is commonly known as Mahatma Gandhi or the 'Great Soul' around the world. He is also popularly known as 'Bapu' in India. He is officially honoured in India as the 'Father of the Nation'. His birthday 2<sup>nd</sup> October is celebrated as 'Gandhi Jayanti', a national holiday in India. It is celebrated worldwide as the International Day of Non-Violence. As a practitioner of *ahimsa* his aim is to speak the truth and ignite the spirit in others.

This unit makes an attempt to deal with the sociological ideas of Gandhi's political thought. It will mainly analyze his views on women, untouchability, family etc. He believes that men and women are essentially endowed with

the same spirit and therefore they should be treated as equals. According to him, untouchability is a social evil and he wants to remove it from the society. This unit will further try to explain Gandhi's philosophy of economic reconstruction. Gandhi advocates trusteeship, decentralization of economic activities, labour intensive technology, and gives first priority to rural India. This unit will also deal with Gandhi's views on *Sarvodaya*.

## **1.2 Objectives**

Mahatma Gandhi is the product of Indian culture and civilization and connected with the saintly traditions of India. After reading this unit you will be able to

- *understand* the sociological ideas of Gandhi
- *explain* Gandhi's philosophy of economic reconstruction
- *analyze* Gandhi's views on *Sarvodaya*

## **1.3 Sociological Ideas of Gandhi**

Before discussing Gandhi's political ideas it is pertinent to know that Gandhi does not start any 'ism'. He simply expresses his views on political, social, economic and religious matters according to the need of the occasion and political situation. But it can definitely be said that he has a peculiar philosophy of life and on the basis of the philosophy he tries to solve national and international problems. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism have coloured his thoughts and shaped his actions. His views on women, casteism, prostitution etc. help in shaping his political ideas. In this section we will discuss these sociological ideas.

### ***Gandhi on Women***

Apart from being one of the greatest leaders of Indian nationalism, Mahatma Gandhi is noted as a major social and political reformer. He started a crusade for improving the degrading position of women in India. He wanted to eradicate all the social evils of the society and as a part of the project, he

tried to develop the conditions of Indian women. Before Gandhi, many reformers dealt with this issue. But Gandhi's approach was different from the rest of the reformers.

Before discussing Gandhi's role in improving the position of Indian women, let us discuss the condition of women during that time. The evils like child marriage, dowry system, the *Purdah System* etc. were the striking features of the then Indian society. The *Purdah system* prevented the Indian women from going out of their houses alone. They had to be accompanied by their male guardians. The society regarded the women as inferior to the male members. Moreover, the percentage of women with basic education was minimal. It was because of these degrading and deplorable situations faced by the Indian women that Gandhi started a reform movement to eradicate all these evils from the society.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Life sketch of Mahatma Gandhi**

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi better known as Mahatma Gandhi was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869 in Porbandar, a coastal town in Gujarat, India. His father Karamchand Gandhi was a Diwan (Prime Minister) of Porbandar state. In May 1883, 13 year old Mohandas was married to 14 year old Kasturbai Makhanji. At his middle school in Porbandar and high school in Rajkot, Gandhi was an average student. His family wanted him to become a barrister. On 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1888 Gandhi went to London to study law at the University of London. Gandhi was called to the bar on June 10, 1891 and left London for India on June 12, 1891. After coming to India, he associated himself actively in the struggle of India against British imperialism which ultimately led to India's independence. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948, Gandhi was shot while he was walking to a platform from which he was to address a prayer meeting.

We should remember here that Gandhi never disrespected the tradition of the country, but he felt that some traditions can act as a barrier from the development of women. It is evident from the following quotation of Gandhi.

*It is good to swim in the waters of tradition, but to sink in them is suicide (M K Gandhi, Navajivan, 28<sup>th</sup> June)*

It needs to be mentioned here that Gandhi took a new approach to the study of problems of Indian women. He considers the women capable of occupying the same platform with men. Again, to him, a woman is the embodiment of virtues like knowledge, humanity, tolerance, sacrifice and faith. But for the proper development of these virtues women need education. He never accepts the view that women are the weaker sex. In contrast, he feels that women have strong and equal mental abilities like men. In this context, he cites the example of Sita, Draupadi etc. He therefore believes that women should be given equal right to freedom.

We have already learnt that, according to Gandhi, women play an important role in the political, economic and social emancipation of the country. Gandhi believes that women are more capable than men to carry a non-violent crusade. He guides the Indian women to shoulder critical responsibilities in India's struggle for freedom. Under his guidance women take part in various activities like organising public meetings, picketing of shops, selling *khadi* etc. They also face the atrocities of the police and are put behind bars. Gradually they become an important part of Indian National Movement and this definitely helps in improving their position..

Hence it can be said that Mahatma Gandhi is certainly one of the greatest advocates of women's liberty. Throughout his life, he has worked hard and led reform movements for the cause of the women. He helped them in boosting their morale and self-esteem. It is evident from the fact that he engages women leaders in many nationalistic endeavours.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Major Works of Mahatma Gandhi**

The major Works of Mahatma Gandhi are as follows

- *My Experiments with Truth*- It is his autobiography which covers his life till 1920. Gandhi does not deal with the 1920 post period as it is well known to the

people. Besides he feels that his experiments in this period are yet to yield definite conclusions. He has written this book at the request of Swami Anand. *My Experiments with Truth* appears in the weekly 'Navajivan' during 1925-28. This book is marked with Gandhi's humility and truthfulness. He wants to tell the world the story of his experiments with truth. In 1999, the book is designated as one of the "100 Most Important Spiritual Books of the 20th Century" by Harper Collins publishers.

- *Hind Swaraj*- It is the title of the first complete writing of Mahatma Gandhi. It literally means 'self rule in India'. This small book of about 30000 words is written in November 1909. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi points out that the real enemy is not the British political domination but the modern Western civilization which is luring India into its stranglehold. He believes that the Indians educated in western style particularly lawyers, doctors, teachers and industrialists are undermining India's ancient heritage by insidiously spreading modern ways. Gandhi criticizes railways as they spread plague and produce famine by encouraging the export of food grains. Here he opines swaraj or self rule as a state of life which can only exist when Indians follow their traditional civilization free from the corruption of modern civilization.

Hence the reading of Gandhi's works will give you an idea of his major concerns and socio-economic and political ideas.

### ***Gandhi's idea of Individual***

Gandhi believes that the individuals constitute an important part of the society. Therefore, he opines that the happiness of the whole society is based on the happiness of the individuals. According to him, if the individuals consciously submit their wills and voluntarily contribute their possession to the society, it will automatically lead to social welfare. He also argues that, in return, the society shall guarantee the maximum development of the individuals' personality. Gandhi believes that an individual should exercise five rules in his lifetime- truthfulness, brahmacharya, non- violence, non- stealing and non- hoarding. An individual's character is to be built on the foundation of these disciplines.



**Check Your Progress**

1. Discuss Gandhi as a supporter of emancipation of women.
2. Why does Gandhi advocate the use of *Khadi*?
3. Discuss the five rules advocated by Gandhi for the individuals.

***Gandhi on Family***

Gandhi views the family is a divine and consecrated institution. He has suggested that the conjugal relation should be based on true friendship and equality. He never supports the view that husband is superior in a conjugal relation. In a family, he believes that the children should be devoted to the parents and there should not be any discrimination between the sons and daughters. Both should have equal right to inheritance. He is in favour of self reliant children and for that he suggests that they should be given proper education. They should be taught the value of honest livelihood. Moreover, he has also said that they should not be made slaves of ancestral property.

**SAQ**

Do you think that equality between husband and wife brings prosperity in the family? Explain. (80 words)

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***Devdasis and Prostitutes***

We have already learnt that Gandhi is a pioneer of the development of the status and position of women. While dealing with the issues of status of Indian women, he also considers the issues like prostitution and devdasi.

According to him, the devdasi system denotes the use of young girls for the pleasure of the priests in the name of God. For him, it is a crime. He argues that the existence of the institution of prostitution is a shame both for the society as well as man. Gandhi believes that the term *devdasi* is an indirect expression of prostitution. He considers it as a serious offence in the society.

### ***Gandhi on Untouchability***

Gandhi was dead against the concept of untouchability. He was a believer in Varnashrama system. Varnashrama implies for the division according to one's own profession. But in course of time this Varnashrama system had been replaced by the rigid caste system and he was not in support of this rigidity. He considers untouchability as a social offence and he was not at all happy with the conditions where they were made to stay in. Various restrictions were put against them like denial of entry to the temples, denial of taking water from the village well etc. He calls the untouchables by the name *harijans* meaning people of God. He also created the Harijan Sevak Sangha to fight for the removal of this social evil. And for this, he even stayed in colonies meant for the untouchables and fought for their cause.

#### **Stop To Consider**

##### **On Religion and Politics**

Gandhiji wants spiritualization of politics. He does not want to separate religion from politics. He feels that there is no politics without religion. His religion is a dynamic force. Hence the incorporation of religion in politics means a progressive movement towards justice and truth because a man of religion will never tolerate any kind of exploitation or oppression. According to him, there must be unity between the inner and outer life of a man. Although he wants to strengthen religious basis of politics, yet, he will not tolerate any privilege to any particular group or discrimination against any group on the basis of religion.

### **1.4 Gandhi's Views on Satyagraha**

Gandhi propounded his idea of *Satyagraha* in his political philosophy.

*Satyagraha* is a natural outcome of the supreme concept of truth. It is initially related to the concept of non-violence. *Satyagraha* means the exercise of purest soul source against all injustice and exploitation. He opines that evil should be resisted through *satyagraha*, the moral weapon based on love and soul which is superior to physical source. *Satyagraha* literally means holding fast to truth. It also means a technique of resisting all that is evil, unjust, impure or untrue by love, self suffering, and self purification and by appealing to the soul of the opponent. Gandhi stood for the practice of *satyagraha* in domestic and social relationships before its adoption in the political sphere. For Gandhi, *satyagraha* has certain techniques which may be termed as forms also-

- Non Co Operation-according to him, people can put an end to the injustice by withdrawing cooperation from the government and paralyzing it. Gandhi feels that oppression and exploitation are possible if the people co-operate with it. Even the most despotic government cannot survive without the consent of the governed which is forcibly procured by the despot. But as the subject cease to fear the despotic force, the despot's power is gone. Non cooperation may manifest itself in the forms of hartal, social ostracism, or social boycott and picketing.
- Hartal means stopping the business as a mark of protest against the policy of the ruler. Its object is to strike the imagination of the people and government. Gandhiji insisted that such hartal should be voluntary and non- violent. Those are not to be frequent.
- Picketing or blocking the path of a person who wants to do a particular thing is another form of non co-operation. In case of picketing also no force is to be used. Only the persuasive methods are to be employed. Picketing should avoid coercion, intimidation, discourtesy, hunger-strike etc.
- Another form of non- cooperation is social ostracism or social boycott. It is to boycott those who defy the public opinion. This is to be resorted only in exceptional cases and with restraint.
- Civil Disobedience- the participants in the civil disobedience movement declare their intention to disobey the cruel and unjust laws and suffer

the necessary punishment for doing so. They carry on their struggle till the laws are replaced by just laws. It must be sincere, respectful and restrained. According to Gandhi, it must rest on the well understood principles and exercised only by a selected few. Gandhi regards civil disobedience as a complete effective and bloodless substitute of armed rebellion. Civil disobedience may be of two types namely assertive and defensive. Assertive disobedience implies the disregard of laws retain to revenue and others. Defensive disobedience implies the formation of volunteer force for peaceful purposes like organising meeting, discussion etc.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Gandhi on Nationalism and Internationalism**

Gandhiji stood for a world of people and wanted to build harmony between nationalism and internationalism. The doctrine of *swadharma* and *swadeshi* is the basis of Gandhian nationalism. He was against the nationalism based on violence and aggressive ideas. He relates his nationalism with internationalism. His nationalism was not restricted to India but to humanity at large. He was of the view that one must be a good nationalist in order to become a true internationalist.

- Hijrat- hijrat implies voluntary exiles from permanent place of residence. It means that if a person feels that he cannot undertake *Satyagraha* against the injustice of the oppressor, he should leave his own place. This is done by those who feel oppressed and cannot live without loss of self-respect in a particular place or lack of strength to defend himself violently.
- Fasting- fasting implies readiness on the part of the *satyagrahi* to suffer with a view to appeal to the heart of the wrong doer. Fasting can be resorted to only by a person who possesses spiritual fitness, purity of mind, discipline, humanity and faith. He favours it only as a last resort when all other techniques fail. It is not meant for all occasions except rare occasions.

- Strike- strike is the voluntary purificatory suffering undertaken to convert the opponent. The strikers are required to put forward their demands in clear terms. The demands are not to be unjust.

In short, the various techniques of *satyagraha* indicate the individuals abiding the right of opposition to coercive authority. Gandhi has laid down some principles to be observed in the *satyagraha*. These are behaviour, truth, non-violence, non- stealing, non- possession and celibacy. A *satyagrahi* should not harbor anger. *Satyagraha* also depends upon the stage of the moral development of the *satyagrahi*. *Satyagraha* aims to secure progress and social justice. The *satyagrahi* must have humanity and self respect. *Satyagraha* is a struggle for righteousness.

### ***Distinction between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance***

The concept of *Satyagraha* differs from passive resistance. Passive resistance is supposed to be a weapon of the weak and is characterized by hatred. It can also manifest itself in violence. Under passive resistance, violence is abjured on account of weakness and passive resistance registered to embrace its opponents into submission. Sometimes passive resistance can lead to the use of violent methods.

*Satyagraha* is based on spiritual force and stands for vindication of truth. It is a courage of dying without killing. In the *Satyagraha*, there is no place for cowardice. *Satyagraha* emphasizes the eternal strength. It is a moral weapon based on the superiority of spiritual force over physical force. In *Satyagraha* there is no room for effective and determined opposition to injustice and tyranny.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Gandhi on State**

Gandhi's ideas on state are relevant to understand his political philosophy. He is opposed to the present state because it was based on force and centralization of authority leading to negation of individual freedom. According to him, the state is only one of the means to secure the welfare of all. There is nothing sacred about

the actions of the state. His views are apparent in the following lines: "Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that Ramrajya means a rule of Hindus. My Ram is another name for Khuda or God. I want Khuda Raj which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on Earth." Obviously Gandhi's desire for an ideal society where everybody follows a code of righteous living and meeting all their essential needs is exemplified here. Gandhiji's state is a non-violent democratic state where social life will remain self regulated. In his state the powers are to be decentralized and equality prevails in every sphere of life.

### **1.5 Gandhi's Philosophy on Economic Reconstruction**

By now we all know that Gandhi is a social, economic and political reformer. He is the only political and social thinker who is capable to present a complete economic theory. He has his original explanation about important concepts and terminologies of Economics. He explains that economy does not mean the exploitation of the unlimited use of the resources available in the country. Economy meant the total living of a country that has got the right to survive with co-existence. His economic ideas which cover all the problems that effect our social life are influenced by Ruskin, Tolstoy, Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda.

Again, Gandhiji wants the economic emancipation of Indian people. He is an advocate of *Swadeshi* and he advises the boycott of foreign goods, foreign companies and foreign capital to maximum possible extent. This boycott is not politically motivated. It is purely for the economic betterment of our country. *Swadeshi* avoids economic dependence on external market forces. He appeals the people of India to use home-made goods rather than foreign goods. According to Gandhi, the hand weaving of dresses and development of handicrafts will be a panacea for India's poverty, economic backwardness and unemployment.

He feels that all members of a village community must prioritize local goods and services. The villages must build a strong economic base to satisfy most of its needs. He advises the people of India to purchase the rural products only. Every village community of free India should have its own

carpenters, shoemakers, potters, builders, mechanics, farmers, engineers, weavers, teachers, bankers, merchants, traders, musicians, artists, and priests. Gandhi is not an extremist. Being a practical thinker, he accepts the foreign economic relation for unavoidable useful things which cannot be produced in the country.

Gandhi is well aware that the boycott of foreign goods will adversely affect British industry. Therefore he applies his economic philosophy as a part of his strategy against colonial rule. He is not against industrial revolution, but he creates a framework keeping in mind the economic condition of India under alien rule.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Gandhi's Views on Westernization**

Gandhi's views on westernization are based on his practical experience. He has stayed and studied in England for a long time and this has helped in shaping his ideas regarding westernization. His visit to South Africa has also influenced him to a great extent. He has pointed out both the positive as well as negative aspects of westernization. He is influenced by the rich literature of the western society. He also borrows the concepts like liberty and democracy from the western society. According to him, the brightest feature of western society is that it is free from some degrading evils like child marriage, caste system, orthodoxy, superstitions, etc. Western culture treats both man and woman as equals. He also likes the scientific temperament of the western society. Pointing out the negative aspects of westernization, Gandhi says that the western society is running after wealth which is too dangerous. He also does not like their approach towards the issue of racism. According to Gandhi the western society does not pay any attention to the moral education of the children. Therefore we can say that though he is critical of the western civilization, he does not forget to mention about the positive aspects of westernization.

Gandhi has accepted the doctrine of equal distribution. He opposes the exploitation of poor by the rich. In order to solve the problem of economic inequality he advocates the concept of economic equality. He put forwards his scheme of trusteeship for economic equality. According to him, all persons should be supplied with the necessaries to satisfy their natural needs. He subscribes to the Marxian formula 'to each according to his needs'.

Again, he does not support the confiscation of properties of the rich. He wants them to earn more but after satisfying their needs the balance must be held by them as trusteeship of the people. Gandhi advises the government to fix the amount the rich can keep to themselves and the rest as the trustee of the people. Gandhi says that the brilliant people should use their brilliance to earn more. But they should not keep to themselves anything more than what is necessary. He advocates for the transformation of the capitalist order of the society into an egalitarian society. Gandhi makes it clear that if the rich by themselves do not accept this offer of trusteeship, the government may be forced to pass a law by which their properties can be confiscated.

**SAQ**

Examine Gandhi's views on confiscation of property. (60 words)

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Again, Gandhi does not favour large scale industrialization and mechanization. He always gives man more importance than machines. He is an advocate of cottage industries. He believes that poverty of people can be less only if they are given work for their spare time so that they can earn. He advocates a reconciliation of large and small scale industries and nationalization of key industries. He opposes to the introduction of the labour saving machines. His view is that the problem of India is to find employment for those who had no work to do and not to restore unemployment as a result of the introduction of the machinery to do the work previously done by the workers. Gandhi accepts some basic industry on large scale like mines, cement, electricity etc. He also encourages big industrialists and big farmers with the expectation that they will develop the attitude of trusteeship.



Gandhi puts emphasis on the ethical aspect of economic problems. He does not draw a distinction between economics and ethics. Gandhi believes that the economics which hurts the moral well-being of an individual or nation is immoral. He feels that it is wrong to measure the value of an industry by the dividends it pays to shareholders. Rather it should be measured by its effect on the bodies, souls and spirits of the people employed in it. Gandhi emphasises plain living. He believes that it helps in cutting down the wants and ensuring self reliance. Gandhi distinguishes between standard of living and standard of life. He opines that standard of living implies the material and physical standard of food, clothes and housing. A higher standard of life on the other hand, denotes that along with these material advancements, the cultural and spiritual values and qualities should also be adopted.

We have learnt that Gandhiji provides us with original ideas regarding economics. He popularizes a unique way of thinking in the field of economics. His idea regarding economic system of the county is the most practicable alternative system against the prevailing economic system. Here we can refer to the village based economy of China and Israel, the small scale industry based economy of Japan which are close to the Gandhian model of economy.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Why did Gandhi consider untouchability a social evil?
2. Mention the measures suggested by Gandhi to tackle the problem of Unemployment.
3. Write true or false
  - a. Gandhi favoured large scale industrialization and mechanization.
  - b. Gandhi draw a distinction between economics and ethics.

## **Stop To Consider**

### **Gandhi on Religion and Politics**

Gandhi wants spiritualization of politics. He does not want to separate religion from politics. He feels that there is no politics without religion. His religion is a dynamic force. Hence the incorporation of religion in politics means a progressive movement towards justice and truth because a religious man will never tolerate any kind of exploitation or oppression. According to him, there must be unity between the inner and outer life of a man. Although he wants to strengthen religious basis of politics, yet, he will not tolerate any privilege to any particular group or discrimination against any group on the basis of religion.

## **1.6 Gandhi on *Ahimsa***

The core of Gandhi's political thought is non violence or *ahimsa*. According to Gandhi non-violence or *ahimsa*, the heart of all religion is the truth itself. It means avoiding injury to anything. According to him, the function of the state should be based on the principles of *ahimsa*. (Non-violence is a powerful instrument.)

Gandhi supports non- violence for the following reasons

- Non-violence is held to be superior to violence, as it is an expression of love leading to acceptance of punishment upon oneself rather than imposing it upon the opponents.
- Non-violence appeals to conscience.
- It is a spiritual force relating to soul and not a physical force.
- Adherence to non-violence is sometimes held to be a commandment of religious faith.

Gandhi refers to three levels of non-violence. The highest form is the enlightened non-violence of resourcefulness or the non-violence of the brave. People adopt this kind of non-violence not by painful necessity but by inner conviction based on moral considerations. This type of non-violence is not only confined to political sphere but pervades every sphere of life. It is the

non-violence without any mental reservation. It is that kind of non-violence which can move mountains and transform life.

The second kind of non-violence is adopted as a measure of expediency and sound policy in some spheres of life. This kind of non-violence is the non-violence of the weak or the passive, i.e. non-violence of the helpless. People use this kind of non-violence because of weakness rather than moral conviction. However, it is not as effective as the non-violence of the brave. It is not based on any conviction but on expediency and consequently permits the use of violence where necessary.

The third kind of non-violence is the passive violence of the coward and the effeminate. A coward runs away from danger instead of facing it. It is unnatural and dishonourable. This non-violence of the coward is actually the violence in suspension or inactive violence. If a choice has to be made between violence and cowardice, Gandhi's preference will be violence. To him, vengeance is superior to passive and helpless submission. According to Gandhi, non-violence presupposes the ability, though not the willingness to strike. Non-violence is the quality of the brave and strong and is not possible without fearlessness. There is nothing like failure in non-violence as there is nothing like success in violence.

It is essential to understand the implications of non-violence as Gandhi understood them. It is the creed to which he rendered life-long service.

The Implications are:-

- The people who do not believe in God of love cannot be benefited by non-violence.
- Non-violence can be used for the safeguard of one's self respect and sense of honour. But it cannot always be used in the context of the possession of land or money.
- Truth and *ahimsa* are two sides of a smooth unstamped metallic disc and are so intertwined that it is difficult to separate them. Gandhi puts more emphasis on truth than on *ahimsa* because he believes that truth exists beyond and unconditioned by space and time, but *ahimsa* exists

on the part of all finite beings. *Ahimsa* divorced from truth will be demoralizing. Gandhiji is prepared to sacrifice *ahimsa* for the sake of truth and not vice versa.

### **Stop to consider**

#### **Gandhiji on Sarvodaya**

Mahatma Gandhi translates John Ruskin's tract on political economy 'Unto The Last' and named it as '*Sarvodaya*'. It is published in the year 1908. The word *sarvodaya* is a combination of two words 'sarva' and 'uday'. It denotes upliftment of all. It also denotes 'good of all', 'service to all', 'welfare of all' etc. Gandhi's *sarvodaya* presupposes the socio- economic development of all. The base of this philosophy is commonness i.e. what is done for all. Gandhi's *sarvodaya* follows the policy of self-sacrifice. He opines that every individual should be ready as well as willing to sacrifice the happiness of his own for the sake of others. Gandhi's *sarvodaya* again puts emphasis on the development of the villages. He argues that the villages should be given priority while giving aids as these villages form the keystone of Indian democracy. *Sarvodaya* believes in the principle of equality. Gandhi opines that in *sarvodaya* raj there should not be any rich or poor, high or low, privileged or unprivileged persons.

### **1.7 Summing up**

In this unit, we have learnt the sociological foundations of Gandhi's political thought. He wants to make the women capable of sharing the same platform with men. Mahatma Gandhi's urge to make the people of India wear khadi garments is not only a call to create self-reliance but also a call to prove the unity of India. He wants to eradicate the social evils like untouchability, the institution of devdasi, prostitution etc. We have also learnt that Gandhi is a crusader who advocates economic reform. For him the means are as important as the aims. The means must be nonviolent, ethical, and truthful in all economic spheres and Gandhi provides the new economic system with these means. He advocates trusteeship, decentralization of economic activities, labour intensive technology, and rural India is his first priority. He

advocates the development of the rural economy with the development of agriculture and village industries. Here, you have also learnt Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya which means upliftment of all. In the next unit of this block, we will be dealing with Jawaharlal Nehru.

**SAQ**

Do you think non-violence can be used as an instrument of conflict resolution in present day politics? (60 words)

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**links**

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## Unit 2

### Jawaharlal Nehru

#### Contents:

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Nehru as an Architect of Modern India
- 2.4 Nehru on Democracy
- 2.5 Nehru's Ideas on Socialism
- 2.6 Summing up
- 2.7 References and Suggested Readings

#### 2.1 Introduction

Among the modern Indian political thinkers the name of Jawaharlal Nehru deserves special mention. Jawaharlal Nehru is regarded as the architect of modern India. He is a leading figure in Indian Independence Movement and is elected as the first Prime Minister of independent India. He is one of the founders of Non-Alignment Movement. He is also referred to as *Pandit* Nehru and among the children he is known as *Chacha* Nehru. Nehru, the creator of modern India is a renowned political thinker as well as a statesman. Jawaharlal Nehru is a revolutionary, internationalist, A democrat, A socialist, A pacifist and an individualist. He is a free thinker and emerges as a man of action who does not indulge in political speculation. He has certain basic conviction and ideology. Nehru believes in anti- fascist ideology and fights against totalitarianism. He believes in human values and the dignity of the individual including civil liberty. The influence of Gandhi can be traced in Nehru.

This unit will make an attempt to deal with the ideas of Nehru. We shall discuss Nehru as the architect of modern India. His ideas on non- alignment, secularism, nationalization of industries, mixed economy, nationalism,



internationalism etc. help him contributing towards building a modern India. He never tries to build up political theories but his political ideas can be found in his writings like *Glimpses of World History*, *Discovery of India*, and *An Autobiography*. We shall also discuss his ideas on democracy and socialism.

## **2.2 Objectives**

The objective of this unit is to explain the main features of Nehru's views. After reading this unit you will be able to

- *examine* Nehru as the architect of modern India
- *explain* his ideas on democracy
- *analyze* his ideas on socialism

## **2.3 Nehru as an Architect of Modern India**

Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the greatest figures of our generation, an outstanding statesman whose service to the cause of human freedom is unforgettable. Nehru can rightly be called the architect of modern India. He is of the firm opinion that without economic and social freedom, political freedom has little or no meaning. Constitution is relevant to him only as an instrument of social change. Nehru is very clear in his vision that modern India shall radiate scientific temper, which includes freedom from every form of fundamentalism and respect for universal values of human dignity. He carefully handles India's domestic situation in the years immediately after the independence. One of the major contributions of Nehru towards modern India is the making of Indian foreign policy. In fact, Nehru determines India's international profile to a great degree in the post-independence years. Nehru is regarded as the architect of modern India from shaping the nation-building process in India.

## **Stop To Consider**

### **Life sketch of Jawaharlal Nehru**

Jawaharlal Nehru is born in Allahabad on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1889 to a wealthy Indian barrister and politician Motilal Nehru. He is educated in Britain at the Independent Boy's School, Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge. During his time in Britain, he is known as Joe Nehru. Nehru becomes a leader of the left wing of the Indian National Congress and the Congress President under the mentorship of Mahatma Gandhi. He is a key player in the long struggle for Indian independence. He is eventually recognized as Gandhi's political heir. He is elected as the first Prime Minister of India in 1947. He remains in power till 1964. As one of the founders of the Non-Alignment Movement, he is an important figure in the international politics of the post-war era. He is also referred to as 'Pandit Nehru'. He died on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1964.

### ***Nehru and the Non-Alignment Movement***

Nehru's concept of non-alignment has earned him the reputation of the architect of modern India. Along with Tito, Nasser and Sukarno he has founded the non-alignment movement. During his time, the world is divided into two power blocs. The newly independent and non-colonized nations are pressurized from both the blocs to join them. But Nehru along with Tito, Nasser and Sukarno stay out of the power bloc politics. Nehru is in favour of an issue-based alliance. He does not favour alliances based on political and economic dogmas. The main principle of non-alignment movement is the preservation of India's freedom of action internationally through refusal to align India with any bloc or alliance particularly those led by the United States or the Soviet Union. Nehru believes that the newly independent states in Asia and Africa have the rights not to join either the Soviet or the capitalist power blocs. Nehru does not consider the non-aligned policy to be neutral but he believes that it allows the nations to accept aid and maintain good relations with nations from both power blocs.

### ***Panchasheel***

Nehru's concept of *panchasheel* is also a contribution towards building modern India. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence or *Panchsheel* are a series of agreements between the People's Republic of China and India. It is first put forth by India at the start of negotiations that takes place in Delhi from December 1953 to April 1954 between the Delegation of the PRC Government and the Delegation of the Indian Government on the relations between the two countries with respect to disputed territory. Later, the Five Principles are formally written into the preface to the "Agreement Between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India on Trade and Co-Operation between the PRC and India" concluded between the two sides. Since June 1954, the Five Principles have been adopted in many other international documents. As norms of relations between nations, they have become widely recognized and accepted throughout the region.

The main objective of *panchasheel* is to ensure that newly independent nations will not have the same aggressive relationship they once share with the colonizers. The five principles or the *panchasheel* are

- Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
- Mutual non-aggression against anyone.
- Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful co-existence

### ***Nehru as An Individualist***

Like a modern thinker the whole philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru revolves around the individual. He attaches great importance to the all round development of the individuals in the society. Nehru argues that without the satisfaction of essential economic needs individual development is not possible. He believes that the welfare of the individual can be properly realised only in a democracy. Democracy is a means to an end, the end being the good life of the individual. He considers the individual more

important than the society. He insists that individual shall try to promote the larger interest of the community as a whole while developing himself. But he never believes in the sacrifice of the spirit of individual freedom at the altar of the state. He believes in various freedoms of man inside the state. His faith in individual freedom and civil liberty is fundamental.

### ***Mixed Economy***

Another notable contribution of Nehru towards building modern India is his concept of mixed economy. Though Nehru is a socialist he favours a type of socialism different from most of the socialist thinkers. Nehru reconciles his socialism with the concept of mixed economy. This implies combination of state or public enterprise in certain fields with private enterprise in other fields. In his socialism Nehru rejects the state owned concept of mixed economy.

Nehru argues that India with her limited resources and underdeveloped economy cannot adopt the system of complete state controlled economy and also free enterprise method. Therefore, he favours the idea of mixed economy as the best method because this will lead to equitable distribution of wealth in the country and proper utilization of the wealth. Nehru favours state control of industries, which are concerned with defense production as well as the basic heavy industries. He is conscious of the fact that India, a state with a shattered economy and limited technical and financial resources is not in a position to take over the existing industrial concerns. He feels it desirable to permit the private enterprise to continue in the fields where it is operative and to utilize the resources of the state for the development of the state. However, Nehru is in favour of limiting the scope of private sector, though he fully realizes the important role the private sector can play in the development of the country's economy. He favours its continuance with governmental control and to work in co-operation with the public sector. The private sector must be guided by a social purpose and must subordinate its self-interest to common welfare. Thus the mixed economy gives the consideration in extension of public sector on social ends. The idea of mixed economy emphasized by Nehru is of a flexible nature and can adapt itself according to the changing conditions.

Thus Nehru has to reconcile himself with the concept of mixed economy because of the economic conditions of the country, particularly India's underdeveloped economy. His main concern is the concept for India's economic development. Though various thinkers criticize the concept, Nehru has to compromise with the concept of mixed economy in the socialist pattern of society as it is not applicable in the Indian situation.

### ***Nationalization of Industries***

To ensure state control over key industries Nehru advocates nationalization of industries. This concept also helps him in building modern India. To him, the most important objective is to increase production and nationalization is only a means to achieve that end. He does not wish to go for nationalization without considering its consequences. He does not regard socialism as synonymous with nationalism. He does not accept the idea that a general scheme of nationalization will bring greater equalization. He is in favour of the rapid industrialization of India so that she can be relieved of pressure on land, combat poverty and raise her standards of living, her defence and variety of other purposes. Nehru advocated a socialist model for the economy of India i.e. no taxation for Indian farmers, minimum wage and benefits for blue-collar workers, and the nationalization of heavy industries such as steel, aviation, shipping, electricity and mining. An extensive network of public work and industrialization campaign result in the construction of major dams, irrigation canals, roads, and thermal and hydroelectric power stations.

#### **Stop To Consider**

##### **Major Works of Nehru**

***The Discovery of India:*** This book is written by Jawaharlal Nehru during his imprisonment in 1942-1946 at Ahmednagar in the Ahmednagar Fort. He is imprisoned for taking part in the Quit India Movement along with other Indian leaders. He uses the time of his imprisonment to write down his thoughts on Indian history, philosophy and culture from the viewpoint of a liberal Indian

fighting for the independence of his country. In this book Nehru argues that India is a historic nation with a right to sovereignty. He also examines the impact of various people starting from the arrival of the Aryans to the British government on Indian culture. In this book he also analyses the incorporation of various people and culture into Indian society. This book also analyses the philosophy of Indian life.

***Glimpses of World History:*** Jawaharlal Nehru has written this book in the year 1934. It is the collection of 196 letters on world history written from various prisons in British India from 1930 to 1933. He has written these letters to his young daughter Indira to introduce her to world history. The first letter is the birthday gift to Indira from him. It is the only gift he can afford in jail. This book contains the history of humankind from 6000 BC to the time of writing of the book. It covers the rise and fall of great empires and civilizations from Greece and Rome to China and West Asia; great figures such as Ashoka and Genghis Khan, Gandhi and Lenin; topics like wars and revolutions, democracies and dictatorships. He does not like the way history is taught in school as it is confined to the history of a single country. He wants his young daughter to know what people do and why they do. He is well aware that it is possible only through knowing the history of the whole world. The New York Times describes it as one of the most remarkable books ever written.

***An Autobiography or Towards Freedom*** (1936): This book is an autobiographical book. He has written this book while staying in prison. He begins the book describing how his ancestors have to flee Kashmir and goes on to tell about his own life. His entire life history, from the time before his father is born seems to have led him naturally to where he is. As a child he seems quiet, observing, and thoughtful. As a (very tall) grownup, he is still thoughtful. One sees his admiration for humble people and his aversion to any form of violence early in the book.

This section is designed to help you comprehend Nehru's works as well as aims to provide an insight into his socio-economic and political ideas.

### ***Nehru on Secularism***

Secularism is a distinct contribution of Nehru to Indian political thought. He is the chief architect of Indian secularism. Nehru defines secularism in dual sense. Firstly, by secularism he means keeping the state, politics and education separate from religion. He has no attraction for religion as the

basis of social and political state. Religion, according to him is a private matter for the individual. India is a country of many religions. He feels that it must not be controlled by any particular religion. Secondly, he defines secularism in terms of showing equal respect for all faiths and providing equal opportunities for their followers. According to him, secularism means grant of equal status to all religion. He feels that through secularism all religion will be equal in order. He opposes the grant of any special privileges to any religion. He regards secularism as an essential condition for democracy. He lays his foundation of strong secular state. The secularism of Nehru implies the neutrality of the state in religious matters. According to him, secularism is a mental attitude on the part of various committees which can bring harmony and fraternity towards one another. His concept of secularism also implies the existence of a uniform civil code for the people of India. His commitment to secularism is unsurpassed and all-pervasive. He helps secularism acquire deep roots among the Indian people. He is of the view that secularism means giving full protection to the minorities and removing their fears. But at the same time he is opposed to minority communalism. He also argues most convincingly that secularism has to be the sole basis for national unity in a multi-religious society.

### *Nehru on Nationalism*

Nehru is a great nationalist though he does not provide any theory of nationalism. He believes in fundamental unity of India despite numerous diversities. He treats nationalism as a positive as well as negative force. The radical arrogant behaviour of the British ruler towards the Indians shapes his ideas on nationalism. He blames the British government for poverty and exploitation in India. Again, nationalism is a living force in the history of modern India. As the British keeps in their hands all the initiatives and controls the mechanism and they take all the decisions, he thinks that nationalism in India is very important for the people of India. Nehru opines that the feeling of nationalism will make the people realize that they belong to a nation

called India and it will help in bringing national unity among the people of India. It is worth mentioning here that Nehru is cautious against any narrow-mindedness in the name of nationalism.

By now we have learnt that Nehru is not a narrow nationalist. Nehru is convinced that differences in language cannot stop the growth of nationalism in India. He does not believe in things like Hindu nationalism or Muslim nationalism. According to him, there is only Indian nationalism.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. What is the meaning of non- alignment?
2. What are the five principles of *Panchasheel*?
3. Analyze Nehru as an individualist and secularist.
4. Discuss briefly the economic ideas of Nehru.

### ***Nehru on Internationalism***

Nehru is also an internationalist. Though he is a great nationalist, he does not advocate an aggressive attitude towards internationalism. He is of the view that true nationalism does not conflict with internationalism. His nationalism is mixed with a strong internationalist outlook. He believes that the different nations of the world shall maintain a relation of peaceful co-existence and co-operation. But most importantly, Nehru does not want internationalism at the cost of nationalism.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Nehru on Women**

Jawaharlal Nehru is said to be one of the greatest advocates of the rights of women in India. He plays a significant role in improving the socio- economic condition of the women. He makes every effort to raise their status socially, economically, politically and educationally to make them at par with men.



He believes that a country is judged by the condition of women. Nehru forces the women of India to come out of their seclusion. He turns the 'dolls' into valiant soldiers to fight the battle for freedom.

In the Karachi Congress, Nehru introduces the concept of 'equal obligations' along with 'equal rights'. He tries to remove the 'sex disabilities'. He introduces the local programmes of self-defence and self-sufficiency to help the women to take part in the national movement.

With the dawn of independence, the upliftment of women becomes the special responsibility of the government. Jawaharlal Nehru enacts laws to guarantee practical universal suffrage to the women population of the country. These laws aim to secure the social freedoms of Indian women. Under the Prime-Ministership of Nehru, female legal rights are increased. The greatest achievements of Nehru are the female education and passing of Hindu Code Bill.

**SAQ**

1. Is there any relevance of non-aligned policy in contemporary politics?  
Give reasons in support of your answer. (20+80 words)

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**2.4 Nehru on Democracy**

Nehru is a democrat in the true sense of the term. He is ready to accept political democracy in the hope that it will lead to social democracy. He is clear in his mind that political democracy is only the way to the goal and not the final objective.

We have already learnt that Nehru is a great individualist. He has great faith in individual and this has naturally led to his faith in democracy. He criticizes the authoritarian system as it hampers individual liberty and does not provide adequate opportunity to the individual for his development. He shows preference for the democracy which promotes human dignity. Nehru's concept of democracy is different from the western concept of democracy. His democracy does not imply a system in which certain freedoms are made available to the people. To him, democracy is a way of life and a basis for social structure. According to Nehru, democracy is a mental approach applied to our political and economic problems.

Nehru offers different interpretations of democracy at different times. Firstly, he defines democracy in terms of freedom. According to him, freedom is vital to the realization of human values. Nehru is of the view that if an individual is denied freedom it will automatically goes against democracy. Therefore he favours grant of freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action to all. He also argues that individual freedom shall be balanced with social freedom.

Again Nehru defines democracy in terms of certain governmental institutions and procedures. He lays emphasis on the principle of popular sovereignty, elections, adult franchise etc. He realize the importance of political parties and considers majority rule as an integral part of democracy. He also wants a constitutional guarantee for the protection of cultural and religious rights of the minorities. He feels that the government must use its power for the betterment of the people.

Leadership constitutes a very important role in democracy. Nehru is of the view that without civil liberties there cannot be social progress. Nehru's democracy implies the existence of social and economic equality amongst the members of the society. He is of the opinion that true democracy can flourish only in an equal society. He argues that a system where the social and economic equalities are absent cannot be regarded as democracy. According to him, political democracy is the only means to attain the goal of an economic and social structure which can ensure freedom, equality and social justice to all.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Nehru on State**

According to Nehru, the state is not an end in itself but only a means to an end, and that end is to serve man. Political liberty is intended to give economic and social freedom to individuals. Nehru condemns the Machiavellian concept of state governing the people and keeping them down. According to him, the duty of the state is to protect the individual from foreign attack and internal disorder. It is to provide the citizens with opportunity of progress, education, health for the development of man. Consequently for Nehru some kind of coercion is inevitable. It is not possible to reject violence altogether. However violence must be used with reason. Nehru has faith in good government and preferred local self government. He believes in welfare state and self government at village level.

Again Nehru visualizes democracy as a way of self discipline and a scheme of values and moral standards. He defines democracy in terms of social self discipline and tolerance. According to Nehru, democracy means a dynamic society giving full opportunities to the individuals for their development.

Above all, to Nehru, democracy implies solution of all problems through peaceful methods like discussions, negotiations, conciliations and persuasion. Thus we can say that Nehru's democracy aims at the multifarious development of the individuals.

However, he is well aware of the fact that democracy cannot work successfully and achieve its aims and ideals without the goodwill and the cooperation of the people. He accepts the truth that democracy cannot go against people. According to him, democracy is the best form of government because it preserves the highest human values.

To him, democracy in practice does not mean the stifling of the voice of minority by a majority through its sheer voting strength. According to him, democracy means tolerance not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us. He believes that the method of democracy is discussion, argument, persuasion and ultimate decision and acceptance of that decision may go against our grain. He does not object to

demonstrations, but he has no liking for violence, resulting from them. In fact, parliamentary democracy demands many virtues. It demands, of course, ability and devotion to work. But it also demands co-operation, of self-discipline, of restraint.

Nehru argues that in a democracy the party should be a mass party. It shall be constantly in touch with the people. Moreover, it shall reflect the aspirations of the masses and also struggle to end social and economic justice. Though there are some changes in the party system in India, but still it has not come up to the expectation of Nehru. But we can hope that the mass consciousness that is developing in India will help in achieving this goal.

Nehru has fought three general elections on the basis of universal adult franchise and secret ballot and made elections the norm, not an exception. Nehru uses his popularity and personal power to reinforce the democratic process. He has promoted internal democracy and open debate within the Congress Party. He also helps to create an institutional structure which is democratic and in which power is diffused. He regular tour sharing his ideas with the people, trying to educate them in the ways of rational and democratic thinking. When he was asked what his legacy to India will be, he replies, “hopefully it is four hundred million people capable of governing themselves.” (*Jawaharlal Nehru- A Biography* by S Gopal, volume 3, London, 1984, p. 170). He is of the view that democracy will enable the people to mobilise themselves and to exert pressure from below to achieve social justice and equality. It will also help in reducing economic inequality. If the political party does not implement the popular mandate it will get swept away. He has placed emphasis on elections, besides community development projects, panchayati raj, cooperatives and decentralisation of all kinds of power.

Nehru feels that to ensure the unity of a diverse society like India’s, democracy is essential. He opines that no amount of force or coercion can hold India together. In ‘India today’ he opines in 1960, ‘any reversal of democratic methods might lead to disruption and violence.’

### **Check Your Progress**

1. What are the freedoms that Nehru grants in a democracy?
2. How does Nehru define democracy in terms of self-discipline?
3. Discuss critically Nehru's view on internationalism.

## **2.5 Nehru's Ideas on Socialism**

Nehru is born in an aristocratic family and possesses purely bourgeois outlook till 1920. Only in the summer of 1920, he is involved in a peasant movement in Oudh which provides a new turn to his thinking. During this peasant movement in Oudh Nehru stays with the peasants for three days. This period brings him in close contact with the peasants and provides him an opportunity to look at their miserable plight from close quarters. The impacts of this change in Nehru's ideologies greatly contributes to the development of his faith in socialism in the later stages. It ultimately leads Nehru to become a socialist. In 1929, after a visit to Russia, Nehru is greatly influenced by the socialist thought of Russia. He is firmly convinced that without social freedom and socialist pattern of society neither the state nor the country or the individual can develop much. Nehru is opposed to capitalism as it leads to exploitation of one man by another, one group by another, and one country by another. According to Nehru the only alternative is socialism.

Socialism appeals to him as a philosophy of life. It is the only key to the solution of the world's problems in India. According to him, establishment of a classless society shall be our main aim. Ideologically, Nehru's socialism is given concrete form at the Avadi session of the congress in January 1955. The state will have to initiate large scale power and transport projects, it will have overall control of resources, maintain strategic controls, prevent the development of cartels and the like.

Nehru is deeply moved by what he has seen in China. He is impressed by the energy and discipline of Chinese workers under the direction of an

efficient centralized government, which gives China terrifying strength. He admires the effective use of China's huge labour force in large scale construction projects such as dams and hopes to emulate this in India. Nehru feels that the socialism is the only solution to India's problems as well as world problems. For him, socialism is more important than economic doctrine. He considers socialism necessary not only for India but for the entire world.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Nehru on Caste**

Jawaharlal Nehru is a highly educated man. His western education acts as a catalyst to make him oppose the evils of all pervasive caste system. He undertakes corrective measures by changing existing Indian legal laws. He enacts legal procedures to make caste discrimination illegible and punishable by law. He also aspires for the equality of the Indian populace. He actively promotes and brings the system of reservation in the Indian job sector. A certain percentage of government jobs are reserved for persons born into Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is done to ensure the participation of the less privileged Indian population to the mainstream.

Nehru is keen on retaining the Indian character of socialism. His approach to socialism is pragmatic and he opposes to define socialism in precise and rigid terms. The socialism of Nehru is not only based on his social ideal of human relations based on individual liberty but also on his concept of social justice. He believes that the problems of India's mass poverty and economic stagnation can be solved only through the adoption of economic planning on socialist basis. He puts emphasis on planning, economic growth and socialist pattern. He is in favour of equality of opportunity for all individuals, minimization of inequalities of income and wealth and prevention of the concentration of economic power.

Nehru tries to evolve a socialist philosophy. In order to achieve a classless society he emphasizes the need for total transformation of social life through democratic methods. He wants to bring socialism through gradual and non-violent methods. He also gives importance to economic planning but rejects the concept of state owned economy. He advocates the concept of mixed economy in his socialism. He assures a place for the private sector in his socialism. His socialist society is not totalitarian in nature. He does not subordinate the individual to the state. He also gives place to rival industries and Khadi Udyog in his scheme of economic reconstruction.

The socialism of Nehru is particularized by three distinguishing characteristics. He is a democratic socialist and his socialism is based on respect for individual worth and dignity. He also provides freedom of enterprise, conscience and mind and the possession of private property on a restricted scale. Nehru does not find any inherent contradictions between socialism and individualism. He gives more importance on production than on distribution.

The removal of poverty and the establishment of equal opportunities are the main essence of socialism. Nehru wants to organise socialism in a way that it suits the condition of each country. He continuously tries to bring changes keeping in view the fabric of Indian society.

Nehru opines that socialist society and cooperative society are similar in kind. All of us know that in a cooperative society each individual gives his best as well as find full scope for his own development. Nehru said that we are accustomed to an acquisitive society. But the profit motive of this society should be ended as soon as possible. But this is not a very easy task. The vested interest in the acquisitive society will always act as a barrier. These interests are active during the freedom struggle also. This gives a false impression of democracy without active participation by the masses. But the changing model envisaged by Nehru will definitely benefit the masses. But it should be noted here that there is a large gap between his theory and practice. Yet we must not forget that he is the one who carries the socialist vision to millions and makes socialism a part of their consciousness.

Nehru opines that in Indian condition socialist transformation is a process and not an event. Socialism in India, according to him, is not a clearly pre-defined, pre-laid-out scheme. Socialism is a process which is expected to go on being defined, stage by stage, as the process advanced. Socialist transformation is viewed in terms of a series of reforms. Nehru describes these reforms as 'surgical operations'. Therefore, socialist transformation, according to him, consists of a series of 'surgical operations' performed through the due process of law by a democratic legislature.

Moreover, one aspect of Nehru's approach to socialism deserves to be stressed. As an impact of Gandhiji's influence, he emphasises the importance of means with that of ends in building a socialist India. He believes that wrong means will not lead to right results. He condemns violence as a means and emphasises using non-violent means. He is of the view that existing class struggle can be resolved through non-violent means and rule of law.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Nehru on Education**

Jawaharlal Nehru is well aware of the need of proper intellectual development of the Indian populace. He understands the importance of proper and healthy intellectual development to run the Indian states. He tries to imply the winning combination of western scientific prowess and Indian civilization wisdom.

Nehru is well aware that Indian republic can reestablish its existence in the world scenario only through the intellectual power of its citizens. He emphasises on the teaching of science and its application in practical field. The teaching of vocational science attracts him. The Indian Institute of Technology or IITS are established during his Prime Ministership. The Indian Institutes of Technology are now regarded as the premier scientific institutes of higher technological learning throughout the world. All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Indian Institutes of Management are also established during his time. Nehru also initiates the construction and functioning of a number of schools to educate the rural populace. Primary education is provided free of cost.



The trump card of Nehru is the scheme of providing free meals to the students of government schools. He understands the importance of food to attract students. Majority of rural population survives on one meal a day. The food acts as a magnet for the impoverished hungry child. The family of the prospective student is also happy with the subsequent tangible cost savings. Jawaharlal Nehru also establishes vocational schools for adults. Adult education centers are created both in rural and urban areas. Higher technical schools are also established.

**SAQ**

1. Discuss Nehru’s views on socialism in India. (80 words)

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**2.6 Summing up**

After analyzing the unit you have learnt that Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the greatest political leaders of India as well as the socio economic reformer. He is rightly said to be the architect of modern India. He has proposed some ideas which earn him the reputation as the architect of modern India. These ideas include his views on non-alignment, *panchashheel*, individualism etc. He is said to be the founder of non-aligned movement. He opines that this non-align policy helps India in getting aids from the power blocs. He also put forward his ideas on mixed economy. He suggests the nationalization of big industries. He also adopts a secular outlook. He does not support religion as the basis of state. You have also learnt that Nehru is a true democrat in the true sense of the term. He offers different interpretations of democracy at different times. He defines democracy in terms of freedom, leadership and also in terms of certain governmental institutions and procedures. You have also learnt that he emphasises the need of co-operation of people for

the successful working of democracy. We have also learnt that though he is born into an aristocratic family, he puts forward some socialist ideas. He wants to retain the Indian character of socialism. Nehru's socialism is marked by two essence i.e. the removal of poverty and establishment of equal opportunity. He believes in democratic means to bring about socialism in the country. In the next unit we shall discuss the ideas of B.R. Ambedkar.

## **2.7 References and Suggested Readings**

Agarwal, R.C. *Constitutional Development and National Movement of India: Freedom Movement, Acts and Indian Constitution*; S. Chand and Company Ltd. New Delhi, 2002.

Gupta, R.C. *Great Political Thinkers: East and West*; Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Agra, 2001.

### **Links**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jawaharlal\\_Nehru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jawaharlal_Nehru)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_Principles\\_of\\_Peaceful\\_Coexistence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Principles_of_Peaceful_Coexistence)

<http://www.amazon.com/Glimpses-World-History-Jawaharlal-Nehru/dp/0143031058>

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## **Unit 3**

### **B.R. Ambedkar**

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- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 Ambedkar as a Critic of Hindu Society
- 3.4 Ambedkar's Views on Caste System
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- 3.6 Ambedkar's Movement against Caste System and Untouchability  
(Hindu Social Order)
- 3.7 Comparison between Gandhi and Ambedkar
- 3.8 Ambedkar's Views on Education
- 3.9 Ambedkar's View on Language Policy
- 3.10 Ambedkar's View on Democracy
- 3.11 Summing up
- 3.12 References and Suggested Readings

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar also known as *Babasaheb* held a prominent position among the twentieth century leaders of India. Ambedkar took upon himself the task of fighting for religious, social and economic equality in the Indian society. He was widely read in history, culture and religion. He realized that distortion of religion and misinterpretation of history and culture does more harm to Indian social life than foreign invasions and dominations.

In this unit we shall discuss Ambedkar as a critic of the Hindu society. We shall also deal with his criticism of the Varna system, Caste system, and Untouchability. Our attempt here is to offer you a comparative study of the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar. Our discussion shall also include Ambedkar's efforts for removal of Untouchability and the restrictions of

caste system. Moreover, this unit also attempts to deal with Ambedkar's views on education, language policy and democracy.

### **3.2 Objectives**

Ambedkar is known as a jurist, a political leader, philosopher, anthropologist, historian, Buddhist activist and a revolutionary thinker. As a reformer and critic of Indian Hindu society, Ambedkar has made efforts to establish social justice and worked for the liberation of the untouchables. After reading this unit you will be able to

- *analyse* Ambedkar as a critic of the Hindu society and the Caste system
- *discuss* Ambedkar's criticism of Untouchability
- *explain* Ambedkar's views on Education and Language policy
- *attempt* a comparative study of Gandhi and Ambedkar
- *analyse* Ambedkar's efforts for removal of Untouchability and restrictions of caste system
- *elaborate* Ambedkar's views on Democracy and Parliamentary Democracy

### **3.3 Ambedkar as a Critic of Hindu Society**

In this section we shall discuss Ambedkar as a critic of the Hindu society which suffers from number of inherent contradictions and is steeped in various social evils during the time of Ambedkar. It is known to us that the Hindu culture is based on the high ideals of non- violence, tolerance, love and humanitarian services but there are several problems within the Hindu society.

B.R. Ambedkar studies the Hindu social system objectively and dispassionately. The ideals of freedom, equality and justice cannot be realized in practical social life. According to Ambedkar, the gap between theoretical ideals and practical life existing in Hindu society is the main cause of its weakness and consequent subjugation for centuries. The Hindus never

resemble a society which is an organized system of individuals with a purpose. Ambedkar criticizes the Hindu society on the following grounds:

- **Caste system:** A society is composed of social, economic and intellectual classes. An individual in a society is always a member of a class. The most unfortunate characteristic of the Hindu society is that classes develop into a caste. Ambedkar has realized that social stratification of occupations by caste system is basically a pernicious development. In Hindu society, social rules subordinate natural powers and inclinations of individuals.
- **Denial of equality:** Ambedkar is of firm belief that the Hindu social order does not recognize the principle of equality. It is given to believe that men differ from birth. Thus, Hindu social order is based on graded inequality and the principle of fixity of occupation, regardless of a person's ability and quality. Hindu social order denies individual freedom. By denying the right of education, resentment and use of arms, the social and economic status of lower castes is fixed. He further states that class consciousness and class conflict has been the basis in Hindu society. Rigid rules of marriage, eating and social customs prohibit Hindus to grow as a harmonious community. The religion of Hindus prohibits them to lead a free social life based on social interchange. The Hindu social life is based on *Varna* (class) system that recognizes four *varnas* and later the class of untouchables is added to them. Though Hinduism is a liberal religion, yet it gives sanction to complete segregation of a class known as untouchables. Therefore, Ambedkar is of the view that it amounts to the fact that untouchables are not human beings and not fit for social association.
- **Against *Chaturvarnas*:** According to Ambedkar, with the growth of caste system, Hinduism ceases to be a missionary religion. The *varna* system becomes more and more rigid and hierarchical. Ambedkar opines, "there cannot be more degrading system of social organisation than *chaturvarna*. It is a system which deadens, paralyses and cripples people from helpful activity". Thus, Ambedkar opines that Hinduism is based on the principle of graded inequality.

- **Atrocities against untouchables:** Ambedkar has said, “Hindu law declared that the untouchable was not a person, Hinduism refused to regard him as a human being fit for comradeship”. The people belonging to untouchable category cannot be touched by touchables, an untouchable patient cannot be treated by the doctors of higher caste. There are various other restrictions on untouchables. To elaborate, they are not allowed to enter into temples and fetch water from common well. The society imposes various restrictions even on their eating and wearing of clean clothes.

To summarize Ambedkar’s views on Hindu society, we can say that the Hindu society is based on inequality which has denied social justice to a large section of population. Consequently, such principles deprive a large number of population belonging to the untouchable category and lower caste from the measure of equal privileges.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Life Sketch of Ambedkar**

B.R Ambedkar also known as *Babasaheb* was born on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1891 in a Mahar community, an untouchable caste of Maharashtra. He was the last child of his parents Ramji and Bhimabai. His father and grandfather served in the army. But the stigma attached to the members of Mahar community continued to influence their position in the caste – ridden society of Maharashtra. Mahars were treated as untouchables by the Hindus. Being a member of the Mahar community, B.R Ambedkar had a bitter taste of discriminatory treatment early in life. During his early school career he got to know that being born in a particular community could make all the difference in one’s status in society. He and his brother had to carry bags from their home to sit in the class. They were denied facilities of drinking water, games and mixing up with other children. Even teachers would not check their notebooks for fear of pollution. Thus, the seeds of discontentment about Hindu social system were sowed in the life of Ambedkar.

Ambedkar started his education first at Satara. He passed his B.A from the prestigious Elphinstone College, Bombay with distinction. The assistance and encouragement from the Maharaja of Baroda in the form of scholarship played a great role in Ambedkar’s life. Again with the scholarship of Maharaja of Baroda

he passed M.A and finished his PhD from Columbia University, U.S.A. In 1917, Ambedkar joined the Baroda State Service but did not get respectable treatment because he belonged to the untouchable community. He left Baroda for Bombay where he first started business and then joined as a professor of Political Economy in Sydenham College, Bombay. He earned good reputation as a teacher, however very often he felt insulted as he was ill treated by his colleagues from high caste in the college. Thus he resigned from his job and resumed his studies in Law and Economics in London. He died on 6 December 1956.

**The Major works of Ambedkar are as follows:**

*Problem of Rupees*

*Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*

*Castes in India*

*Small Holdings and their Remedies.*

**SAQ**

Elaborate Ambedkar’s views on Chaturvarnas and Untouchability. (80 words)

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**3.4 Ambedkar’s Views on Caste System**

As a member of a lower caste or untouchable family, Ambedkar has personally experienced discriminatory treatment from upper caste. Thus, the seeds of discontentment about the Hindu social order and the caste system are sown very early in the life of Ambedkar. He observes that the caste system stands as a major obstacle against an egalitarian society. Ambedkar studies the Hindu Social System objectively and opines that Hindus never appear as a society; they are always a system of castes. He states that “Hindu society as such does not exist. It is a collection of castes,



each caste is conscious of its existence. It is not even a federation.” Thus, according to him, the Hindu social system suffers from inherent contradictions due to the caste system.

Caste system provides for social stratification. We all know that the division of people into classes is very common in all societies of the world. Ambedkar also believes that society is always composed of classes. An individual in a society is always a member of a class. This is a universal fact and early Hindu Society is no exception to this rule. In the Hindu society, the *chaturvana* (four caste system) system becomes the base of caste system. According to Ambedkar, this system has ruined the Hindus in general and the Untouchables in particular. The origin of this system is traced back to the Purusha Sukta of the *Rigveda*, the arch text of Hindus. Ambedkar treats the *chaturvarna* system as a social idea that is invested by Manu with a degree of divinity and in fallibility. The caste system as depicted in the Hindu religious texts, does not only divide the social order into four unequal, hierarchically organized and ritually graded occupational groups, but also makes these divisions permanent and immutable. Ambedkar also believes that in the beginning there is only one caste but later on classes become caste through initiation and excommunication. Ambedkar realizes that social stratification of occupations brought by caste system is a pernicious development of Hindu society.

Ambedkar has bitterly criticized the caste system of the Hindus. Let us now discuss the grounds on which the caste system is criticized by Ambedkar:

- The caste system is based on four *varnas* that have resulted in inequality and disunity among the Hindus.
- Caste system has given rise to Untouchability and the untouchables have to face various humiliations and oppressions from the high caste Hindus.
- Caste system has made the Hindu society weak compared to other religions or societies.
- Caste system, rigid rules of marriage, eating and social customs have prohibited the Hindus to develop into a homogeneous community.
- As a result of Caste system, Hindu religion has ceased to be a missionary religion.

- Caste system is used as a weapon by the orthodox Hindus to persecute the reformers of the society.
- Caste system paralyses and cripples the people from cooperative and helpful activities.
- Caste system has created divisions among the Hindu society as it is based on the principle of graded inequality.
- Due to the caste system, it is impossible to establish a just social order in the Hindu community.
- The caste system is the main cause of the weakness and subjugation of the Hindu society for centuries.

Hence, it is evident from the above discussion that Ambedkar believes that Hindu social society is not based on the principle of equality and fraternity. It is based on graded inequality as it is based on the principle of fixity of occupation regardless of a person's ability to perform other occupation. Ambedkar suggests that the internal contradictions within the Hindu society can be solved only by annihilating the caste system of the Hindus. Throughout his life Ambedkar wages a relentless struggle against the caste system and untouchability of the Hindu society to build a new social order based on freedom, equality and justice in social, religious and political life of the people.

**SAQ**

Do you think Ambedkar's criticism of caste system can be justified?

Give reasons in support of your argument (20+80 words)

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### Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks

- a) According to Ambedkar caste is.....
- b) Chaturvarna system divides the Hindu social order into..... unequal, hierarchically organized groups.

2. State the reasons behind Ambedkar's view of Hindu society as based on graded inequality.

3. Why is it impossible to establish a just social order among the Hindu community?

### 3.5 Ambedkar's Views on Untouchability

The above section has made us familiar with Ambedkar's criticism on the caste system. The caste system of Hindu social order is closely linked with the system of untouchability which is regarded as one of the worst social evils of the Hindu society. In this section we shall discuss Ambedkar's view on Untouchability.

It is already clear to us that the Hindu social order is based on four *varnas* or classes – Brahmins, kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. In the Hindu society, each class develops into a caste and every individual is entitled to the rights and privileges attached to the class he belongs. Ambedkar analyzes that after sometime, a fourth class develops in Hinduism i.e., the Untouchables. Hinduism sanctions the complete segregation of the Untouchable class. They are shunned by Hindus as they are considered to be impure and polluted. The Untouchables are not treated as human beings and are not regarded fit for social association. A permanent division is created between the so-called Touchables and Untouchables. The higher castes in Hindu society enjoy all the rights and privileges and in the name of code of conduct they have the freedom to ill-treat a section of the society i.e. Untouchables.

The untouchables are given a condition of life in which their thinking habits and general conduct cannot be improved. The upper castes forfeit their

civic life and the untouchables are forced to live a suppressed life. They are declared unfit for social association and denied all social rights. The society imposes restrictions on the eating and wearing of clean clothes on the untouchables. They are not allowed to use the village wells, go to the schools and enter the temples. Outcaste patients are not treated by the doctors from the higher caste. Religious segregation of a particular class has forced millions of untouchables to convert to Islam and Christianity to free themselves from the shackles of humiliation and oppression.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Ambedkar and The Partition of India**

Between 1941 and 1945, Ambedkar published a number of books and pamphlets, including *Thoughts on Pakistan*, in which he criticizes the Muslim League's demand for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan but considered its concession if Muslims demanded so as expedient.

In the book entitled *Thoughts on Pakistan*, Ambedkar writes a sub-chapter titled 'If Muslims truly and deeply desire Pakistan, their choice ought to be accepted'. He writes that if the Muslims are bent on Pakistan, then it must be conceded to them. He asks whether Muslims in the army can be trusted to defend India. To answer the question-In the event of Muslims invasion of India or in the case of a Muslim rebellion, with whom will the Indian Muslims in the army side? he concludes that, in the interests of the safety of India, Pakistan should be acceded to in keeping with the demand of the Muslims. According to Ambedkar, the Hindu assumption that though Hindus and Muslims are two nations, they can live together under one state, is nothing but an empty sermon, a mad project, to which no sane man will ever agree.

### **3.6 Ambedkar's Movement against Casteism and Untouchability (Hindu Social Order)**

After discussing Ambedkar's criticism of the Hindu society, the caste system and Untouchability, now we will discuss Ambedkar's efforts for removal of casteism and Untouchability in this section. He is of the view that there is Untouchability because there is caste system. Thus he launches a powerful

movement for the restoration of civic rights to the untouchables and giving them equal rights at par with other castes. The movement for the rights of the untouchables and for the eradication of caste system is started in two phases-

- Firstly- In the form of petition and protest.
- Secondly- In the form of direct action to use wells, schools, buses and railways etc.

Ambedkar's movement against Casteism and Untouchability can be described as humanitarian struggle. Ambedkar believes that caste system and untouchability are parts of social system based on some principles. Without destroying the caste system, untouchability cannot be reviewed. Thus Ambedkar stresses the necessity of eradicating the ideas of highness and lowness on the basis of caste. He asks his followers to fight against the isolation of civil life without fear. The leaders of *Satyasodhak* movement of Maharashtra have given Ambedkar full support in his struggle for the rights of the depressed classes. Through Satyagraha, he has led his followers to assert their rights over common drinking water and right to worship in temples.

The demands for safeguarding the interest of the untouchables inform Ambedkar's career. In 1919, when Montague Reforms are being formulated, Ambedkar demands separate electorates and reservation of seats for depressed classes in proportion to their population. In the first conference of Untouchables, in March 1927, at Bombay, Ambedkar has called upon the Untouchables to fight for their rights, give up dirty habits and rise to manhood. During that time, the *Satyashodhak* Movement is taking place in Maharashtra and the leaders offers full support to Ambedkar in his struggle for the rights of the depressed class.

Ambedkar becomes the first President of The All India Depressed Classes Association on August 1930, where he demands the safeguard of depressed and downtrodden untouchables in the constitution and pleads for their representation in official committees. As a member of the State Committee

appointed by the Bombay Government in 1930 to find out educational, social and economic condition of the depressed classes, Ambedkar recommends scholarship for students of depressed classes, their recruitment in police and army as well as their greater involvement in social and cultural activities.

Political activities are prominent part of Ambedkar's movement against Casteism and Untouchability. He is not impressed by Gandhiji's word Harijan as a replacement for untouchables. His views with suspicion the formation of the Harijan Sevak Sangha by Gandhiji for removal of untouchability as it is entirely managed by caste Hindus and the Sangha works as an organ of the Congress party. Ambedkar maintains that its aim is to secure support of the depressed classes. Thus Ambedkar forms the *Samata Sainik Dal* for the upliftment of the Untouchables and asked the Untouchables to adopt Buddhism to free themselves from the shackles of discrimination followed in Hinduism.

Ambedkar feels that concerted action to secure political and economic rights for people ignored for centuries is necessary to give them a better future. He attacks the British Government for not initiating constitutional measures to improve the lot of Untouchables. He demands a separate electorate and reservation of seats for the depressed classes in proportion to their population. He has succeeded in securing separate electorate for the depressed classes through the Communal Award in 1932. However Gandhiji's protest and fast unto death made Ambedkar sign the Poona Pact in 1932 on behalf of the depressed classes and accept a joint electorate with the Hindus ensuring seats for the depressed classes. The pact is later embodied in the Government of India Act 1935. In 1942, Dr Ambedkar was included in the Executive Council of the Viceroy and as a labour member he works hard to give workers their due rights and to provide social security to the labour class. In securing reservation of seats for members of the depressed classes, Ambedkar makes use of his position in raising the standard of life of the labourers. He worked hard for establishing better relations between labour and management and thus ensuring industrial peace through suitable law.

He asserts that the problems of the Untouchables cannot be solved unless radical changes are introduced in the social system and unless the caste system is annihilated. Ambedkar pleads for making the public services more responsive to the needs of the Untouchables and insists on recruitment of more members of the Untouchable community in the higher posts. Through his writings and speeches, he makes the people conscious of the political, economic and social problems of the Untouchables and focuses the need of paying special attention to the amelioration of the condition of the Untouchables.

Influenced by the ideas of Ambedkar, the new constitution of independent India, not only assures equality, reservation of seats and special privileges for the depressed classes but also takes definite steps to abolish untouchability and make its practice in any form an offence punishable under law.

**SAQ**

Elaborate the humanitarian struggle and political activities of Ambedkar aimed to safeguard the depressed classes. (80 words)

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**3.7 Comparison between Gandhi and Ambedkar**

After discussing Ambedkar’s ideas, we can easily make out that Ambedkar differs from Gandhi in various matters. Gandhi and Ambedkar are the two prominent personalities of India who devote their life for the upliftment of the depressed classes and eradication of Untouchability. They are the symbol of revolt against caste-conscious oppression within the Hindu society. Gandhi

and Ambedkar live for service and not for glory and in this section we will attempt a comparative study of Gandhi and Ambedkar.

Both Gandhi and Ambedkar share the similar interest of uplifting the untouchables from the shackles of oppression and domination.

Gandhi and Ambedkar want to eradicate untouchability and thereby uniting all castes into one oceanic unity. Both the personalities are able to command respectful obedience from millions of people. They are able to reach tremendous height in Indian politics and Indian society. They want to remove the economic disparity that exists in the society as both firmly believe that unless the economic disparity is removed, there can be neither social justice nor the downtrodden will rise in life. After the Poona Pact, Gandhi and Ambedkar have intensified their efforts to eradicate untouchability. Gandhi has softened people's heart and Ambedkar awakened self-respect and interest in politics among the untouchables. Gandhiji's work, in fact complements Ambedkar's work and vice-versa. Thus both Gandhi and Ambedkar can be rightly regarded as saviours for untouchables as they share similar interests.

Though we have found that both Gandhi and Ambedkar share similar interests in terms of improving the fate of the untouchables, their approaches for the removal of untouchability are dramatically different. They have chosen different paths, strategies and ideologies. Now let us discuss the grounds of their difference

### ***Views On Untouchability***

Gandhi feels that he is the natural guardian of untouchables while Ambedkar opines that he is the natural leader of the untouchables. Gandhi firmly believes that Untouchability can be removed by change of hearts in the Hindus initiated by moral pressure but Ambedkar believes that Untouchability can be removed by giving them safeguards and political and legal rights.



### ***Views On Caste System***

Mahatma Gandhi's views on caste system are quite different from those of Ambedkar.

Interpreting Hinduism Gandhiji said that, "*Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a custom whose origin we do not know and do not need to know for the satisfaction of my spiritual hunger. But I do know that it is harmful to both spiritual and national growth.....*". Ambedkar totally disagrees with Gandhiji's view. According to Ambedkar in Hindu society, class (varnas) develops into castes and the caste system develops various sub-castes. But according to Gandhi, caste system has nothing to do with religious and *Varna* system. It is harmful for both spiritual & national growth. But according to Ambedkar caste system has completely ruined the Hindu society.

Gandhi represents the masses of India, Ambedkar represents the depressed classes of India. Gandhi wants to reform, end injustice without abolishing caste system. But, Ambedkar demands rebellion for the annihilation of the caste system itself. Gandhi wants to eradicate shudrahood & untouchability and not the caste system as a whole.

### ***Efforts of Gandhi and Ambedkar for Upliftment of Untouchables***

In 1932, under the patronage of Gandhi, The All India Anti- Untouchability League was formed, which is later named as "Harijan Sevak Sangha". But Ambedkar is not impressed by this movement as it excluded the leaders of the depressed classes as the members of the governing body and did not concentrate on the economic, social and educational development of the depressed classes. Ambedkar thus forms *Samata Sainik Dal* (Social Equality Army) for the upliftment of the depressed classes. *Samata Sainik Dal* emphasizes the development of the depressed classes by granting scholarship for the students of depressed classes and reservation system for their upliftment in every stage of their life.

### *Views on Separate Electorate*

Ambedkar also differs from Gandhi on the question of separate electorate and reservation of seats for the depressed classes. He opines that there is no link between the Hindus and the depressed classes. Each has distinct and separate identity. He thus achieves separate electorate for the untouchables through the Communal Award in 1932.

But Gandhi believes that untouchability is a stigma of the Hindu society as whole and it must be eradicated. Separate Electorate will make it a permanent feature giving rise to serious problem of human relationship. His decision to fast till death leads to the signing of Poona Pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar. But Ambedkar feels that Poona Pact is against the interest of the depressed classes.

### *Views on Varna System*

Ambedkar is full of criticism for the Hindu society as a whole and wants to eradicate the *varna* system and he does not favour Gandhi calling the untouchables as Harijans. But Gandhiji is not against the *varna* system. He opines that *varna* system has nothing to do with caste. In fact he wants to revert the original *varna* system. He said that the law of *varna* teaches us that each one of us can earn our bread by following our ancestral calling. He only wants to abolish untouchability but not at the cost of offending the castes Hindus.

But Ambedkar believes that *varna* system has given rise to caste system and the reorganization of Hindus on the basis of *varna* system can prove harmful as it will have degrading effect on the mass by denying them opportunity to acquire knowledge. Religious sanction behind the caste and the *varna* system must be destroyed.

Thus we have seen that both Ambedkar and Gandhi criticize each other but at the same time each is conscious of others necessary place in any final solution of the problems of the untouchables. Though their paths are different their ultimate aim is quite similar. Because of the efforts of Ambedkar and

Gandhi, the constitution of independent India not only abolishes Untouchability but also makes its practice in form punishable by law.

**SAQ**

Analyse how Ambedkar differs from Gandhi. (80 words)

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**Check Your Progress:**

1. Fill in the Blanks:

a)The fourth class that develops in the Hindu society is

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b) The first president of All India Depressed Classes Association is.....

c) The Poona Pact was signed in.....between.....

2. Write a brief note on Ambedkar’s movement against Untouchability.

3. What is Ambedkar’s view on separate electorate?

**3.8 Ambedkar on Education**

Like any social reformer Dr. Ambedkar believes that for the reconstruction of society on the principles of equality and justice education is the necessary precondition. Now Let us study Ambedkar’s ideas on Education.

He studies the development of education in Indian society and finds that right to education is restricted to higher castes during the rule of *Peshwas* in Maharashtra and even during the earlier period of British Raj. Ambedkar takes upon himself to fight for the education of masses without discrimination

of caste and sex. Ambedkar's attempt for spreading education can be highlighted as follows

- As a nominative member of Bombay Legislative Council in February, 1927 Ambedkar takes active part and pleads for greater attention toward education.
- Ambedkar has founded the people's Education Society, and starts colleges at Bombay and Aurangabad.
- He pleads with the government that providing equal education opportunities to all without discrimination is the responsibility of the government.
- He pleads that boys and girls should get different education suited to their temperament.
- Taking active part in the discussion on Bombay University Act and Primary Education Amendment bill, he contributes his views in the reform of education.
- Ambedkar stresses on the need to cheapen education in all possible ways and greater possible extent so that it can reach everyone.

Therefore, Ambedkar is of the view that education is something to be brought within the reach of everyone and should be made cheap in all possible ways.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Ambedkar as an Architect of India's Constitution**

With India's independence on August 15, 1947, the new Congress-led government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first law minister. On August 29 of 1947, Ambedkar was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, charged by the Assembly to write free India's new Constitution. Ambedkar won great praise from his colleagues and contemporary observers for his drafting work. In this task Ambedkar's study of sangha practice among early Buddhists and his extensive reading in Buddhist scriptures were to come to his aid. Sangha

practice incorporated voting by ballot, rules of debate and precedence and the use of agendas, committees and proposals to conduct business. Sangha practice itself was modelled on the oligarchic system of governance followed by tribal republics of ancient India such as the *Shakyas* and the *Lichchavis*. Thus, although Ambedkar used Western models to give his Constitution shape, its spirit was Indian and, indeed, tribal. The draft prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and also won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through this measure, which had been originally envisioned as temporary on a need basis. The Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.

### **3.9 Ambedkar on Language Policy**

We all know that India is a multilingual country. Ambedkar clearly understands that India being a multilingual country has the possibility of problem for the unity of the country on account of regional pressures and pulls. When the idea of linguistic states is taken he favours it for two reasons. Firstly, he thinks that it will facilitate functioning of democracy in the country. Secondly, linguistic states will help in the removal of racial and cultural tension.

*Ambedkar said, "In seeking to create linguistic states, India is treading the right road. It is the road which all states have followed. In case of other linguistic states they have been so from the very beginning. In of India, she has to put herself in the reverse gear to reach the goal. But the road she proposes to travel is a well tried road."*

According to Ambedkar, in the enthusiasm to accept the idea of linguistic states, India commit the grave blunder of giving official status to regional

language. For this reason, he warned that with regional languages the states could aspire for independent nationality and thus pose a threat to the national unity. To avoid this possibility in future Ambedkar suggested that it should be laid down in the constitution that regional languages shall never be accepted as official languages of the states. Hindi must be declared as the official language of the nation. So long as Hindi does not become fit for this status English should continue as the only official language.

Again, Ambedkar believed that those who lived in India should be Indians first and Indians last. This is the only way to keep India a united country. The idea of linguistic states with regional languages as their official language was contrary to this basic principle. He is of the view that one language can unite while two languages can divide the people of India.

He emphatically said that any Indian who refused to accept this idea has no right to call himself an Indian. He might be hundred percent Tamil or Gujarati but could not be an Indian in real sense. Ambedkar said that Indian politics, already under the great influence of castes, is suffering from lack of unity of interest. The evil consequences of this are sure to be sharpened with linguistic states which we have created. The country is bound to move to disintegration if suitable amendment in our Constitution is not made and a national consensus on one official language is not accepted and enforced.

**SAQ**

Discuss Ambedkar's ideas on Education and Language policy. (80 words)

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### **3.10 Ambedkar on Democracy**

Ambedkar, on the basis of his extensive study and knowledge of the evolution of human society and social institutions, is convinced that democracy is the only form of government which ensures liberty and equality in the society and he has discussed elaborately on democracy.

Democracy is the form of government in which people rule themselves through their elected representatives. It ensures equality, liberty, fraternity and justice to all section of the people without discrimination and give due importance to public opinion. Democracy is universally accepted as the best form of government and it not just a form of Government but has become a way of life. Hence, according to Ambedkar we should have a government where the men in power, not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life will give their undivided allegiance to the best interest of the country.

#### ***Notion of Democratic Society***

*Ambedkar said, "Democracy is more than a government. It is a form of the organization of society. There are two essential conditions which characterize a democratically constituted society:*

- *Absence of stratification of society into classes,*
- *A social habit on the part of individuals and groups which are ready for continuous readjustment or recognition of reciprocity of interests."*

He opines that a real democratic government is not possible without form and structure of democratic society. If the social milieu is undemocratic, the government is bound to be undemocratic. According to Ambedkar even a democratic government will not be able to do anything if Indian society remain divided into classes and sub classes as each individual in such society will place class interest above everything and there will be no justice and fair play in the functioning of the government. Apart from being a government

of the people and by the people, democracy must also be a government for the people. It requires a democratic attitude of mind and proper socialization. Thus, Ambedkar is of the view that democracy is more than a social system. It is an attitude of mind, a philosophy of life.

### ***Need of Fraternity***

Impressed by French Revolution, Ambedkar opines that in democracy equality and liberty ensured by the constitution cannot be considered sufficient. Without fraternity equality destroys liberty and liberty destroys equality. Fraternity implies true religious spirit which is the basic of any democratic system.

### ***Conditions for a Democratic System***

Ambedkar clearly outlines the conditions for a democratic system. These conditions are as follows

- In a democracy, those who are in place of authority must seek mandate to rule after every five years.
- In a democracy, there is a necessity of a strong opposition.
- In a democracy, there should be equality for all in the eyes of law.
- In a democracy, there should be observance of constitutional morality. In the larger interest of the country, the party in power must resist temptation.
- In the name of democracy, there should be no tyranny of the majority over the minority.

### ***Parliamentary form of Democracy***

There are different forms of democracy prevalent in different countries of all these Ambedkar feels that parliamentary democracy of the British type will be the best for India. Ambedkar says that parliamentary democracy has three traits



- a. Negation of hereditary rule.
- b. Laws applicable to public life have public approval.
- c. Rulers cannot stay in power without the confidence of the people.

Ambedkar says that, “In Parliamentary democracy, there is the legislature to express the voice of the people; there is the executive who is subordinate to the legislature and bound to obey the legislature. Over an above the legislature there is the judiciary to control both and keep them both in prescribed bounds. Parliamentary democracy has all the marks of a popular Government.”

***Conditions for Parliamentary Democracy***

Ambedkar knows that parliamentary democracy can fail as there can be discontent and dissatisfaction in such a system. In spite of constitutional assurance of equality and liberty, the parliamentary system cannot succeed without social and economic democracy.

According to Ambedkar, “Democracy is another name of equality. Parliamentary democracy developed passion for liberty.”

**SAQ**

Elaborate Ambedkar’s notion and conditions for a democratic society.  
(80 words)

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**3.11 Summing up**

After reading this unit, we come to the conclusion that B.R Ambedkar has made valuable contribution to the social and political thinking. He strongly

denounces the outrageous attitude of the Brahmanical Hinduism towards the Untouchables and works for the liberation of the untouchables from the oppressions of the High caste Hindus. Ambedkar is successful in focusing the attention of the Hindus on the tension generating social problems and the need for resolving the same in the interest of the Hindu society as well as the political system. Because of the efforts of Ambedkar Indian Constitution makes special provisions for the upliftment of the backward classes. Reading of this unit will help you to make a comparison between Gandhi and Ambedkar. This unit will also enrich your knowledge on education, language policy and democracy.

Through his writings and speeches he makes the people conscious of the political, economic and social problems of the untouchables and impressed the need of paying special attention to the amelioration of the condition of the untouchables. As the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution for free India, he made provisions for the members of the Schedule caste community to develop itself with constitutional guarantee of equality of opportunities. The influence of his idea is evident from the fact that the new constitution not only assured equality to all citizens but took definite steps to abolish untouchability and made its practice in any form an offence punishable under law. Dr D.R Jatav has rightly described Ambedkar as a social humanist. Ambedkar was a great optimist . He had faith in man's capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, true and false.

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